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MAKING HISTORY
FROM JAPAN'S MARGINS
Ōta Masahide and Okinawa

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Unless otherwise indicated, this is my own original work.

Julia Humphry

August 2002
“Human life occurs only once, and the reason we cannot determine which of our decisions are good and which is bad is that in a given situation we can make only one decision; we are not granted a second, third, or fourth life in which to compare various decisions.

History is similar to individual lives in this respect.”

Milan Kundera, 1984

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Writing acknowledgements has to be the most long-awaited and the most difficult part of any work. For in these pages lie not only words, but a period of my life. It is as impossible to fully recount all the experiences that came with this learning path as it is to adequately thank all those people who have been an invaluable part of it.

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As has been pointed out, biography, like history itself, is an “impossible craft,” and can only provide fragments of a life. This is ever more apparent when, as in this thesis, the “past” which I seek to examine is very much a part of the present. For me, being able to work with living subjects and issues has been invaluably rewarding. In doing so, I sought to take John Ritchie’s advise: “Biographers should recognise that, in most cases, their subjects are more intelligent than themselves, and they need to guard against the condescension of hindsight. May we always respect the autonomy of a subject’s life….Let them develop and change within and beyond the general patterns we perceive.”

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Abstract

On 28 September 1995, Okinawan Governor Ota Masahide announced that he had decided to refuse to act as proxy in the signing of leases for land utilized by the US military within Okinawa prefecture. In his subsequent testimony to the Japanese Supreme Court, he argued that the disproportionate burden of US bases in Okinawa amounted to a form of institutionalised discrimination. More than any previous governor, Ota drew connections between the base issue—or what he has repeatedly termed the “Okinawan problem”—and questions of democracy, autonomy, and cultural diversity.

Before running for governor in 1990, Ota was an academic and a central figure in Okinawan public debate. Spanning almost fifty years, he has written over 60 books on contemporary issues concerning Okinawa. This thesis explores the multiple connections between “politics” and “history” within the life and work of Ota Masahide as an intellectual and as governor of Okinawa. I trace the way in which Ota has negotiated and contested Japanese national paradigms of homogeneity and US military power within historical discourse and as activist and politician.

In postwar Okinawa, claims to Okinawan culture and history have been inherently politicised, just as contests over Okinawa’s position in relation to Japan and against the US military presence are also cultural and historical contests. Within the intersection between politics and history, the question of how to conceive of history from “the margins” has also been a question of how to perceive and combat the cultural, economic, and political structures by which Okinawa is marginalised within Japan and under US-Japan relations.
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(1) A Map of Okinawa Island

Source: downloaded from http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/okinawa_rel90.jpg
(2) The Amami, Okinawa, Miyako, and Yaeyama Island Groups

1 Downloaded from http://www12.u-page.sonet.ne.jp/za2/sham/pescare/images/OkinawaMap.gif
Okinawa and the Reaffirmation of US-Japan Security Relations

On 17 April 1996, US president Bill Clinton met with Japanese Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryūtarō in what then US secretary of defence William Perry described as "the most significant summit since the end of the Cold War."¹ Both heads of state reaffirmed the US-Japan Security Treaty and the "global partnership" between the two countries. A day later, on April 18, Clinton told the Japanese Diet that while the Soviet Union had collapsed and Russia was far less of a military threat, this did not mean that US forces should be withdrawn from Japan. Increased globalisation and technological and information revolutions had created a world where, the President enthused, "ideas flash across our planet in the stroke of a computer key, bringing with them extraordinary opportunities to create wealth, to protect the environment, to prevent and contain disease, to foster greater understanding among people of diverse cultures." Yet, Clinton added, "greater openness and faster change also mean that problems that start beyond our borders can quickly penetrate our borders." The opportunities for expanding capital and markets in short coincided with new threats which required a strengthened "global partnership" between the US and Japan.² The subsequent joint declaration issued by the two leaders reconfirmed the importance of the US-Japan Security Treaty, and called for increased bilateral military cooperation and the formulation of guidelines for joint operations in a "time of crisis."

² "Clinton emphasizes dual leadership in address before Diet," The Japan Times (19 April 1996).
Yet events on the small archipelago of Okinawa posed a direct challenge to this global agenda. US military bases make up almost 20% of the main island of Okinawa. The islands host over 70% of all the US bases in Japan. In opposition to this large US military presence, Okinawan Governor Ōta Masahide announced his decision to refuse to act as proxy in the signing of leases for land utilized by the US military on the islands at the end of September 1995. The rape of an Okinawan girl by three US military servicemen less than a month previously had prompted an upsurge of anti-US base sentiment, culminating in an Okinawan People's Rally for Peace attended by some 85,000 people on 21 October, 1995. Ōta became the first prefectural governor in Japan's history to be the subject of a lawsuit by the Japanese Prime Minister. He made his case both in the Supreme Court of Japan and within the corridors of the Pentagon on highly publicized visits to Washington. No other confrontation between local and national government in postwar Japan placed the government in so compromised a position over a fundamental element of foreign policy. The “Okinawa issue” exploded into a major diplomatic issue between the US and Japan.

Less than a year later, in September 1996, a prefecture-wide plebiscite supported by the Ōta administration called for a reduction in the US military presence on the islands. It was the first plebiscite ever held on the issue of US military bases in Japan, and the first ever prefecture-wide plebiscite to be conducted. Ōta opposed the maintenance and possible expansion of the US military presence on Okinawa as laid down in the Pentagon’s “Nye Report” of February 1995. In his testimony to the High Court and appeal to the Supreme Court in March and August of 1996 respectively, Ōta argued that the highly disproportionate burden of US bases in Okinawa amounted to a

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4 Officially entitled “U.S. Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region” or EASR, the report was released by the US Department of Defense in February 1995. See for example “Pentagon affirms Asia commitment,” The Japan Times (28 February 1995), p 1.
form of institutionalised discrimination. He also argued for an appreciation of Okinawans’ distinct history, cultural heritage, and desire for peace. More than any previous governor, Ōta drew connections between the base issue—or what he has repeatedly termed the “Okinawan problem”—and struggles over democracy, identity, autonomy, and cultural diversity.

The conflict which arose over the US military base issue was inherently historical in a dual sense. Its origins lay in the role imposed on Okinawa during the Cold War, and in over fifty years of protracted US military presence on the islands. The disproportionate US military presence in Okinawa highlighted the inequalities of Japan’s postwar system, and its legacies in the post-cold war. Arising from competing visions for the future, this political conflict was also deeply related to struggles over economic autonomy, cultural diversity, identity, and the past. As Matthew Allen notes: “‘Okinawan values’ have been invoked in providing a historically legitimated, regional, and, at times, ethnic basis of separateness from the cultural colonizing influence of Japan and the military colonization of the United States.”

On close examination, the “Okinawa problem” reveals itself as intimately connected to contests over identity, historical memory, and cultural representation. Ōta sought equality and the recognition of cultural and historical difference. His historical analysis and appeal to a unique Okinawan culture and identity provided a counternarrative of mobilization against dominant notions of national security, the role imposed on Okinawa within US-Japan relations, and hegemonic national narratives of homogeneity.

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This thesis looks at the profound and multiple connections between “politics” and “history” within the life and work of Ōta Masahide. Before running for governor in 1990, Ōta was a professor of history and journalism, and a central figure in public intellectual debate on Okinawa. Spanning almost fifty years, he has written over 60 books and hundreds of newspaper and magazine articles on contemporary issues concerning Okinawa and Okinawan history, politics, and sense of identity. The intermixing of “history” with “politics” has also been played out in Ōta’s life through the interconnection between his role as “intellectual figure,” “activist,” and “politician.” What is in a life? Put another way, how does the “academic” reconcile his or her place as writer, thinker, and teacher with the desire to play some kind of an active role in the context of pressing social, political, cultural, and environmental issues within contemporary society? Living within the highly politicised context of postwar Okinawa, the pervasive question of the relation between “theory” and “practice” has been a focal concern for Ōta within his intellectual work as well as in his political career. Researching and writing this thesis in the turbulent times of today, this question drew me to Ōta as an intellectual and political figure and has been the core concern of this “thesis”—as both a piece of writing and a real-life process.

History, Nation, and Periphery

Ernest Renan remarked in 1882 that national memories and a sense of history, of “sharing, in the past, a glorious heritage and regrets, and of having, in the future, [a shared] programme to put into effect,” are “essential conditions for being a people.”

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7 In this body of work, Ōta has explored the Battle of Okinawa, the US occupation of Okinawa, Okinawa popular consciousness, Okinawan identity, central government policies towards Okinawa, the Okinawan People Right’s Movement and both pre- and postwar struggles to gain political representation in Japan, Okinawan reversion to Japan, Okinawa’s economy, education, the Emperor system, and Emperor Hirohito’s stance towards Okinawa following Japan’s surrender.

8 Ernest Renan, “What is a nation?” in Homi K. Bhabha, Nation and Narration (London and New York,
Yet, as Prasenjit Duara observes, complicit with the formation of the idea of nation though it is, history may also provide materials through which those on the margins of a nation seek to organize a “counternarrative of mobilization.” Ensuing contests over history reveal the multiple sources of identity creation, and the process of construction and repression through which historical narratives—which often posture as eternal, essential or evolutionary history—are imposed and contested.9

To speak of Okinawa as the “margins” of Japan is in no way to marginalize it. As periphery or margin, Okinawa does not exist in binary opposition to the imaginary “centre” of Japan. As Fujitani, White and Yoneyama point out in the context of competing memories of war, marginalized memories do not occupy a separate or alternative space of remembrance to dominant or hegemonic ones: “To the contrary, their marginality or silence is linked necessarily to the centrality, volume, visibility, and audibility of more dominant stories.”10 Political and historical struggles within Okinawa attest to the contested nature of nation-building, as well as discontinuities within national collective memory.11 Contests over competing memories or claims to history highlight the violent process of erasure which has formed a part of centralized “civilizing” projects of national consolidation and assimilation in modernity.12 Assertions of Japanese homogeneity may be invoked in attempts to reify this erasure or

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delegitimize alternative political, social, and historical claims in the present. A dearth of English works on Okinawa, only redressed very recently in a surge of interest in the islands, attests to the far-reaching legacy of what Oguma Eiji has phrased “the myth of the homogenous Japanese nation.” It also hints to the process whereby the history of US colonization in the Pacific has been largely overshadowed by the binary oppositions of the cold war.

Official nationalist discourse in Japan has never found an obvious place for Okinawa. In early modern Japan, the Ryukyu Kingdom was partially integrated within the Tokugawa system under the control of Satsuma, while also maintaining tributary relations with China. Both Ainu territory and the Ryukyu Kingdom were segregated from the bakufu administration, while at the same time forcefully incorporated into its trading system. The Shimazu lords of Satsuma were granted the right to incorporate the kokudaka (productivity as calculated by amount of rice) of Ryukyu into their holdings, and profited from Ryukyu’s tributary trade with China. This system of relations was largely derived from a Chinese-inspired concept of civilization in which place was perceived according to the hierarchy of centre (ka) and periphery (i).

13 On the influence of notions of Japanese homogeneity in English literature on Japan see also David Tobaru Obermiller, “The Okinawan Struggle over Identity, Historical Memory, and Cultural Representation.”


15 As Fujitani, White and Yoneyama observe: “The void left by the collapse of the cold war order has in fact opened up possibilities for more diverse, localized, and contradictory narratives and memories about the past to emerge and compete in the various public spheres” (T. Fujitani, Geoffrey M. White and Lisa Yoneyama (eds.) Perilous Memories, op cit., p. 5). At the same time, the 1990s have seen a surge in historical revisionism and neonationalism on both sides of the Pacific, augmented by the instabilities of an increasingly globalized financial system and the events of 11 September 2001 (See Chapter Five).


Yet such a hierarchical organization of relations became untenable in an international system which increasingly revolved around modern (Western) notions of borders, sovereignty, national defence, and imperial might. The Meiji government, established in 1868 on the eve of the most intense period of colony-grabbing in history, pursued "on a domestic front the policies of civilization (bunmeika) and rich-nation-strong-army, and on the international front the projects of revision of the equal treaties and demarcation (possession) of territory, seeking a direction to realize the 'appearance of independence' while similarly advocating the 'building of national prestige' in those regions on the periphery." Difference in modern Japan became interpreted as temporal rather than spatial, in concert with evolutionary ideals embodied in Western-inspired notions of civilization (bunmei). The incorporation of the concept of geographically limited territorial sovereignty, based on the delineation (within the geographical imaginary and the realpolitik of international diplomacy) of clearly defined boundaries, was integral to this "policy of civilization." The modern sovereign state was based on the ideological and geographical separation of Japan from its "others," and the denial of "everything that cannot be assimilated."

The policy of the "abolition of Ryukyu Kingdom" (Ryūkyū shobun) was part of this project of state-building and territorial consolidation. In March 1879, Meiji

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20 On a comparison between premodern and modern concepts of frontier/boundary in the context of Japan, see Bruce L. Batten, "Frontiers and Boundaries of Premodern Japan," in Journal of Historical Geography Vol. 24 No. 2 (April 1999), pp. 166-82.
22 This is not to suggest that this project was not highly contested within central forces in Japan. As Kevin Doak points out: "The dilemma of how to build a truly modern nation, a politicized Japanese identity for the new state, was a constant thorn in the side of the revolutionaries who had brought the young Emperor Meiji to the apex of the Meiji state but who could not bring all the people to identify with a modern,
official Matsuda Michiyuki arrived in Shuri with an entourage of some 30 or so officials, 160 police, and 400 infantry to implement the final stage of this policy. Shō Tai, the King of Ryukyu, was banished from Shuri Castle, and the Ryukyu Kingdom forcefully incorporated into Japan as Okinawa prefecture. The Meiji government justified this annexation to China on the grounds that Ryukyuans were of a “race” (jinshu) common to the rest of imperial Japan.23

The abolition of the Ryukyu Kingdom marked the consolidation of the Japanese national “geo-body.”24 Yet it also coincided with the subsequent blurring of boundaries between colony and nation, as Japan expanded its territories to Taiwan and beyond. This lead to a geographical discourse which through an increasingly ambiguous perception of the kokutai (literally “national body”) “did not lend itself to logical articulation.”25 The embracing of Western paradigms within Japan’s national/imperial project was accompanied by a sense of loss and accompanying desire for that which could not be articulated within the adopted dichotomies of colonizer/colonized, Occident/Orient, and civilized/barbarian. The celebration of romantic nostalgia, antirational logic, and over-determined articulations of the kokutai served to represent in Japanese intellectual and popular discourse that which was “unrepresentable” within the modernist rationalist lexicon.26 In its extreme form, Imperial Japan’s self-proclaimed

imperial Japanese one. The policy of Ryūkyū shobun was also contested within the highest echelons of the Japanese oligarchy (see Julia Yonetani, “Ambiguous Traces and the Politics of Sameness: Placing Okinawa in Meiji Japan,” Japanese Studies, Vol. 20 No. 1, (May 2000), pp. 15-31).

23 It is important to note that the policy of Ryūkyū shobun was also contested within the highest echelons of the Japanese oligarchy. The Ministry of the Left was against both Deputy Finance Minister Inoue Kaoru’s plan announced in 1872 to prohibit any further tributary relations, and his suggestion that Ryukyu was located within naichi (Japan’s inner territories). See Julia Yonetani, “Ambiguous Traces and the Politics of Sameness: Placing Okinawa in Meiji Japan,” Japanese Studies, Vol. 20 No. 1, (May 2000), pp. 15-31.


26 As Iida observes: “Negatively correlated with the rise of enlightenment reason and modern rationalism, the aesthetic is the domain where the unspeakable stories of the excluded are given voice as a protest
mission came to be conceived as the liberation of Asia from Western domination and the "overcoming of modernity" through total war.

State bureaucrats in the Meiji period incorporated Western-conceived notions of civilization and progress, while maintaining an ambivalence towards its Eurocentric assumptions. Anthropologist Torii Ryūzō (1870-1953) depicted Okinawans as Japanese, yet also saw them as more primitive than the peoples of what he described as 'the inner territories of Japan' (naichi). As Steven Harrell observes in relation to China, this is common to a "civilizing ideology" which seeks to integrate peripheral peoples into modern centralized projects of national consolidation. Those on the periphery are depicted as both primitive and civilizable—that is, from the same origins yet not as far advanced as the people of the civilizing centre. The imperial and national "civilizing centre" draws its rationale from the belief that the process of domination helps the "periphery" attain the more developed and superior qualities of the centre. While an entire nation's population is subject to assimilation, the "civilizing project" on the periphery is more extreme for two reasons. Firstly, the cultural distance between centre and periphery is greater. Secondly, the "civilizing" or assimilationist project often ends up emphasizing the very difference between centre and peripheral peoples that it is ostensibly trying to reduce. As Harrell observes: "It is when directed at peripheral peoples that the civilizing project takes on its full and paradoxical character."27

The question of who was and who was not to be regarded as "Japanese"/"imperial subjects" within Japan's national/imperial project was highly contested, politically and historically contingent, and often ambiguous. Torii saw

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Okinawans as Japanese, and yet not quite Japanese. Okinawans were depicted as “the closest genealogical group or ethnos (minzoku) to the people of the inner territories of Japan”—by their very categorization separate from Japan-as-naichi. Torii concluded that both Japanese from the civilizing centre (naichi-jin) and Okinawans originated from the same ancestors—the “descendants of the Emperor” (tensionha) or “Japanese proper” (koyū no Nihon-jin). Through the creation of this third all-embracing category, the term “Japanese” could be depicted as either Japanese proper, the people of the inner territories of Japan, or both—as simultaneously inclusive and exclusive as well as ancient origin and present reality. According to this logic, although a product of the same fixed origins, Okinawans must be “civilized” (that is ‘Japanized’) in order to become more like Japanese of the inner territories through a process of “assimilation.”

As Jennifer Robertson points out: “Assimilation ultimately defined a process whereby, as a strategy of colonial domination and control, the Japanese nation assumed a protean character capable of absorbing, reappropriating, and reinscribing cultural difference according to the dominant ideology and image of Japaneseness.”

The ambiguity of Okinawa’s discursive location in articulations of the Japanese kokutai was also reflected in its geopolitical and social position within Japan’s expanding empire. Okinawa’s systematic incorporation into Meiji Japan was

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accompanied by discrimination and exclusion. The policy of "Preserving Old Customs," held in place until 1899 at least in part to placate the Ryukyuan elite, maintained a burdensome system of taxation on Okinawan peasants, particularly in the outlying islands of Yaeyama and Kumejima. The first prefectural elections and the first elections to the national diet were held in 1909 and 1912 respectively, roughly twenty years after mainland Japan. All prewar governors of Okinawa were from outside the prefecture, and few of the officials within Okinawa's powerful and elitist Bureau of Education were from Okinawa, testimony to the exclusion of Okinawans from central political processes.

Throughout the prewar period Okinawa held an ambiguous place as both/neither the "inner territory" (naichi) and nor the "outer territories" (gaichi) of Japan's expanding empire, its fluid and contested position discernable only within the complex power relations of imperial Japan. This ambiguity was manifest, for example, in the 'House of Peoples' incident of 1903, where an exhibit within the Osaka Industrial Exhibit featured two Okinawan women, together with Koreans, Ainu, and Taiwanese aborigines as objects of curiosity to mainland Japanese onlookers. Okinawans held both a tenuous ethnic position and political, economic, and social status within the Japanese empire. In the 1900s, the Japanese Diet debated a proposal to integrate Okinawa with Taiwan under joint colonial rule. The proposal was defeated after fierce opposition from within Okinawa.

In the pages of local newspapers, Okinawan intellectuals and elite figures greeted both the "House of Peoples" exhibit and the proposal to integrate Okinawa

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32 Ibid., p. 163.
33 Ibid., p. 141.
under Taiwan’s colonial government with fierce indignation. Many members of the Ryukyuan elite fiercely opposed the Kingdom’s annexation to the Japanese state in early Meiji. Yet particularly after Japan’s display of force in the Sino-Japanese war in 1895 and the subsequent implementation of conscription in Okinawa, a large number of Okinawans internalised the process of assimilation imposed upon them, and the assumption of inferiority towards things “Okinawan.” The impetus to “become Japanese” was propelled by a desire for equality and from fear of subjugation.34

As Steven Harrell observes on the position of the marginalized voice within modern “civilizing” projects:

The reactions of peripheral peoples to civilizing projects are not...limited to the development of ethnic identity. Insofar as civilizing projects are wholly or partly successful, they include the participation of the peripheral peoples. And in fact, as long as peripheral peoples agree, at least on the surface, to the terms of definition and scaling imposed by the civilizers, the civilizees will be granted a voice to speak to themselves and the world about the success of the project. In this sense, the answer to whether the subaltern can speak is that the subaltern can speak on the sufferance of the civilizer. Voice is granted on the provision that it will speak in favor of the project, or at least in the project’s terms.35

The complexities of Okinawa’s complicity within Meiji Japan’s “civilizing project” are embodied within the figure of Iha Fuyū (1876-1947), the so-called founder of Okinawan studies. Iha was born as the eldest son of a wealthy family who had made their fortune through trade with China in the midst of the transition period marking the Ryukyu Kingdom’s annexation to the Meiji state. His extensive historical, linguistic, and anthropological work,s and his life itself, may be conceived as comprising of an endeavour to resolve the ruptures between these two periods—and to define his and Okinawa’s place in Japan according to the transformed set of power relations and

34 Ibid., 153.
conceptualisation of civilization which emerged in the Meiji era. A graduate in linguistics from Tokyo Imperial University, Iha was Torii Ryūzō's assistant and informant during his anthropological fieldwork in Okinawa in 1904. After returning to Okinawa as a celebrated university graduate, he employed Torii's analysis in the formulation of his “theory of a common ancestry between Ryukyu and Japan” (Nichi-Ryū dōsō-ron). As he described his aims in 1909:

From the time of my youth...I have endeavored to construct a mental bridge between the two ethnic groups (ryōminzoku no aida) [of Ryukyu and Japan] by conceiving from an academic standpoint the way in which Okinawans comprise part of the Yamato race (Yamato minzoku). I came to hold the conviction that this was a form of patriotism, and an expression of devotion to my country.36

As integral to a discourse of assimilation, Iha’s project was doubly complicit in the construction of a modern Japanese subject—working within Western-inspired conceptualisations of civilization and progress, and re-envisioning an essentialized Japanese historical narrative.

Yet Iha’s self-defined project of reconciliation between Okinawa and Japan was inherently ambivalent—as a double recreation not only of Okinawans within the Japanese race but of an autonomous Okinawan history and conceptualization of self. As Steven Harrell further observes: “The paradox of civilizing projects is that they can, in some circumstances, turn back on themselves. With their avowed (and often sincere) intention to raise the cultural or civilizational level of the peripheral peoples, civilizers also make an implicit promise to grant equality, to share power, to give up ultimate control over how and when the subalterns speak.”37 Iha’s conceptualisation of common ancestry was integrally related to a political agenda advocating equality: “it is time for

Okinawans to claim their rights as pure Japanese citizens." At the same time, Iha also combined Torii’s analysis with direct references to “Okinawa” as a category both distinct from and comparable to the ethnic group of “Yamato.” In doing so, he inverted the articulation of Okinawans as Japanese, such that not only were “Japanese” signifiers discovered within Ryukyu, but “Ryukyuan” signs could also be discerned within Japan. Iha relativised differences between “Yamato” and “Ryukyu” through the evocations of a “common ancestry.” In this way, he endeavoured to claim Okinawans’ rights to equality while at the same time rediscover a unique Ryukyuan/Okinawan identity in the concept of individuality or Okinawan kosei.

It was thus a politics of sameness—within which there existed differing interpretations of assimilation and commonality—that became the primary site of contention in expressions of Okinawan identity in the prewar period. This became a factor affecting the direction that political struggles over and within Okinawa have taken since. The contradictions embedded in Japan’s prewar assimilationist policy—which stressed the necessity for Okinawans to become Japanese while already being Japanese—have never been fully resolved. Similarly, contested notions of ambiguous commonality—as embodied within a “politics of sameness”—remain integral to the “politics of memory” whereby contesting perceptions of Okinawa’s position historically and within contemporary relations have been played out in Okinawa and Japan in the postwar period.

In 1945, Okinawa became the site of the only ground war between US and Japanese forces fought within Japan. The bloody battle killed almost a third of the population. With the military landing on the main island of Okinawa on 1 April 1945, the US Navy declared the suspension of all Japan’s powers over Okinawa, and vested the right of government and jurisdiction of the local population in United States Pacific

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39 As analyzed by Tomiyama Ichirō, “Ryūkyū-jin to iu shutai: Iha Fuyū ni okeru bōryoku no yokan.”
Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz. In other words, the military occupation of Okinawa was ordered and established simultaneously with the planning and execution of combat strategy. Ota cites this fact as instituting the “primary difference between Okinawa’s occupation and [that of] the Japanese mainland,” and sees it as a precursor to prolonged direct occupation of the islands following the war. In 1952, the San Francisco Peace Treaty came into effect. Article Three of the treaty accorded the US administration legislation and jurisdiction rights over the territory and inhabitants of Okinawa (including Nansei Islands south of 29 degrees north latitude). In an effort to legitimise military colonisation and reassure Japan that this arrangement was not permanent, the US guaranteed Japan “residual sovereignty” over the islands.

Under this agreement, in the words of Oguma Eiji: “Okinawa was territorially a part of ‘Japan’, and Okinawans were also ‘Japanese’ citizens, but the constitution was not applicable, the right to political representation was denied, there were limits on travel and family register transferral, and the islands were ruled by a military commander with a monopoly over the three [judicial, administrative and legislative] powers. An existence both ‘Japanese’ and not; this was Okinawa according to Japan. Moreover, according to the US, Okinawans were not ‘American’, nor were they guaranteed legal or civil rights.” Administrative rights over Okinawa were returned to Japan in 1972, yet the implications and legacies of Okinawa’s geographical and

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41 Ota Masahide, Essays on Okinawa Problems, ibid., p 197.
44 Oguma Eiji, Nihonjin no kyōkai, p. 480.
ideological separation from the rest of Japan remained an issue in political contests and within popular memory. Almost 29 years after the reversion of Okinawa to Japan and 49 years to the day after the San Francisco Treaty came into effect, the editorial of one of Okinawa's two major newspapers, the Okinawa Times (Okinawa Taimusu), reflected: "In relation to this day, there is no such thing as a common 'national memory' (kokumin no kioku). Mainland Japan and Okinawa completely differ in their remembrance of the historical date which determined the course postwar Japan would take."^45

Since the war, multiple and contradictory meanings of "Okinawa" and "Japan" have been fought over and negotiated within, and against, US military power. Okinawa has simultaneously stood at the geographical and ideological margins of Japan, while it has remained at the centre of the US-Japan strategic relationship as the "keystone of the Pacific" in US military strategy. The political, economic, and cultural power structures within postwar US-Japan-Okinawan relations were built upon, and compounded with, vestiges of hierarchical relations from the prewar period.

After reversion, direct military rule was replaced by indirect forms of dependency and the homogenisation of society and culture within Japan. Yet Okinawa’s central position within the US and Japan’s reified bilateral security structure remained. Under the circumstances, claims to Okinawan identity, place, and past have inevitably been highly politicised and contested. One of the consequences of that history, as Laura Hein points out, "is that all expressions of culture are 'always already' politicised and all claims of Okinawa distinctiveness become part of this larger debate over contemporary political identity."^46 Within this politics of identity, the reverse also appears highly pertinent; that is, not only are claims to an Okinawan culture and history

“always already” politicised, but contests over Okinawa’s position in relation to Japan and against US military control have necessarily been cultural and historical contests too.

**Ôta Masahide, Okinawa, and the Making of History**

The conflation of culture, history, and the political in struggles over Okinawa’s position in Japan’s postwar relations take concentrated form in the person of Ôta Masahide. Ôta was born in 1925 on the tiny island of Kumejima, situated approximately 90 kilometres west of and, in the pre-war period, a twelve-hour boat ride away from Naha, the biggest city on Okinawa’s main island. He was the youngest child of four in a farming family. Ôta Masahide grew up with his two elder brothers, Masaji and Shōen, his elder sister, Sae, and his mother, Kame. His eldest brother, Masaji, entered the Japanese Navy and died in unknown circumstances during battle in 1944. His second eldest brother, Shōen, died during the war in an ill-equipped hospital in Naha in 1941. Kumejima boasted much more fertile conditions than many other islands within the Okinawan archipelago, and Ôta’s family grew rice, potatoes, and vegetables. Yet his family only owned a small plot of land, and soon after Ôta Masahide was born his father, Ôta Shōkō, emigrated to South America in search of work. His mother, Kame, now left to support three children on her own, made extra money by cooking staff meals at the school. Shōkō remained in Brazil until after the end of World War Two. When he returned to Yokohama port on his way back to Okinawa, Masahide was studying at university in Tokyo. Masahide reunited with his father in Yokohama at this time before his father returned to Kumejima. He only knew his father for these three days. In 1955, Ôta Shōkō passed away while Masahide, his only remaining son, was in the US completing a Masters degree. Masahide’s mother passed away at the age of 104 years on 30 October 2001.
After graduating from Ōtake Elementary School in Kumejima, and without the financial resources to fund his own further studies, Ōta became a janitor within the school. A year later, after receiving a recommendation from the school principle, he left Kumejima with the intention of entering technical high school in Tokyo. Yet while staying in Shuri on Okinawa's main island with his cousin and her husband, Yamasato Seishō, who was a mathematics teacher at the Okinawa Normal School for Teachers, he was encouraged to take the Teacher's School entrance examination. He passed the examination, and in accordance with the wishes of his mother, who preferred her son stayed closer to Kumejima, entered Okinawa Normal School in 1941. By 1943, the battle for the Pacific had intensified, and the students of Okinawa Normal School became fully mobilized to assist with the war effort. On 31 March 1945, the day the US military forces occupied Kerama Islands and the day before the US landed on the shores of Yomitan village in central Okinawa, Ōta was recruited along with 385 other students into the Okinawa Normal School Student “Imperial Blood and Iron Corps,” formed under the orders of Japan’s 32nd Army Command. 226 out of Okinawa Normal School’s total of 386 students died in the battle for Okinawa.47 In Ōta’s year, only 37 students survived of a total of 152.48 Injured and near-starving, Ōta spent several months hiding in the cliffs and surrounding caves of Mabuni, in Okinawa’s south, dodging snipers and the US military onslaught while scavenging leftover supplies from dead and injured Japanese soldiers, the US military, and local Okinawan civilians. Ōta's war experience formed the foundation of his analyses on the Battle of Okinawa and Japanese militarism.

48 “Okinawa Mondai purojekuto’ ooraru hisutorii (OMPOH) (transcript of a series of interviews of Ōta Masahide conducted by Ito Takeshi, Sadō Akihiro, and Maita Keio, and recorded by Tanba Kyosaka), p. 27.
After being released from Yaka prison camp in October 1945, Ōta moved to Ishikawa City, where he was recruited by the military as a labourer to assist in reconstruction of the war-torn island. Soon afterwards, he found work within the education division of Ryukyu Gunto Government, established under US military direction. He assisted in the duplication of new elementary school textbooks under the division's head, Nakasone Seizen. He entered the education division's centre for further learning, and then in the Okinawa Foreign Language School, which actually only taught one language—English. Ōta studied and worked part time, as a houseboy for the family of a US military officer, and a bartender. After graduation, he began to teach at a subsidiary English school in the northern village of Nago. In 1950, he received a scholarship to attend Waseda University, where he majored in English literature. Soon after graduating, Ōta received funding to further his studies through a US scholarship scheme, and he undertook a Masters of Arts at Syracuse University, New York State, in journalism. On completing his studies, he was appointed to an administrative position under the dean of the newly established University of the Ryukyus. Two years later, he began lecturing at the university, where he continued to work for over thirty years (1958-1989) as a lecturer, assistant professor, and later professor and head of the Department of Law and Letters.⁴⁹ During this time, Ōta also held a research position at Tokyo University Newspaper Research Institute (Tōkyō daigaku shinbun kenkyūjo) for several years (1963-4 and 1968-70), undertook research in Hawaii University’s East West Centre for a one-year period (1978-79), and was invited as a Fulbright scholar to the University of Arizona State for one year (1978-79). He served as governor of Okinawa for two terms from 1990-98. In the national elections of July 2001, he was elected to the Upper House of the Japanese Diet as a representative of the opposition

⁴⁹ Ōta was head of the department from 1983-85.
Social Democratic Party of Japan. He continues to hold this position at time of writing.  

As an academic Ōta has been a central figure in debates on social, historical, and political issues concerning Okinawa: as a politician he has frequently appealed to Okinawan culture and history, and conceived of his political position in the context of Okinawa's historical position within Japan. Following his defeat in the 1998 gubernatorial elections, Ōta reflected on the relation between his historical consciousness and political career in the following way:

My approach to the base issue is different from say someone who had become governor straight from the ranks of government. For years I have studied the abolition of dominions and disposal of Ryukyu (Ryukyu shobun), subsequent economic conditions in Okinawa, the reasons why Jahana Noboru began the Okinawan People’s Rights Movement, anti-establishment forces in Okinawa, and Okinawans’ changing view of the United States… It is as an extension of this that I come to approach the base issue. It is not something I just began to think about on becoming governor, but something I became involved in from the perception that… the very mode of being of the people of Okinawa from the time of the abolition of the Ryukyu domain (haihan jiken), is under question. That is the difference.

Both Ōta’s intellectual work and his political career have been part of negotiating and contesting Okinawa’s historical and political location. Contests over the historical position of Okinawa in relation to mainland Japan have been and are also contests over Okinawa’s position in Japan and within US-Japan relations. For Ōta, the evocation of the past has been integral to conceptualisation of the present and future possibilities. History is consecutively an explanation of the present, and a lesson to be

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50 Biographical sources on Ōta include: the Asahi Tapes; Ōta Masahide, Okinawa no ketsudan (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha 2000); 'Okinawa Mondai purojekato ooara hisorsii (OMPOH) (see bibliography for explanation of sources).

51 Asahi Tapes (28 April 1999).
heeded in envisioning the future. Embedded within the articulation of a sense of Okinawan identity, it is also inherent to contests over the nation and its makeup.\(^{52}\)

Yet Ōta has not employed a “counternarrative of mobilization” to the extent that he has sought to envision an alternative claim to sovereignty through Okinawan independence. This counternarrative has rather been embedded within a “politics of sameness,” as involving a strategy of simultaneous incorporation and differentiation within tropes of being “Japanese.” Ambivalence and double consciousness are not simply born out of political opportunitism but are the result of strategies developed under the conditions of hierarchical and centralized relations of domination.\(^{53}\) As Rajagopala Radhakrishnan observes:

I would argue that there is a distinction between ambivalence as a given conditioning and the agential politicization of ambivalence. We cannot forget that double consciousness and ambivalence are mutually constitutive, and peoples and cultures that have been coerced into more than one history through domination, slavery, and colonialism have the ethicopolitical need and authority to make their presence felt in all of these histories. Ambivalence gives these cultures a double directionality: a here of the present home, and a there of the elsewhere in terms of

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\(^{52}\) As Deniz Kandiyoti observes, nationalist discourse presents itself as both a “modern project” and as a reaffirmation of authentic cultural values culled from the depths of a presumed communal past: “It therefore opens up a highly fluid and ambivalent field of meanings which can be reactivated, reinterpreted and often reinvented at critical junctures of the histories of nation-states. These meanings are not given, but fought over and contested by political actors whose definitions of who and what constitutes the nation have a crucial bearing on notions of national unity and alternative claims to sovereignty as well as on the sorts of gender relations that should inform the nationalist project” (Deniz Kandiyoti, “Identity and its Discontents: Women and the Nation,” cited in Rey Chow, *Ethics after Idealism: Theory-Culture-Ethnicity-Reading*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), p. 70).

\(^{53}\) Such a strategy of ambivalence and double consciousness has also been integral to articulations of Puerto Rican identity. As observed by Frances Negron-Muntaner and Ramon Grosfoguel: “On the island as well as in the United States...the ambiguity of Puerto Ricans’ relationship to the United States creates a slippery semantic context where sometimes ‘Puerto Rican’ is claimed as a sign of difference, for example, cultural identity and language, while at other times, the same sign is equated with being part of the ‘United States’ (citizenship, welfare, entitlements). The double strategy was spectacularly performed during the intense debates around language policy in Puerto Rico during the early 1990s” (“Introduction” in *Puerto Rican Jam: Rethinking Colonialism and Nationalism* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 16).
which metropolitan contemporaneity can be interrogated and transformed. 

Ôta’s analysis has worked within Japan’s “civilizing project” as defined and reconceived within the hegemonic relations and economic development ideology of the postwar period. At the same time it has resisted and contested these relations. Evocations of Okinawan history and a sense of self have been integral to the formation of the “elsewhere” of Ôta’s double consciousness, and a position from which to interrogate and seek to transform the Tokyo “metropolis.”

Japanese notions of national identity are themselves not fixed. As Prasenjit Duara has pointed out, on close examination, “in place of the harmonized, monologic voice of the Nation, we find a polyphony of voices, contradictory and ambiguous, opposing, affirming, and negating their views of the nation.” For all their discursive homogenizing power, discourses on nationalism and national identity throughout East Asia have not been able to displace social resistance, or contentions, whether on the basis of gender, ethnicity, or alternative political and ideal visions of the nation. “Rather than a homogenous discourse—whether emanating from the state, the nation, or ethnic groups—identity is actually the site of hegemony, contestation, and various kinds of resistance.”

The implementation of the San Francisco system in Japan in 1951-2 in particular was accompanied by the solidification of opposing political camps within Japanese society and politics over fundamental conceptualisations of foreign policy, Japanese war aggression, and the significance of Japan’s constitution. While the moderate

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54 Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan, Diasporic Meditations: Between Home and Location (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), xxiv, as cited in Frances Negron-Muntaner and Ramon Grosfoguel (eds.) Puerto Rican Jam, pp. 17-8.


conservative camp, dominated by the figure of Yoshida Shigeru, advocated a maintenance of the status quo as embodied in the peace settlement and the US-Japan Security Treaty, the left-wing opposed Japanese rearmament and the post-treaty stationing of US military forces in Japan, and called for a multilateral peace treaty and permanent neutrality in the cold war.\(^{57}\) Ideals of the postwar as encapsulated in the slogan “demilitarisation and democratisation” were incorporated into the anti-security treaty movement, popular tropes of war remembrance, and intellectual thought. Personified in the renowned political scientist Maruyama Masao, they also became integral to the endeavour to ground a sense of individual subjectivity or shutaisei within Japanese society, deemed essential to the functioning of democracy.\(^{58}\) As Rumi Sakamoto observes: “Arguing that the tragedy of Japanese fascism was caused by the lack of free, autonomous subjects with ‘internalised ethics,’ Maruyama counterpoised an idealized model of Western modernity to ultra-nationalism. Central to this model were modern subjectivity (a free and autonomous consciousness that allows an individual to independently judge the external world and actively intervene in it) and the ‘neutral state’ that guarantees the inner freedom of the subject.”\(^{59}\)


\(^{58}\) Masao Miyoshi provides a useful explanation of the term shutaisei: “Shutaisei, according to Kenkyusha’s New Japanese-English Dictionary, is ‘subjectivity; subjecthood; independence; identity.’ All four words are pertinent, but none of them exactly corresponds to the Japanese term. The absence of an English equivalent underscores that shutaisei is a native invention. Initially coined by the Kyoto philosophes, it is a word widely used after 1945 to fill a perceived gap in the Japanese language. The Japanese thought they saw the concept they named shutaisei everywhere in Western intellectual discourse: individualism, democracy, liberalism, libertarianism, subject, subjectivism, and libertinism flourished without bound. A compound of shu (subject, subjective, sovereign, main), tai (body, substance, situation), and sei (quality, feature), the word means inclusively the agent of action, the subject of speculation or speech act, the identity of existence, and the rule of individualism” (Off Center: Power and Culture Relations Between Japan and the United States (Cambridge, US: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 97-8).

\(^{59}\) Rumi Sakamoto, “Dream of a Modern Subject: Maruyama Masao, Fukuzawa Yukichi, and ‘Asia’ as the
In opposition to the US military presence in Okinawa, Ōta has framed his claims within these counter-hegemonic narratives of nation and accompanying progressive political movements. Yet in endeavouring to attain Okinawan subjectivity and autonomy, he has also maintained an ambivalence towards constructions of a Japanese national subject. This sense of ambivalence increased as the terms of reversion emerged and Japan’s postwar progressive opposition movement itself fragmented. He saw that the ideological and geographical separation of Okinawa within Japan’s postwar system was fuelled by and exacerbated a profound fissure between Okinawa and mainland Japan. This fissure was exemplified by the inability for Japanese government and mainland Japanese to conceive of the Okinawa issue as their own. One of Ōta’s aims was to strive to fill this gap in perception. At the same time, though, he also sought to claim an autonomous Okinawan self and political and cultural autonomy for Okinawa. While inherent differences also obviously exist, Ōta’s project of dual incorporation and differentiation has clear parallels with Iha Fuyū’s.60

On the one hand, Ōta’s political and historical articulations of Okinawan identity disrupt the reification of state authority, security policy, the glorification of war, and hegemonic national historical narratives. They also challenge hierarchical centre-periphery relations of power which are maintained through systems of economic dependence, centralized administration, and the homogenisation of culture. On the other hand, his analysis has worked within modern evolutionary conceptualisations of progress, and essentialist articulations of the nation-state (albeit within the ambivalent binary of Okinawa and mainland Japan). At certain junctures he has reified nationalist tropes which emphasize the loss incurred by the Japanese people in the war at the behest of the state without questioning individual accountability. At other junctures, he

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60 On ambivalence and pluralism within Okinawan identities see also Matthew Allen, *Identity and Resistance in Okinawa*, especially pp. 1-23.
has directed profound criticisms towards Japan’s relation to its decolonised “others.” Within an ambiguous binary between Okinawa and mainland Japan, however, this has also resulted at times in an obscuring of Okinawa’s own complex role within Japan’s prewar empire. During his period as governor, Ōta appointed the first female vice-governor of Okinawa, was the first Okinawan leader to promote affirmative action, and supported a Women’s Affairs Section within the prefectural administration. Yet he also has evoked notions of a collective Okinawan identity which, criticizes Linda Angst; often represent Okinawan subjectivity in a way that denies Okinawan female agency and privileges issues of political identity and autonomy.61

Ōta’s claims to Okinawan subjectivity have been constrained by the very discourses and relations of power in which they are peripheralized.62 Concurrently, however, they have also intervened in significant ways to resist and challenge the conditions by which these relations and conceptions of national homogeneity are constructed and reproduced.63 In concentrating on the complex interaction between this dual process of containment and intervention, I attempt to move beyond the theoretical and political impasse of a bifurcated debate between “an ontological preoccupation with a fixed nationality, culture, or ethnicity and a sceptical postmodern pragmatism that distrusts any form of identitarian orientation, whether strategic or pluralistic.”64

In simply refuting all social and cultural identities as essentialist, we cannot fully confront the extent to which essentialised structures regulate social, cultural, and political

62 As has been analyzed in the context of subaltern studies by Gayatari Spivak (“Can the Subaltern Speak?”), reprinted in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (eds.) The Post-Colonial Studies Reader (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 24-8).
63 The importance of examining the capacity of the subject to resist imperialism and intervene in the conditions which appear to construct subjectivity is pointed out by Stephen Slemon, “The Scramble for Post-Colonialism,” reprinted in The Post-Colonial Studies Reader, ibid., pp. 45-52.
64 Leo T. S. Ching, Becoming “Japanese”: Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation, p. 194.
practices. Nor can we see the important ways in which centre-peripheral relations of power have been contested through counter-identity claims.\textsuperscript{65}

Ota's resistance is doubly complicit—within the discursive practices which it disrupts, and in the apparatus of the nation-state which it seeks to transform and transgress. This implication takes a very literal form during his term as Okinawan governor, and in the cycle of conflict, compromise, and negotiations with the central government which marked this period. Moreover, it is also paralleled in Okinawa's own incorporation into the Japanese nation-state and the role imposed on it in the US-Japan postwar system. It is precisely through a strategy of resistance and compliance, incorporation and differentiation, that Ota has sought to challenge the set of conditions whereby Okinawa itself has been implicated within imperial and hegemonic relations and connected structures of organized violence. Complicity is at the foundation of the endeavor to conceive and empower a collective Okinawan subject, just as Okinawa's historical and political incorporation within hegemonic structures forms a core philosophical and political dilemma in the very attempt to conceive of an Okinawan autonomous subjectivity.

In examining the interlocking of historical and political struggles within postwar Okinawa, it is also important to contextualize identity politics itself. Contests over identity, historical representation, and culture are tied to the political conditions within which they have been fought—in this case in the context of struggles over US military occupation/colonization, and Okinawa's subsequent incorporation into reified US-Japan security relations and Japanese centralized political and economic structures. In this way, as David Gary Shaw observes in conceiving of history and agency; "much of the entire linguistic apparatus cannot be separated from everything else, all the other

\textsuperscript{65} As also discussed by Ching, ibid., pp. 194-5.
components of the 'action situation'."\textsuperscript{66} Individuals play an active role in reproducing and contesting discursive practices, as well as the political, cultural, and economic power structures connected to these practices.

Moreover, while the past is connected to both discursive contests and wider political struggles, it is not wholly reducible to either. Past historical moments as well as previous conceptualizations of historical relations are evoked within contemporary debates in a complex interweaving of multiple "networks of time."\textsuperscript{67} Political and social contests are moreover tied to the historical conditions from which they have emerged. To once again take heed of Duara's observations: "A more complex view of history suggests that if the past is shaped by the present, the present is also shaped by the past as inheritance, and the most fertile questions lie in understanding how this dialectic is articulated within the contest over the significance of national history."\textsuperscript{68} It is in the context of this dialectic that interweaving contests within postwar Okinawa are played out. It is also precisely in the context of these complex processes that I seek to examine the multiple ways in which Ōta has sought to "make history"—through conceptualising the past, acting in the present, and envisioning possible futures.

As Ōta notes, his experience during the Battle of Okinawa has formed the basis of his writing and intellectual thought. The first chapter traces transformations in Ōta's reflections and analyses on war across a period spanning over fifty years. The following chapters examine the evolution of Ōta's thoughts up to Okinawan reversion in 1972; his writings on Okinawan history and identity following Okinawan reversion to Japan; and his negotiations over the Okinawa base issue during his time as governor. The last


\textsuperscript{67} For a subtle examination of these interlocking "networks of time" in the context of intellectual debate in contemporary China, see Geremie Barmé, "Time's Arrows: Imaginative Pasts and Nostalgic Futures" in Barmé and Gloria Davies (eds.) \textit{Voicing Concerns: Contemporary Chinese Critical Inquiry} (Boston: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), pp. 227-58.

chapter focuses on contests over identity under Inamine Keiichi, Ōta’s successor, and the politicised process by which history is made and shaped in contemporary Okinawa.
CHAPTER ONE

Recollecting War and Constructing Peace

The Battle of Okinawa

“The reason why I have become deeply involved with ‘Okinawa’ is not only because it is the place where I was born and grew up. For me, ‘Okinawa’ signifies more than merely my ‘place of birth.’ While perhaps a slight exaggeration, it may be said that ‘Okinawa’ is the ‘point of origin’ of my existence from which, with 1945 as the dividing line, I was reborn, or rather, have sought to reincarnate myself.

That ‘Okinawa’ can be the point of my origin lies first and foremost in the fact that is was there that I experienced the ‘Battle of Okinawa.’ I believe that my experience during the Battle of Okinawa has formed, in various ways, the nucleus of my life ever since. This is because, whether specifically consciously or not, experiencing the Battle of Okinawa has unmistakably determined the way in which I have lived after the war.”

Ōta Masahide, 1971

Rebirth and Remembrance in Postwar Okinawa

Ōta has written in several places of the way in which, interned within Okinawa’s Yaka Prison of War camp at the end of the war, he became overwhelmed with a fierce desire to live the remainder of his life in a “totally different” way to his experience up to that point. He recounts how, using the broken end of a small bamboo

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stick and condensing his ration of coffee into a thick brown solution as ink, he repeatedly wrote the words “rebirth” (shinsei) and “the creation of life” (sei no sōzō) onto scrap pieces of paper and the lids of empty cans found in the camp. He later interprets this impulsive action as the “outpouring” of his will to be “reborn”—to not entrust his body and mind to meaningless notions of “national will” and “national interest,” but to seek a new autonomous (shutaiteki) way of life according to the true human desires of self (jiko). The precious lesson learnt from the tragedy of war was that a mode of living which denies subjectivity and humanity signifies the spiritual “death” of the individual.3

Contests over war remembrance—as dialogues with the past and as visions of the future—have haunted postwar Japan. In Okinawa, where close to one-third of the local population were killed in the only ground war between US and Japanese forces fought in Japan’s so called “inner territories,” the legacies of war remain engraved in historical memory and upon the geopolitical landscape. In the name of “rebirth,” Ōta has spent over half a century recollecting the war. As Ōta himself reflected in his final lecture as a professor at the University of Ryukyus in 1990, “my experiences during the Battle of Okinawa have formed the base of my method of research, mode of thought and way of seeing.”4 Moreover, as Ōta further observed, this point formed a vital difference between his research and prewar works on “Okinawan Studies” produced by such figures as Iha Fuyū and Higashionna Kanjun. Repentance over the war necessitated a revision of history in the attempt to evoke meaning in the present and the future.

Ōta’s endeavour harboured its own contradictions—contradictions which are present in the picture of his war-weary figure etching out characters in the brown ink of

US military-rationed ground coffee in Okinawa's internment camp. For this vivid image also seems to highlight pervasive issues concerning discontinuity and war remembrance relevant to all of postwar Japan. The Battle of Okinawa brought untoward personal and cultural destruction to the islands. Ōta sought to impart meaning to the tragedy and trauma of this ruin through utopian ideals of redemption and reconstruction. Yet they were ideals themselves steeped in repentance over the war, guilt over his own survival, and a sense of nostalgia and overwhelming loss towards an irretrievable past.

Repentance over the war fed Ōta's desire to obtain individual autonomy and subjectivity. In the spirit of Maruyama Masao's critique of wartime ultranationalism and conception of Japan's postwar democratisation project, Ōta saw that Japan's authoritarian Empire system was founded on the denial of subjectivity. "Rebirth" in the postwar era necessitated the attainment of autonomy. Yet this conceived "new beginning" was simultaneously inherently ahistorical, and founded on the historical "lesson" of the war. The experience of war was both cut off from a perceived redeemed present, and the point which must be continually returned to in order to impart meaning to this rupture. This metaphorical break obscured continuities between the prewar and postwar era, and the implications of decolonization. The postwar struggle to obtain subjectivity in the present left open the complex issues of how to conceive of historical agency and individual responsibility in retrospect. An assumed disjunction between the Japanese state and the people, and the tendency to lay war blame primarily on the

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5 As Carol Gluck observes: "The myth of a new beginning, itself a radically ahistorical notion, not only prevented seeing the twentieth century whole, but it also elided the prewar and wartime and perpetuated the notion of a long postwar." ("The Past in the Present," p. 94).

6 As L. E. Ching observes; "precisely because the total defeat of Japanese militarism occurred at the hands of the Allied forces and not under the pressure of the empire’s disintegration...(t)he exigent concern was not that of Japan’s relationship to its decolonized others, but to itself" (Becoming Japanese, pp. 43-4).
former, ironically compromised the pursuit of personal and political autonomy and eschewed exhaustive claims to war responsibility.  

Yet Óta’s analysis did not rest solely on a perceived separation between the state and the people. Nor have his accounts of war purely served to reproduce a sentimental victim consciousness in fitting with popular tropes of postwar nationalism. His early testimonies of the war experience painted a complex and disturbing picture of personal devotion, horror, delusion, and repentance in the face of bloody battle and unmitigated defeat. In the years leading up to reversion in 1972, Óta began conducting more historical analyses of the war. These analyses were integrally related to political contests over Okinawa’s position within Japan. In contrast to the situation in mainland Japan, the end of the war in Okinawa did not bring occupation reforms and democracy, but twenty-seven years of US military rule. War experience for Óta entailed a rejection of assimilation policies and the ideology of Japanese nationalism from the time of the disposition of Ryukyu Kingdom in 1879. In other words, particularly in the years directly leading up to and following Okinawan reversion to Japan in 1972, it called for a complete reappraisal of Okinawa’s cultural, historical, and political position in relation to the modern Japanese nation-state.

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8 For an analysis of the popularization of victim consciousness in postwar Japan, see James J. Orr The Victim as Hero: Ideologies of Peace and National Identity in Postwar Japan (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001). As Orr observes, a crucial number of war testimonies and analyses of war in mainland Japan sought to raise the question of individual responsibility: “There have always been voices of conscience, just as there have always been incidences of inadvertent and willful neglect of Japan’s aggressive past. Rather than dwell on this amnesia, one needs also to trace the selective and manipulated remembrance of those aggressions.” (p. 173). Lisa Yoneyama examines the complexities of testimonial practices in Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and the Dialectics of Memory, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), especially Chapter 3.
Narratives of war, as intimately connected to the production of a collective sense of identity, are inherently political. As Peter Novick attests, collective memory "is not just historical knowledge shared by a group... (but) is understood to express some eternal or essential truth about a group." It is both reproduced by the state to reinforce its own legitimacy, and mobilized by oppositional groups in the name of competing definitions of the nation, and as a counter narrative of mobilization for minority groups. The promulgation of peace, as a "lesson of history" learnt through the horrors of war, has been an essential creed of Ōta's position and of social movements in postwar Okinawa. On the eve of reversion, war remembrance became intertwined in complex ways with contests over the terms of reversion and collective identity in Okinawa. From this time, a competing set of divisions can be discerned within Ōta's work: between the Japanese military and civilians, and between the state (kokka) and the citizens (kokumin) of Japan, but also between mainland Japan (hondo, Yamato) and Okinawa. Ōta condemned not only the Japanese government but mainland Japanese for their consensual and even complicit role in determining Okinawa's plight during and after the war. Okinawans, not mainland Japanese, were seen as the victims, and the Japanese military, together with an institutionalised system of discrimination and imposed assimilation, the perpetrators.

It is important to note in this sense how war remembrance evolved over time, in the context of wider struggles. The beliefs and aspirations of the present influence depictions of the past as they are manifested respectively in different historical contexts. Each time the war experience and the Battle of Okinawa was re traced in the

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11 Maurice Halbwachs was at the forefront of analyses on collective memory in relations between the past and the present. See Maurice Halbwachs, On Collective Memory (Chicago and London: University of
endeavour to define its significance in the present and for the future, it was accorded new significance—as an integral part of contests over public memory, collective identity, and historical consciousness. This is not to suggest that the past is wholly defined by the present. As Lewis A. Coser observes, collective and individual historical memory has both cumulative and presentist aspects. This chapter traces Ōta’s reflections and analyses on war across a period spanning over fifty years, framing them in the context of the issues of autonomy, war responsibility, democracy, gender relations, and the historical and political position of Okinawa, in the effort to provide a glimpse of the multiple ways in which questions of war remembrance and forgetfulness have become entwined with political, historical, and cultural battles in Okinawa’s long and tumultuous postwar period.

Recollecting War: “That Which was Paid For in Blood”

The first material Ōta published on his war experience was a book which came out in 1953 entitled Okinawa kenjītai, or The Okinawa Youth Corps. It is a compilation of various testimonies about the war from survivors of the “Imperial Blood and Iron Corps” (Tekketsu Kinnōtai) of Okinawa’s Normal School for Teachers (Shihan Gakkō). Published eight years after the end of the war, The Okinawa Youth Corps was one of the first books written and compiled by an Okinawan on the Battle of Okinawa. It was preceded only by two major Okinawan records. One is Tetsu no bōfu (The Typhoon of Steel), a collection of various war testimonies compiled from interviews by journalists from the local newspaper, Okinawa Times. The other is Okinawa no higeki (The Tragedy of Okinawa), testimonies from the female student equivalent of the Imperial Blood and Iron Corps, the so called Himeyuri Corps (Himeyuri tai), compiled by


Nakasone Seizen, a former teacher at the girl’s school and survivor of the war. Nakasone became a leading official in the civilian education division of the Okinawa Gunto Government in the early years of US occupation. Nakasone was also Ōta’s mentor. Directly after the war, Ōta assisted Nakasone in the process of rewriting textbooks, as well as in identifying the bones of war dead from the Himeyuri Corps and sending them back to surviving family members.

Ōta edited *The Okinawa Youth Corps* together with Hokama Shuzen, who was also a survivor of the student corps and who would later become a well known scholar on Okinawan linguistics and history. During his third year at Waseda University Ōta travelled from Tokyo back to Okinawa to collect testimonies from other fellow colleagues who had survived the war. In June 1953, on the eighth anniversary of the last organized resistance of the Japanese 32nd Army in the Battle of Okinawa, Ōta contributed an article to a newspaper commemorating the publication of *The Okinawa Youth Corps*. In describing the process of compiling the book he wrote: “Approximately ten months ago, I came back to Okinawa to collect memoirs [on the battle]. Reading the written testimonies that were assembled, the tragic scenes of the time crowded my head as if had they happened only yesterday. Overcome by tears and grief, I had to stop writing, and this became a reason for the book’s delay.” Ōta described being overwhelmed by “anger and a feeling of oppression” on numerous occasions when trying to take up his pen. Once the process was over, however, he felt that “a shadow which had weighed at my heart for eight dark years was suddenly lifted, and I became completely overcome with emotion.”

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14 The Asahi Tapes (29 January 1999).
The Okinawa Youth Corps was published in the midst of rising Cold War tensions. Early in 1953, the United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands (USCAR) utilized its executive powers over Okinawa to hand down a series of orders aimed at legalizing land hitherto expropriated under occupation, and expropriate further land for the expansion of US military facilities over the islands.\(^{16}\) Within Okinawa there was a restrictive political environment, stringent censorship, and a growing opposition movement towards USCAR's policies. In his introduction to the Okinawa Youth Corps, Ōta denied that the publication held "ideological or political intentions," as had "been inferred by some."\(^{17}\) He attested that the book was "merely a faithful expression of what we felt, saw, and experienced at the time" of war. In a following article introducing the book in a local newspaper, however, Ōta did elucidate that he had become determined to convey at least a "fragmentary part" of the "sacrifice" which Okinawa had borne during the war to a wide section of Japanese because "the various problems which Okinawa faces in the present are directly related to the great misfortunes of that time."\(^{18}\)

In the book's introduction, in an implicit appeal to Okinawa's postwar plight Ōta called on the people of Japan to recognize Okinawa's sacrifice in the war, as the "epitome" (shukuzu) of what a final ground war in mainland Japan would have been like had it occurred.

In other words, for Ōta the act of recording the war on paper was both an emotionally draining and redemptive personal experience, and undertaken in the context of direct military occupation. Ōta's testimony formed part of a larger struggle against the system of relations whereby US military colonization of Okinawa was sustained and

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\(^{18}\) "'Okinawa kenjitai' hakkan ni tsuite," RS (23 June 1953), p. 4.
legitimised through the separation of Okinawa from Japan under the logic of residual sovereignty. In conjunction with the rise of the reversion movement, war remembrance in Okinawa came to be defined against the US occupation, and incorporated into mainland Japanese tropes of war and victimhood. Claims to sameness and equality were integral to the struggle for “emancipation” against “foreign rule.” As a consequence, issues relating to Japanese imperialism in the Asia-Pacific, the contradictions embedded within the prewar project of “Japanization” or the “becoming of Imperial subjects”, and Okinawa’s complex and ambiguous positioning under Japan’s empire were largely deferred. In short, consolidated in reaction against US military rule and mobilized in the political movement calling for equal rights for Okinawans as Japanese nationals, memories of Japanese prewar colonialism was often repressed in Okinawan postwar identity formation.

Ota’s written testimony of his war experiences makes up the first section of the book, and continues for over one hundred pages. The title of Ota’s piece is “That Which was Paid for in Blood” (chi de aganatta mono). Ota emphasized that his account was a relaying of war experience “as it happened.” In order to convey this experience, however, Ota had to reconstruct his feelings and thoughts from a time when he was much younger, and the writing style itself inevitably includes the understanding of hindsight. The account was written in first person, and the descriptions are vivid, drawing the reader into gruesome scenes of war, death, and destruction, as the Japanese forces become cornered and finally disband at the cliffs of Mabuni, on the southernmost tip of Okinawa’s main island. It begins on 22 March 1945, just over a week before the

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19 Tomiyama Ichirō critically analyzes this process in Senjō no kioku (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Hyōronsha, 1995).
21 As Lisa Yoneyama has observed on Hiroshima: “Whether they choose to write or speak, the survivors must confront the fact that their witnessing of Hiroshima’s obliteration can never be reconstructed or conveyed in its original form” (Hiroshima Traces, p. 92).
US land on the main island of Okinawa. What follows is a brief summary of the account's narrative.

Ôta listened together with his fellow colleagues to the year master, Mr. Satô Hayami, lecturing the students on how great their fortune was and what an honour it would be to give themselves over for service to the country while still in the purity of youth. Ôta too believed in purity. He felt the air over the peaceful town of Shuri turning heavy, as in the wake of a summer storm, and imaged the form of Okinawa's Diego flower in his head. Without even realizing it, he and his colleagues had already begun to "accept the fateful notion that our lives were to end before reaching the age of twenty." The following day, on March 23, Shuri was attacked in an intense air-raid from carrier-born aircraft, and two days later, on March 25, US troops landed at nearby Kerama Islands. Ôta realized that it was only a matter of time before they would reach Okinawa's main island. On March 31, the enemy began firing long range shells towards a small island just outside the harbour of Naha, only a stone's throw away from Shuri castle and the headquarters of the Japanese command. Ôta was called along with the teachers, staff, and students of the Okinawa Normal School to assemble in front of a cave near Shuri, and under orders from Japan's 32nd Army the entire school was conscripted. They were formed into the Imperial Blood and Iron Corps. The younger students took to the provisional uniforms relatively merrily, teasing one another on their appearance. In retrospect, Ôta marvels at the extent to which he and his colleagues faced the oncoming onslaught with such lack of awareness and so little ado.

The US landed on the coast of Chatan in the central part of Okinawa island the next day. The sea had turned into a black mass of every different type of military vessel imaginable. The roar of carrier-born aircraft across the island skies of Okinawa was a

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22 Ôta Masahide, "Chi de aganatta mono", in Okinawa kenjitai, p. 3.
“spectacle beyond description.” Ota was conscripted into the Chisōtai Infantry within the Blood and Iron Corps. This infantry was charged with conveying information released by the army headquarters at Shuri to local civilians who were hiding in caves in the surrounding area. The students moved from cave to cave in groups of two to three at night, trying to avoid roads and particularly intersections, which were constantly bombarded with artillery shells. While this job was dangerous, Ota considered himself lucky to be able to escape from the cramped conditions and stench of the crowded caves. As the bombardment intensified, members of the newly recruited corps were increasingly hit. Those whom the remaining student corps members managed to bury were “the lucky ones of the ill-fated.” Shuri gradually became surrounded by the oncoming enemy, and the students were ordered by the military command to “advance” by foot to the south. Ota was shocked and disbelieving: “What do they mean advance?! Isn’t that just a mere euphemism for withdrawal?”

On the way to Mabuni, Ota suffered from chronic dysentery. He no longer cared about the war, or about victory, but was overwhelmed only by the desire to be relieved of his pain and exhaustion. In the face of attack, aside from constant fear and complete exhaustion, the number of students and soldiers around him still alive grew less and less by the day. He saw numerous corpses of dead animals and local people on the trip. He felt the chances he had been given of survival growing fainter, and his mind and his body advancing towards death. At the beginning of June, Ota’s infantry was ordered to conduct “underground operations.” They were to reach behind enemy lines, from where they were to promote the fighting spirit of civilians, and throw the enemy in confusion from behind. Ota was pleased: finally they could act out their destined “noble duties.” But Ota and his colleagues never managed to infiltrate the ranks of the enemy. There

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23 Ibid., p. 6.
24 Ibid., p. 21.
25 Ibid., p. 25.
were no civilians left in the designated area where they were supposed to conduct their activities. He returned to the infantry headquarters at Mabuni in the face of heavy artillery, where he was ordered on another mission to a nearby cave. Wandering through the war-torn district of southern Okinawa, Ōta began to question the meaning of war: “What were we doing? Up to now I had not doubted this at all. I just naively believed in the war. The doubt formed an invisible shadow in my chest, plaguing at me incessantly.”

Yet Ōta vacillated. In a cave where he and his colleague fled to after coming literally within feet of US soldiers, local civilians looked on in horror and prayed as a soldier lay bleeding to death before them. Ōta was overcome with emotion, and felt ashamed at his earlier lack of faith. The soldier died and the enemy grew closer. Ōta and his colleague fled once again to the coast. On 19 June, the surviving members of Chisōtai were given orders to disband. They left in groups of three to penetrate enemy lines, heading towards Kunigami, in the northernmost part of Okinawa Island. Ōta’s recollections after this time are disorientated. He was injured in the foot by shrapnel soon after he left the cave, and lost contact with his colleagues. He wandered around the cliffs of Mabuni, shorn of all vegetation by flame throwers, and finally fled into the water to escape from the incessant bombing. He woke up washed up on the rocks of Mabuni, dazed, hungry, and injured. He was left alone, without food, and in shock on the rocky cliffs for an unknown period of time. Ōta dreamt of his mother and his home island of Kurue. The battle was surely lost. At night he scavenged for food found near corpses, or left by the US soldiers who scouted the hillsides during the day. Ōta found out that Japan had unconditionally surrendered from a Japanese officer named Shirai who could read English and had managed to pick up some magazines left by the US military. Ōta and Shirai both surrendered after a former member of the local defence

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26 Ibid., p. 59.
corps cooperating with the US military cleanup operation came to the cave where they and others were hiding and urged them to hand themselves over. The local showed them the largely incomprehensible imperial rescript announcing surrender which the Emperor had read to the nation over a month before. While the Japanese in the cave were initially disbelieving, they were finally convinced by the flowery language and difficult characters of the rescript.

By focusing on Okinawa’s undeniably tragic plight, Ōta’s account is in one sense conducive to the kind of “psychology of victimhood” that James J. Orr observes has featured extensively in Japanese popular postwar antiwar literature. As Orr observes, the mythicising of war victimhood with the peace movement in the 1950s and increasingly in the 1960s “manifested a tendency to privilege the facts of Japanese victimhood over considerations of what occasioned that victimhood.” Life before the onslaught was ideally pictured, with schoolboys living out their youth on a peaceful island boasting beautiful vegetation and a tradition of culture, exemplified by the ancient castle of Shuri, and its surrounding temples, trees, and glistening lake. The students are depicted as passive agents of the Japanese state’s oppressive totalitarian ideology. Thrown into the midst of bloody battle, they became impotent victims, unable to mount an attack on the overwhelmingly superior forces of enemy, and falling to an onslaught of artillery shells, flame throwers, and direct fire.

Yet even here, tensions in Ōta’s account produce a competing narrative within the text to the Battle of Okinawa as “Japanese” experience. Appeal to Okinawa’s postwar plight is echoed within the text by vivid descriptions of the sacrifices and losses

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27 In Okinawa kenjitai, this incident is described as occurring on 15 September 1945. In a book published in 1972, however, Ōta’s corrects this date to 21 September 1945 (Okinawa no kokoro: Okinawa-sen to watashi (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1972), p. 213). According to Ōta’s testimony in Okinawa no kokoro, Ōta arrived in Yaka Internment Camp by truck on 23 September 1945.

28 James J. Orr, The Victim as Hero, p. 106.

29 Ibid., p. 3.
which local Okinawan civilians were forced to pay. Ōta repeatedly notes the way in which the plight of local civilians was the most wretched throughout the bloody fighting. The able-bodied had already been mobilized into local brigades, leaving only young girls and the aged to fend for themselves. Many dug their own shelters, only to be driven out by the Japanese military, who in turn deprived them of the scarce provisions they had gathered. Ōta recounted how locals were abused for obstructing the battle, and told by the Japanese military that if caught in the hands of the enemy they would be killed. In some cases, they became subject to the brutal force of their own army, accused of being spies, and for making the smallest of complaints were slandered as ‘traitors’ (hikokumin) or even killed. Even being treated in such a way, Ōta pitifully noted, the locals “still believed with conviction in the victory of their homeland (sokoku), and withstood all sorts of hardships, aimlessly roaming the battlefield with nothing but the clothes on their back.”

Moreover, in many ways Ōta’s testimony was too gruesome to be sentimental. His depiction of bloody combat, disillusionment, multiple deaths and ultimate defeat provided a profound critique of war, the Japanese military, the Japanese state and the ideology of the Emperor system. Ōta described how, in the makeshift army hospital at Haebaru, the putrid smell of blood and body odour which permeated the oppressive air of the caves was too much to bear. In the cave at Shuri, when the first student, Kuba, was hit by shrapnel, the bottom half of his right leg was severed almost completely, left dangling by a few tendons. Ōta and the other students watched on in shock as the leg lay twitching to-and-fro, as if it had a life of its own. On the march southwards, when Ōta lost his firearm in a blast: “human hands, feet, a leg-less torso, and organs with the insides spilling out...such things were lying about on the cragged ground. They were probably catapulted once into the air together with mud, and then fell down again.

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30 Ōta Masahide, “Chi de aganatta mono”, in Okinawa kenjūai, p. 34.
found myself unable to imagine that this was, an instant before, the figure of a living
human with a mind and body the same as our own. I searched amongst the blood and
lumps of flesh for my rifle, but couldn't find it anywhere.” On the cliffs near the cave
that became the Japanese command’s makeshift headquarters at Mabuni, an injured Øta
tried to drag his feet across the ground but “the remains of dead bodies, burnt the colour
of roasted potatoes, were piled up one on top of the other, and it was difficult to find a
place to put my feet.” After he was injured, Øta tried to undo the boots of a dead soldier
to wear on his impaired and bleeding leg, but the bloated corpse kept swaying together
with the boot as he tried to jerk it off. When finally he managed to pull the boot from
the soldier’s feet, layers of skin peeled off with it.

In the face of such horror, Øta began to doubt Japan’s nationalist ideology and
the war. In the early throes of battle the locals were grateful for Øta and his colleague’s
messages from the Japanese military command: “they did not know how to doubt. Even
seeing before their eyes the discrepancy of forces, they had full faith in the infallibility
of the imperial nation.”31 Yet as the war continued, the civilians became more and more
derisive towards Øta as he mouthed words of caution and encouragement from army
command. Øta also began to lose faith. He avoided repeating the command’s
proclamations of oncoming victory: “I no longer had confidence in my own
words...and now I would just be scoffed at.”32 Injured and starving, Øta began to have
traitorous thoughts, and to doubt the ideology which he had up to that point
unquestioningly believed dictated his duty in life. This doubt lead to misgivings. Øta
ruminated: “might it not be that we have all taken the wrong path? Have not all of us
been blinded by some strange delusion?”33 The passage where Øta learns of Japan’s
surrender is particularly compelling. Øta recounts how he was totally incapable of

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31 Ibid., p. 16.
32 Ibid., p. 47.
33 Ibid., p. 90.
connecting those who had died believing they were helping protect the nation (kokutai) with defeat. Ōta implored: "What about all the people that have died up till now, that won't come back? Do you mean to say their death was totally pointless?" Ōta wanted to claim that their death was not in vain. But he does not. He finds significance in his own survival, in the ability to tell the story of those who died. Yet to the end of Ōta's testimony, when he is taken by truck to Yaka internment camp, the many deaths of the Battle of Okinawa remain meaningless. The young students, civilians, and even Japanese soldiers who one by one fall to their death are certainly portrayed as victims. Yet it is difficult for those who die a "dogs death" (inuji), completely in vain, to become heroes.

There is an ambiguity in Ōta's account which can finally be left only to interpretation. This ambiguity is manifested in the title of Ōta's testimony itself: "That Which is Paid for in Blood." What exactly "that"—in Japanese literally "the thing" (mono)—which is gained by spilt blood is is not clear. Moreover, the phrase "paid for" is also equivocal. In Japanese, the term used (aganau) can mean both to buy something, or to atone for one's sins through some form of payment. Was Ōta implying that no matter how much we wish to place significance on the blood of the war dead, that there was in fact no "thing" which could gained from the multiple meaningless deaths of war? Or did he seek to emphasize that the blood spilt in the Battle of Okinawa was the sacrifice that Okinawa was forced to pay for the sake of mainland Japan? Or did he seek to claim, as he would later infer, that he was indebted to the spilt blood of his colleagues for his own life, and therefore it was his obligation as survivor of the battle to speak of the horrors of war in the name of peace?  

34 Ibid., pp. 110-11.
35 In 1977, Ōta republished the testimony of his war experiences in a single book form, as Tekketsu kinmōtai, (Naha: Hirugisha, 1977). In the introduction to this book, Ōta stated: "This year constitutes the thirty-third year of mourning for the Battle of Okinawa's war dead. I have keenly felt that this opportunity should be used to once more earnestly reflect on the significance of the Battle of Okinawa and my own
Such ambiguities within the text were integrally related to the way in which Ōta sought to negotiate Okinawa’s experience within the postcolonial “coloniality” of US occupation. Against the framework of the US military presence, Ōta incorporated his account of the Battle of Okinawa into tropes of Japanese war experience—tropes which effectively excluded debate on Japan’s colonial legacy. At the same time, this incorporation was accompanied by a deep-felt sense of betrayal—by Japan’s defeat in the war, by the sacrifice Okinawa was forced to pay, by the fallacy of imperial ideology, and by Okinawa’s postwar conditions. Placed under the constraints of direct US military occupation, these issues were left largely implicit. It was only as war remembrance in Okinawa became increasingly politicised in the struggle against the US military occupation and calls for the reversion of Okinawa to Japan that these questions began to rise to the surface.

The 1952 movie of the Himeyuri Corps, the female equivalent of the Blood and Iron Corps, entitled “Himeyuri no Tō” or “The Himeyuri Monument,” became a hit throughout Japan. In its wake, “The Okinawa Youth Corps” was also made into a movie a year later directed by Iwama Tsuruo, distributed by Shōchiku, and starring the relatively well-known actors Ishihama Akira and Ogi Minoru. It was agreed that money received from the book and the movie rights of “The Okinawa Youth Corps” would be used to construct a monument in commemoration of those comrades who died in the war. “The Statue of Peace” stands next to the original stone “Okinawa Youth Corps Monument” which was built by alumni associations in 1946, below the cliffs of Mabuni. The three bronze figures in the statue were designed to symbolize friendship, love, and eternal peace. Ōta brought it with him to Okinawa from Tokyo in 1954 after his graduation from Waseda. At this time, USCAR were in the midst of a “counter-

experiences on the battlefield. That is, I have no choice but to do so. For, when I survived the war, I perceived all too well that my very life was that ‘paid for’ (aganawareta mono) by the blood of my colleagues.”
communist crackdown campaign in response to widespread resistance to its land expropriation policies in Okinawa. Ota later recounted that he was subject to surveillance by the US military for possible subversive ideological activities for his connection to the peace monument, and at one stage feared that his US scholarship might even be jeopardized.36

Yet the Okinawa Youth Corps never came to serve, as the Himeyuri Corps have, a dominant image of the Battle of Okinawa in Japan. The movie of Himeyuri no tō was remade in 1982 and again in 1995. The Himeyuri Peace Museum opened next to the Himeyuri Monument near Mabuni in 1989, and has become a popular tourist site. There is no equivalent museum for the Okinawa Normal School for Boys, and the movie of “The Okinawa Youth Corps” was never remade and remains relatively unknown. The question as to why the male student corps have not enjoyed the fame of the Himeyuri (literally “lily maiden”) particularly in mainland Japan is a compelling one. In the prewar era, images of Okinawa served to reinforce hierarchies and contain difference.37 In the postwar, as Lisa Yoneyama insightfully traces, tropes of female atomic bomb survivors in Hiroshima came to reinforce ambiguous conceptions of Japanese victimhood at once benevolent with and antithetical to US hegemony and militarism.38 In the case of the Himeyuri, tropes from prewar Okinawa are replicated with postwar Okinawa.

36 Okinawa no ketsudan, pp. 61-3.
37 Alan Christy suggests that the fear of effeminacy served a motivating factor in the desire to “become Japanese” in Okinawa. Of prewar Okinawa, he observes: “Representing the colonized (territory or people) as feminine is yet another standard trope of colonist representation, and its employment in prewar Okinawa reveals yet one more colonialist power differential in the relation between Okinawa and Japan. This trope was frequently expressed in the fixation of Japanese observers on the problem of Okinawan prostitution.”
38 On the one hand the so-called Hiroshima maidens—young female atomic bomb survivors who received orthopedic surgery on their deformed limbs and other medical treatment in the United States in the 1950s—served to reinforce alliance and friendship between Japan and the benevolent United States. On the other hand, tropes of motherhood which prevailed in peace and antinuclear discourses came to signify that which was antithetical to US militarism and imperialism, consolidating a national narrative whereby Japan was remembered one-dimensionally as a victim of US and Western imperialism and colonialism. Lisa Yoneyama, Hiroshima Traces, p. 202.
relations, as the maiden comes to symbolize Okinawa’s dual subjugation to the US and Japan. The Himeyuri has played at least a dual role in competing Japanese discourses—as female body submitting to masculinized military state and ‘body’ of the emperor, and virgin sacrificed for the sake of postwar peace. On the one hand nationalist ideology which sought to largely esteem and legitimise Japan’s war effort glorified Okinawan participation—as symbolized by the depoliticised and passive virginal female student core—as an act of patriotic sacrifice. On the other, pacifist tropes uphold the Himeyuri story as representative of Okinawan (Japanese) suffering. The incorporation of Himeyuri war dead into national discourses which seek to legitimise Japanese militarism has been fiercely criticized and resisted by Himeyuri survivors.

The eulogizing of the Himeyuri Corps within popular Japanese and Okinawan tropes may be seen to form an integral part of the way in which women’s bodies are disciplined and contained within the public sphere and by the state as figures of national self sacrifice. Containing and privileging the Himeyuri experience over that of the male student core (who died in much greater numbers) forms part of the process whereby both female and Okinawan active subjectivity has been denied. The militaristic image conjured by the term “Imperial Iron and Blood Corps” itself stood at odds with the inscription of Okinawa as submissive, effeminate, and lacking in agency. Their activity in combat also made it more difficult to depict them solely as victims. Ota did

39 As Linda Angst observes: “Their virginal condition signifies purity and innocence, which is easily transformed into a kind of sacred purity with their deaths, not unlike the purity associated with the imperial body and personage of the Emperor” (In a Dark Time: Community, Memory, and the Making of Ethnic Selves in Okinawan Women’s Narratives, p. 138).
40 Members of the Himeyuri Colleagues Association (Himeyuri Dōsōkai) criticized a monument in Kanazawa City glorifying the war which had inscribed the Himeyuri Corps without permission (see for example Okinawa Taimusu (hereafter OT) (22 August 2000).
41 The way in which women’s bodies are disciplines as figures of self-sacrifice to the state in contemporary Chinese nationalist discourse is analyzed by Prasenjit Duara in “The Regime of authenticity: Timelessness, Gender, and national history in Modern China,” in Kai-wing Chow, Kevin M. Doak, Poshek Fu (eds.) Constructing Nationhood in Modern East Asia (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), pp. 359-87.
not completely pass over this point. At the end of “That Which is Paid for in Blood,” the young Ota reflected as he headed towards Okinawa’s POW internment camp in Yaka: “I had up to this time clearly followed the path of a soldier. What was the use in trying to hide it now?”

**The Politicisation of Memory: Remembrance and Reversion**

Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, Okinawa’s burgeoning reversion movement was founded upon and repeatedly sought to reinforce a sense of national commonality between Okinawa and Japan—conceived as the “ancestral nation.” Both in mainland Japan and Okinawa, Okinawa’s war experience, as symbolized in the fate of the Himeyuri, became popularised within narratives of victimhood and sacrifice. In the context of Okinawa’s burgeoning reversion movement, the sacrifice paid in the war duplicated with appeals against Okinawa’s postwar plight and occupation. From the 1950s, reversion movement leader Yara Chōbyō (who would become Okinawa’s first elected Chief Executive in 1968) appealed to the “heroic sacrifice” which Okinawa had made during the battle of Okinawa in campaigning against the US military’s land expropriation policies and for financial and political support from Japanese mainlanders. Yara incorporated both pacifist and conservative ideologies into his speech, often making it unclear as to whether he was upholding this “sacrifice” in the name of peace, patriotism, or a mixture of both.

The Japanese government war compensation policies as they applied to the Okinawan experience also had a complex impact on war remembrance. Due to

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42 Shima Tsuyoshi notes that of 120 books published in the 1960s on the Battle of Okinawa, 49 of these were accounts compiled by journalists or novelists. A number of the best-known novels on the Battle of Okinawa from this era were compiled by mainland Japanese, such as Sono Ayano’s *Ikenie no Shima* (The Sacrifice of an Island), first published as a serial in *Shūkan Gendai*, 3 April-31 July 1969.

Okinawa’s separation under the Peace Treaty agreement, legislation on benefits for veterans and bereaved families in Japan did not initially apply to Okinawa. After extensive petitioning, however, this legislation became applicable in 1953. Following further widespread calls for consideration of the “special circumstances” of Okinawa, not only veterans and their bereaved families, but student corps and civilians who had “cooperated in combat” (sentō sanka kyōryokusha) during the Battle of Okinawa were also able to apply for compensation benefits after 1956 and 1958 respectively. As a consequence, both as a political strategy in opposition to the US military, and a financial strategy to obtain compensation, war remembrance tended to focus on the extent to which Okinawans had “cooperated” with the Japanese military, and the losses pertained as a result.

Yet just as Yara himself was a complex figure, Okinawa’s reversion movement had more than one face. As historians such as Kano Masanao have pointed out, many advocates of Okinawa’s reversion had goals far removed from nationalistic desires.

With the escalation of the Vietnam War, criticism of what was seen as Japan’s complicity with US military strategy and aggression in Asia increased within both mainland Japan and Okinawa. In Okinawa, the immediacy of the US military campaign against Vietnam in the form of the bases compounded with increasing dissatisfaction with the terms of reversion. Resulting mass political mobilization motivated people to begin to speak of their traumatic experiences during the war. This also coincided, after a

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44 See Shima Tsuyoshi, Okinawa-sen o kangaeru; and Miyagi Harumi, Haha no nokoishita mono (Tokyo: Kōbunsha, 2001). James J. Orr observes on war compensation in Japan in the 1960s: “The ‘consensus politics’ of the Ikeda and Sato administrations allowed for many ambiguities, and in granting state compensation for private losses, the government bordered on valorizing these victim experiences as service to the state. This was an era in which the victim became the hero for Japan not only metaphorically but in monetary terms as well” (The Victim as Hero, p. 10).

twenty year "blank," with the first extensive official compilation of testimonies on the war.\(^\text{46}\) Reappraisal of the relationship between Okinawan civilians, the military, and the Japanese state during the Battle of Okinawa was accompanied by a fundamental questioning of the significance of the war, of Okinawa’s historical relations to Japan, and of reversion itself.

Following *The Okinawa Youth Corps*, for over ten years Ōta published very little on the battle.\(^\text{47}\) On 23 June 1965, the twentieth anniversary of the last organized Japanese combat, however, he contributed a piece to a local Okinawan newspaper highly critical of recent attempts to valorise the war. Ōta wrote with concern: “It seems as though the tides of time have also cast the many calamities that people experienced to the shores of oblivion.” He was particularly critical of the Okinawan elite (*shidōsha*) who had themselves promoted militaristic indoctrination during the war and were now endeavouring to glorify the ravages it had caused. He observed an increasing “triumphant proliferation” of the “fraudulent logic” which sought to claim that Okinawa’s sacrifice was made in the name of a worthy cause. Ōta called for the need to fully question exactly who had been sacrificed, and for what purpose and in whose name these sacrifices had been made. In answer to these questions, Ōta increasingly explicitly laid out what he saw to be the political implications of war remembrance in

\(^{46}\) Okinawa Board of Education (ed.) *Okinawa kenshi* Volume Nine, *Okinawasen kiroku* Part One, 1971. Shima Tsuyoshi describes this publication as a milestone in the history of the recording of war testimonies in Okinawa (*Okinawasen o kangaeru*, p. 126). Shima observes that between *Tetsu no bōfu* (1950, op cit.) and the text compilation of war experiences, *Okinawasen kiroku* (1970), there existed a twenty year “blank” in attempts to comprehensively compile testimonies from the war in Okinawa. He appeals: “Why was there this long silence? In order to answer this question, we must look at the conditions under which narratives on the war were produced. In other words, it is an issue involving our stance towards records on the war.” (*Okinawasen o kangaeru*, p. 113).

\(^{47}\) Two exceptions are Ōta’s “Heiwa irei Kannon kensitsu ni omou” (Two-part Series), *OT* (21 and 26 December 1958), which focuses on the making of the Okinawan “Goddess of Mercy” peace monument; and “Unmei o kura wase hir: aani pairu o shinonde” *OT*, 24-7 April 1960, which was written in commemoration of the American war journalist Ernie Pyle, who was killed when accompanying US troops in Ie jima on 18 April 1945, and includes translations of some of Pyle’s dispatches in the early throws of the battle.
the present. In the turbulent years leading up to reversion, for the first time Ōta openly debated the significance of the Battle of Okinawa in the immediate context of US and Japanese policies over the islands. He also embarked on more historical analyses of the Battle of Okinawa.

In his well known and controversial work *Minikui Nihonjin* (The Ugly Japanese), first published in 1969, Ōta was unequivocal in his lambasting of the Japanese military and imperial court’s total disregard for the fate of Okinawa or its civilians during the war. Here Ōta did not hesitate to state that the “thing which was gained” by Okinawa’s sacrifice in the war was the postwar prosperity of mainland Japan—at the expense of the peace and well being of Okinawa—and condemn the Japanese government and mainland Japanese for condoning these conditions. For the first time Ōta systematically laid down a comprehensive historical analysis of the Battle of Okinawa. According to his analysis, prior to battle the Imperial Headquarters’ knew of America’s oncoming onslaught, but were only concerned about the fate of Okinawa to the extent that it affected the “decisive battle” (*kessen*) to be fought on *Naichi* or the inner territories of Japan. In other words, the Imperial Headquarters did not consider Okinawa or Taiwan as a part of Japan proper. Neither was the survival of the local population a priority for Japan’s military officials. Fleeing to the northern area of Okinawa and if need be fighting a war of attrition from the hills would have saved the majority of Okinawan civilians from being directly caught in the crossfire between the two armies. Yet this strategy was not chosen. Ōta concluded that the reason for this lay not only in a perceived “samurai tradition” in Japan (where flight from the enemy was considered cowardly) but in the fact that the Battle of Okinawa was first and foremost considered by the Japanese military to be a delaying tactic in order to more fully prepare for war in the home territories. In other words, Okinawa was sacrificed as a “suteishi”
(literally “sacrificial stone,” a sacrificial piece in the game of go) for the sake of mainland Japan.\textsuperscript{48}

By 1970, Ōta drew a direct correlation between the Battle of Okinawa and present conditions. He likened the persistent US military presence in Okinawa to a continued state of war. While the rest of Japan experienced the “end” of the war on 15 August 1945, Okinawans had been forced to carry on an enduring struggle in the form of US occupation. Ōta cynically equated the Japanese government’s public stance on reversion with the Imperial Headquarters’ propaganda during the war. In the Battle of Okinawa, Ōta had been charged with reading out imperial rescripts which spoke of the “great advances” of the Japanese military to war-weary and increasingly disbelieving Okinawan civilians who were clearly facing the consequences of full onslaught and unmitigated defeat. Now, the Japanese government was giving false reassurances that Okinawa would with reversion enjoy conditions “on par” with the rest of the country, while it set about strengthening the military presence on Okinawa. Ōta pointed out that the bases in Okinawa were not only stockpiled with chemical and nuclear weapons,\textsuperscript{49} but were directly linked to US military operations in Vietnam. Okinawans were continually reminded of war even if they tried to forget of the Battle of Okinawa.

As the ratification stage of US-Japan negotiations on the return of Okinawa neared, pro-reversion groups increasingly voiced their dissatisfaction with the terms of agreement. On 15 October 1971, a protest against the ratification of the reversion agreement was held in Naha.\textsuperscript{50} Four days later, Ōta contributed an article to the Asahi

\textsuperscript{48} On the politics of war memory in Ōta’s home island of Kume, see Matthew Allen, Identity and Resistance in Okinawa, especially Chapter One.
\textsuperscript{49} See Chapter Two of this thesis. In July 1969, a canister of nerve gas stored on Okinawa developed a leak, and the story hit American press headlines, confirming the suspicion that unconventional weapons had long been stored on bases in Okinawa. See also Sarantakes, Nicholas Evan, Keystone: The American Occupation of Okinawa and US-Japanese Relations (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000), p. 186-8.
\textsuperscript{50} These protests also incorporated a burgeoning anti-reversion movement which was ironically advocated
outlining what he saw to be the reasons why the residents of Okinawa were fiercely defying the terms of the reversion agreement, and taking to the streets in protest. From this period, Ōta came to depict Okinawans' struggle for reversion as embodied in what he termed the "Okinawan spirit" (Okinawa no kokoro). The "Okinawa spirit," also translatable as the "Okinawan heart," was a term which Ōta came to use frequently from this period to distinguish fundamentally Okinawan traits or a sense of Okinawan-ness. Ōta employed it to contrast what he saw as a distinct Okinawan-ness to either mainland Japan (Hondo or Yamato) or Japan (Nihon). The term has since become closely associated with the anti-base movement in Okinawa. Ōta saw the Okinawa spirit to be embodied in three ideals of reversion: the preservation of peace and opposition to war; the establishment of autonomy; and the restoration of humanity. He saw all three of these tenets as deriving from Okinawa's modern history, particularly the war experience.

He concluded that Okinawans' desire for peace came from regret for the loss of life of almost one in every three Okinawans during the Battle of Okinawa, and as a reaction against the Japanese government's policies towards the islands. Ōta noted that historically the Japanese government had only been concerned with Okinawa as a military buffer zone in order to defend the rest of Japan. He pointed out that during the Meiji Period, the Japanese state stationed military forces in Okinawa in spite of the fierce objections of the Ryukyuan court. The Battle of Okinawa was seen as the tragic consequence of the military role forced upon Okinawa. Ōta also contrasted the reversion movement with prewar assimilation policies. From the abolition of the Ryukyu Kingdom in the Meiji period, the modern history of Okinawa was the history of

by many who had previously been avid supporters of return to Japan. David Tobaru Obermiller observes of this phenomenon: "Even though much anti-reversion sentiment arose from dissatisfaction over the reversion negotiations (especially the continuation of the status quo of the US bases), I believe the anti-Japanese sentiment reflects a nascent expression of an Okinawan ethnic nationalism at a popular level" ("The Okinawan Struggle over Identity, Historical Memory, and Cultural Representation," p. 15).

“Japanization” (Nihonka). Becoming Japanese was equated with “the production of imperial subjects” (kōminka). The national government expunged all things “Okinawan” and introduced an education system centered on the ideology of the emperor. Ōta saw the Battle of Okinawa as the tragic result of this indoctrination and Okinawans’ desire to gain identity as Japanese. In repentance, Okinawans sought reversion in order to obtain human rights or a “human identity,” rather than simply a “Japanese” one. Reversion was in this sense a struggle for the pursuit of autonomy, as well as rights as national citizens. Ōta stressed that war had taught Okinawans the importance of individual will or subjectivity (shutaisei). In advocating reversion, they would be able to determine their own path, free from US occupation.52

Ōta also stressed that the US and Japanese endeavours to maintain and even reinforce Okinawa’s strategic military importance after reversion—now through the joint management of both governments—directly contravened these three tenets of the “Okinawan spirit.”53 He saw the pursuit of reversion to be antithetical to the US military presence and the further militarisation of Okinawa through the stationing of Japan’s Self Defence Forces (SDF). In various writings during this time, Ōta criticized Japanese government attempts to station Japan’s SDF on the island as part of the supposed “defence of Okinawa.” He drew on the lessons of the Battle of Okinawa in exposing to question Japanese government-defined notions of “defence,” “security,” and the “national interest.” In particular, he saw the relationship between Okinawan civilians and the Japanese military during the war as epitomizing the self-interested motives of the state and the military.

52 Ibid. See also Okinawa no kokoro (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1972).
53 Ōta wrote: “In other words, the set of conditions which we abhor and fear the most, the “joint control” of Okinawa through the US-Japan military order, is becoming a reality” (“Taiken ni nezasu ‘hansen’: Nichibei gunji kanri ni kikikan”, ibid.).
The most chilling reminders of the discrepancies between military strategy and civilian protection lay in the incidents of civilian atrocities perpetuated by the Japanese military during the course of the war. Ōta first examined some of these cases in *The Ugly Japanese*. Numerous cases of civilian atrocities perpetrated by the Japanese military have been recorded. Up to twenty civilians were tortured and massacred by the Japanese military under commander orders in Ōta's home island of Kume. The US marines landed in force on Kume Island on 26 June 1945. Asato, a local and employee of Kume Island's Post Office, was captured by the US military and sent to the Japanese army base with a message demanding surrender. He was executed on the spot by the Japanese army commander, and his wife and children later drowned themselves in the river. Nine people who were initially caught by the US military and released were subsequently shot to death by members of the Japanese army and their bodies burnt. Another villager, Nakandakari, travelled back to Kume from Okinawa Island and sought to notify locals that the war was already over, but was killed by the Japanese military together with his wife on 18 August. Two days later, a Korean family of seven were killed by the Japanese military intelligence.

While in these cases civilians were clearly directly killed by the hands of the supposed “friendly” army (yūgun), incidents of what was referred to as “compulsory group suicide” (kyōsei sareta shūdan jiketsu) are more complex. On the island of Tokashiki for example, where almost four hundred civilians committed “group suicide,” it remained a point of contention as to whether the Japanese military actually gave out a military command ordering the civilians to commit suicide. Civilian survivors attested that after the Americans landed on Tokashiki, the locals were told to gather in the Japanese army camp, where they were ordered to commit mass suicide by the military commander. They were handed grenades by the Japanese army, and those who did not

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54 For an account of these incidents in English see also Matthew Allen, *Identity and Resistance in Okinawa*. 

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immediately die from the blast subsequently began murder one another with sticks, razor blades, pots, and farm tools, hitting each other over the head and cutting one another's throats. The Japanese general who commanded over Tokashiki, however, while acknowledging the suicides occurred, avidly denied that he ordered them to take place. In an interview in 1968 the commander asserted: “I think the civilians felt at the time it better to die and not be burden for the army.” Aware of this complexity, Ōta included the discrepant positions between civilians and the military in his analysis in *The Ugly Japanese*. In conclusion he placed the multiple incidents of “compulsory group suicides,” whether “self-determined” or coerced by the military, in the context of an ill-prepared, reckless war, where the locals faced military onslaught, starvation, and an army unconcerned with their fate. He also suggested that, as in many elements in the Battle of Okinawa, at question was the “national character” (*kokuminsei*) of Japanese themselves—and an underlying prejudice towards Okinawans.  

On the one hand the multiple incidents of civilian atrocities in the Battle of Okinawa provided all too horrific evidence for Ōta to question the intrinsic nature of the Japanese military, and the Japanese government’s claims to national security in the present. Remembrance of Japanese military atrocities against civilian coincided with and became highly politicised within opposition to the placement of Japanese Defence Forces within Okinawa. Yet these incidents of atrocities also raised questions about Okinawa’s position within Japan. For was it merely that the military did not protect the civilians, or was it also that they did not consider the Okinawans worth protecting—as not “Japanese” enough? Ōta only implicitly raised this problematic, yet it produced

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55 Questions of historical agency and the incorporation of imperial ideology within Okinawa integral to the complexities surrounding incidents of “group suicide” came to the fore in relation to textbook issues in the 1980s as examined in the following section.

56 This issue has been examined by Tomiyama Ichirō (see for example, Tomiyama Ichirō, *Senjō no kioku* (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Hyōronsha, 1995)). In English, see for example Ichiro Tomiyama, “Spy': Mobilization and Identity in Wartime Okinawa,” *Senri Ethnological Studies*, 51 (2000), pp. 121-32. Tomiyama positions the mobilization of Okinawans during the war as the extreme manifestation of the
inherent tensions in his analysis on war. On the one hand Ōta adopted many of the
tenets of Japanese postwar pacifism, particularly in his separation of the state (kokka)
from the people (kokumin), and his questioning of the legitimacy of the former as
protector of the latter. On the other hand, Okinawans were placed in opposition to the
"national character" of the "Japanese" which formed the base of discrimination which
Okinawans experiences within Japan. Okinawans were sacrificed not only through the
US military onslaught, but in the direct hands of the Japanese military. Moreover,
discrimination continued in the form of US military occupation and ignorance,
indifference, or even complicity in securing Okinawa’s plight. Knowledge of this
discrimination, and a sense of ambivalence towards mainland Japan, rose to the surface
as in became only too evident that reversion would fail to realize the ideals of peace and
autonomy.

In 1971, on the eve of the ratification of the reversion treaty, Ōta deeply
regretted the fact that Okinawans were not only the “victims” (higaisha) of US-Japan
postwar policy, but also “aggressors” (kagaisha) in Asia, as (unwilling) host to large US
military bases both during the Korean and Vietnam Wars.57 The underlying violence
embedded within the US military presence, and the immediacy of the Vietnam War as
embodied in this presence, complexly overlapped with traumatic memories of the Battle
of Okinawa. Yet as in the prewar period, the process of “becoming Japanese” through
reversion only reinforced Okinawa’s compromised position. Okinawa’s dual role—as
both victim and aggressor—formed the core of Ōta’s philosophical dilemma. The

ideology of assimilation and “Japanization” expounded since the Meiji Era.
57 “Irei no Hi ni kokoro iradatsu: Mabuni no jigokue, ima mo”, RS (23 June 1971), p. 17. Nicholas Evan
Sarantakes suggests that Okinawa’s military strategic importance during the Vietnam War may not have
been as great as locals believed, and that the US Air Force made almost no use of airfields in Okinawa
during the Vietnam War due to strong local opposition, though he does not provide extensive historical
material to maintain this claim (Sarantakes, Keystone: The American Occupation of Okinawa and US-
Japan Relations, op cit, pp. 142-43). Other evidence attests that at least from 1968 Okinawa was a major
departure point for B-52 bombing campaigns over Vietnam (see Chapter Two).
incidents of “mass suicide” themselves highlighted in horrific detail the inmixing of consent and coercion symbolic of Okinawa’s incorporation within the modern Japanese nation-state. Hierarchical relations of dependence were duplicated in the postwar period through Okinawa’s dual subjugation to the US and Japan. Moreover, in spite of reversion, again Okinawa was unable to defy the role imposed upon it as the “keystone” of (imperial) hegemonic military power in the region—to be the “determinant of its own history.” In response, Ōta sought to resist Okinawan incorporation into reified structures of violence by reclaiming an Okinawan identity—an identity which in turn became inextricably interlinked with a perceived sense of Okinawans’ peaceful traditions and desire for peace founded on remembrance of the tragedy and sacrifice of war.58

War remembrance thus became increasingly politicised and intertwined within contests over reversion in the years up to 1972. Neither did its significance abate with Okinawa’s return to Japan. On the contrary, on the eve of ratification of the US-Japan agreement on Okinawa, Ōta expressed an ever fiercer conviction of the burning necessity to derive meaning from his war experience:

In the so-called “Okinawa Diet” proceedings which begin from this coming 16 October [1971], the US and Japanese governments will no doubt ratify the “Agreement on Okinawan Reversion”, formulated without the participation of the Okinawan people. In doing so, they will fully fortify the “state will” (kokka ishi).

If this is the case, it is certain that Okinawa will face its most serious turning point in the postwar period. Under these conditions, there is an urgent necessity to reconsider our experiences in the Battle of Okinawa and reconfirm our determination to maintain our “original resolution” [on rebirth and the need to seek autonomy] as we look to the future. Today, as Japanese, bolstered by the achievements of high economic growth, endeavor to unrepentantly reappraise the “Pacific War,” I cannot but begin the arduous process of relaying in depth my

58 In this way, as Matthew Allen has pointed out, a clear distinction should be made between tropes on war victims and peace in Okinawa and in relation to for example Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Matthew Allen, Identity and Resistance in Okinawa, p. 48).
Contesting Official History and Textbook Wars: The Battle of Okinawa on Trial

In the eighteen odd years from Okinawan reversion to his early retirement from the University of the Ryukyus to stand in the Okinawan gubernatorial elections of 1990, Ōta produced the majority of his considerable set of works to date on the Battle of Okinawa. He continued to extend his analysis of the war from accounts of his own war experience to more comprehensive historical analyses of the battle. Utilizing an extensive range of history materials, he examined the battle from various perspectives: the ground preparation strategy of the military on both sides (or, in the case of the Japanese side, the lack of effective strategic preparation); military operations and tactics; the course of combat; and the plight of Okinawan civilians during the war. On the plight of civilians, he examined atrocities perpetrated by the Japanese military on local civilians suspected of “spying,” cases of civilian “compulsory group suicide,” and discriminatory policies of the Japanese military, such as an ordinance forbidding the use of Okinawan language.

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60 Including historical materials from US military records, disclosed documents from the War Records Office of Japan’s Defense Research Institute, American wartime press clippings, and the war testimonies of Okinawan civilians.
61 Works by Ōta Masahide on the Battle of Okinawa from this period include: This Was the Battle of Okinawa (Naha: Naha Shuppankai, 1981); Okinawasen: sensō to heiw (Tokyo: Shakai Shinsō, 1981); Sōshi Okinawasen (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1982); Naha jūjū daikūshū (Tokyo: Kume Shoten, 1984); and Okinawa-sen to wa nanika (Tokyo: Kumeshoten, 1985). Ōta has also compiled several collections of photographs from the battle, such as: Ōta Masahide, Kore ga Okinawasen da: shashin kiroku (Naha: Ryukyu Shinpōsha, 1977); and Ōta Masahide (ed.) Shashinshū: Okinawasen (Naha: Naha Shuppansha, 1990). Ōta recounts that he travelled extensively to Washington to gather information from US archives on both the war and the US occupation of Okinawa during this time. Former University of Ryukyus professor Miyagi Etsujirō also accompanied Ōta on many of these trips and assisted in the editing and proof reading of Ōta’s English texts (author’s interview with Ōta Masahide, 4 May 2001, and with Miyagi...
Ôta’s post-reversion analyses on war were integrally connected to his endeavour to reclaim a sense of Okinawan identity in the face of strong homogenizing forces and the fragmentation of the community which accompanied the massive influx of capital into Okinawa in the early 1970s. These conditions will be more closely examined in Chapter Three. Here it suffices to note that war remembrance became intimately related to the endeavour to reclaim a sense of “identity loss” which accompanied reversion. Ôta contrasted the peaceful traditions of Okinawa from the time of the Ryukyu Kingdom with the “samurai” military spirit of mainland Japan. 62 Tropes on Okinawa’s peaceful tradition and “ideology of peace” (heiwa shisō), Okinawa’s plight during the war, and historical lessons on discrepancies between military strategy and civilian protection were integrally linked to contests against the continuing large US military presence, state-sanctioned historical narratives, and Okinawa’s position within Japan. 63

Particularly after reversion, within the Okinawa peace movement the Ryukyu Kingdom was idealized as a period of prosperity and peace, in contrast to the longstanding oppression which proceeded its downfall. As Linda Angst points out, while this teleological reading of history and focus on Japanese oppression held the danger of understating the agency of historical actors, it provided a powerful contribution to the formation of a collective ethnic identity, political resistance, and a new vision of civil society. 64 For Ôta, it also enabled a politics of possibility for Japan.

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62 See for example Ôta Masahide, “Taiken ni nezasu ‘hansen’: Nichibei gunji kanri ni kikikan”; and “Okinawa no heiwa shisō ni tsuite.” Heiwa kenkyū, No. 4, June (1975); 65-72.

63 The tensions noted in Ôta’s work from the pre-reversion era are also present here. On the one hand, Ôta presents Okinawa’s plight during the war as exemplary of the tragedy which would have become Japan, as a relatively small island nation, if it had had to fight a ground war on its soil. At the same time, he is highly critical of the way in which the Japanese government has been repeatedly willing to “sacrifice” Okinawa in order to protect the perceived safety and profit of “Japan proper” (koyū ryōdo), both during the war and in the postwar period. Ôta Masahide, Okinawa: Sensō to Heiwa (Tokyo; Asahi Bunko, 1996) (reprint: first published by Shakai Shinsho in 1982), p. 50.

64 In a Dark Time: Community, Memory, and the Making of Ethnic Selves in Okinawan Women’s Narratives, p. 50.
as a whole, and beyond. Considering the importance of viewing peace from within
Okinawa, Ōta concluded:

I must always [think about the meaning of peace] from within my everyday life, forced
to live side by side with military bases. It is significant to question the idea
of peace from Okinawa not merely because we, the residents of Okinawa, suffered such a tragic fate in the previous war. More than anything...it is because
it is only by revitalizing and fully upholding the Okinawa's traditional notions of
peace that the safety of Japan can be ensured, and we can contribute to a peaceful
coexistence between all peoples.65

Yet, contrary to Ōta's pacifist idealist aims, Okinawan history was largely
excluded from Japan's education curriculum. In the afterward to Okinawa: War and
Peace, dated March 1982, Ōta criticized the pervasive lack of references to Okinawa
within Education Ministry-approved textbooks. Up to 1960 Okinawa was literally non-
existent in textbooks used in Japan.66 Yet even in post-reversion textbooks, conditions
did not change a great deal. Only fragmentary references were made to the Battle of
Okinawa, generally in relation to the Himeyuri Corps, preventing the students from
having any comprehensive understanding of the war. Moreover, Ōta noted that some
texts referred to Okinawan reversion in 1972 without even mentioning that Okinawa
was separated from Japan and placed under direct US military rule in the first instance.
He reproached the Ministry of Education's textbook approval system and conservative
nationalist trends in Japan. He called for the implementation of a system more befitting

65 Okinawa: Sensō to Heiwa, pp. 212-3.
66 This is verified by Nakasone Seizen, who recounts that in the early postwar period, when Japanese
textbooks were imported to Okinawa, maps of Japan did not include Okinawa. The publishers claimed
that if Okinawa, which was under US military rule, was included in the maps, it would not pass the
Japanese Education Ministry's approval system. Somewhat ironically, Nakasone had to request that the
publishers print a special version of the text for use only in Okinawa that included the islands of Okinawa
within a map of Japan. Nakasone concludes: "'Okinawa' no doubt remained a 'gap' forever open in the
minds of the generation [of Japanese] who were educated with that textbook." (Interview with Nakasone
Seizen in Arasaki Moriteru (ed.), Okinawa gendaishi e no shōgen, (Part Two) (Naha: Okinawa
to the democratic principles of Japan’s constitution, and the complete revision of
curriculum content.

Ōta’s appeal formed part of a growing literature in the early 1980s on Japan’s
war responsibility. As liberal and leftwing historians began to write highly controversial
issues such as the Nanking massacre into school textbooks, the Ministry of Education in
turn utilized the textbook screening process to “modify” such histories. In the summer
of 1982 it became apparent that the Ministry was demanding the revision of references
to Okinawan civilian massacres perpetrated by the Japanese military from a draft
history textbook as a condition of approving its use in high schools.⁶⁷ As a reason for
rejecting the sentence in question, the ministry asserted that The Battle of Okinawa War
Records (Okinawasen kiroku, Volume Nine of the Okinawa Board of Education (eds.)
Okinawan Prefectural History (Okinawa kenshi)), which was cited as reference, were
not reliable “primary historical material.” This compilation of testimonies from the war
was the only existing official record of its kind, and its pages detail numerous incidents
of atrocities perpetrated by the Japanese military against civilians, including the
extortion of food, forced expulsion from refuge caves, and murder.⁶⁸ Through
privileging official documented histories of the war compiled largely from military
sources, the Ministry sought to delegitimise the personal, subversive, and marginalised
oral histories of Okinawan civilians. Outraged at the ministry’s stance, the Okinawan
prefectural assembly passed a unanimous resolution in protest addressed to both the
Cabinet and the Education Ministry on 4 September 1982. A prefecture-wide
demonstration calling for the “democratisation of education” and involving 84 different
Okinawan citizen groups was held ten days later. In a flood of contributions to local

⁶⁷ This first became publicly known on 26 June, 1982. For a detailed summary of the incident and its
implications, see Shima Tsuyoshi, Okinawasen o kangaeru, pp. 65-82.
⁶⁸ Shima Tsuyoshi points out that neither the Japanese government nor the Government of the Ryukyus
during the US occupation of Okinawa had ever conducted an official survey on civilian atrocities (ibid., p.
65).
Okinawan newspapers, several hitherto unknown incidents of civilian massacres were also disclosed in emotional eye-witness testimonies. In response, the Ministry of Education was forced to retract its appraisal of *The Battle of Okinawa War Records*, but it did not change its position on the textbook in question. The ministry only approved the text after the reference to civilian atrocities was removed, defeating the first attempt to include the existence of these incidents during the Battle of Okinawa within a Japanese school textbook.

At the same time as this issue erupted, a much more publicized battle was being fought between Japan and other East Asian countries over Japan’s textbook screening process. The controversy began after it was widely reported that the Ministry of Education had attempted to water down Japan’s aggression on the Asian continent in textbooks, in particular by suggesting that publishers replace the term “invasion” (shinryaku) with “advance” (shinshitsu). Under diplomatic pressure from China and Korea, then Chief Cabinet Secretary Miyazawa Kiichi announced in August that the Japanese government would “revise” the textbook descriptions. In November, the Ministry of Education also officially announced that it would include a new provision in its screening process that textbooks take note of the importance of “international friendship and cooperation” in discussions of Japan’s historical relations in Asia.

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69 Ibid., p. 66.
70 Shima Tsuyoshi notes that one of Okinawa’s main newspapers, the *Okinawa Taimusu*, for example, published a series of sixty-one articles on the textbook issue during the summer of 1982 (ibid., p. 66).
71 Nozaki Yoshiko and Inoguchi Hiromitsu note that in July of 1982 the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and the People’s Republic of China officially protested to the Japanese government, and by September more than 2,000 reports on Japanese textbook screening had appeared in the press of nineteen Asian countries (Nozaki Yoshiko and Inoguchi Hiromitsu “Japanese Education, Nationalism, and Ienaga Saburō’s Textbook Lawsuits” in Mark Selden and Laura Hein (eds.) *Censoring History: Citizenship and Memory in Japan, Germany, and the United States* (Armonk, New York and London: M. E. Sharpe, 2000), p. 113). They also point out that while it was reported in the press as a new phenomenon, the Ministry of Education had been making such requests from the 1960s (ibid., p. 125).
72 Ibid., p. 114.
In February 1983, Ōta contributed an article in English to the Japan Times in which he contrasted the Japanese government’s reaction to the demands of East Asian countries with their lack of response to the Okinawa issue. He observed: “The Japanese government has tended to be weak under pressure from abroad but tough concerning demands from within.” Yet he also concluded that the concessions made to China and Korea while appreciable were still a mere palliative. He suggested that what was required was in fact a thorough historical review of the formation of modern Japan and “the crimes Japanese have committed against our neighbours,” as well as the implementation of “permanent preventative measures” so the mistakes of war were not repeated again. Ōta observed that the Japanese government had still not displayed a willingness to combat these issues—a fact most clearly shown in the Okinawa case. The deletion of passages on the killing of civilians by Japanese troops was indicative of the fact that the Japanese government, in seeking to expand Japan’s military capability, “is unwilling to inform the people of what war really means.” Ōta surmised: “The [textbook] issue has not been settled. It has merely been patched up for the moment.”

His prediction would be proven correct—a mere year later, in 1984, the Ministry of Education’s revisions of another textbook became the subject of a lawsuit. The plaintiff was historian Ienaga Saburō, a long-time opponent of the Ministry of Education’s screening process. After the Japanese government had reassured neighbouring countries in 1982 that it would correct depictions of Japan’s relations with Asia in school textbooks, Ienaga requested permission to make such corrections to his

73 The full sentence reads: “While the Japanese Government has never tried to conduct a full-scale survey on the losses among Okinawan, the Education Ministry disputed the number of Okinawan casualties, as claimed by Okinawans, and forced the total deletion of passages from textbooks on the killing of Okinawans by Japanese troops. This must be because the government, seeking to expand the military capability of Japan, is unwilling to inform the people of what war really means” (“Remember Battle of Okinawa and Textbook Issue: Government has Tradition of Misrepresenting—or Even Omitting—Facts on Ryukyus” (sic.), Japan Times (6 February 1983), p. 4. Ōta includes in his analysis a review of how Okinawa was represented in pre-war textbooks as well as in the postwar period.

74 Ibid..
New Japanese History (Shin Nihonshi), which had already been approved by the ministry after substantial revisions. The ministry refused, and in 1983 after Ienaga submitted a revised manuscript of his earlier text, he was again forced to make substantial revisions on some seventy points. Ienaga challenged the Ministry for “abuse of power” on eight specific points that it had demanded be revised for approval. Four were related to Japanese aggression in China, one the colonization of Korea, two more concerned protests within Japan against the imperial system, and one was over the Battle of Okinawa. It was Ienaga’s third lawsuit against the state. Yet it was the first time that contests over the Battle of Okinawa in textbooks were to be waged in a court of law.\textsuperscript{75} Ōta also became directly involved as one of the witness for the prosecution, in his first legal dispute with the Japanese government.\textsuperscript{76}

The revision on the Battle of Okinawa under contention related to a sentence in Ienaga’s original draft textbook which mentioned than “more that a few” Okinawan residents who died in the war were “killed as a consequence of the Japanese Army” (Nihongun no tame ni korosareta). No doubt sensitive to the widespread outrage its earlier “revision” on civilian atrocities had provoked, the Ministry of Education did not dispute this fact. Instead, it requested that as “mass suicides” (shūdan jiketsu, also translated as either “collective suicides” or “group suicides”) had resulted in the largest number of civilian victims in the war, the text must include an account of these mass suicides in order that the battle be “objectively comprehended.”\textsuperscript{77} Ienaga’s counsel

\textsuperscript{75} A part of the court proceedings were also held in Naha, Okinawa. In a dialogue with Ōta, Ienaga asserted: “Now at last a part of court proceedings will be held in Okinawa. This is an epic event and the first of its kind. I am very happy that four testifiers, including those who experienced the Battle of Okinawa themselves and war historians, will be able to take to the stand” (“Heiwa to minshūshugi o kangaeru,” dialogue between Ōta Masahide and Ienaga Saburō (Part Three of a Three-part Series), OT (13 January 1988), p. 6).

\textsuperscript{76} For a comprehensive summary and analysis of Ienaga’s trials, see Nozaki and Inoguchi “Japanese Education, Nationalism, and Ienaga Saburō’s Textbook Lawsuits.”

\textsuperscript{77} For a comprehensive analysis of the revisions and their significance, see Koji Taira “The Battle of Okinawa in Japanese History Textbooks” in Chalmers Johnson (ed.) Okinawa: Cold War Island (Cardiff:
opposed the ministry’s claim that “mass suicide” was the main cause of civilian death; that it must be mentioned along with civilian killings by the Japanese military in order to present an objective view of the Battle of Okinawa; and that the term “mass suicide” adequately conveyed the fact that force and pressure on the part of the Japanese Army had formed a factor in these incidents. Ienaga also questioned the intentions of the Ministry of Education. Namely, he interpreted the Ministry’s request as an attempt to tone down the statement that “more than a few civilians were killed as a consequence of the Japanese Army,” and alternatively emphasize the noble and sacrificial spirit of Okinawan victims. 

The Japanese phrase “mass suicides,” shūdan jiketsu, contains inferences inherently lacking in the English translation. The word used for suicide, jiketsu, literally means self-determination (as in ethnic self-determination). As a euphemism, it evokes a sense of determinate will and therefore heroic honour in death that the usual Japanese term for suicide, jisatsu, does not. As Koji Taira points out, to call such cases jisatsu would “amount to blasphemy.” To use shūdan (group, mass, or ‘collective,’ as in ‘collective security’) jiketsu is therefore to infer that the Okinawans sacrificed themselves en masse out of their own (honorable) will, and for the sake of the Japanese Imperial Nation. While on one level a question of semantics, on another level contentions over the appropriate use of “mass suicides” as a term thus raised fundamental issues concerning the nature and significance of the Battle of Okinawa.

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Japan Policy Research Institute, 1999), pp. 39-49.


80 During the war itself the expression used was gyokusai, or literally “shattered jewels,” clearly a valorization of the act of giving one’s body and life up for the sake of the Emperor and Imperial Nation. The term shūdan jiketsu has rather ironically been traced back to Okinawa itself. It is thought it began to be used, together with the phrase “collective death” or shūdan shi, around the time of the publication of Testu no bōfu, that is 1950-51. Okinawan Aniya Masaaki insists, however, that the term was not used to mean or infer that the deaths were in fact self-determined, although unfortunately this is the nuance that using the phrase on its own gives (Aniya Masaaki, Sabakareta Okinawasen, op cit., p. 180 (note 11)).
Firstly, there was the question of whether the mass deaths could be seen as voluntary acts of free-will—a “self-determined” suicide. Secondly, there was the wider, more ephemeral, and yet vital issue of what inferred meaning the civilian deaths were to be given. Ienaga, his counsel, and his supporters, focused on the aggressions of the Japanese military and the atrocities they had perpetrated on Okinawans. The Ministry of Education sought to emphasize the sense of sacrifice and pathos in the civilian deaths—therein implanting patriotic will onto the Okinawan civilians whether it existed or not, and implicitly endorsed it.

Ōta, together with the three other witness for the prosecution on the Battle of Okinawa issue, Aniya Masaaki, Kinjō Shigeaki, and Yamakawa Munehide, opposed both the Ministry’s simplification of the complex set of conditions under which Okinawan civilians met their death into the phrase “mass suicide,” and the glorification of these deaths. The Ienaga trial moved to the Naha Court especially to hear the four testimonies from 10-11 February, 1988. Aniya and Kinjō were, together with Ōta, university professors, and Yamakawa was a practicing teacher in Japanese History at Futemna High School. All were born and lived in Okinawa, and all but Yamakawa had directly experienced the war.

Kinjō was born on the tiny island of Tokashiki, where 329 people had died (out of an estimated total population of 1300) in the “mass suicides”—what historian Aniya refers to as the “mass mutual killings” (shūdan teki na koroshiai)—of 28 March 1945.81 During his testimony, Kinjō brought the court to a stunned silence in his harrowing tale of events after the US landing on the Kerama group of islands on 27 March 1945.82 Kinjō recounted that on the evening of the twenty-seventh, the Japanese military

command on Tokashiki Island ordered all civilians to move to a designated area closer to the army’s camp. After the islanders had gathered under the pelting rain, they were handed the few spare grenades left, and news that the military were ordering “suicide” spread. Some people tried to escape, but many were led back by soldiers on patrol. Husbands began killing wives, parents their children, and brothers their sisters, with pots, sticks, stones, whatever was at hand. Kinjō explained to the court that the event most deeply seared forever onto his brain was when he and his elder brother took to their mother. They either used a stone or a rope—he couldn’t clearly recollect which. But there was no mistaking that he, with his brother, killed his mother with his own hands. He recounted on the stand: “For the first time in my life, I wailed out aloud, overcome with anguish. But it was only a sheer expression of my love... In order that the people who the men loved were not murdered in the hands of those ‘foreign beasts’ (kichiku beiei), so that the women did not have to suffer the humiliation of rape. At least to kill them with your own hands, to have at least that consolation, it was with that thought that I took the lives of those who were dear to me.”

In his testimony, Ōta recounted how, during the course of the battle and after repeatedly coming fact to face with the inhumane carnage of war, he began to question his entire education up to that point. Ōta placed his own experience in the historical context of education in Okinawa from the Meiji period. He testified to the court that the most conspicuous aspect of pre-war imperial education in Okinawa was the extent of so-called “Japanization.” From the Meiji period, the education system had been based on the premise that Okinawan history and culture was inherently inferior to that of the rest of Japan. It promoted the complete annihilation of Okinawan culture and all things “backward” through rigorous indoctrination. Ōta concluded that it was precisely this system which gave birth to Okinawans’ “beast-like devotion” (dōbutsu teki chūseishin),

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citing Ōya Sōichi’s well known phrase, to the imperial cause during the war. Ōta thus placed paramount importance on the power of indoctrination. Ōta used the phrase “beast-like devotion” because he saw it as most adequately problematizing Okinawans’ slave-like devotion to the imperial system, assimilationist policies, and the nature of prewar education, and because unlike terms like “devotion” or “purity,” it did not seek to glorify the war.⁸⁴

Ōta explicitly opposed not only the Ministry of Education’s corrections, but the screening process as a whole. He asserted that the Ministry of Education’s revisions revealed a lack of repentance for the war, and the screening process attested to the state’s continued extensive control over education in the postwar period. In a powerful speech against Japan’s education system, Ōta directly criticized the Ministry of Education’s postwar screening system in the context of the inherent flaws of Japan’s prewar education:

What did an “education promoting the making of imperial subjects” (kōminka kyōiku), and that is precisely what prewar education was, entail? That which the state (kokka) determined was correct was laid down in textbooks, and only those textbooks chosen by the state were used in school. In my experience, nothing but these texts were used in class. Thus, everything you knew was what was fed to you. And, if the teacher said “use this textbook,” you just swallowed it word for word. That was the kind of education I received. From that experience, personally I instinctively dislike it when the ruling political authority tries to enforce onto educational content its own perspective as the one and only correct view...

In other words, I believe that educational content should maintain diversity, and that it should allow a freedom of choice...In this sense, in relation to the basic principles of education, the writers of textbooks should be free to write their texts according to the principles laid out in the Basic Education Law, as founded on the Japanese Constitution, and the teachers given autonomy to choose texts, also taking account of whether or not these principles have been adhered to...⁸⁵

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⁸⁴ Ōta’s testimony in ibid., particularly pp. 11-20.
⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 18-19.
The counsel for the Japanese government brought two people to the stand in support of their case during proceedings in Tokyo—novelist and Sasagawa Peace Foundation Trustee, Sono Ayako, and director of the Japanese Defense Agency’s War Records Room, Ichitomi Noboru. Ichitomi went so far as to deny that civilian murders had even taken place, and his testimony was ultimately dismissed by the court for lack of objectivity. Sono is a well-known Japanese novelist. She visited Okinawa in the late sixties to gather historical material on the war, and interviewed the former Japanese military commander on Tokashiki Island, General Akamatsu Kijigen, as well as civilian survivors. Based on these findings, and Akamatsu’s diary of events, she wrote an account on the mass deaths at Kerama Islands first as a journal series and later as a book entitled The Story Behind a Myth (Aru shinwa no haikei). Sono came to the conclusion that there was no evidence that the military had ordered civilians on the island of Tokashiki to commit suicide. She debunked earlier accounts of the Tokashiki deaths published in The Typhoon of Steel (Testu no bōfū) as having been based on second-hand accounts from people living in the main island of Okinawa. She surmised that survivors had in part not corrected these erroneous claims because of stipulations in Japan’s war compensation legislation. She also concluded that Akamatsu’s order to kill civilians suspected of being “spies” was based on military law and could not be condemned from a legal or moral point of view. In her testimony to the court, Sono asserted that Akamatsu had not given any direct army command ordering the civilians to commit suicide. She also emphasized that the military were dispatched to Tokashiki

86 More recently she drew media attention for providing lodgings to former Peruvian president and colleague Fujimori Alberto after he announced he would step down from the presidency and remain in Japan amongst charges of longstanding corruption.

87 There is no doubting discrepancies exist in war accounts, as Shima Tsuyoshi also argues in Okinawasen o kangaeru, pp. 107-29. Sono Ayako also argued that residents in Tokashiki Island had asserted there was a military order commanding them to commit suicide so that they could claim benefits from the government.

island not to protect the islanders per se, but to attack the oncoming enemy for the sake of Japan as a whole.\textsuperscript{89}

As Okinawan historian Shima Tsuyoshi conceded in 1983, the \textit{Typhoon of Steel} did include historically questionable assertions, and: "At this stage there exists no historical evidence which can counter Sono's explanation on account of fact."\textsuperscript{90} By the mid-1980s on the island of Zamami, near Tokashiki, some locals came to admit that there had not in fact existed a military order demanding civilians to commit suicide. According to local historian Miyagi Harumi, her mother, Miyagi Hatsue, directly met with former military commander Umesawa Yutaka in December 1980 and confessed that she had lied about the military order in the effort to ensure residents within the impoverished peripheral and war-stricken island who had lost family were eligible under Japanese legislation to receive compensation. Facing stress at being castigated by locals for divulging her long-kept and emotionally draining secret, and publicly exposed by Umesawa, Hatsue died of cancer in 1990.\textsuperscript{91}

Hatsue's personal trauma bespeaks of the complex and often tragic way in which individuals have sought to negotiate the configuration of power relations in pre- and postwar Okinawa. As a highly personal account, it divulges the way in which each individual was severely restricted within the disciplinary regimes of war without simplifying this process as total or encompassing the complete overwriting of the subject, the element of choice, and responsibility.\textsuperscript{92} The civilian suicides and atrocities committed by the Japanese military in general bring to question issues of historical


\textsuperscript{90} Shima Tsuyoshi, \textit{Okinawasen o kangaeru}, p. 114.

\textsuperscript{91} Miyagi Harumi, \textit{Haha no nokoshita mono} (Tokyo: Kōbunsha, 2001).

\textsuperscript{92} On a sensitive account of these issues in an Okinawan context, see also Christopher T. Nelson, "Huzuki Hayato, the Storyteller: Comedy, Practice and the Politics of Everyday Live in Okinawa," \textit{Postcolonial Studies}, Vol. 4 No. 2 (July 2001), pp. 189-209.
agency and victimization, and divulge how war remembrance has compounded with personal and political struggles in the postwar era.

They also bring to question the construction of self and other at the foundation of national historical narratives and security discourse, and for these reasons remain inherently controversial as well as highly complex. As Tomiyama Ichirō has pointed out, fear of the Okinawan “spy”—as seen to be manifested in the incomprehensible Okinawan dialect—embodied fear of the other within. This fear reveals the ultimately violent and destructive ambiguity of overdetermined constructions of “us” and “them” which are at the core of total war discourses. For historians Miyagi Harumi and Shima Tsuyoshi, as well as Ōta, at issue in the problem of civilian group suicides was similarly much more than the question of whether or not a military order existed. They challenged the assumption that the military represented or sought to protect civilians as a whole, and placed the sacrifices Okinawan civilians had made in the context of historical discrimination. As Shima criticizes, while Sono’s work cannot be disputed on fact, it ignores these important issues and merely reconstructs a patriotic narrative.

The Ministry of Education sought to reaffirm the legitimacy of the state first by denying the occurrence of atrocities, and, when this was defeated, through emphasizing the way in which civilians “wilfully” sacrificed their lives to the nation body. On the other hand, by arguing that all civilian suicides were tantamount to murder, Ienaga wrote out the question of historical agency. The issues which arose in the Ienaga trial revealed the dilemma and problematic of the postwar liberal democratic movement—as a struggle for political autonomy through remembrance of its lack. In the context of the court room, Ienaga’s sentence on the battle was placed against the Ministry of Education’s “corrections,” and one had to be defined as more or less “correct” than the other. As a legal issue, the question centred around the legality of the Ministry of Education’s corrections, rather than the screening process as a whole. The irony was that Ienaga’s counsel could only claim the right to freedom of choice and diversity in
textbooks by asserting a counter historical truism. Yet by placing full blame for the tragedy of mass “compulsory suicides” during the Battle of Okinawa on the Japanese military, they ran the risk of obscuring the complexities of Okinawa’s experience of war and modernity.

The first judgement on Ienaga’s third lawsuit against the state was passed down in October 1989. The court questioned the validity of the Ministry of Education’s claim that “collective suicide” had been the main cause of death during the Battle of Okinawa. Yet, it concluded that as “collective suicide” was also a distinct feature of the war, the Ministry of Education was not unlawful in demanding it be included in the text in question. In legal terms, Ienaga’s claims on the revision over the Battle of Okinawa were defeated.93 Almost ten years later, on August 29, 1997, the five presiding judges in the Supreme Court passed down a unanimous verdict that it was not illegal for the Ministry of Education to issue the request for revision in relation to the Battle of Okinawa. Ienaga’s claims were upheld on only one point, relating to the biological warfare experiments of Unit 731.94

Yet the proceedings on the Battle of Okinawa provided an important public arena in which personal war experiences could be voiced.95 They brought contested issues surrounding the battle to the attention of at least a portion of mainland Japanese press, and provided the means to further air these issues within Okinawa. They mounted a challenge against the Ministry of Education’s screening process from within Japan of political implications well beyond the court room. Moreover, the debate over the Battle of Okinawa displayed how Japan’s relations with Asia were also inherently connected

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94 The Supreme Court ruled 3-2 that the Ministry of Education’s orders to delete all references to Unit 731 from the text was an abuse of discretionary powers.
95 As Nozaki and Inokuchi point out, Ienaga’s lawsuits “provided a countervailing force in the struggle over national narrative and identity construction in postwar Japan” (“Japanese Education, Nationalism, and Ienaga Saburō’s Textbook Lawsuits,” p. 119).
to questions of democracy, autonomy, diversity, and of course history within Japan itself. That is, the textbook issue was not only a "diplomatic issue." The lawsuit highlighted links between the Japanese government’s stance towards the war in Okinawa and in the Asian region as a whole. Following his experience as a testifier in the Kenaga trial, Ōta too began to draw important historical connections between civilian atrocities in Okinawa and Japanese aggression within the rest of Asia.

Connections between the Ministry of Education’s screening of references to the Japanese military in Okinawa and aggressions in Asia first become clear after the outbreak of the first textbook controversy in the early 1980s. At this time, Ōta provided an analysis of some of the links between the "internal" (Okinawan) textbook controversy and the "external" (neighbouring Asian countries) one. He traced both back to at least the Meiji period, when Japan saw other Asians and minority groups as backward. He saw that the issue was integral to the question of how Japan viewed its history and its place in the world. He also stressed that the outcome of textbook controversies would inevitably influence "Japan’s future course"—in its internal relations with Okinawa and relations with the Asian region as a whole.

Two years after the first verdict on the Kenaga case, Ōta made further historical comparisons between Okinawa and the rest of Asia. In a book entitled Genocide: When Humans become Inhuman (Genocide: ningen ga ningen de wa naku naru toki), he drew direct historical links between war in Okinawa and on the Asian continent for the first time. He analysed Japanese atrocities in Asia—in particular the massacres of Nanking,

96 He related the textbook issue to an incident during the 1903 Osaka Exposition, when traditional Okinawans, Ainu, and Koreans were objectified as living anthropological subjects in an exhibit entitled "The House of Peoples." Plans to also exhibit Chinese were dropped after protests from China, and the Korean woman displayed was also removed after vigorous protesting by Koreans. In spite of stirring a wave of criticism within Okinawa, however, the two Okinawan women "exhibits" remained, together with the Ainu. Ōta Masahide, "Remember Battle of Okinawa and Textbook Issue: Government has Tradition of Misrepresenting—or Even Omitting—Facts on Ryukyus" (sic.), Japan Times (6 February 1983) p. 4.

97 Ibid.
and connected the mentality of the Japanese army during invasion of China to the
discrimination which local Okinawan civilians faced in the hands of the Japanese
military during the Battle of Okinawa.

Until the publication of *Genocide*, Ōta did not extend his criticism of war to
include reference to Japanese aggression in Asia during World War Two. In *Genocide*,
he observed that the incidents of atrocities perpetrated by the Japanese Army in
Nanking implicated Japan’s military from commanders at the highest level to the lowest
ranking foot soldiers. He surmised that subsequently Japanese troops, who had not
fought a war on Japanese soil since the Meiji period, brought these brutal methods of
combat directly from Asia to the battlefield in Okinawa. Okinawa civilians were
murdered on groundless accusations, and forbidden to speak their own language, even
though many elderly people could not speak standard Japanese. Although Okinawans
believed after a long process of assimilation that they were “fully-fledged” Japanese,
Ōta concluded that on the battlefield they were not treated as such.

Ōta laid down in *Genocide* a radical critique of the relations between Okinawan
civilians and the Japanese military during the war. He did not set out to valorise the US
military—and was on the contrary highly critical of the indiscriminate bombing of
Okinawa. Yet he undoubtedly focused on Japanese military as the primary perpetrators
of aggression in the war—in Asia and on the battlefields of Okinawa. By viewing both
Okinawans and Chinese as victims of Japanese discrimination, Ōta clearly placed
Okinawa historically within the rest of Asia and against mainland Japan. *Genocide*, like
*The Ugly Japanese* and other works, was critical of Japan’s stance towards Okinawa—
both historically and in the present. At the same time, it went beyond Ōta’s earlier
works in one significant aspect. By placing Okinawan history in a wider regional
context, it both relativised Japanese history from within and provided a profound
criticism of Japan’s historical relations in Asia. In other words, through comparing
Okinawa’s experience to colonialism and war aggression in the rest of Asia, Ōta began
a radical breakdown of what Leo T. S. Ching has described as the enclosed discursive space of postwar Japan. As Ching notes, within this closed space the exigent concern has remained not that of Japan’s relationship to its decolonised “others,” but only its own war defeat. The “myth of the homogenous nation” was thus inaugurated within this enclosed framework: “By effacing and denying the graces of those who ‘once were Japanese,’ the postwar cultural identity of the Japanese as a homogenous people was able to establish itself as Japan’s self image.” Against this image, Ōta’s comparative framework simultaneously disrupts hegemonic assumptions of national homogeneity and the effacement of Japanese colonialism from historical memory.

Paradoxically, however, Ōta’s analysis also invited the further erasure of the complicit role Okinawans played in Japanese expansion. In other words, placing civilian atrocities in the Battle of Okinawa alongside the atrocities of Nanking without considering this role reinforced a victimology which rendered all Okinawans hapless victims of Japanese militarism. Ōta’s public and prolific criticisms of the Education Ministry’s textbook screening process, of Japan’s education system as a whole, and of historical discrimination against Okinawa and Japanese militarism provided a counter-hegemonic voice against conservative Japanese nationalist forces allied to US military hegemony. Evocations of the “Okinawan Spirit” were integral to social and political endeavours which sought to envisage alternative claims to a Japanese identity formed on the ideals of peace and democracy, and a pluralistic society. Yet the dual incorporation and differentiation of Japanese tropes of war integral to this project coincided with a deferral of sustained debate on the internalisation of assimilatory practices in prewar Okinawa within the context of Japanese imperialism, and its relation

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98 Becoming “Japanese”: Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation, p. 44-5.
99 Ibid., p. 34.
to complex questions of agency and responsibility. This problematic became diffused between the lines and within the pages of Ōta’s analyses on genocide and war. As we shall see, it has also become engraved onto the granite walls of Okinawa’s massive Cornerstone of Peace Monument, conceived and built during Ōta’s term as governor.

Constructing Peace: The Cornerstone of Peace and the “Okinawan Spirit”

Contending memories and conceptions of the past are not only the subject of history books, or even court rooms. They also take multiple and often conflicting forms within the landscape. In Okinawa, where Ryukyuan/Okinawan and Japanese histories converge and compete, the grim scenes of decaying remains in dank and half-concealed caves contrast with the glittering monuments dedicated to the heroic and noble spirits of war. In the south of Okinawa Island, scene of the most protracted fighting during the Battle of Okinawa, it is perhaps least of all the dead who are at rest—and at the National Peace Memorial Park at Mabuni a cacophony of narratives speak in their name.

Mabuni is a rugged coral ridge which rises some 300 feet above the water’s edge on one side, boasting extensive views over hills to the west and the sea below. At the top of the cliff and looking out to sea stands the Reimei no Tō, or Break of Dawn Monument, built in honour of Lieut.-Gen. Ushijima Mitsuru, Commander of the Japanese 32nd Army during the battle, and his Chief of Staff Lieut.-Gen. Cho Isamu. The monument stands above the cave where the two military commanders committed suicide on 23 June 1945. It is said that the monument’s shape was envisaged to evoke seppuku (harakiri, the traditional Japanese form of suicide), and that its title, “Break

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101 It is a matter of historical debate as to whether Ushijima and Chō did actually commit harakiri, or whether they died from rifle wounds.
of Dawn,” was designated by the late Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru. The term reimei or ‘dawn break’ in one sense evoked the arrival of a new, enlightened “postwar” era. Yet it is also clearly linked to images of hi no maru (the rising-sun flag), imperial Japan, as the land of the rising sun, and the Emperor himself, revered according to nationalist rhetoric as the living embodiment of the sun-goddess Amaterasu. The monument was built at the behest of the Okinawa Bereaved Families Association, and was completed in 1962.

As in the case of written accounts of war, the decade of the 1960s saw an influx of war monuments with nationalist and patriotic overtones in Okinawa. Many of these monuments were sponsored during Japan’s era of high economic growth by veteran associations in mainland Japan. According to a survey report published in 1983 compiled by the Okinawa Christian Network Opposed to the Nationalization of Yasukuni Shrine (Yasukuni Jinja kokuikka hanai Okinawa kurisuto sha renrakukai), 42 of the 73 monuments built during the Okinawan “memorial boom” of the sixties were constructed at the behest of mainland Japanese organizations, and 32 of these contained expressions glorifying the war. 15 of the 20 monuments constructed during this period by the Okinawa Bereaved Families Association, who purportedly strengthened ties with their powerful mainland counterpart around the same time, were also said to include such expressions. Mainly these inscriptions valorise the spirits of the war dead and their “noble sacrifice,” and some even paraphrase lines from Lieut.-Gen. Ushijima’s last

103 Ota Masahide, Irei no to: Okinawasen senbotsusha o inoru (Naha: Naha Shuppansha, 1985), p. 103.
104 Gerald Figal suggests that: “That the majority of overtly patriotic memorials in Okinawa appeared during the 1960s could be seen as an assertion of new-found Japanese national pride in the wake of postwar economic recovery and as a prelude to the Japanese re-territorialisation of Okinawa that would come with Reversion in 1972” (Waging Peace on Okinawa,” Critical Asian Studies 33.1 (March 2001), pp. 46-7).
105 Ota Masahide, Irei no to: Okinawasen senbotsusha o inoru, p. 24.
106 As cited in ibid., pp. 22-3.
imperial military order. The largest concentration of monuments which include such patriotic dedications may be found at Memorial Hill in the peace park of Mabuni, at the apex of which stands the Break of Dawn monument itself.

 Ôta long expressed a strong apprehension towards the glorifying of war and adulation of Japanese militarism in Okinawa’s war memorials. He became particularly vocal in his opposition after the publication of the Okinawa Christian Network’s survey coincided with heated debate over “epigraph issue” (hibun mondai) in Okinawa. In a guidebook on Okinawa’s war memorials published in 1985, Ôta concluded that clearly the epitaphs on a large number of memorials in Okinawa “contradicted” the “spirit” of the residents of Okinawa. Following his victory in the gubernatorial elections of 1990, as a reaction against nationalistic currents and in direct opposition to the Break of Dawn monument’s militaristic symbolism, Ôta vowed to build a monument “unlike any previous one” within the grounds of Mabuni’s peace park.

On 1 May 1991, an Okinawan prefectural research committee was formed to develop a conceptual outline for the construction of a peace monument (originally provisionally titled the “Heiwa no Kabe” or “Peace Wall”) within Mabuni park. Over two years later, in October 1993, the guidelines for the making of the monument, entitled the “Heiwa no Ishiji” or “Cornerstone of Peace,” were laid down in a

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107 As also outlined by Gerald Figal in “Waging Peace on Okinawa,” Critical Asian Studies, p. 46. As Figal notes, these patriotic inscriptions have been the focal point of both the “epitaph controversy” (hibun mondai) and opposition to the “Yasukunification” (Yasukunika, in other words, the valorization of the war on par with the nationalistic Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo) of Okinawa (Ibid.).

108 As Gerald Figal observes: “The set phrase ‘glorious spirits and manifest merits of the war dead’ (sirei kensho) conveys overwhelmingly the message of epitaphs found on the prefectural memorials line up on ‘memorial hill’ above the Peace Park in Mabuni...” (Ibid., p. 46).


110 Ôta Masahide, Irei no tō: Okinawasen senbotsusha o inoru, 22.

111 As Ôta recounts in Okinawa no ketsudan, pp. 144-8.
The Heiwa no Ishiji was to embody the “unique cultural and regional characteristics” of Okinawa, and fulfil its functions as both a “place of prayer” (inori no ba) and a “symbol of peace” (heïwa no shōchō). In the report’s prologue, Ōta expressed his apprehension at the recent tendency to merely “treat war as just another event in history.” It was as if, he reflected, “time has eroded our repentance and the lessons learnt from our tragic war experiences.” He stressed both the “immense sacrifice” that Okinawa was forced to make during the war, and the need to “recognize and apologize for our position as aggressors against neighbouring countries.” On the significance of the new peace monument he declared:

Today, in spite of the end of the Cold War’s divisions between East and West, the many regional conflicts of the world have not abated. Moreover, in direct and indirect connection with this situation, massive military bases still exist within our prefecture. It can only be said that these conditions remain far from the peaceful society desired.

Facing this reality, I believe it is our duty and call to...convey to the world the “Okinawa Spirit” and our everlasting desire for peace by paying our respects to the Battle of Okinawa war dead and adhering to the lessons of war.

The “Cornerstone of Peace,” will engrave the names of all those who died in the Battle of Okinawa, regardless of nationality, and become the focal base from which Okinawa can convey a message of peace.

Conceptualisation and construction of the Cornerstone of Peace progressed hand-in-hand with plans for a new prefectural peace museum, and the establishment of an international peace research centre in Okinawa. Together these three projects made up the major components of the Ōta administration’s “peace promotion” policy. As a cultural backbone, they were also formulated in conjunction with and integral to the

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prefectural "action program," which called for the return of military-base land and the curtailing and ultimate withdrawal of the US military presence in Okinawa. In subsequent years, however, following Ōta’s defeat in the gubernatorial elections of 1998, plans for the Okinawa International Peace Research Institute (OKIPRI) were stalled indefinitely by Ōta’s successor, Governor Inamine Keiichi, and in the summer of 1999, the New Okinawa Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum also became the site of fierce controversy after it was divulged the Inamine administration sought to alter exhibition content prior to opening (see Chapter Five). The Cornerstone of Peace is thus the only one of these three major "peace projects" which was actually completed within Ōta’s term as governor of Okinawa and which thus stands as a direct legacy of his administration.

The winning design chosen for the Cornerstone by a selection committee was entitled "Everlasting Waves of Peace." It is composed of concentric arcs of wave-like black granite walls on which are engraved the names of the war dead. The walls form a concentric arc towards the sea, and convening onto an open circular space at the edge of Mabuni cliffs. At the centre of this space stands the “Fire of Peace” (Heiwa no hi). The concept was in part inspired by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at Washington Mall. Yet while the Vietnam Veterans Memorial includes the names of only US military war dead, a unique characteristic of the Cornerstone of Peace is its gesture towards memorialising all war casualties, regardless of nationality or status as combatant or civilian. The monument was first unveiled at the official ceremony commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Battle of Okinawa, on 23 June 1995. The fire’s

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114 A Cornerstone of Peace Design Competition was held in 1993, and the winner announced on 7 September 1993. The competition attracted 274 entrants in total.
115 For an analysis of this memorial see Marita Sturken, Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
flame was ceremoniously lit by four elementary school representatives from Korea, the United States, Taiwan, and Okinawa. At the time of unveiling, 234,183 names had been engraved on the Cornerstone’s granite walls, including 147,100 from Okinawa, 72,907 Japanese from other prefectures, and 14,166 from outside Japan (the US, Taiwan, and North and South Korea).

Official national narratives of Japanese homogeneity and militarism are challenged on various levels. The decision not to employ the Japanese imperial calendar nor play the anthem “Kimigayo” at the official opening ceremony indicates a refusal to sanction symbols of Japanese imperialism. The commemoration date inscribed on the monument is 23 June 1995, yet the names engraved on the Cornerstone’s walls also extend to all those who died of war-related afflictions within a year of 7 September 1945—in tacit recognition of the fact that for many the Battle of Okinawa did not end with the suicide of Lieut.-Gen. Ushijima, and in a further attempt to avoid a Japanese military-centred view of history. On a more literal though perhaps unintended level, the Cornerstone also provided a competing dialogue to the “Japan-US security partnership.” The latter was described by the then Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryūtarō and President Bill Clinton in their April 1996 joint security declaration as providing the

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118 Ōta challenged 23 June 1945 as the date of the end of the war in the Ienaga trial. See his testimony in Kyōkasho Kentei Soshō o shien suru Zenkoku Renrakukai (eds.), Ienaga kyōkasho saiban 5: Okinawasen no jissō, pp. 6-7. For Aniya Masaki the issue of whether or not 23 June is designated as the day of remembrance is no less than one of “whether the war is to be examined from the perspective of the ‘Emperor’s Army’, or fully examined from the viewpoint of the people” (“Okinawasen kenkyū no nijūnen” in Okinawa Prefecture History Teachers Association (ed.) “Rekishi no shinjitsu wa yugametewa naranai,” Rekishi to jissen, No. 20 (Dec. 1999), p. 7).
"cornerstone of achieving common security objectives ... for the Asia-Pacific Region as we enter the 21st Century."\textsuperscript{119}

Various subtle, and not-so-subtle, features of the Cornerstone also incorporated the sense of a distinct Okinawan-ness. The monument's title, "Heiwa no Ishiji," drew attention to a unique Okinawan culture and identity by the use of the Okinawan pronunciation of the Chinese character for "cornerstone" (literally "foundation"—that is, "ishiji" instead of the Japanese "ishizue"). The main pathway also draws a physical separation between the "Okinawan" names, which are listed on one half of the concentric arc formation, and those of the "rest of Japan," which make up the other half together with the names of "foreigners" (South and North Korea, US, Taiwan, and after the inclusion in 1996, the United Kingdom). The Okinawan list of war dead, moreover, not only included those casualties from the Battle of Okinawa, but all Okinawans who died "as a result of the fifteen years of conflict beginning with the Manchurian incident."\textsuperscript{120}

From its instigation, the Cornerstone became an important symbol for the anti-base movement in Okinawa. Due to the fact that an official comprehensive survey of civilian casualties during the Battle of Okinawa had never been conducted, the verification and collection of names for the monument marked the first time a large-scale investigation of the war dead was carried out the prefecture.\textsuperscript{121} This involved a massive mobilization of people and resources within a very limited time frame (the process of gathering the names was only officially initiated in December 1993),\textsuperscript{122} and

\textsuperscript{119} Japan Times (18 April 1996).
\textsuperscript{120} As cited in Gerald Figal's "Historical Sense and Commemorative Sensibility at Okinawa's Cornerstone of Peace," pp. 762-3. Figal provides an insightful analysis of these features in his critique on the disparities between commemorative history and critical historical knowledge.
\textsuperscript{121} This long the chagrin of a number of Okinawan historians, and came up in the lenaga trial. See also Ishihara Masaie and Arakaki Shoko, "The Cornerstone of Peace Memorial: Its Role and Function," pp. 90-91.
\textsuperscript{122} See also Linda Angst, \textit{In a Dark Time: Community, Memory, and the Making of Ethnic Selves in
in itself stimulated awareness and reflection on the war and its affect.\textsuperscript{123} Some observed that it was this process, as much as the monument itself, which secured the Cornerstone’s importance within the Okinawan peace movement. In an incisive article examining the connections between memories of the Battle of Okinawa and the upsurge of protest and anti-base sentiment in Okinawa in 1995, Muratsubaki Yoshinobu concludes: “the fact that the ‘Cornerstone of Peace’ was constructed with the support and participation of many local residents is vital. To the extent that the people of Okinawa do not forget the horrors of war, and continue to question why it occurred, the ‘Cornerstone of Peace’ …will remain an expression of anti-base, anti-Emperor-system, pro-peace causes.”\textsuperscript{124}

In the complex interweaving of historical events and remembrance in 1995 in particular, memories, both individual and collective, were not only highly politicised, but became integrally connected to direct political action. The massive verification effort, the ceremonial unveiling of the coffin-like granite walls on the fiftieth anniversary of the war, and the indelible impact of the endless rows of names on the Cornerstone of Peace itself cannot be seen as divorced from the upsurge of protest which occurred in Okinawa only months later. Nor were they separate in the mind of Ōta. In his book of the same title (\textit{Okinawa: Heiwa no Ishiji}), published in 1996, Ōta described the construction of the Cornerstone of Peace as “the largest event which took place to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the war.” He further continued: “it would not be an exaggeration to say that the motivation which led to the building of the ‘Cornerstone of Peace’ has also become the basis for the people of Okinawa devoting

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Okinawan Women's Narrative, p. 119.
\item Ishihara and Arakaki observe that the verification project “stimulated an awareness among citizens of the value of research on the war and its tragic consequences” ("The Cornerstone of Peace Memorial: Its Role and Function," pp. 91).
\item Muratsubaki Yoshinobu. “Okinawasen no 'kioku' to aratane 'shima gurumi' tōsō,” \textit{Impaction} 95 (1996): 33.
\end{itemize}
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heart and soul, night and day, to solving the military base issue."

Ota also purportedly visited Mabuni and the newly constructed Cornerstone of Peace before resolving not to act as proxy in the signing of the leases for land used by the US military in September 1995.

The Cornerstone, however, was not without its critics, many of whom also came from within the anti-base peace movement. Most of these criticisms focused around the fact that engraving the names of all the war dead rendered war responsibility ambiguous if not inherently problematic. The inclusion of the names of Japanese combatants alongside those of civilians was seen as inappropriate for a war in which the Imperial Army not only failed to provide protection, but committed atrocities against the local population. Takazato Suzuyo, anti-base activist and core member of the Okinawan group Women Act Against Violence, similarly saw the all-inclusiveness of the monument as problematic from a gender perspective. Children who had died during battle and whose names were unknown had been included within the monument as “the child of…” followed by the name of their father—reinforcing structures of patriarchal lineage. The multiple rows of granite walls which were left blank at the time of the monument’s opening (and largely remain so) spoke most powerfully of the “absences” of subjugated histories. Lack of complete access to original Japanese records and the colonial policy of “Japanizing” names made the names of Korean war dead difficult or impossible to trace, and some families resisted inclusion. By the time of unveiling, only 133 Korean (51 South and 82 North) soldiers’ names had been included from what are estimated to be between 10,000 and 17,000 casualties.

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126 The Asahi Tapes (30 April 1999).
127 Muratsubaki Yoshinobu. “Okinawasen no ‘kioku’ to aratana ‘shima gurumi’ tōsō,” p. 34.
129 It is of course also ironic that these names must be retrospectively divided into “North” and “South” Korea.
unknown number of so-called “comfort women” brought from Korea and used as sex slaves by mainland Japanese, and no doubt Okinawan, soldiers were marked down in stone.\textsuperscript{130}

In response to criticism, the Cornerstone planning committee stated that the Cornerstone should be viewed in conjunction with exhibit plans for the new Prefectural Peace Museum at Mabuni. This museum, like the Cornerstone, was a major component of the Ōta administration’s “peace promotion” policy, to progress hand-in-hand with the prefectural “action program” for the return of military-base land and for the curtailting of the US military presence in Okinawa. While the Cornerstone was to remain a symbol dedicated to the war dead in the name of peace, the museum should display in detail the “realities of war,” and include information useful for the “study and research of peace.”\textsuperscript{131} In the words of Ōshiro Masayasu, a member of the museum planning committee, while the Cornerstone was “a place of prayer” and a “symbol” of peace, the museum was to be “a site of learning” wherein “the irrationality and brutality of war must be displayed.”\textsuperscript{132} After Ōta’s defeat in the gubernatorial elections of 1998, the new Okinawan prefectural administration sought to change the exhibit content of this museum (see Chapter Five).

The Cornerstone challenged a militaristic state-centric version of history, contested homogenizing forces within Japan, and was an important endeavour to move beyond nationalistic historical narratives in an appeal towards universal pacifist ideals. It served a vital role as a cultural backbone to Ōta’s anti-base pro-autonomy policies

\textsuperscript{130} As of June 2001, 378 Korean (296 South Korean and 82 North Korean) names have been engraved on the Cornerstone. No names of so-called “Comfort Women” have been included. According to Director of the Myongji University Institute for Okinawa, Hong Jong Pil, numbers of Korean soldier casualties from the Battle of Okinawa range from 17,000 to 20,000. Hong was requested by Ōta to assist in verifying Korean names and requesting consent from families in South Korea in 1995, and has been conducting investigations on the Korean war dead since (special lecture by Hong Jong Pil in Naha on 22 June 2001).

\textsuperscript{131} Cited in Ōshiro Masayasu, “Kenjitsu wa dare ni mukerareta ka,” in Okinawa Prefecture History Teachers Association, \textit{Rekishi no shinjitsu wa yugamete wa naranai}, pp. 34-5.

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
during his time as governor and as a symbol of pacifist sentiment in Okinawa, and it stands in triumphant contrast to the blatant nationalism of many monuments in Japan, the US, Australia, and beyond. Yet at the same time, it also stands as a symbol of many of the difficulties associated with the attempt to transnationalize the act of commemoration in the name of universal peace. The inclusion of all Okinawan war dead from 1931-1946 within the Cornerstone moreover brings to question the very aims of the monument—as a remembrance to all those who died in the Battle of Okinawa. It highlights conflicts between competing narratives within the Cornerstone—as on one level a subtle expression of a distinct Okinawan-ness, and on another a universalised and trans-national symbol of peace.

The Cornerstone thus stands as a physical embodiment of the possibilities and dilemmas embedded within Ōta’s historical and political project. Okinawan war remembrance contains the potential of relativising Japan, and national historical narratives in general, in the name of universal peace. At the same time, the dual process whereby Okinawa is both incorporated within and resistant to a national Japanese framework, therein making its relativisation possible, is also accompanied by an obscuring of the role of the individual and historical responsibility. This is particularly problematic when the construction of an Okinawan collective identity intersects with other relations of subjugation—as exemplified in the case of Okinawan women, Korean soldiers mobilized in the Imperial Japanese Army, and Okinawan and Korean “comfort women.” Viewed from this light, the Cornerstone of Peace’s embracing inclusiveness ironically dislocates the multiple inscriptions of hierarchical difference and incorporation/exclusion which were inherent to the project of “becoming Japanese” as imperial ideology and national/colonial policy.133

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133 For a criticism of the discourse of collective emancipation from the perspective of gender see for example Rey Chow on Franz Fanon in Ethics after Idealism: Theory-Culture-Ethnicity-Reading, pp. 55-74.
Such dilemmas are exacerbated within the Cornerstone by the "coarsening" effect of commemorative history, as well as what has been referred to as the "traditionally didactic function" of monuments. As James E. Young observes, monuments have a tendency both to displace the past they serve to have us contemplate, and through the authoritarian propensity of monumental space reduce the viewer to "passive spectator." Young notes that:

(B)y insisting that its meaning is as fixed as its place in the landscape, the monument seems oblivious to the essential mutability in all cultural artifacts, the ways the significance in all art evolves over time. In this way, monuments have long sought to provide a naturalizing locus for memory, in which a state’s triumphs and martyrs, its ideals and founding myths are cast as as naturally true as the landscape in which they stand. These are the monuments sustaining illusion, the principles of its seeming longevity and power.

The case of Germany seems to highlight many of the problems involved in attempting to devise an all-inclusive memorial. As Young observes, a memorial space which honoured all of Germany’s war dead would in essence be contradictory. That is: "Those now considered its ‘heroes’ had been regarded as treacherous enemies of the state during the war, whereas its fallen soldiers had been killed in Hitler’s campaign to conquer Europe and murder its Jews.” Kathe Kollwitz’s “Mother with Dead Son”, the centrepiece of Germany’s national memorial, Neue Wache, was fiercely criticised by those offended by the remembrance of Jewish victims alongside the perpetrators of genocide—and in the Christian image of maternal sacrifice. The 1994 competition for a “Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe” under former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl’s administration were similarly greeted with scepticism by many. As Young

134 Gerald Figal “Historical Sense and Commemorative Sensibility at Okinawa’s Cornerstone of Peace,” op cit. As Figal notes, the Cornerstone also reveals the difficulties in “transnationalizing” the act of commemoration. Figal concludes that: “Rather than being transcended, national and ethnic identities are encoded and contested in subtle ways throughout” (p. 764).

reflects: “Instead of inciting memory of murdered Jews, we suspected, Germans would come dutifully to unshoulder their memorial burden, so that they could move freely and unencumbered into the twenty-first century. A finished monument would, in effect, finish memory itself.”

A similar fear exists in relation to the Cornerstone of Peace. Namely, the monumentalization of the Battle of Okinawa within the monument as a symbol of peace may ultimately serve to justify war through its commemoration. Ōta has made a strident and persuasive case on the inherent meaningless of the war in numerous historical and personal accounts. As governor of Okinawa, he instigated the construction of the Cornerstone in order that the “lessons of history” were not forgotten. Yet void of historical details (such as Okinawa’s semi-colonial status within the Japanese empire, civilian atrocities during the war, sexual slavery, and imperial aggression by both mainland Japanese and Okinawans in Asia), the historical lessons to be learnt from the Cornerstone’s global “message of peace” remain ambiguous.

Some historians have argued that these ambiguities invite individual interpretation and reflection, and even the cultivation of an awareness of the past, from all of the monument’s visitors. The monument’s ambiguous inclusiveness also enabled it to become a powerful symbol at least to an extent uniting the disparate groups which formed the core of Okinawa’s anti-base movement. These ambiguities, however, may similarly serve to reify the commemorative and “sacred” aspect of the Cornerstone (as a “place of prayer”), rather than its educational or pedagogical (as a “lesson of history”) tone. As the past becomes the object of veneration and is reproduced as sacred memory, it has the power to authenticate dominant modes of

156 Ibid., p. 194.
157 For example, Ishihara and Arakaki suggest that inclusion of all Okinawans who died between the 1931 Japanese invasion of Manchuria and the end of the fifteen-year war in 1945 “functions to symbolically retrace the steps of Japan’s aggression in Asia and the Pacific” (“The Cornerstone of Peace Memorial: Its Role and Function,” p. 90).
collective historical consciousness. In this way, as we shall see in Chapter Five, as the Cornerstone becomes ‘rewritten’ within hegemonic interpretations of history, it may in fact be used as a tool to assist in the erasure of marginalized and displaced memories.

Remembrance and Return: The Battle of Okinawa in History and Memory

As Carol Gluck observes: “National history is never neutral, and in postwar Japan, as elsewhere, the past was contested terrain on which other, larger battles over politics, society, and culture were being fought.” In Okinawa, fierce struggles have not only been waged over this terrain, but its very borders: that is, the formation and constitution of the Japanese modern nation state itself. In the postwar period, these contests were inherently connected to issues of war remembrance. The Battle of Okinawa has been central to the politics of history and popular memory, as well as political struggles. In the pages of numerous books and newspapers, in the courtroom, the classroom, and through names engraved on stone, Ōta has been a central figure in articulating, and contesting, war and its “historical lessons” in the present and for the future.

Ōta’s reflections on war and peace were intimately related to Okinawa’s postwar historical and political context—to struggles against both US military occupation and a state-endorsed Japanese nationalism closely allied to US hegemony. In his earliest work, “That Which Was Paid for in Blood,” his account of his war experiences and the psychology of war and defeat was profoundly personal. Yet it was also made as an appeal to mainland Japan, to gain a wider conscience of Okinawa’s plight during the war and under occupation. In the late 1960s, his analysis and remembrance of war became essentially related to contests over the meaning and terms of reversion. Issues of discrimination deferred under US occupation and within the reversion movement
came to the surface. Ōta began to draw links between the experience of war, the desire for peace, and a distinct sense of Okinawan-ness, as embodied in the “Okinawan spirit.” He has expanded these analyses since. He has strongly opposed attempts to glorify the war, the imposition of a nationalist and conformist education in postwar Japan, the continued US military presence in Okinawa, and the stationing of Japan’s Defence Forces in the islands. He resisted and questioned the Japanese government’s security claims in the postwar period with continual references to his own war experience and the historical experience of Okinawa(ns). The textbook issue concerned not only the wording of the textbook itself, but both the essence of Japan’s education system and the future of Japan’s relations in Asia. In short, as competing visions of the future, contests over the war and its remembrance were intimately connected to wider cultural, social, and political struggles.

Ōta incorporated many of the tenets of Japan’s postwar peace movement: a pervasive anti-militarism; a commitment to the pacifist and democratic principles of the constitution; a linkage between struggles for peace and democracy; and opposition towards the Japanese “state” in the name of the Japanese “people.” The Battle of Okinawa was seen as a compressed version of what ground war would have been like had the US forces advanced to mainland Japan. It epitomized the way in which the Imperial Headquarters and the Japanese military prioritised the survival of the Japanese polity even at the expense of its own civilians. In this sense, Ōta saw Okinawa’s plight during the war, and in the postwar period, as inherently relevant to all of Japan. This enabled Okinawa to become an important issue within the Japanese peace movement, and in turn a forceful challenge to state-endorsed nationalist historical perceptions.

Yet Ōta also possessed a pervasive sense of Okinawa’s history, and historical discrimination towards Okinawa. His appeals to universal pacifist ideals came hand-in-hand, and were complexly intertwined, with ideas of a distinct Okinawan-ness in contrast to mainland Japan. During the war, the Imperial Headquarters held a particular
disregard for the fate of Okinawa. The Japanese military command stationed on Okinawa too displayed a disdain for the customs, and ultimately the survival, of Okinawans. Okinawa was “sacrificed” in the name of protecting the Japanese “imperial homeland,” of which it was not considered a part. For Ōta, a sense of victimhood often verged on an Okinawan, rather than Japanese, ethnic nationalism. His articulations on war partly incorporated Japanese historical narratives, and radically disrupted these narratives. His analysis of Okinawa’s complex experience as both “Japanese” and colonized subject forced to “become Japanese” served to break down the closed discursive space of postwar Japanese war remembrance, and provide a powerful deconstruction of the inherent ambiguities underlying the delineation of the Japanese subject from its colonized “other”. At the same time, Okinawa’s dual role as both colonized and colonizer provided an inherent dilemma for Ōta as he sought to empower an active political Okinawa subject ambiguously within Japan and against Okinawa’s dual subjugation in US-Japanese relations.¹³⁸

War remembrance was intimately connected to the conceived struggle for peace, democracy, and autonomy as embodied in the reversion movement. From the ruins of unprecedented physical destruction, these ideals became the focus of a conceived “rebirth.” As it became increasingly apparent that reversion would fail to guarantee the conditions necessary for Okinawa to become a “determinant of its own history,” war remembrance became the primary means of redeeming a sense of Okinawan identity in the face of the forces of homogenisation and consumerism. In this way, Ōta sought through remembrance of the war experience to mitigate against a double sense of loss—from the destruction of war and the failures of the postwar political struggle. In post-reversion Okinawa, the Battle of Okinawa ironically became the centre of Ōta’s attempts to reclaim a sense of Okinawan identity, as the percentage of war survivors to

Okinawa's population steadily decreased and Okinawa became further incorporated within Japan.

As well as having a central role in contests over war memory and history, the tragic experiences of war also undoubtedly left an indelible imprint on Ōta's personal sense of self. Ōta's remembrance of war, his sense of purpose in the struggle for an individual sense of self and autonomous political subject, and his intellectual analyses on the Battle of Okinawa intersect in multiple forms. These intersections themselves attest to the vital interplay and tension between memory and history—and the enmeshing of both in political and cultural contests in the present. Under US occupation, in the tumultuous years prior to reversion, following Okinawa's administrative reincorporation into Japan, and during his time as governor, Ōta repeatedly and through multiple mnemonic practices “returned” to the Battle of Okinawa. The Battle of Okinawa formed the foundation of his work and sense of self in the “postwar” in at least a dual sense—as the “origin” of a perceived “rebirth,” and through the continual retracing of war experience and its meaning. This process of retracing has been intrinsic to contests over the set of power relations which placed Okinawa between the US and Japan. It is a process that we shall revisit, as we further examine how Ōta sought to claim an Okinawan sense of identity, and political autonomy, in the years prior to reversion and beyond.

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139 In an interview following his defeat in the 1998 elections, Ōta stressed this importance, stating: “When people's life becomes stable, they become conservative, and lose their original sense of purpose...Sometimes, I think too much of my own position, and do not speak out when I should. I try to live as my own person, but the situation becomes all too difficult. At that time, after I see the names of my dead colleagues [engraved in stone], the events of fifty years ago come back to me, and it strengthens my resolve.” The Asahi Tapes (30 April 1999). Also reprinted in “Ōta zen Okinawa chiji: 4 nen o kataru,” Asahi Shinbun (26 October 1999).
CHAPTER TWO

Between Illusion and Reality

Okinawan Reversion

"To say it simply, I have...the irrepressible desire to witness with my own eyes 'Okinawa’s momentous turning point.' To put it rather exaggeratedly, while only too well aware of my own powerlessness, it is purely that I want to play my part as one individual (shutai) in the making of history...

It is not easy to be the one voicing disharmony, just as the people of Yamato sing in chorus of wealth and prosperity. Moreover, personally I would even prefer if possible to avoid the situation where Okinawa becomes a gag choking at the throat of the glutton that is Japan. Yet if this is necessary in order to fulfill 'the minimum set of conditions' essential for us to live as human beings, it must be done nonetheless.

I am going home, to Okinawa."

Ota Masahide, 1970

Return to Okinawa: Return to Japan

"If to return to Okinawa from Tokyo means something more than to merely move from one place to another, then what is it?" In the first months of 1970, Ōta vacillated about the future direction of his life and career, and whether to stay in Tokyo

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2 Ibid., p. 216.
or to return to his post at the University of Ryukyus. He recorded these anxieties and his final resolve to return to Okinawa in a short and unusually personal article published in the May edition of the journal Sekai. He explained that his decision arose from the desire to experience Okinawa’s historical turning point from within the islands rather than to continue research from the distant shores of Tokyo. The joint communiqué on Okinawan reversion announced in November 1969 had further strengthened his resolve. No longer able to witness the tumultuous tide of events sweeping Okinawa from afar, Ota determined he must play a small part in the ‘making’ of this history.

Ota sought to realize in both theory and practice what he conceived to be the aims of reversion. In the spirit of Japanese postwar liberal enlightenment thought, Ota saw the creation of an individual subject able to act as an autonomous political agent to be vital to the functioning of democracy. Yet unlike liberal postwar intellectuals in mainland Japan, Ota was not preoccupied with the question of how to guarantee the adequate functioning of democratic processes, but with the very attainment of civil rights under the Japanese constitution. In his conception of this struggle, Ota adopted many assumptions of postwar Japanese liberal ideology, as conceived in the ideals of peace and democracy. Yet he adopted these assumptions with a certain ambivalence. For without irony, Ota saw the attainment of Okinawan political autonomy and an autonomous identity as the core aim of the movement calling for the return of administrative control over Okinawa to Japan.

Ota noted that in viewing the historical formation of modern Japan, “one is struck immediately by the almost abnormal strength of ‘pro-centralizing forces’ within Okinawa.” From the economy to education, politics, and culture—all aspects of Okinawans’ lives in the prewar period were overwhelmed by “the forces of

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1 During this time, Ota received a lucrative offer from a large US company, intent on expanding its share in the Japanese market, and wavered as to whether he should take the post or return to his associate professorship in Okinawa.
‘Japanization’ and ‘the making of Imperial subjects’ (kōminka).” All the most renowned anti-establishment activists and intellectuals of this period either left Okinawa because of the pressure from these forces, or went mad. Ōta recounted that in learning of this history, he was “struck by the closed and insular nature of Okinawan society and the maliciousness of authority.”4 In contrast, he saw that the experience of war and occupation had instilled a stronger political consciousness in the minds of Okinawans. Precisely for this reason, he differentiated reversion from prewar assimilationism, and upheld the former as a call for the realization of Okinawan autonomy and the constitutional ideals of peace and democracy.

As Leo T. S. Ching observes; “places are artfully lived spaces, both physical and discursive, material and metaphorical, geographical and ideological, real and imagined.”5 Ōta’s return to Okinawa prompted him to reflect on the relation between “Tokyo” and “Okinawa” on a multitude of levels, and within intersecting networks of time. He saw the “Okinawa problem” in both inherently personal and political terms—and as a condition born through historical discrimination. As the contents of the bilateral agreement for return gradually came to light, he increasingly questioned this history, and challenged the tenets of assimilation. Just as the root of the Okinawa issue—discrimination—was universal in its scope, so too was the fundamental intent of Okinawan reversion—the guarantee of human rights and the “restoration of humanity” (ningen no kaifuku).

The Okinawan reversion movement as a whole was disparate, and embraced a range of groups, often with hazy, diverse, and even contradictory agendas. It was at once both pro-autonomous and pro-assimilationist. On the left, it incorporated elements of pacifist nationalism, anti-US and anti-Vietnam War sentiment, movements for democratic self-government and civil rights, and socialist and communist organizations.

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5 Becoming Japanese, p. 197.
A broader spectrum of Okinawans also called for reversion out of an emotional attachment to mainland Japan, the vague but pervasive notion that Japan was somehow the “ancestral country” (sokoku) of Okinawa, widespread discontent with the policies of the US military administration and “foreign rule” (iminzoku shihai), and a desire to attain the kind of working and living conditions enjoyed in the rest of the nation.

The reversion movement worked within postwar Japanese ideals of peace and democracy, and brought to question the subjugation of Okinawa within Japan’s postwar structure. Okinawan reversion became a focal issue of political resistance in mainland Japan just as Japan’s oppositional political movement fragmented. The years from 1968 to 1970 witnessed the peak of political activity, and subsequent fragmentation, of both mainland Japanese anti-Vietnam war anti-anpo (US-Japan Security Treaty) protests and pro-reversion anti-base resistance in Okinawa. This fragmentation occurred in the context of a general reappraisal of issues and assumptions concerning nationalism, identity, political resistance, discrimination, subjectivity, sovereignty, democracy, and autonomy within Okinawa and Japan as a whole.6

While reversion itself was realized, many of the aims called for by progressive groups for the reduction or significant withdrawal of US military bases from Okinawa were not. It failed to guarantee the demilitarisation of Okinawa and Japan as a whole, or political or economic autonomy for Okinawa. On the eve of reversion, Ōta disparagingly observed: “In the eyes of both the US and Japanese national authorities, Okinawa is only significant as a military stronghold, and may as well be an island uninhabited by people. National authorities in both countries have both just used Okinawa as a political and economic negotiating pawn, as if the fierce longing of the islands’ one million people to regain a sense of humanity is not worth even one

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mention." Less than two months later, administrative control over Okinawa was returned to Japan in a joint ceremony in Tokyo and Washington.

On the eve of Okinawa's return to Japan, frustration at his own powerlessness only seemed to inflame Ōta's sense of political urgency. Between 1967 and 1972, Ōta published at least sixty articles and five books, all relating in some form to the process and the conditions of reversion. He emerged as a central figure in debates over Okinawa, and played an important role as a conduit between mainland Japanese and Okinawan liberal intellectual circles. Even after the return of administrative rights over Okinawa to Japan, the unfulfilled goals of reversion remained an underlying theme of Ōta's work—as part of an enduring contest over Okinawa, the makeup of Japan, and US-Japan relations. Debate over reversion highlighted divisions within and issues pertaining to the movement. In many ways, the issues and divisions raised within debates over reversion also continued to define the framework of political debate in Okinawa in years to come.

Almost a quarter of a century after Okinawan reversion, in May 1996, Ōta published a revised edition of one of the books he wrote during the volatile pre-reversion period, Kyozetsu suru Okinawa (Okinawa Defiant, 1971). In the preface he declared: "Even though this book was written over twenty years ago, its message is still relevant today. That is to say, it is a fact that the stance of both the US and Japanese

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7 "Okinawa: kokka no hen'yō to gyōsei no naka de," Ekonomisuto (1 April, 1972), p. 108.
8 US military bases continued to occupy 12.3% of the total land mass of the islands. It was agreed that 16.6% of the land area used by US facilities in Okinawa would be returned. Land utilized by US facilities remained at 12.3% of the total area of Okinawa prefecture, from 14.8% directly prior to reversion (figures cited from Sugeyama Shigeru. Okinawa Henkan Kyōtei no kenkyū (Tokyo: Sekibunsha, 1982), p. 195-9.
9 For example as the coordinator of a symposium on "The Reversion of Okinawa and the Base Issue," held in Naha on 13 August 1968 and published in Sekai (October 1968), pp. 37-76. Ōta also coedited a journal on Okinawa with mainland Japanese writer Ōe Kenzaburō during this period entitled Okinawa Keiken. It is difficult to gauge Ōta's exact influence on public debate. Yet there is no doubt that his analysis had an impact, in publicizing the Okinawa issue, on perceptions of reversion and its significance, and on the way in which groups in Okinawa perceived and articulated themselves, as aspects of this analysis were reincorporated back into movements in Okinawa.
governments on the Okinawan issue has hardly changed at all." Two months later, in explaining his stance against the US bases to the Japanese Supreme Court, Ota testified:

Reversion to Japan in 1972 was supposed to constitute the return of Okinawa under the Peace Constitution of Japan, and the radical transformation of Okinawa, both in name and in reality. In advocating reversion, the people of Okinawa called for at least a decline in the US military presence on the islands to a level on par with the rest of Japan, the repossessio of human rights, and the establishment of self-government (jichi).

However, even now, approximately a quarter of a century later, conditions in Okinawa have hardly changed. Expansive military bases remain, and accidents, incidents, and pollution resulting from the bases still continue. This is very far from the reversion to Japan which the people of Okinawa prefecture wished for.

In short, in 1996 Ota saw his stance as an attempt to fulfil the failed goals of Okinawa’s postwar struggle. The outcome of reversion determined the form in which Okinawa was reincorporated into Japan. Yet in many ways, the legacy and memory of what reversion did not achieve had as lasting an impact, both on Ota and Okinawa’s political landscape.

The Road to Reversion

Land Expropriation and Resistance

Life in post-war Okinawa began for Ota in October, 1945, when he received permission to leave the US military POW internment camp. After five years of working and studying in war-torn Okinawa, in 1950 he became a member of the second group of students from Okinawa in the postwar period to receive scholarships to attend university

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10 Kyozetsu suru Okinawa: Nihon fukki to Okinawa no kokoro (Tokyo: Kindai Bungeisha, 1996 [1971]).
in mainland Japan. Waseda University was renowned as a hotbed of student unrest, and in the early nineteen fifties there was a burgeoning student movement opposed to the remilitarisation of Japan, military campaigns on the Korean Peninsula, and the ratification of the US-Japan security treaty. Neither the security treaty nor the Japanese constitution applied to Okinawa. During the occupation period, Okinawa was excluded from the reforms of the SCAP (the Supreme Command for the Allied Powers) administration in Japan. In 1950, in the face of communist victory in China, the US Congress approved the allocation of 58 million US dollars towards the fortification of military facilities within the Ryukyu Islands. Two years later, the Ryukyu Islands, as well as the Amami and Ogasawara Islands, were separated from the rest of Japan under the peace treaty.

Ōta avoided participating in student demonstrations. Yet he was certainly affected by the pacifist idealism of the times, by the sight of colleagues being injured in clashes with police during demonstrations, and in the death of a close friend who strongly advocated the ‘liberation’ of Okinawa and Amami from US occupation and had become heavily involved in the student movement. Ōta later named 1953 as the year in which he himself began to strongly advocate Okinawan reversion. He cited the growing struggle against the expropriation of land by the US military command within Okinawa, and widespread opposition towards the Korean War amongst progressive forces within mainland Japan, as the two primary factors driving his sentiment. From an early stage, Ōta called for reversion according to the anti-militarist ideals of the

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13 Ōta recounts that Taneda Shigenobu, who grew up in the Amami Islands, arrived on the same boat from Okinawa to Tokyo, and boarded in the same temple lodgings near Waseda. As a result of his political activities, however, Taneda was expelled from the university, and ordered to return to Okinawa. He went underground, scavenging food and lodgings from friends, including Ōta, and moving from place to place in an effort to avoid the authorities and expulsion from Tokyo. Soon after, however, he became ill, and died within a year (as recounted by Ōta in Okinawa no ketsudan, pp. 54-6). The Amami Islands were returned to Japan on December 25, 1953.
14 Interview with the author (4 May 2001).
Japanese peace movement and in opposition towards the expansion of US military bases.

Prior to 1952, the US military rationalized the use and acquisition of land in Okinawa by the 1907 Hague Convention's Rules of Land Warfare (Section III, Article III). By 28 April 1952, when the San Francisco Peace Treaty came into force, 12.7% of the land area of Okinawa had been requisitioned for use by the US forces without payment, affecting a total of approximately 40,000 land owners. After the peace treaty came into effect, the military sought to authorize these acquisitions under the powers of the US Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands (USCAR, originally the US Military Government, renamed in July 1950). USCAR also began authorizing an expansion of the area of the existing military bases, and in April 1953 issued an ordinance which gave the US military powers to forcefully expropriate new plots of land. Landowners fiercely protested, and in May 1953, the legislature of the Government of the Ryukyu Islands called for the abolition of the three most controversial ordinances issued by USCAR on land acquisition. Yet the US Army Commander effectively held absolute power over the GRI, the only politically elected body in Okinawa.

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16 In November 1952, an ordinance was issued requiring landowners to conclude a contract with the chief executive of the Government of the Ryukyu Islands (GRI, made up of local legislators) which allowed the US to lease the land for a period of 20 years.
18 The Government of the Ryukyu Islands (GRI) was established by USCAR in a proclamation dated April 1952. Article 7 of the proclamation stipulated: “The Deputy Governor of the Civil Administration who is the local US Army Commander, has the right, in the event of necessity, to veto, prohibit or suspend the operation of any laws, ordinances or regulations enacted by the Government of the Ryukyu Islands or any civil government or agency of any such government; to order the promulgation of any law or regulation he may deem advisable; and to resume in whole or in part, the exercise of full authority in the Ryukyu Islands.” As cited in “Report of Investigation Concerning Problems of Human Rights of the Okinawan People” (sic.), compiled by the Japan Federation of Bar Associations, 30 April 1955 (US National Archives, RG 59 CDF 1955-59 Box 3978 F5).
A grass-roots reversion movement centring around the Okinawa Teachers Association (OTA) emerged in parallel with the intensification of the land dispute. Yara Chōbyō, the president of the OTA, was elected as chairman of the Council for the Return of the Ryukyu Islands to the Japanese Fatherland (Okinawa Shotō Sokoku Fukki Kiseikai), established in January 1953. The Council for Reversion called for the abolishment of Article III of the peace treaty and urged the rise of nationalist Japanese sentiment within Okinawa.\(^{19}\) Yara and three other representatives from the committee visited Japan in early 1954 to raise funds for the reconstruction of damaged school buildings, and further promote nation-wide support for the reversion movement in mainland Japan.\(^{20}\) During this time, Ōta met with Yara in Tokyo, and assisted on a small scale with the fund-raising campaign, which by March 1954 had raised over 6 million yen.\(^{21}\)

In response, however, USCAR forced Yara to resign as Council for Reversion Chairman, and initially refused to issue permits to Yara and other representatives to visit Tokyo to accept the collected contributions. Growing opposition to the US military amongst progressive political parties and the Okinawan student movement, efforts to unionise the labour force, and demands for better working conditions were met with repressive measures. In April 1954, USCAR warned labour unions not to participate in events organized for May Day, a celebration it considered dominated by communist

\(^{19}\) Nanpō Dōhō Engokai (ed.) Okinawa mondai kihon shiryō, pp. 1151-2. see also Kiyoshi Nakachi Ryukyu-US-Japan Relations 1945-1972, p. 65
\(^{20}\) Okinawa Fukki Undō Kiseikai (The Association for the promotion of the return of Okinawa to Japan) was established in mainland Japan by those of Okinawan descent in 1946. It was lead by Nakayoshi Yoshiaki, who professed to be the first person to use the term ‘fukki’ in the context of calling for the return of Okinawa to Japan. This organization was originally dominated by conservative forces. However the more progressive Okinawan Peoples Association (Okinawajin Renmei) also began more actively advocating reversion by the end of the 1940s, and in 1949 decided to omit ‘peoples’ (“jin,” denoting that Okinawans were of a different ethnicity/citizenship to Japanese) from its name, to become the more innocuous Okinawa Association (Okinawa Renmei) (Arasaki Moriteru, Sengo Okinawashi (Tokyo: Nihon Hyoronsha, 1976), pp. 74-5.
\(^{21}\) Interview with Ōta, details on campaign from Nakachi, Ryukyu-US-Japan Relations 1945-1972, p. 67.
groups. A month later, David Ogden, the Deputy Governor of USCAR, issued an anti-communist statement, and sought to introduce legislation outlawing the activities of the left-wing Okinawan People’s Party for communist affiliations. USCAR’s information and education division head similarly accused the OTA of “promoting communism” and “financing communist party members.” Writing in 1968, Ota himself described the years of 1953-4 as marking the onset of a “dark period” in Okinawan history, when: “not only did USCAR take an even tougher stand against local residents, but all expressions of opposition towards the US military administration were seen as being incited by communists and their collaborators.”

In response to USCAR’s uncompromising stance, opposition against the land expropriation policies escalated into a protracted non-partisan “island-wide” struggle (shima gurumi tōsō) against military policy. The “Okinawa issue” also finally gained significant attention in mainland Japan. In January 1955, the Asahi Shinbun ran a large story on the Civil Liberty Union’s (jiyū jinken kyōkai) findings on human rights infringements in Okinawa. The inquiry had been undertaken at the recommendation of the American Civil Liberties Union, who also directly expressed their concerns about land acquisition and the military’s repressive policies to the Department of State and Pentagon. In April 1955, the Japan Federation of Bar Associations published a

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22 This legislation was in fact also supported by the Okinawa Liberal Democratic Party, affiliated with Japan’s ruling LDP.
23 “Okinawa no osoru beki shōsenkyokusei” (Okinawa’s Fearsome Small electoral-district System). Usūhio No. 93 (March 1968), p. 153. He also concluded that the “land issue” of 1955-6 had been decisive in securing the transformation of Okinawans’ image of the US in the early postwar period from a positive to negative one (“Okinawa no Amerikazō” (Okinawa’s View of America), Usūhio No 104 (Special Addition) (December 1968), p. 25).
24 “The problem of Communist infiltration should be dealt with by combating it in the open without resort to repressive measures. Particularly it should not be confused with the propaganda for reversion to Japan or expressions of hostility to occupation measures.” Letter addressed to General William Marquat of the Pentagon from the American Civil Liberties Union (US National Archives, RG 59 CDF 1955 Box 3978 F5).
similarly damning report documenting extensive human rights infringements in the islands.25

The immediacy of the land issue served to override larger questions of Okinawa’s status, and following USCAR’s attack on the activities of the Council for Reversion it was not until 1960 that an equivalent, the Council for the Return of Okinawa Prefecture to the Fatherland (Okinawa-ken Sokoku Fukki Kyōgikai or Fukki-kyō), was formed. Fukki-kyō was a large umbrella organization sponsored by three key organizations, the OTA, the Government Employees’ Labour Union, the Council of Okinawan Prefectural Youth Associations, as well as progressive political parties, the Parent and Teachers Association, and the Bereaved Family Association. It incorporated pacifist, pro-centralist and pro-autonomy groups. The Okinawan Liberal Democratic Party decided not to participate, preferring a “step by step” approach towards the assimilation of Okinawa’s social, cultural, and political institutions rather than immediate reversion.26 The reversion movement thus became integrally connected to and dominated by a progressive agenda. A year later, in September 1961, Ōta published his views on reversion for the first time.

The Call for Popular Elections

Ōta’s first article on the issue of reversion was a lengthy review of Hamanishi Kenjiro’s A Report on Okinawa (Okinawa e no hōkoku), an account of the US military occupation of Okinawa published in early 1961.27 Hamanishi, a mainland Japanese

25 Japan Federation of Bar Associations, “Report of Investigation Concerning Problems of Human Rights of the Okinawan People” (sic.). The report separated human rights infringements into three areas: the forcible leasing of land for military purposes; racial discrimination in wages; and “other happenings,” which included a list of various cases where US military members had not been held accountable for rape, murder, or hit-and-run incidents, and restrictions on freedom of speech, publication, and collective bargaining.


journalist who completed his work after a two month trip to Okinawa, was sceptical of the extent of Okinawa’s so called “island-side struggle” against occupation. He concluded that: “I did not find a strong sense of national belonging amongst the people of Okinawa. From what I saw, Okinawans’ sense of being Ryukyuan, above being Japanese, is too strong.” Hamanishi surmised that Okinawans’ desire for reversion arose from merely a vague sense that the islands would be economically better off as a part of Japan than they were under US occupation. He argued that in fact reversion would only seriously impede Okinawa’s base-centred economy and be detrimental to local industry, which greatly benefited from restrictions and customs taxes imposed on goods imported from mainland Japan. Hamanishi declared that in fact none of the Okinawan business elite supported calls for reversion, and predicted that once these benefits were transferred down to the populace at large, the reversion movement would lose momentum.

Hamanishi’s views were no doubt prevalent in mainstream Japanese society, and his observations on economy—that it was hinged on a pro-military Okinawan elite and highly dependent on the bases—certainly held weight. In his critique of the book, Ōta conceded that with reversion a multitude of complex economic issues had to be confronted. Yet he strongly refuted Hamanishi’s suppositions on the reversion movement. Ōta countered that in concentrating on a group of influential Okinawans who economically benefited from collaborating with the US military, Hamanishi could not “see the forest for the trees.” Ōta stressed that the reversion movement in Okinawa was based on something more fundamental than either nationalism or pragmatics—the desire for equal status within a democratic nation founded on pacifist principles, and for an elected autonomous government. Ōta referred to these aims comprehensively as the “pursuit of rights as human beings.” He also predicted that the more the standard of

28 Ibid., p. 12.
living in Okinawa improved, the more calls for reversion would grow in strength. In other words, "to the extent that democracy is upheld in principle, no one will be able to deny Okinawans the fundamental rights that all people are guaranteed through their position as humans and members of a sovereign nation."^29

For Ōta, the call for reversion was necessarily the pursuit of democratic rights—in opposition to the authoritarian powers of the US Army Commander in Okinawa (renamed the High Commissioner in 1960), and in the name of autonomy. In September 1950, after the establishment of the Okinawa Gunto Government, the first gubernatorial elections under US occupation (and in fact in the history of Okinawa) were held.^30 After the peace treaty came into force in 1952, however, the Chief Executive of the newly established GRI was appointed by US authorities.^31 None of the three Chief Executives of Okinawa who held office from 1952-1968 were chosen by direct popular election, but were appointed by and answerable to US authorities. In response to growing calls for public elections, and after the pro-military Okinawa Liberal Democratic Party (OLDP) secured a majority of seats in the legislature in the early 1960s, USCAR introduced a system of indirect election where the appointment of the Chief Executive had to be approved by the GRI legislature. This was seen as little more than a palliative to many, however, and in 1964, over 100 Okinawans were injured in clashes with police during a mass protest against the legislature's nomination of Matsuoka Seiho (an OLDP member who had in fact lost to Taira in the last direct elections of 1950) to the office of Chief Executive.

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^30 As Ōta later pointed out, however, this system of democratic election "became no more than a temporary aberration" ("Okinawa no shuseki kōsen no igi," Minami to kita No. 46 (September 1968), p. 58).

In November 1964, directly after this episode, Ōta published a pointed political satire in one of Okinawa’s main local newspapers. He drew an analogy between the political “burlesque” which unfolded over Matsuoka’s appointment and traditional Ryukyuan theatre. Ōta sarcastically noted that in this recent “political drama” the audience became so “moved” by the performance that they themselves attempted to “take to the stage.” This was a clear reference to the crowd of angry protesters who had stormed the parliament in protest against Matsuoka’s nomination. Members of the OLDP condemned the protesters. But Ōta was critical of pro-military politicians—the “star performers” of the play—who sought to limit “audience participation” within the theatre. He reminded his readers that on the contrary, the central and most enjoyable feature of Ryukyuan theatre was this tradition of audience participation, its customs of open interaction between the stage and floor. In a subtle yet powerful call for the implementation of popular elections and democratic participation, Ōta concluded:

In the political theatre, the completion of the performance is not itself the goal. For the audience, is not the very process of the actors’ enacting of the drama the most important thing? In this case, the playwright and the performers cannot succeed without taking note of the will and feelings of the audience itself...I must repeat. The greatness of traditional Ryukyuan Theater lies in the sense of communion between audience and performers, in the mutual sharing of the theatrical space. Is not the advancement of this kind of mutual interaction the best, the only way, that the theatre of politics, especially in its democratic form, can succeed?32

By 1967 Ōta was more explicit in his criticism of USCAR’s policies. Ōta saw that the true expansion of autonomous powers was only achievable with the return of administrative rights to Japan, just as reversion must guarantee an increase in Okinawan autonomy.33 He predicted that as long as the office of Chief Executive was a

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32 “Mahiru no yoru no yume: shuseki shimeigeki o mite” OT (4 November 1964).
33 “Okinawa no shuseki kōsen wa jitsugen suru ka,” Ushio No. 7 (October 1967) (Special Autumn
"subordinate institution" (jūzoku kikan) of the US Army Command, no matter who was appointed to the position they would ultimately be forced to defer to the US. He also concluded that as long as the US administration saw the strengthening and maintenance of the US military presence on Okinawa as their most important task and prioritised military issues above all else, they would seek to obstruct the establishment of local democratic processes.34

On 24 February 1967, a major confrontation occurred between the LDP-majority GRI legislature and the OTA over the GRI's attempts to pass two education bills designed to limit the political activities of teachers. Demonstrators succeeded in pushing aside police and storming the legislature building. The protracted political conflict which ensued (known as kyōiku nihō soshi tōsō or "the struggle for the prevention of the two Education Laws") ended in victory for the teachers, and the bills were eventually shelved in November of the same year.

Only a few months following this effective show of force by Yara's supporters, on 1 February 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson issued an executive order which authorized the popular election of the Chief Executive of the Ryukus.35 In analysing these turn of events, Ōta noted that: "Even the US, in prioritising 'the security and the most effective method of preserving' the military bases, can no longer ignore the ever-growing demand for the expansion of rights to self-government by the residents of Okinawa."36 In other words, USCAR's compromise on the issue of popular elections was seen as a pragmatic response to the growth of anti-military pro-reversion forces in Okinawa, rather than a fundamental change in military policy. At the same time, Ōta

34 Ibid.
36 "Okinawa no shuseki kōsen wa jitsugen suru ka," p. 163.
saw the realization of the elections as an important victory for Okinawans, and "a highly significant step towards the early attainment of Okinawan reversion." 37

Less than three months later, the first popular election of the Chief Executive since before the San Francisco Treaty took place. Both the US and Japanese governments supported the conservative pro-military base candidate, Nishime Junji. Over twenty years later, disclosed documents divulged that both Tokyo and Washington conspired to ensure that covert funds from the CIA were directed to the election campaign trust of the Okinawa LDP. 38 In spite of these efforts, however, the candidate supported by Okinawa’s progressive parties, Yara Chōbyō, defeated Nishime by a sound majority. The common platform of the political coalition which had supported Yara during the campaign centred upon the call for: the termination of B-52 flights from Okinawa; the halting of all other military operations directly tied to combat in the Vietnam War; the protection of Okinawans’ life and property and the attainment of peace and security in Japan, Asia, and the world; the abolition of Article III of the San Francisco Peace Treaty; and the immediate reversion of administrative rights over Okinawa to Japan. 39

Okinawa and Ōta Between Japan and the US

Viewing the Military Administration, Viewing the US

Throughout the 1960s, Ōta explicitly opposed the bases and the US military occupation of Okinawa. Yet he also expressed a certain faith in the conscience of the American people. 40 Ōta was fluent in English, read English materials prolifically, and

37 "Okinawa no shuseki kōsen no igi," p. 68.
40 In 1967, he went to the extent of stating that: "I believe that if the ordinary American citizen was more
during his time at Waseda became one of the founders of the university's English Speaking Association. On graduation in 1954, he received a US government-funded scholarship to undertake an MA in journalism at Syracuse University in New York. Ōta's studies at Syracuse provided him with academic skills which proved indispensable in writing and research. His experiences as a student in 1950s America also drew his attention to problems of discrimination and minority issues. On his first holiday break from Syracuse University, Ōta travelled to Jacksonville, Florida, to visit a US teacher he had befriended and assisted translating for in Okinawa, a “Miss Cheney.” On arrival at the station, however, he was mistaken for an illegal South American immigrant, and held in jail by authorities overnight, until his university could be contacted and his details verified. Ōta was also shocked at the separation between “coloured” and “whites” on the buses and in public toilets. At the same time as being drawn to blatancy of discrimination pervasive in American society, he was drawn to debates on racial issues. In journalism classes and amongst other foreign student colleagues racial discrimination became a heated and much debated topic. In the press, the beginnings of Martin Luther King’s bus boycott campaign in Alabama, and parliamentary hearings on allegations of communism drew Ōta’s attention to the first seeds of America's growing civil rights movement, and the influence of McCarthyism in US politics. At university, Ōta was impressed with the energy which students, male and female, put into publishing the university’s daily student paper, The Daily Orange. Through journalism class, and in devouring magazines such as Time, Harper's, The New Republic, and what came to be his preferred source of information, The Nation, Ōta came to cherish that which had been most lacking in his prewar education—

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informed about the situation in Okinawa, a much earlier solution to the Okinawa issue could be found. If not an early solution, at least various improvements to the current situation would be forthcoming. This is because more than anything the American people themselves abhor the kind of situation wherein a people are subjugated to foreign rule against their will.” “Okinawa no shuseki kösen wa jitsugen suru ka,” p. 158.
political and social debate. Ota later reflected that together with his war experience the opportunity he was given in the US to learn about American racial issues had been instrumental in opening his eyes to the historical discrimination against Okinawans within Japan, and its direct relation to contemporary conditions.

In the late 1950s, after his return from the US, Ota joined the Golden Gate Club (GGC or kinmon kurabu), an elite Okinawan organization whose membership was only open to those Okinawans who had graduated from US universities. The GGC was set up by the first group of graduate returnees from the US in 1952. From 1949 to 1970, 1089 Okinawans were funded by the Pentagon to undertake undergraduate and graduate studies in the US. The GGC itself emerged as an influential organization under the US occupation—and a symbol of the hierarchical set of relations which helped secure USCAR's stronghold. Though when viewed up closely the GGC made far from a homogenous group, and the experience studying within US university was sometimes the only common thread binding members. Soon after joining, Ota was elected president of the club for a term of one year (1957-8). Ota later noted that as the Golden Gate Club became even closer to the USCAR administration under the leadership of Takaramura Nobuo in the early 1960s, he became disaffected with its pro-military stance. During the war, Takaramura had been aide to a Japanese marshal in the Philippines who was later hanged for war crimes: under occupation he became a top executive within the US-controlled Bank of the Ryukyus and closely cooperated with the upper echelons of the US military administration.

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41 Interview with the author (25 February 2001).
42 Ota Masahide, “Kaerinan, iza,” p. 221. Ota also reflects on the importance of his experience in the US in Okinawa no Ketsudan, pp. 63-71.
43 See Kinjō Hiroyuki, Kinmon Kurabu: mō hitotsu no Okinawa sengoshi (Naha: Hirugisha, 1988), p. 76. Kinjō concludes that the GGC had "three faces": as an elite organization with close ties to the USCAR authority; as an influential business network; and as a "plural" group incorporating many diverse elements. Shinzato Hideyuki criticizes the fact that Ota himself was closely involved with this group—as typifying the kind of "toadyism" which Ota was so critical of (Shinzato Hideyuki, Ota Okinawa-ken chiji no haishin kōi (Urasoe: Puresu Okinawa, 1994)).
In short, Ōta was part of an Okinawa elite who, through prolonged occupation, were far more Americanised than their mainland Japanese counterparts, and intimately connected to the USCAR administration. Yet USCAR reports did not praise Ōta as “pro-US” as they did for example Takaramura. USCAR maintained a file on all of the GGC’s members. The description of Ōta interestingly concludes: “His capacity for leadership probably is limited to the academic field, and within that tied to mass communications.”

In years to come, Ōta was critical of both prewar Japanese militarism and the postwar US military occupation administration. In opposing occupation, he sought to separate USCAR and the US military presence in Okinawa from America as a whole, and to reject the kind of Cold War rhetoric which assumed that opposition to the former entailed hostility to the latter. While often scathing towards the motivations of the US military, on the other hand he held a strong faith in many of the ideals of American democracy. In short, Ōta’s perception of the US was as multifarious as the often contradictory faces of the US which had been a pervasive part of his experience.

In two separate articles in 1962 and 1968, Ōta warned against the tendency for Okinawans to hold stereotyped images of the US, and vice versa. He noted that during and preceding World War II, Okinawans held a false image of Americans and British that had been fed by nationalistic anti-American propaganda promoted by the Japanese government to garner support for militarism. During the Battle of Okinawa, however, this image was turned on its head, as the supposedly friendly Japanese “Imperial soldiers” plundered the food and shelter of local Okinawans, and feared and loathed American soldiers risked themselves to save injured and war-stricken Okinawan

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45 “Ryōbeijinkan no rikai wa kanō ka: komiyunikeeshon no shōgai ni tsuite no ikkōsatsu,” Okinawa Kōron (February 1962), pp. 67-71; and “Okinawa no Amerikazō,” Ushio, No 104 (Special Addition) (December 1968), pp. 14-34. See also Chapter Three, “Okinawa no Amerikanjin” in Minikui Nihonjin.
civilians. Of his own experience Ōta recounted that: “There were many genuinely humane American soldiers who displayed on the battlefield the best of America’s attributes.” Yet Ōta warned that as a result of the prolonged occupation and US military policies, Okinawans had begun to again harbour hostile sentiments towards Americans.

Ōta saw mutual distrust between Okinawans and the US administration as caused not only by a conflict in interests, but by a mutual breakdown in communication. Ōta was particularly affronted by the way in which Okinawa calls for reversion, for better labour conditions, for the right to strike, and for democratic elections were often depicted by the military as merely communist-incited “anti-Americanism.” He concluded that if Okinawan sentiment was more clearly understood, on an individual level at least, Americans would be more sympathetic to Okinawa’s plight. In 1965 Ōta, assisted by two colleagues, Miyagi Etsujirō and Kyoda Seitoku, and a native English proof-reader, initiated the publication of a weekly English edition of the local newspaper, Okinawa Times. The newspaper was named The Weekly Okinawa Times. Kyoda worked on base: Miyagi had been a student of Ōta’s in Nago City some twenty years before, and was a journalist for the Stars and Stripes newspaper. For over three years, Kyoda, Miyagi and Ōta met in the evenings, first at Ōta’s home and later within the head office of the Okinawa Times, translating the editorial and various articles from the Japanese Okinawa Times.

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46 “Okinawa no Amerikazō,” p. 18.
47 Ōta Masahide, Okinawa no ketsudan. Also interview with Miyagi Etsujirō (4 May 2001). The publication was supported by Okinawa Times president, Uechi Kazufumi. Echoing Ōta’s views, and in indirect criticism of the way events were presented in Okinawa’s American press, Uechi noted in his introductory article on the aims of the weekly edition that: “People...are inclined to relate fact and opinion to stereotypes. When the images portrayed in the press fail to present a social group truly, judgements by the people at large are perverted. Moreover, unchallenged assumptions soon harden into prejudice. The truth about any social group reveals weaknesses and vices, but also recognizes values, aspirations, and common humanity.” The Weekly Okinawa Times No. 1 (December 1965), p. 1.
Ôta repeatedly pointed out the contradictions between USCAR’s policies and the notion that the US was the bastion of liberty and democracy in the free world. He noted that the “fallacies and contradictions of American democracy” were manifest in the military occupation of Okinawa, and in relation to the appointment of a Chief Executive observed: “It is said that the reason the US is reluctant to hold popular elections for the post of Chief Executive is because they fear that someone will be chosen who they do not consider favourable for their own ends. If this is the case, it merely attests that America, a country which prides itself on being a bulwark of democracy, is admitting to its own misgovernment.”

Ôta particularly noted the contrast between domestic American libertarian traditions and foreign policy: “While Americans, as well others, recognize that the US is more rooted in ‘libertarian tradition’ than other countries, they have not displayed such virtues within Okinawa. Instead, they end up becoming ensnared by their own ideals—criticized by Okinawans in the name of these very traditions.”

Ôta also repeatedly employed this method of “reversal.” He often cited criticisms against the US military occupation of Okinawa made by Americans to back his arguments, including American Civil Liberties Union’s Robert Baldwin, who lobbied against human rights infringements in Okinawa, and prominent university professors such as Robert A. Scalapino, who expressed concerns over America’s Okinawan policy. In short, the military occupation of Okinawa was the manifestation of the imperialism, military aggression, authoritarianism and inherent violence which lay behind and contradicted US claims to democracy. Yet Ôta credited and sought to uphold the ideals of democracy and traditions of libertarianism which were a part of his

49 “Okinawa no Americazō,” p. 28.
own experience of the US, and which contrasted with the pervasive lack of democratic consciousness in Japan. In fact, he went as far as to conclude: “It is Americans who rule over Okinawa in an undemocratic fashion. Yet it is also Americans, more than Japanese, who have made an effort to redress these inequities.”

*Viewing Okinawa, Viewing Japan*

In August 1965, Satō Eisaku became the first Japanese Prime Minister to visit Okinawa. In an emotional and well publicized speech, Satō symbolically addressed Okinawans on his arrival as “my fellow countrymen and women” and declared that: “Until the return of Okinawa has returned to its fatherland (sokoku), Japan’s ‘postwar’ will not be over.” Yet the Okinawan Prefectural Reversion Council and all political parties apart from the Okinawa LDP (affiliated with the ruling Japanese LDP of which Satō was head) refused to attend the official welcoming reception for the prime minister. Instead, the Reversion Council organized a mass rally, which was attended by approximately 150,000 people. Rally participants later surrounded the hotel where Satō had planned to stay, ironically forcing the prime minister to seek accommodation overnight within the US Army Headquarters.

In an article published in the wake of Satō’s visit, Ōta concluded: “The real feelings of the people who lined the streets and waved the Japanese Rising Sun flag at the Prime Minister, was not one of welcome in any true sense of the word. That mainland Japanese could not grasp this fact reflects the fundamental gap in perception between those who live in Okinawa, and those on the mainland. For the people of Okinawa, the Prime Minister’s words seemed merely to ring hollow and lack any true

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51 “Okinawa no Amerikazō,” p. 31.
substance." That Satō should be surprised at the scale of these protests after his initial seemingly warm welcome epitomized to Ōta the Japanese government’s lack of understanding of Okinawan sentiment. He saw that only when the Japanese government adequately tackled the “Okinawa issue” would the “sense of unified purpose” which the prime minister spoke of truly exist between Okinawans and mainland Japanese.55

Two years later, in the preface to his first major academic work, *The Popular Consciousness of Okinawa* (*Okinawa no minshū ishiki*, 1967), Ōta described Okinawa’s postwar plight in the following terms:

Okinawa is not a prefecture of Japan as it was in the prewar period. Whatever its status in name, in reality Okinawa is at present not Japan. The Japanese who live in Okinawa are not guaranteed rights under Japan’s constitution, nor are they allowed the right to self-government. Since the defeat of Japan in 1945, Okinawa remains under US military rule. Furthermore, the reality is we do not know how long this situation must continue.56

In the face of over twenty years of ‘foreign rule’ (*iminzoku shihai*), a fundamental question came to the fore for Ōta. That is: “What is Okinawa? And what exactly does it mean to be Okinawan?” Ōta saw the relation between Okinawans and mainland Japanese both historically and in the present as beset by a fundamental gap in emotional empathy (*ondosa*)—that is, the inability or even unwillingness of many mainland Japanese to perceive of the ‘Okinawa problem’ as their own. For: “If another part of Japan, such as Aomori, or Nagasaki, was placed in the same predicament as Okinawa, would the Japanese government and the people of Japan simply allow it to continue? I think not. It is because it is Okinawa that this situation has been tolerated.”57

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55 Ibid.
57 Ibid., p. 2.
question “Who are Okinawans?” ultimately weighed on Japan as a whole, and the history of discrimination towards Okinawa.

In *The Popular Consciousness of Okinawa*, Ōta searched for answers to these dilemmas through a historical examination of the formation of Okinawan popular consciousness in the modern era. *The Popular Consciousness of Okinawa* marked the first attempt to trace the way in which Okinawans had resisted and embraced assimilation into Japan in the modern era within the print media. Ōta drew on a wealth of original material gathered from his earlier research on the history of print media in Okinawa from the Meiji period to World War II. It was one of the first attempts to come to grasp with the historical process by which Okinawans “became Japanese”, and has formed the basis of much analyses on the historical formation of modern Okinawan identity since.

Ōta saw comprehension of the past as a “shortcut” to understanding the present.\(^\text{58}\) He also hoped it could become a lesson for the present, and a useful reference in the formation of a blueprint for the future.\(^\text{59}\) He incorporated modern conceptions of progress and emancipation into his analysis. In a similar vein to Japanese postwar enlightenment thought, Ōta sought to find an explanation for the lack of a democratic revolutionary spirit in Okinawa, in the attempt to secure political agency in the present. This raised the question as to why Okinawan society as a whole had been unable to effectively resist homogenisation, assimilation, and the indoctrination of imperial ideology.

Ōta concluded that both feudalism and modernity had emerged only belatedly in Okinawa. Subjugated first under Satsuma and later by the Meiji policy of ‘preservation of old customs,’ Okinawans were unable to break out of the multiple layers of shackles which bound them within pre-modern hierarchical social relations. These relations were

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\(^{58}\) “Fukuzatsu na genchi no kokoro: kako o shiru no ga chikamichi,” *Asahi Shinbun* (27 October 1967).

\(^{59}\) *Okinawa no minshū ishiki*, p. 6.
in turn reinforced by discriminatory attitudes and government policies following the formation of the Meiji state. As a result: "Okinawans were isolated from the centre, neglected by the progress of the times, and unable to form a collective consciousness. At the end of this path lay only counterproductive nihilism, self-loathing, a distrust of politics, cynicism, and a sense of apathy towards life in general."60

Ōta was particularly critical of what he saw to be the "extreme form of toadyism" (gokudo no jidaishugi) which historically beset Okinawans. Unable to hold a definitive and common set of principles or creeds, Ōta declared, Okinawans "have sought to sustain their existence by serving the wishes and demands of larger powers." As a result, they have deferred to the modes of lifestyle dictated upon them by others, while maintaining a severe inferiority complex. "It has been repeatedly noted that Okinawans," Ōta asserted, "have a terrible sense of inferiority towards the rest of Japan, and at the same time often overreact and become emotional over the slightest comment made about them by others, regardless of whether or not it holds some truth."61

Ōta noted that the historical structures of subjugation and subsequent "opportunism" were also duplicated within postwar power relations. Under US occupation, USCAR authorities exploited the Okinawa's tradition structure of toadyism through the maintenance of a small-district electoral system in the Government of the Ryukyus Legislature elections. A small-district system, combined with a lack of democratic tradition, strong village community affiliations, and the dependence of small localities on Okinawa's centralized and base-centred economy benefited the pro-military Okinawan LDP. This in turn served to further reinforce pork-barrel politics, dependence, opportunism and servility.62

60 Ibid., p. 340.
61 Ibid., p. 2-3.
In the prewar period, Okinawans had embraced patriotic ideology and assimilation in an effort to gain the spoils of Japanese imperialism on an equal par with mainland Japanese. In return, however, they “gained nothing but limitless despair.” For the hundred years of its modern history and since its incorporation within the Meiji state, Okinawans had been unable to obtain either spiritual or material independence (jiritsu). The question as to whether Okinawans could regain their subjectivity (shutaisei) and attain true autonomy was for Ōta the primary aim and most difficult challenge of the reversion movement. In order for this aim to be achieved, Okinawans must hold an independent spirit, and not be overcome by an opportunism which only reinforces hierarchical relations and exploitation. Similarly, mainland Japan must atone for its historical discrimination of Okinawa, and its general disdain and ignorance towards Okinawans’ plight, both historically and in the postwar present. The reversion struggle was thus placed within the framework of the postwar Japanese struggle for subjectivity.

In conceiving of the postwar pursuit for pacifism and democracy, and Okinawa’s place within it, Ōta also drew on two very different cultural figures of the prewar and postwar era—Yanaihara Tadao (1893-1961) and Yanagita Kunio (1875-1962). Yanaihara was a Christian liberal who was forced to resign from his chair at Tokyo Imperial University in 1937 after critics decried him for being a pacifist, an enemy of the Imperial House, and an anticolonialist. In the postwar era he returned to Tokyo University to become its head from 1951 to 1957. Yanagita was a conservative ethnologist and founder of Japanese folklore studies (minzoku-gaku). Yanaihara

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63 Okinawa no minshū ishiki, p. 339
emphasized the connection between domestic and international justice: Yanagita rediscovered in Japan’s social and geographical margins the “old customs and unconscious tradition” of Japanese folklore. Their projects came from opposing poles of Japanese intellectual thought—Yanaihara was strongly influence by European liberal and enlightenment traditions, while Yanagita rejected rationalist academic discipline in favour of the spoken narrative of Japanese native (dochaku) culture.

Yet whether advocating an internationalist pacifism or the essence of Japan as discovered on its margins, both Yanaihara and Yanagita evoked ethnic cultural nationalism in opposition to government policies and state-centred nationalism. Ōta read the works of both in the early 1960s, and recounted being deeply impressed by them. Yanaihara provided a vision of international pacifism, and Yanagita a discourse which empowered the periphery and criticized Japan’s centralized bureaucratic policy-making process. Both provided ideals for conceiving of reversion within the framework of the (ethnic) nation. Ōta adopted Yanaihara’s idealist vision of democracy and pacifism, and Yanagita’s criticism of centralised state structures. Yet at the same time, even from this period, a distinct tension can also be discerned in Ōta’s work between perceptions of an Okinawan and Japanese (ethnic) subjectivity. These tensions increased as reversion itself neared.

In an article published soon after the 1968 Chief Executive elections, Ōta wrote: “The right for people to choose their own political leader is taken as a given in contemporary politics. And yet the hardships of the long struggle it took for the people of Okinawa prefecture to achieve this right are not comprehended in the mainland.”

For Ōta, Yara’s victory symbolized the strength that Okinawa’s political movement had

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gained through years of resisting occupation. Yet even after the election victory, Ōta saw that the struggle for equality had not yet been fully won, and an inherent “perception gap” between mainland Japan and Okinawa remained. He appealed to mainland Japanese to fulfill their responsibility in realizing Okinawans’ right to national representation in the Japanese Diet. He also stressed that, contrary to those who saw Yara’s victory as a threat to US-Japan relations, answering to the wishes of the Okinawan people was a necessary prerequisite for cooperation between the two countries. For, Ōta emphasized: “As long as it is founded on the continued denial of the citizen rights of Okinawan Japanese, the bilateral ‘cooperation’ of which both the US and Japanese governments speak can only be a fiction.”

The Satō-Johnson Joint Communique and the “Ugly Japanese”

The period from OTA’s victorious battle to prevent the passing of the GRI legislation on education in 1967 to the breakdown of Okinawa’s progressive coalition on the eve of the anti-B-52 strike of February 1969 marked a highly significant turning point in the reversion movement. This period witnessed the increase of organized mass resistance against US occupation. The US authorities’ inability to contain pro-reversion forces in Okinawa, the Japanese government’s desire to reach some kind of an agreement on the Okinawa issue before the security treaty revision was debated in parliament in 1970, and a growing mass protest movement against the US-Japan Security Treaty and the Vietnam War in mainland Japan brought the Okinawan issue to a head. As one US government analysis concluded: “By January 1969 a strong consensus had already developed within the US Government that it would be necessary

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68 Ibid., p. 19.
to agree to reversion in order to maximize the useful life expectancy of US military facilities not only in Okinawa but also in Japan proper.  

Consequently, the policy of both the US and Japanese governments took an about-face. It was determined that in order to maintain the military capacity of bases in Okinawa, Okinawa should be returned to Japan, rather than ruled under ‘separation.’ The US sought to maintain its military capability on the islands, while Japan was to assume responsibilities for the internal security of Okinawa as part of assuming a larger security role within the bilateral partnership. Anti-military reversion groups were unable to produce a united front to effectively combat this strategic change in policy. The reversion movement and its progressive support base became weighed down by the bilateral forces mobilized in response to its own successes, and fragmented. This fragmentation was compounded by Okinawa’s entrenched economic dependence on the bases. It coincided and complexly intersected with the fragmentation of the foundations of left-wing opposition in mainland Japan.  

Under US occupation, Ōta contested the set of power relations which embedded Okinawans somewhere between Washington and Tokyo by stressing that Okinawans were entitled to equal rights as Japanese nationals. At the same time, he held the Japanese government to blame for its complicit role—in securing Okinawa’s postwar fate, and in displaying a lack of resolve towards, and even hindering, the realization of

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71 As John Dower observes: “By 1972, the Left thus had lost hold of many of its most evocative peace issues: US bases in Japan, the Security Treaty, nuclear weapons, arms production, Okinawa, and China. A year later, with the armistice in Vietnam, the last great cause that had provided a modicum of common purpose among the opposition was removed. The average citizen turned inward, to bask in Japan’s new international influence as an economic power and become consumed by material pursuits, exemplified in such mass-media slogans as ‘My Home-ism’ and ‘My Car-ism’” (John W. Dower, “Peace and Democracy in Two Systems: External Policy and Internal Conflict” in Andrew Gordon (ed.) *Postwar Japan as History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 27).
Okinawan calls for civil rights, national representation, and reversion itself. As reversion emerged as a foreseeable reality, and Okinawa once again became excluded from the bilateral negotiations set in motion to determine its own fate, this sense of antagonism only increased. Though published little more than a year after Okinawan Popular Consciousness, Ōta’s The Ugly Japanese: The Outrage of Okinawa (Minikui Nihonjin: Nihon no Okinawa ishiki, 1969)\(^\text{72}\) blazed with indignation of an intensity not seen in his earlier work. For Ōta came to see the fight for reversion as “not only a battle against US occupation,” but a historical and contemporary struggle “against the Japanese government, and against Japanese themselves.”\(^\text{73}\)

The first discernable signs of a shift in the US and Japan’s joint stance on the Okinawan issue came in the form of a joint communiqué issued after talks by Japanese Prime Minister Satō Eisaku and US President Lyndon Johnson in Washington on 15 November 1967. The Japanese Government had formally requested that the US Government open talks on the future of the Ryukyu and Bonin (Ogasawara) Islands for the first time in July of the same year. In the following communiqué, it was announced that negotiations for the reversion of Ogasawara Islands were to begin immediately, and agreed that the two governments would “keep under joint and continuous review” the status of the Ryukyus, “guided by the aim of returning administrative rights over the islands to Japan.”\(^\text{74}\)

Ōta published a critical commentary in the Okinawa Times on the communiqué two days after its declaration, concluding: “The recent joint communiqué stands out merely for its well-considered choice of words, and contains nothing that in any

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\(^{72}\) Ōta’s own English translation of the Japanese title.


substantial way fulfils our expectations." At the same time, Ōta discerned that the meeting between the two heads of state symbolized an important historical turning point for Okinawa and for the reversion movement. The call for reversion, Ōta stressed, must transform itself from a movement of "official petitions and formal requests" (chinjō to gigan) to one which "demands what it wants and gets what it demands" (yōkyū shi, kachitoru). He declared that: "The reversion movement is no longer a simple expression of nationalism. It is obvious to all that if we rely purely on the largely sentimental and emotional call for release from foreign rule, the reversion movement will reach an impasse. The principles of the reversion movement must be fundamentally taken to question and redefined." Ōta predicted that the outcome of the next round of struggle and conflict within Okinawa would affect the future of the whole of Japan. The aims of the US and Japanese governments were clearly spelled out in their policy over Ogasawara. That is, the return of administrative rights over the islands was to come hand in hand with the strengthening of security relations. Ōta was quick to warn that there was no guarantee that Okinawa would not face the same fate, and that: "the return of Okinawa may very well be accompanied by the condition that the US have unrestricted use of the bases and maintain nuclear weapons within the islands."

Ōta therefore made an important shift towards focusing debate much more squarely on the fundamental meaning of reversion. For Ōta, the call for reversion was the call for the attainment of human rights, and for protection under Japan's "peace constitution." Okinawa was to no longer be used as a "means" (shudan) or "instrument" (dōgu) by the US or Japanese governments in the name of security: "to be able to live as an autonomous being with your own goals, and not [like Okinawa] as a 'means' under.

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76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
the name of the Japanese government, is a bare essential right of humans.” Ota saw the peace constitution as symbolizing the fundamental principles of rebirth which formed the base of his political action and the pursuit of autonomy. In another article on published during this time, Ota recounted how his teacher and mentor, Nakasone Seizen, had faithfully copied out by hand the text of the constitution around the summer of 1947, and how he himself had also copied out the text from his teacher. Ota reiterated that: “The words of the constitution provided us with the key to our own rebirth. There we found several of the principles which formed the base of our pursuit for humanity.”

In questioning the meaning of reversion, Ota contested the process by which Okinawa was becoming incorporated within Japan’s administrative system. In the joint communiqué, Johnson and Satō agreed that, “with a view toward minimizing the stresses which will arise at such a time as administrative rights are restored to Japan, measures should be taken to identify further the Ryukyuan people and their institutions with Japan proper.” They also pledged the formation of an advisory committee to “develop recommendations which should lead to substantial movement toward removing economic and social barriers between the Ryukyu Islands and Japan proper.” Less than one month later, Ota published a series of articles highly critical of Okinawa’s so called “ittaika” or unification “boom.”

While rendered as “further identify” in the English version of the communiqué, literally translated the Japanese term “ittaika” called for the “becoming one” of

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78 Ibid..
Okinawan people, society, and economy with mainland Japan. As Andrew Gordon observes: “the recasting of the ideal of equality as that of homogeneity, rather than equal opportunities for individual expression, was central to a postwar discourse undergirding conservative hegemony and celebrating the arrival of the middle-class society” in high-growth Japan. It was also central to the Japanese government’s policy on reversion. Ōta contested this process, emphasizing that state-centred homogenizing processes compromised individual autonomy, necessary for the functioning of democratic processes, and stifled Okinawan identity. Healthy scepticism in respect to the national government’s promotion of ittaika was, Ōta stressed, vital to ensure that Okinawans do not become alienated from political processes, as they had been in the prewar period.

Ittaika described a process where the extraneous or nonessential parts of something became incorporated into the whole. Yet Ōta raised a fundamental question: namely, who determines what the “intrinsic” part of Japan is to which Okinawa should be incorporated? For Ōta, the guarantee of democratic principles was the fundamental factor which should be given priority in any policy of incorporation. Okinawa’s incorporation must not merely be a repetition of prewar assimilationist policies: the essence of true incorporation was the attainment of an “autonomous spirit” (jiritsushin). Ōta emphasized that at a time when the “reversion issue” was beginning to be used as a pretext in the name of “national defence,” Okinawans must establish for themselves what exactly incorporation should or should not entail. He concluded:

Consequently, ittaika should not be a “policy of overcoming the economic gap” between Okinawa and mainland Japan (kakusa zesei), nor should it be the hitherto “policy of step by step incorporation” (tsunikasane hōshiki). It is not the mere

82 A linguistic comparison between the English and Japanese texts reveals numerous ways in which the US and Japanese government used terms which reflected their respective agendas and official stance in relation to Okinawa.
assimilation and homogenisation of Okinawa’s institutions. And it is more than the “official administrative return of Okinawa.” I believe it is the binding of a true “solidarity” (rentai) between Okinawans and mainland Japanese, where each respectively are aware of their responsibilities as subjects (shutaiteki sekinin), founded on the desire to build a future Japan in the name of peace and culture according to the principles of the constitution. It is only when this is achieved, that the incorporation (ittaika) which we have sought for so long will become a reality.\(^\text{84}\)

For Ōta, reversion did not entail homogenisation, nor only the attainment of an incorporated Japanese “subject”, but the building of a coalition between mainland Japan and Okinawa based on a respect for autonomy and difference. Three months after the Satō-Johnson joint communiqué, Ōta moved to Tokyo to conduct two years of further research at the Tokyo University Newspaper Research Institute. During this period, Ōta drew extensive ties with liberal intellectuals in Tokyo, including Ōe Kenzaburō, Sakamoto Yoshikazu, and Nakano Yoshio. He became a central member of a study group on Okinawa attended by Sakamoto and others, forged a strong connection with Iwanami editor Yoshino Genzaburō, and published prolifically in the journal Sekai and numerous Japanese newspapers. As he emerged a central voice in debates over the Okinawa issue in mainland Japan, he also undertook a profound revision of Okinawa’s historical relations with Japan. One month after his arrival in Tokyo, Ōta published an article in the Asahi Gurafu magazine which was highly critical not only of the government, but mainland Japan as a whole.

Ōta was highly critical of the lack of concern within Tokyo over the mountain of issues facing Okinawa. He saw that this ignorance was not due to Okinawa’s geographical distance, but the fact that Tokyo was too immersed in materialism to take heed of the multiple problems faced on Japan’s “periphery” (henkyō). Ōta began to draw a direct connection between this material prosperity and Okinawa’s own plight.

The prosperity of Japan was seen as gained through the tragedy of Okinawa’s war experience, and Japan’s exploitation of Okinawa in the postwar period. The separation of Okinawa from Japan as a result of the peace treaty was seen as a disgrace.85

The sense of indignation discernable in the Asahi Gurafu article set the tone for Ōta’s subsequent much lengthier analysis, The Ugly Japanese, published early the next year.86 “Japanese are ugly. At least in regards to Okinawa, I can say as much.” So began Ōta’s controversial work, described by the Weekly Okinawa Times as “an impassioned impeachment of the ignorance and egoism of the Japanese in mainland Japan in regard to the Okinawa issue, and their prejudices and discriminations against the Japanese people in Okinawa.” “Reading Ōta’s book,” the Okinawa Times review continued, “one realizes that if there has been any consistency in the policy of the Tokyo government toward Okinawa, it has been one of convenience. What is more, one is struck by the fact that the past century has been a continuous painful struggle for Okinawans in search of their identity.”87

Ōta was highly critical of the Japanese government’s stance on the Okinawan issue, particularly the “realization before our very eyes” of a mentality which “seeks to eschew the significance of Okinawa’s sacrifice in the Battle of Okinawa, and without even attempting to solve the remaining legacies of the war, to once again turn Okinawa into a stronghold of its national defence policy.” Mainland Japanese did not comprehend Okinawans’ sentiment on claims to national defence precisely because they were ignorant and uncomprehending of the immense sacrifices which Okinawa paid during the war, and of the reality of Okinawans’ postwar experience “living inside a

86 Ōta also expanded these ideas in “Hondo ni totte Okinawa to wa nanika,” Sekai (August 1968), pp. 72-85. Here he concluded that not only the ruling government and national agencies but also mainland Japanese intellectuals had failed to conceive of the Okinawa issue as their own.
nuclear base.” Moreover, this ignorance and lack of common understanding was seen to have “deep historical roots in the distant past.”

From the “house of peoples” exhibit during the 1903 Industrial Exhibition in Osaka, where two traditional Okinawan women were displayed as objects of curiosity to mainland Japanese onlookers, to the (ultimately defeated) parliamentary proposal to integrate Okinawa with Taiwan under joint colonial rule in the early 1900s, to the anti-dialect assimilation policies of Imperial Japan and the ultimate disregard for the fate of Okinawans during the Battle of Okinawa—Ota drew on extensive material as testimony to the historical discrimination against Okinawa by mainland Japanese. Moreover, he also placed this history in the immediate context of current Japanese government policies, of the extent to which mainland Japanese fiercely opposed the presence of nuclear weapons in mainland Japan while displaying a seeming blatant indifference towards the situation in Okinawa, and of the government’s repeated denial of Okinawans’ right to political representation in the national diet. Ota criticised Satō’s Washington visit of November 1967 as a further betrayal of the wishes of the majority of Okinawans. On the eve of Satō’s visit the GRI had passed a resolution urging the prime minister to determine a set date for the return of administrative rights over Okinawa and ensure that this return would guarantee for Okinawa a position equal to all other prefectures of Japan according to the “spirit of the Japanese constitution.” With these requests unfulfilled, Ota warned, “Okinawa’s distrust towards the Japanese government has only deepened.”

The perception gap between mainland Japanese and Okinawans was seen as born of a history of prejudice and discrimination. Moreover, the most surprising thing for Ota was that: “While Okinawa has been conveniently separated from Japan and left under foreign military rule for a period of over twenty-four years, in mainland Japan the

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88 Minikui Nihonjin: Nihon no Okinawa isshiki, pp. 3-4.
89 Ibid., p. 36.
government and the ruling party but also an untoward proportion of the general population do not even recognize that they are discriminating against Okinawans. The Japanese government has never yet acknowledged this discrimination or apologized for it. They have merely repeatedly told Okinawans over and over again to ‘bear’ their lot ‘for the sake of peace in East Asia and in Japan.’” 90

Ôta recognized that discrimination existed on a range of levels—within Okinawa for example against the peripheral islands of Yaeyama, as well as within mainland Japan itself. Yet he noted that in regards to relations between mainland Japan and Okinawa, this discrimination remained institutionalised (seidojō no sabetsu). 91 Prejudice against Okinawans not only existed on an emotional level, but was institutionalised within legal systems through the denial of their basic rights as Japanese citizens.

Ôta concluded that until mainland Japanese recognized the reality of this discrimination, they would not be able to grasp the fact that their own prosperity had been founded on Okinawa’s sacrifice, or be able to perceive the Okinawan issue as their own. Just as The Ugly Japanese was an “impassioned impeachment” of Japan’s historical stance towards Okinawans, it was also an emotional entreaty for mainland Japanese to recognize that the Okinawan issue was an important issue facing Japan as a whole. “Fundamental ‘Japanese polity’ does not hold Okinawa to be a vital part of the nation’s body; it is expendable, under duress, if thereby the interests of the home islands can be served advantageously.” Citing George Kerr from his well known historical treatise, Okinawa: The History of an Island People, Ôta appealed to mainland Japanese to prove these observations wrong. 92

90 Ibid., p. 11.
92 Ibid., p. 44.
In the first five months of after publication, *The Ugly Japanese* went through eight printings. As Hokama Shuzen noted at the time: “Out of the numerous works on Okinawa which have appeared in the so called ‘Okinawa boom’ of today, none has been read by as many people as *The Ugly Japanese.*”\(^9^3\) Many Japanese gained knowledge of Okinawan issues for the first time through its pages. Numerous Okinawans also greeted the book as, in the words of Hokama, “lifting the weight of twenty four years of silence from their shoulders by giving a voice to their thoughts.”\(^9^4\)

As a review of *The Ugly Japanese* in the Japanese edition of *Okinawa Taimusu* pointed out: “A sense of distrust towards mainland Japan smoulders in the depths of the hearts of Okinawans, and while impeaching Japan has again grown popular of late, it is in fact a subject with a long history.”\(^9^5\) In the wake of the war defeat, both pro-independence advocates within Okinawa and the Japanese Communist Party called for the liberation of Ryukyu from protracted Japanese imperialist rule. As late as 1949, Okinawan Popular Party leader Senaga Kamejirō stressed the need to cooperate with the US forces in order to realize the emancipation of the “Ryukyuan race” (*Ryūkyū no minzoku*).\(^9^6\) As pro-reversion forces grew and opposition to the US occupation increased in the early 1950s, however, progressive as well as nationalist conservative groups in Okinawa began to stress, under different agendas, the commonalities rather than differences between Okinawa and mainland Japan. By the mid 1950s, even one-time independence advocate Senaga, now under persecution by USCAR authorities for communist collaboration, had begun to differentiate between Japan’s historical

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\(^9^4\) Ibid., pp. 234-5. One person of Okinawan descent residing in Osaka is said to have sent out tens of copies to his acquaintances declaring that: “this is precisely what I was trying to say.” See Okamoto Keitoku, “‘Sabetsu’ no mondai o tōshite kangaeru Okinawa: fukudokuhon ‘ningen’ o meguru mondai,” *Kyōiku Hyōron* (June 1971), p. 32, also Arasaki Moriteru in *Sengo Okinawashi*, p. 353.


\(^9^6\) Oguma Riichi, *Nihonjin no kyōkai*, 488.
discrimination of Okinawa, perceived as an already resolved issue, and the unequal system of relations of the postwar period. 97

By the 1960s, however, increasing disaffection towards the Japanese government’s stalling on the Okinawa question brought deep-rooted issues of discrimination once again to the surface. This disaffection only intensified after Satō’s visit to Washington in November 1967. By giving wide audience to an emerging sentiment within pro-reversion ideology, Ōta also became a representative voice of it. 98 He was able to use a wealth of primary historical material to relate highly politicised contemporary issues to a history of discrimination and inequality. His indictment of Japan’s historical relations with Okinawa was proffered not as a call for independence but from a pro-reversionist stance, and as a counter to the Japanese government’s emerging agenda on reversion. In short, The Ugly Japanese was Ōta’s own attempt to contest the US and Japanese government’s strategic shift in policy on Okinawa, and redefine the reversion movement as more than the mere nationalist desire for the return of administrative rights to Japan.

Yet Ōta’s analysis and censuring of discrimination was not universally acclaimed, even by anti-base left-wing Okinawan intellectuals. Such criticism attested to discrepancies in how reversion was conceived, both as a political movement and in relation to Okinawan identity. These discrepancies were indicative of a fundamental crisis in representation of the Okinawan/Japanese “subject”, and indicative of fundamental fissures within the left. Historian and activist Arasaki Moriteru criticized Ōta’s analysis for being founded on an emotional sense of victimhood. Arasaki saw that

97 Arasaki Moriteru, Sengo Okinawashi, op cit., p. 337. For an analysis of the change in stance within progressive parties in both Okinawa and mainland Japan, see Oguma Eji ibid., pp. 496-9.
98 Arasaki Moriteru observes that the indictment of Japanese historical discrimination from within the reversion movement grew in strength from around the time when the Reversion Council submitted a “Petition Addressed to Prime Minister Satō” (Satō sōri daijin e no chokusōjo) directly prior to Satō’s Washington visit in 1967, and peaked with the publication of Ōta’s Minikui Nihonjin.
it was only through delving into the numerous contradictions embedded within Okinawa’s political movement, while at the same time uncovering “common issues” affecting Japan as a whole, that a “true solidarity movement” between mainland Japan and Okinawa could be formed.\(^9\) Marxist-influenced historians Kinjō Seitoku and Nishizato Kikō, in emphasizing that Okinawan history was “a part” of the history of the “Japanese race” (Nihon minzoku), were also critical of a “George Kerr-type” scheme of relations which set “Japan” up against “Okinawa.” They saw inequality as founded on the discriminatory policy of state institutions and the system of production, and historically reinforced by hierarchical relations within Okinawa. The reversion movement was a call for “true unification” between Okinawa and mainland Japan from below, and the “rousing of a sense of being discriminated against amongst the people of Okinawa” was seen to only “serve to weaken the common struggle of the people of Okinawa prefecture and mainland Japan.”\(^10\) Kinjō and Nishizato saw the relations of production as foundation of inequality, and conceived their project of emancipation within the framework of ethnic nationalism.

Soon after the publication of The Ugly Japanese, Ōta became embroiled in a far-reaching dispute over issues of discrimination within Japan. The dispute erupted after the Osaka Education Association passed a supplementary reader on discrimination for use in junior high schools. The reader, entitled Ningen, was produced by the Education Research Association for the Buraku Liberation League (BLL), and sought to raise the

\(^{9}\) “Zen Nihonteki kadai ni takame yo: naizai teki mondai no kyūmei o,” RS (22 August 1968), p. 12. Arasaki was referring in particular to Ōta’s Sekai article, “Hondo ni totte Okinawa to wa ranika.” See also Arasaki Moriteru, Sengo Okinawashi, pp. 340-1. In defense of Ōta, he did criticize pervasive contradictions within Okinawan society and politics in his previous work, The Popular Consciousness of Okinawa. In this sense, Hokama noted that these two works were best read in conjunction: “The seeds of The Ugly Japanese were first sown in The Popular Consciousness of Okinawa, and The Ugly Japanese must be grasped in its context. Moreover, it is also an irrefutable fact that The Popular Consciousness of Okinawa was itself a direct product of Ōta’s war experience” (Hokama “‘Minikui Nihonjin’,” Sekai, p. 345).

\(^{10}\) “Okinawa rekishi’ kenkyū no genjō to mondai ten,” Rekishi Kenkyū, No. 357 (January 1970), pp. 47-57.
issue of discrimination in Japan of groups such as Okinawans, Buraku, and Koreans within the context of the classroom.  

However central figures within Osaka Okinawa Prefectural Association strongly opposed the Ningen reader on the grounds that the Okinawa issue and the Buraku issue were fundamentally different in nature and should not be confused with each other. Members of the Osaka Okinawa Prefectural Association also sought support from politicians within Okinawa, and the issue escalated. Chief Executive Yara formally requested to the Osaka Education Association to take the wishes of members of the Prefectural Association in account. In 1971, the Okinawa Parliamentary Club, made up of Okinawans recently elected to the national diet, directly requested the head of the Osaka Education Association not to approve the reader on the grounds that, amongst others, if used it would promote an “image” amongst Japanese that Okinawans were similar to “buraku” or “Koreans.” Ōta, who had agreed to cooperate with the “Ningen” project, came under direct fire from those who opposed it, including former Chairman of the Reversion Council and Upper House member Kyan Shin’ei.  

The issue was in part complicated by Ōta’s own differentiation between types of discrimination. The Osaka Okinawa Prefectural Association (OOPA) employed this differentiation to argue that while the Okinawa issue was one of institutionalised  

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101 The National Committee for Buraku Liberation, successor of its prewar counterpart, Suiheisha, was renamed the BLL in 1955. Government reforms in the early Meiji period stripped “buraku” of official stipends for policing and leather-related industries, while persistent prejudices prevented many from finding new occupations. Like their later counterparts in Okinawa, buraku liberation and improvement of lifestyle movements of the Meiji era sought equality by attempting to transform themselves into model modern Japanese citizens. See Ian Neary, “Burakumin in Contemporary Japan,” in Michel Weiner (ed.) Japan’s Minorities (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 50-78; and Noah McCormack, Nation and Prejudice: On the buraku problem 1868-1912, PhD dissertation (Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, 2002).  

102 Partly in response to a display of support by other Okinawans within Osaka and in Okinawa itself, eventually the Osaka Education Association decided to authorize use of a rewritten version of the text. On the issue, see for example Arasaki Moriteru Sengo Okinawashi, pp. 350-8. See also Okamoto Keitoku, “‘Sabetsu’ no mondai o tōshite kangaeru Okinawa: fukudokuhon ‘ningen’ o meguru mondai.” Also as recounted by Ōta in an interview with the author (25 February 2002).
inequality, the Buraku problem in Japan rather arose from prejudices that existed on an emotional level (shinjō teki sabetsu) within Japanese society. In contrast to Ōta, however, underlying this stance was a deep-rooted aversion to equating the Okinawan issue with other subjugated groups within Japan. Such an aversion was reminiscent of way in which many Okinawans in the prewar period opposed and sought to avoid any form of differentiation from “Japanese”—a phenomenon which Ōta had himself examined by cited numerous examples in *The Popular Consciousness of Okinawa*.

*The Ugly Japanese* was a ground-breaking work precisely because of the forceful way in which it exposed fundamental contradictions within Japan’s postwar system. The hierarchical relations which placed Okinawa between Japan and the US were divulged as inherently related to the vestiges of Japanese imperialism, and fundamental contradictions within the Meiji project of national consolidation. Moreover, these unequal relations were seen to be perpetuated not only by the policies of Japanese government, but through a pervasive indifference towards Okinawa within Japan as a whole. Ōta challenged the concept of the Japanese “people”—as both an immutable entity and as the binary opposite of the Japanese “state”—through a poignant expose on the way in which postwar relations had been founded upon the geopolitical and ideological exclusion of Okinawa from mainland Japan. As Hokama Shuzen noted in his review of *The Ugly Japanese*:

How should Japanese deal with the fact that payment for the “blood of the people

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103 For example, the dispute over Kushi Fusako’s “Horobiyuki Ryūkyū onna no shuki” (Notes on the Ruin of a Ryukyuan women, 1932). The dispute broke out after Kushi, a writer of Okinawan descent residing in Tokyo, published a story in the women’s magazine *Fǔjin Kōron* (Women’s Forum) portraying a successful Tokyo businessman who goes to great lengths to conceal his Okinawan identity. Tokyo’s Okinawa Prefecture Student Association publicly objected to the story, in particular the way in which it portrayed “Ryūkyūans” as “ruined” in the same way as the backward Ainu and as if they were a separate “race” (minzoku) to Japanese. Kushi, while highly critical of the Student Association’s stance, published an apology of sorts in the magazine, and ceased writing (see Ōta Masahide, *Okinawa no minshū ishiki*, op cit., p. 328).
of Okinawa Prefecture” during the Pacific War came in the form of a “nuclear base”? Why are Okinawans discriminated against, and why have they been discriminated against in history? The Japanese government, and the Japanese people, cannot avoid facing up to the issues which Ōta raises. For they expose the need for Japan, reconstituted under the principles of the peace constitution, to once again question the essence of its modern experience.104

At the same time, Ōta’s analysis raised more questions than it answered. To what extent was the differentiation between institutionalised and social discrimination useful? Was the “Okinawa issue” merely limited to the former, and if not what important insights could be brought through a wider analysis of inequality and discrimination in Japan and beyond? Moreover—an all-too neglected issue—how did this relate to structural gender inequality in both Okinawa and the rest of Japan? What problems existed in placing “Okinawans” against “mainland Japanese”? How were unequal power relations between Okinawa and mainland Japan reinforced through hierarchical and ideological structures within Okinawa itself? How could this complex nexus of intertwining power relations be conceived and transformed?

The issues were not easily answered, and were inherent to the dilemmas faced in negotiating multiple structures of dominance within US-Japan-Okinawan relations. At the core of many of these issues lay inherent tensions within Ōta’s attempts to both incorporate and differentiate “Okinawa” within constructions of Japanese national identity. Ōta called for the recognition of equal rights for Okinawans, while also calling for a move beyond a framework where the pursuit of equality necessarily entailed regulation within dominant and, in the case of Japan, highly centralized and homogenized forms of governance. In accordance with this dual agenda, Ōta both focused his analysis on the inequalities of the system of discrimination which placed Okinawa under US occupation, and broader issues relating to discrimination. A broad

104 Hokama Shuzen, “‘Minikui Nihonjin’,” p. 345.
frame of analysis also raised important questions relating to Japanese colonialism and nationalism which had been deferred both within postwar progressive politics in mainland Japan and the Okinawan reversion movement. It called into question the way in which Japan's embrace of modernity had coincided with the simultaneous incorporation and exclusion of inscribed 'minority' groups such as Buraku, Okinawan, and Ainu within constructions of the Japanese subject. This simultaneous incorporation and exclusion had in turn been reproduced in Japanese imperialist expansion in Asia.

The complexities of negotiating such a dual strategy became integrated into the semantics of Ōta's analysis. In contesting the ambiguous positioning of Okinawa historically and in postwar relations, Ōta negotiated the protean construction of “Japan” as at times incorporating and excluding Okinawa. With the inclusion of other minority groups such as Buraku and Koreans, however, sustaining this (inherently ambiguous) binary became far more complex. The endeavour to maintain overlapping subjects of reference and multiple alliances resulted in what were at times contradictory frames of analysis. The Ningen dispute highlighted the way in which such contradictions may in turn became manifested within the conflicting political agendas between groups. As Ōta himself lamented in 1971: “When I related the Okinawa issue to the Buraku issue, one section of those of Okinawan descent sent me a letter in protest. In other words, what is so tragic is the way in which, as we can see in this case, the more people are discriminated against, the more they tend to put themselves up against other victims of discrimination. Thus just because they may be members of the working class, does not mean people unite together so easily, in fact sometimes it is just the opposite.”

Ōta's penetrating impeachment of the contradictions of postwar Japan's democratic system and the assumptions of Left populist politics in relation to Okinawa ironically coincided with the breakdown of a common platform within populist politics,

as it was embodied in the perceived struggle for peace, democracy and the attainment of
an autonomous Japanese subject. A crisis in the representation of “Japanese” and
“Okinawan” political agendas and their relation to each other was accompanied by the
fragmentation of collective political action both in mainland Japan and Okinawa.
Moreover, opposition against the Ningen project by members of the OOPA as well as
Okinawans within Okinawa revealed that, in contrast to Ōta’s hopes and assertions, pro-
assimilationist ideology, a sense of inferiority and a fear of claiming difference was
strongly embedded within the reversion movement.

The political fragmentation of the reversion movement was symbolized by the
breakdown of Okinawa’s anti-war anti-B-52 coalition in February 1969. The first B-52s
had been deployed by the US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) to Okinawa a year earlier, on 5
February 1968, initially in response to the North Korean seizure of the USS Pueblo on
23 January. Less than a week after their arrival, on 10 February 1968, the GRI
legislature passed a resolution calling for their immediate withdrawal from Okinawa.
Yet despite widespread opposition across party lines to the stationing of B-52s, the US
JCS authorized the use of Okinawa-based B-52s for missions over Vietnam in the same
month. In April, with the escalation of the Vietnam conflict, the number of US bombing
missions over Vietnam increased from 1200 to 1800 per month. Approximately 400 of
these were flown from Okinawa monthly.106

The stationing of the B-52s on Okinawa served to bring the Okinawa issue
further to the attention of rising anti-Vietnam War sentiment in mainland Japan. It also
became a focus of pro-reversion anti-military political forces within Okinawa. Anti-war
sentiment amongst local residents further increased when a B-52 stationed at Kadena
exploded just after takeoff on 19 November 1968, damaging houses in Kadena village.

After the existence of extensive nuclear weapons in a storage facility located in close

proximity to the explosion was confirmed in the Okinawan press the following day, the All-Okinawan Military Bases Labour Union decided to participate in a strike calling for the withdrawal of the B-52s. The Okinawa Prefectural Joint Council for the Protection of Human Lives, established as an umbrella organization of groups calling for the withdrawal of B-52s, agreed to carry out a mass prefecture-wide anti-B-52 strike. The strike was to be held on 4 February 1969, and to include the Okinawan Teachers Union, the Okinawa Prefectural Council of Labour Unions (Okinawa-ken rōdō kumiai kyōgikai or kenrōkyō) and the Military Bases Union.

The planned strike would have marked the first time that the Military Bases Union joined forces with pro-reversion groups on an anti-base cause, posing a real threat to both the immediate functioning and future of US bases in Okinawa. Previously USCAR had used means available to quell anti-base anti-occupation protests. Yet this time the Japanese government stepped in, urging USCAR not to introduce controversial anti-strike orders, and instead directly pressuring Chief Executive Yara to advise groups against taking strike action. On 30 January 1969 Yara issued a public request asking the Joint Council to cancel the scheduled industrial action. On 1 February 1969, fearing a splintering of the Yara administration and isolated without the support of mainland Japanese labour unions, the largest organization within the Joint Council, kenrōkyō, agreed to cancel their plans to strike. The Joint Council itself followed suit a day later.

Underlying the breakdown of the anti-war pro-reversion coalition was Okinawa’s entrenched structure of economic dependence. Prior to reversion, over 20% of all Okinawan employees worked on base, and it was said that over half of

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108 See for example “Why was Strike Cancelled?” (sic.), *Weekly Okinawa Times* (8 February 1969), p. 3.
109 In the words of economist Miyamoto Ken’ichi, “the pre-reversion Okinawan economy was, in one word, a base-economy” (Miyamoto Ken’ichi and Sasaki Masayuki, *Okinawa: 21 seiki no chōsen* (Tokyo: Iwanami, 2000), p. 4).
Okinawa's total income was derived from the US military bases. The successes of the island-wide struggle of the 1950s ironically further entrenched dependence, as landowners were ultimately able to secure five-year contracts at an annual rent much larger than the original amount proffered by USCAR. The reversion movement, as fundamentally a call against US occupation, was fuelled by strong anti-base sentiment. At the same time, it was not until 1967 and only after extensive debate that the Reversion Council (Fukkikyō) took an explicitly anti-base stance. The united front established in 1968 to support Yara's candidature in the upcoming Chief Executive elections could not reach a consensus on the military base issue after the most influential party, the Okinawan Socialist Masses Party, took the position that the US base issue should be tackled once reversion was achieved.\(^{110}\)

Moreover, Yara sought and heavily relied upon Japanese government funding in the effort to decrease economic dependence on the bases, curb the economic and social dislocations that would accompany reversion, and reduce the income gap between Okinawa and the rest of Japan. From 1967, Japanese government economic aid to Okinawa dramatically increased, reaching over five times the amount of economic aid dispersed by the US government to Okinawa by 1971. The course of events leading up to 4 February 1969 revealed that not only USCAR but also the Japanese Government would deploy the means they had available to ensure that the common interests of the US military and the ruling Japanese LDP were secured. It marked, in short, the emergence of a more indirect (post- or neo-colonial) set of relations, where the US military presence was effectively sustained through indirect structures of dependence rather than direct administrative rule. On the eve of the failed strike, Ōta wrote despondently:

> Whatever the outcome of 4 February, it is certain that already existent internal

organizational divisions and the confusion which arose from mutual antagonism between groups will have a lasting impact. That they were able to found a ‘strong alliance’ amongst diverse organizations was the pride of progressive forces. [Only three months after Yara’s electoral victory], that alliance is already breaking down. Needless to say, ruling forces in the US and Japan will greet this turn in events with glee.\textsuperscript{111}

**Debating Reversion and Anti-Reversion**

1969 witnessed some of the largest demonstrations in the pre-reversion period. The Reversion Council adopted an increasingly radical agenda as the realities of a bilaterally negotiated reversion emerged, and the Vietnam conflict further intensified. On 22 March, the Council adopted the withdrawal of military bases and the abolition of the US-Japan Security Treaty as principle demands of the movement for the first time. The Council marked 23 June, the anniversary of the end of the last organized ground resistance by Japanese forces in the Battle of Okinawa, as “anti-war day” (\textit{hansen no hi}), and held a mass rally calling for the abolition of the security treaty, the withdrawal of the B-52s, and the full and immediate reversion of Okinawa to Japan.

Less than a month later, on 18 July, a \textit{Wall Street Journal} article revealed that over twenty US servicemen had been injured in Okinawa after a nerve gas leak, confirming the long-held suspicion that large amounts of chemical weaponry was stored on the islands. On 25 July a group of student demonstrators stormed into USCAR’s head offices, and pulled down and burnt the American flag in protest. Four days later the Reversion Council also presided over a mass rally demanding the immediate withdrawal of chemical weapons from Okinawa.\textsuperscript{112} On 13 November 1969 an estimated 100,000 Okinawans participated in a mass rally calling for total withdrawal of the US

\textsuperscript{111} "Mitosu na, Hondo seifu e no ikari o," \textit{Shukan Asahi} (14 February 1969), pp. 24-5.

\textsuperscript{112} Details about withdrawal of weapons. On 2 December 1969 the Pentagon announced it would transport the chemical weapons stored within Okinawa to US territory.
bases in opposition to Satō's Washington visit, and demanding the full and immediate reversion of Okinawa.113

Yet while this mass resistance certainly had an effect in expediting the withdrawal of both B-52s and chemical weapons from Okinawa, it did not prevent the strengthening of bilateral security relations from going ahead. In the Joint Communique of 21 November 1969, it was announced that both Satō and Nixon had agreed to return administrative rights over Okinawa to Japan in 1972. At the same time, the President and the Prime Minister also “recognized the vital role played by United States forces in Okinawa in the present situation in the Far East.” It was agreed that the “mutual security interests of the United States and Japan could be accommodated within arrangements for the return of administrative rights over Okinawa to Japan.” The Japanese government would assume responsibility for the “immediate defence” of Okinawa, and the United States would retain “such military facilities and areas in Okinawa as required in the mutual security of both countries.”114

The communiqué’s wording on the most controversial issue surrounding the reversion agreement, the stationing of nuclear weapons in Okinawa, was confirmed immediately prior to US President Nixon’s meeting with Satō.115 The final paragraph read:

The Prime Minister described in detail the particular sentiment of the Japanese people against nuclear weapons and the policy of the Japanese Government reflecting such sentiment. The President expressed his deep understanding and assured the Prime Minister that, without prejudice to the position of the United States Government with respect to the prior consultation system under the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, the reversion of Okinawa would be carried

113 Fukugi Akira, Okinawa no Ashimoto 1968-1972 nen, pp. 91-238.
115 As described ibid., pp. 81-2.
out in a manner consistent with the policy of the Japanese Government as
described by the Prime Minister.\textsuperscript{116}

Okinawans greeted the negotiated position between the US and Japan on the
nuclear question with a level of confusion equal to the ambiguity of the communiqué's
own wording. According to a survey conducted by Ryūkyū Shimpō published on 15
December 1969, 10% of Okinawans believed the joint communiqué provided for the
complete withdrawal of nuclear weapons from Okinawa, 22% believed that nuclear
weapons would not be removed, 24% believed that nuclear weapons would be brought
back in a case of emergency, and 33% did not know what the communiqué actually
meant in regards to nuclear weapons.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., p. 103.
\textsuperscript{117} Cited in Herber A. Kampf, The United States and Okinawa: A Study in Dependency Relationship
he had conducted secret negotiations over the nuclear issue with a Japanese representative referred to by
the code name “Yoshida.” As Kissinger described the exchange:
“This left the nuclear question. Nixon had agreed to give up the right to store nuclear weapons in
Okinawa; we thought it important to retain the right to reintroduce them in an emergency. The result was
a complicated exchange between ‘Yoshida’ and me to find a formula to meet the domestic necessities of
both sides. The Japanese wanted a statement that nuclear weapons would be dealt with in accordance with
‘the policy of the Japanese government as described by the Prime Minister.’ This could mean anything; in
the Japanese context it was bound to be interpreted as prohibiting the introduction of nuclear weapons.
Our Joint Chiefs, on the other hand, insisted on some formula on which they could base the reintroduction
of nuclear weapons in an emergency. In a sense we were arguing about window dressing: a decision of
the magnitude of introducing nuclear weapons would not depend on quoting clauses from long-ago
communiqués but on the conditions prevailing at the time. Still, the reversion would need domestic
approval in both countries and that was unattainable without some solution to the largely self-imposed
dilemma.

“Alex Johnson and I finally came up with a formula as ingenious as it was empty. The US-Japanese
Security Treaty had a provision for prior consultation over emergencies. If we referred to it in the
communiqué, both sides could satisfy their requirements: Sato could maintain the anti-nuclear stance of
his government; Nixon could claim that the clause gave us the right to raise the issue of nuclear weapons
even in advance of an actual emergency.” From Henry Kissinger, The White House Years (Boston and
Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), pp. 354-5. Kyoto Industrial University Professor and
member of the Okinawa Base Problems Committee Wakaizumi Kei later divulged that he played the role
of ‘Yoshida’ in these exchanges in his memoirs, Taraku nakarishi o Shinzumu to hossu (Tokyo: Bunrei
Shunjū, 1994). According to Wakaizumi, minutes between Sato and Nixon on the nuclear question were
agreed to be kept top secret. A draft of these minutes purportedly stated that “…in time of great
emergency the United States Government will require the re-entry of nuclear weapons and transmit rights
In the early hours of 22 November, members of the GRI legislature held a press conference once the contents of the Nixon-Satō joint communiqué became known. Okinawa's political tables were completely turned. Members of the party which had throughout the occupation period taken a pro-military anti-reversionist stance, the LDP, now claimed "inexpressible joy" over the joint communiqué between the two leaders. In contrast, members of the Okinawan Social Masses Party, the Okinawan People's Party and the Okinawan Socialist Party, who had been at the forefront of the reversion movement up to this point, expressed reservations and even outright opposition to the negotiated agreement. The Reversion Council also released a declaration opposed to the terms of the joint communiqué and the strengthening of the US-Japan bilateral security system.\(^\text{118}\)

Throughout this period Ōta continued to contest the stance of both the US and Japanese governments. From 28 January to 4 February 1969, he attended a joint Japan-US conference on "Okinawa and Asia" in Kyoto. The conference was sponsored by the Okinawan Base Problems Committee, an informal advisory council to the government-sponsored Discussion Group on the Okinawan Issue (Okinawa mondai kondankai), headed by Ōhama Nobumoto. Ōhama, dean of Waseda University, had been Ōta's guarantor in the early 1950s when Ōta applied for a scholarship to the US.\(^\text{119}\) Yet now, in Okinawa with prior consultation with the Government of Japan. The United States Government also requires the standby retention and activation in time of great emergency of existing nuclear storage locations in Okinawa" (Ibid., pp. (iii)). Ōta repeatedly questioned the possible existence of a secret agreement on nuclear weapons, and on publication of Wakaizumi's book purportedly contacted Wakaizumi on the details of the negotiations he carried out prior to reversion on behalf of the Japanese government (Ōta interview with author, 4 May 2001). The agreement on nuclear weapons and the issue of prior consultation is discussed in detail in Gabe Masaaki, Henkan to wa nan datta no ka: Nichibei sengo kōshōshi no noka de (Tokyo: Nihon Hōsōhan Kyōkai, 2000). For a detailed analysis of US nuclear weapons in Okinawa and in relation to the rest of Japan during the Cold War, see also Hans M. Kristensen, "Japan under the Nuclear Umbrella: US Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear War Planning in Japan during the Cold War," Working Paper (The Nautilus Institute) (July 1999) (available at http://www.nautilus.org/library/security/papers/Japan.pdf).


\(^{119}\) Interview between Ōta and the author (25 February 2002).
and later in relation to the Okinawa Marine Expo, their opinions directly clashed. The committee was attended by eight representatives from the US, twenty two from mainland Japan and four from Okinawa. Two days later Ōta published an article highly critical of the limitations on Okinawan participation in the conference, the fact that the Okinawan issue was being discussed “over the heads of Okinawans,” and the way in which discussions during the conference “focused not on Okinawa itself, but from the perspective of US and Japan joint national interests.”

On the announcement of the details of Satō and Nixon’s joint communiqué in November 1969, Ōta again published a lengthy commentary in a major local newspaper. He stressed the importance of looking behind the communiqué’s wording in order to comprehend the ‘reality’ of bilateral negotiations over reversion. In particular, Ōta was highly sceptical of the communiqué’s wording on the nuclear question. While according to the communiqué the president agreed that reversion should take place “in a manner consistent with the policy of the Japanese Government,” Ōta pointed out that this “policy” did not necessary indicate Japan’s “three non-nuclear principles.” He observed that references to the “prior consultation system” had been made not with a view to restricting the transportation of nuclear weapons but “with the aim of maintaining Okinawa’s nuclear deterrent capability.” Ōta also noted that the government’s claim to “hondo nama” (literally “the same level as mainland Japan”) was only supported in the text itself by the guarantee that the US-Japan Security Treaty would apply to Okinawa.

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120 Ōta stressed “above all” that the US and Japanese governments cannot be allowed to decide the fate of Okinawa without the full participation of Okinawans. “Nichibei Kyōtō Kaigi to Okinawa no shōrai,” OT (6 February 1969), p. 6. The Okinawan Base Problem Committee report, released on March 8, recommended that the date for the return of Okinawa be determined promptly, that this date be 1972 at the latest, and that the US-Japan Security Treaty be fully applicable to Okinawa on return of administrative rights over Okinawa. In article published in June of the same year, Ōta criticized the report, noting that what Okinawans desired was not return to Japan under the US-Japan Security Treaty, but return to Japan under the guarantees of Japan’s ‘peace constitution.’ He concluded: “Whatever platitudes are given, a ‘security’ system which is founded on the sacrifice of Okinawa will no longer be tolerated” (Ōta Masahide, “Okinawa ni totte anzen to wa nankika,” Tenbō, No. 126 (June 1969), p. 38).
Ōta saw this as directly conflicting with the Okinawan desire for ‘immediate complete and unconditional return’ (sokuji mujōken zenmen henkan). He concluded:

While we are striving against having to live beside massive military bases, and seek the ‘Okinawa’s return to the peace constitution’ with this in mind, the focus of discussions between the US and Japanese heads of state is predictably the ‘defense of the Far East,’ including the security of Japan. Okinawan reversion is merely seen as an effective way to execute American international obligations. In other words, the scenario which we most opposed has materialized before us.\textsuperscript{121}

Ōta saw the joint communiqué as failing to satisfy the demands of Okinawa’s reversion struggle, and continued to view the achievement of ‘true reversion’ as the most pressing issue for both Okinawa and Japan “in the coming decade.”\textsuperscript{122} In the period directly following Satō’s meetings with the US president, however, there also emerged the seeds of a new radical faction from within the reversion movement which questioned its core tenets and grew to make a significant impact on Okinawan intellectual thought. While Ōta and others sought to contest the kind of reversion which the US and Japanese governments were unilaterally promoting, a number of young intellectuals began to oppose the very call for reversion itself.

Intellectuals such as Arakawa Akira, Kawamitsu Shinichi, Okamoto Keitoku, and Nakasone Konyū came to be associated with what became known as the ‘anti-reversion theory’ (hanfukki-ron).\textsuperscript{123} Journalist and later president of the Okinawa Times, Arakawa Akira was one of the first and most prolific writers to take an ‘anti-reversionist’ stance. Born in 1931, Arakawa had been heavily involved in the radical University of the Ryukyus student magazine, Ryūdai bungaku (literature of the University of the Ryukyus) during his student years. He published poems opposing US


\textsuperscript{122} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{123} As Arakawa recounts in \textit{Okinawa: tōgō to hangyaku}, p. 70.
military occupation and the separation of Okinawa from Japan under the peace treaty. At the same time, in a similar vein to Ōta, he also maintained a critical stance and sense of ambivalence towards Japan. By the time of the joint Nixon-Satō communique, this ambivalence had evolved into a vehement opposition towards Japanese nationalism, the nation-state as ideological and political construction, and the reversion of Okinawa to Japan.\textsuperscript{124}

The tenets of the reversion movement had come under questioning at least since the Satō-Johnson communique of 1967, as seen in Ōta’s work and also within the political and social struggles of the time. In this period, some politically active students began to refer to the “struggle for Okinawa” as opposed to the “struggle for reversion” in a conscious effort to redefine and expand the aims and agenda of the movement. In 1950s and 1960s Okinawa the Japanese Rising Sun Flag (Hi-no-maru) emerged as a symbol of resistance against US military occupation and land expropriation policies, and in direct opposition to the military authority’s equation of the flag with anti-Americanism and communism. Yet by the time of mass demonstrations in early 1969, students had begun to burn the Hi-no-maru together with the Stars and Stripes as a symbolic expression of opposition to not only US military occupation, but the Japanese government, Japanese nationalism, and many of the assumptions and tenets of the reversion movement.\textsuperscript{125}

The radicalisation of groups within Okinawa coincided with the general shift in Japan against a liberal progressive concept of democratic revolution founded on the awakening of a rational subject, as the postwar democratic movement opened itself to the embrace of anti-rational, anti-institutional, anti-enlightenment ideologies. With the

\textsuperscript{124} For an insightful analysis of Arakawa Akira’s literary works in English see Michael Molasky, “Arakawa Akira: The Thought and Poetry of an Iconoclast” in Glenn D. Hook and Richard Siddle (eds.) Japan and Okinawa: Structure and Subjectivity (provisional title).

\textsuperscript{125} As described by Arakawa Akira, “Mōmoku teki sanka e no kiken,” OT (9 January 1970), p. 3, and Arakawa Akira Okinawa: tōgō to hangyaku (Tokyo: Tsuma Shobō, 2000), p. 120.
formation of the Joint Student Struggle Committee (Zengaku Kyōtō Kaigi or Zenkyōtō), Japan's student movement became increasingly violent, anarchist, and inward. As Yumiko Iida observes: "(O)ver the course of the 1960s the increasing opacity of the enemy and the increasing internalisation of systemic control in effect increasingly linked one's personal struggles to forms of anarchistic self-negation.... The rise of the Zenkyōtō movement demonstrated the extent to which the ideal-typical content of the rational autonomous subject, the principal agency of the early postwar democratic revolution, had been undermined and replaced by a romantic, collective and agonized notion of the subject." 126

The breakdown of the planned joint action of 4 February 1968 highlighted the process whereby structures of oppression in Okinawa were similarly becoming increasingly opaque through the interlocking of multiple relations of dependence. Increasingly ubiquitous operations of control lead to divisions within coalitions of political resistance and the fragmentation of collective action. This process coincided with a general sense of disillusion— with the Japanese government, with Japan, with political organizations within Okinawa, and with the Yara administration. Disillusionment with the political process as a means whereby voices of resistance could be effectively represented, and opposition to the terms of reversion set out in the November 1969 communiqué, combined to generate a sentiment within Okinawa against participation in the National Diet. As one reader's letter to the Okinawa Times declared: "National political representation will by no means expand the rights of the Okinawan people, nor will it advance Okinawa's struggle...In extreme terms, national representation signifies nothing but the dispatching of merchants to peddle Okinawa off to Tokyo." 127

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In 1961, the GRI legislature passed a unanimous resolution demanding the Japanese government give Okinawan residents rights to political representation in the national diet. From 1961-8, six such resolutions were passed by the GRI to no avail. Japan’s ruling LDP government took the position that while Okinawans had Japanese citizenship and the constitution applied to Okinawa “in concept” (kannen teki ni), to the extent that Okinawa was under US jurisdiction, residents of Okinawa did not have constitutional rights. Directly following the joint communiqué of 1969, however, the LDP revoked this policy, and began to take steps towards allowing Okinawans political participation on a level equal to the rest of Japan.

In an article published as one of a ten-part series entitled “The Suppressed Spirit” (hishihaisha no kokoro) in Okinawa Times in early January 1970, Arakawa Akira was highly sceptical of this policy revision. He surmised that two ulterior motives lay behind the Japanese government’s sudden change in stance. Namely, firstly the LDP sought to further encourage the fractionalisation of Okinawa’s progressive coalition of political parties by creating a situation where they had to compete for positions in the national diet. Secondly, the LDP were attempting to use national participation as a way to whitewash opposition to the joint communiqué and to present the reversion agreement as reflecting “the will of Okinawans.” Arakawa saw that in this context the only “weapon” left for Okinawans to effectively express their deep-rooted opposition to reversion negotiations was to refuse to participate in national politics. For Arakawa, to promote the elections now would be to betray the “blood spilt” in the clashes between

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129 Ōta outlines the history of Okinawa’s prewar and postwar movement for the right to national representation in “Okinawa ni sanseiken o atae yo,” Sekai No. 284 (July 1969), pp. 38-56.
police and protesters seeking to prevent Satō’s trip to Washington in November of 1969.\footnote{Arakawa noted that prior to the 1969 communiqué, a widespread move to carry out provision national diet elections in Okinawa would have had a significant effect in bringing state policies to question. Yet he concluded that this significance was lost now that an agreement for reversion had been made between the US and Japan. Arakawa Akira, “Momoku teki sanka e no kiken.”}

Arakawa began to speak out unequivocally against reversion, first in this series of articles and later in his lengthier work, *Han-kokka no kyōku* (The Formidable Place of the Anti-nation, 1971). He welcomed the fact that the Reversion Council had begun to take an explicitly anti-base, anti-security treaty position. Yet he also criticized the “nationalist” (*minzoku shugiteki*) origins of the reversion movement for being an emotive call to return to Japan as the “ancestral land” (*sokoku*) of Okinawa. Arakawa came to the conclusion that in order to preserve the tenets of the reversion movement as an anti-war struggle it was now necessary to directly oppose a reversion which sought to strengthen bilateral security relations and the remilitarisation of Japan. In this sense, Arakawa’s position differed from that of intellectuals such as Ōta and Okinawan novelist Ōshiro Tatsuhiro who continued to hold the pursuit of “true” reversion as ideal. Yet it also directly contrasted with hitherto pro-military anti-reversion groups who largely focused on the economic loses which Okinawan reversion would bring to base-related industries.\footnote{As represented in two main organizations, the Anti-Immediate Reversion Council, lead by President of the Koza Chamber of Commerce Suehoshi Goshi, and the Okinawa for Okinawans Association, headed by former Chief Executive Toma Jugo.}

Like Ōta, Arakawa saw the question of reversion and what it was to entail as contingent upon profound questions concerning identity, history, politics, the relation between Okinawa and Japan, and modernity as historical and contemporary experience.\footnote{*Han-kokka no kyōku* (Tokyo: Gendai Hyoronsha, 1971), p. 65.} In contrast to Ōta, however, Arakawa saw that the cause of the reversion movement’s failures were harboured in its own limited agenda. That is, the reason why
the reversion movement was unable to resist appropriation by a redefined US-Japan security system lay in its genesis as a fundamentally nationalist movement.\textsuperscript{134}

Arakawa surmised that Imperial ideology was so effective in prewar Okinawa precisely because of the institutionalisation of discrimination. Even so-called anti-establishment resistance in Okinawa ended up promoting Japanization as the most effective way to overcome discrimination, thereby legitimising assimilationist and imperial ideology. Arakawa concluded that prewar Okinawan activist Jahana Noboru held many nationalist assumptions within his call for equal political representation and democratic rights, and that it was precisely for this reason that imperial state forces were able to appropriate and incorporate his struggle. In other words, Arakawa saw Okinawa's struggle for the abolition of discrimination and assimilationist ideology as two sides of the same imperial coin. To the extent that they were founded on a (mistaken) faith in the redeeming and liberating powers of the nation-state, for Arakawa both the movement for equal representation and treatment under the law in the prewar period, and the call for the return of administrative rights over Okinawa to Japan under occupation, were fundamentally flawed.

Arakawa's historical analysis touched on many themes common to Ōta's previous works: criticism of the way in which assimilationist ideology became incorporated into Okinawan popular consciousness; the drawing of connections between this ideology and the tragedy which blind subservience wrought during the Battle of Okinawa; and denunciation of the Japanese government's policies towards Okinawa since at least the Meiji period. Yet for Arakawa, merely divulging mainland Japan's exploitative and discriminatory treatment of Okinawa was not enough. Arakawa sought to take this criticism to what he saw as its logical end—a denunciation of Japan,

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., p. 70.
of democratic constitutionalism as a goal within itself, and of the nation-state system as a whole:

Throughout history Japan has ignored the will of Okinawa, and will no doubt continue to ignore this will in the years to come. Impeaching, denouncing, and expressing anger towards Japan does not have the power to change this probability. The only thing that can is a spirit which fiercely rejects the demands of the system which through the forces of state authority mounts pressure upon us.\textsuperscript{135}

Arakawa also lambasted another tenet of the reversion movement which formed the base of Ōta’s conception of Okinawa’s struggle—Japan’s so-called “peace constitution.” By the late 1960s many left-wing groups in Japan had become disaffected by the Japanese government’s manipulation of pacifist ideals. Satō’s policy of the “three non-nuclear principles” announced in 1967 symbolized the way in which the LDP was able to co-opt the tenets of Japan’s peace movement to further secure its position. Arakawa saw that neonationalist conservative forces were able to appropriate the tenets of Japanese pacifism precisely because the ideology of the peace movement itself was founded upon nationalist delusions. Postwar Japanese democracy, and the “peace constitution” under which it was founded, was a mere chimera, under which lay the vestiges of prewar neonationalist calls to “subservience to the nation.”\textsuperscript{136}

Arakawa concluded that in incorporating such delusions, the reversion movement itself ultimately uncritically subsumed many of the assimilationist and nationalist assumptions of prewar ideology. It was founded upon the deluded idealization of Japan’s postwar democracy and its constitution. Some, such as Ōshiro Tatsuhiro, recognized the gap between these ideals and reality, and emphasized that Okinawans desired to return to Japan on the specific basis of a perceived ideal of “the


\textsuperscript{136} \textit{Han-kokka no kyōku}, p. 101.
Japan which should be"—that is as part of a demilitarised and democratic nation. Yet Arakawa was highly critical of Ōshiro’s attempts to reconstruct the tenets of the reversion movement, as still incorporating the Okinawa issue into a Japanese agenda.\(^{137}\)

Both Ōta and Ōshiro sought to contest the appropriation of the reversion movement into nationalist discourse by emphasizing that the main aims of reversion were the pursuit of equality and autonomy for Okinawa: Arakawa concluded that the only way Okinawa could fight against Japan’s nebulous homogenizing forces was by becoming the focal point of resistance against the constraints of the “nation-state” system itself. In this sense, Arakawa’s thought was strictly deconstructive. He did not seek to assert the existence of an essentialized difference between “Okinawa” and “Japan,” but saw Okinawa’s “possibility” on the periphery as lying in its ability to break down the ideological and political power structures of the modern Japanese nation-state.\(^{138}\) Only through negation of the nation-state system could the ideals of Okinawa’s postwar struggle as the attempt to construct Okinawa “fortress of peace” (hansen no toride) within the Pacific region in direct contrast to its imposed role as the “keystone” of the US and Japan’s bilateral security system in Asia be upheld.

Ōta’s response to the anti-reversion theory was ambivalent. On the one hand, he saw the emergence of “anti-nation” anti-reversion thought as an “inevitable” reaction to unrelenting state oppression. He also conceded that the reversion movement contained within it many elements which tended to promote the further “Japanization” (Nihonka) of Okinawa.\(^{139}\) For the first time, Ōta acknowledged certain continuities between prewar assimilation processes and popular movements in the postwar period.\(^{140}\) Yet Ōta doubted that opposition to reversion or to national representation would have any

\(^{137}\) Ibid., pp. 65-6.
\(^{138}\) Ibid., pp. 133, 136.
\(^{139}\) Ōta Masahide, “Okinawa: kokka no henyō to gisei no naka de,” Ekonomisuto (1 April 1972), p. 111.
positive effects for Okinawa: “while there exist numerous problems with the way in which the process whereby the right to national representation has been implemented...such problems will not be solved merely by raising voices of objection.”\textsuperscript{141} He saw that rather than oppose the elections outright, it would be more effective to actively use the Diet as a way to remind people that, contrary to what the government was trying to claim, the “Okinawa issue” was not over with the joint communiqué of November 1969.

While thus on the one hand Ōta sympathized with many of Arakawa’s insights, on the other he did not see anti-reversionist thought as providing a viable political alternative to reversion. Ōta outlined this issue as he reasserted his commitment to the pacifist principles of Japan’s constitution in an article published in June, 1971:

Those who develop “non-nation” and “anti-nation” theories calling for liberation from the shackles of state authority fail, in much the same fashion as their counterparts in the Taishō period, to provide a clear future vision for Okinawa. Whether Okinawa is within or outside Japan, intellectual thought can only be effective in the context of Okinawa if it outlines a clear status for Okinawa, including the means by which its close to one million people are to survive. I continue to work towards the true implementation of the currently unpopular “peace constitution” for the very reason that...while there is little chance of success in attempting to abolish the nation-state, the constitution at least has significance...in that it upholds a universal principle beyond the national principles of the nation-state of Japan, for the whole of humanity...\textsuperscript{142}

For different reasons, neither did Ōta see an anti-reversion pro-independence stance as providing at this stage a possible alternative for Okinawa. While very much a minority, there were important Okinawan cultural figures, such Yamazato Eikichi, who took an avidly pro-independence stance. Once director of the GRI’s Association for the Preservation of Ryukyuan Culture (Ryūkyū bunkazai hogo iinkai), Yamazato was also a

\textsuperscript{141} “Kokusei sanka no genri to genjitsu,” Sekai No. 293 (April 1970), p. 53.
\textsuperscript{142} “Okinawa no tenki,” Sekai No. 307 (June 1971), pp. 23-4.
recognized playwright of traditional Ryukyuan theatre and a specialist on Ryukyuan history. In a feature on different Okinawan positions on reversion in *Sekai* in June 1970, Yamazato declared:

The return of the administrative rights which the US currently holds over Okinawa back to Okinawans, as far as I am concerned this is precisely the one thing that can be called the reversion of rights. Just because the Nixon administration agrees to pass over administrative rights over Okinawa to the Satō government above the heads of one million Okinawans, as far as Okinawans are concerned this is in no way the return of these rights. Consequently, Japan should immediately give such rights back to Okinawa.  

Yamazato took the view that Ryukyu Kingdom was an independent country until the disposition of King Shō Tai by the Meiji government and therefore Ryukyu, not Japan, was the “ancestral country” of Okinawa. He stressed that Okinawans would only begin to hold rightful pride in their culture and be “saved” from their colonized mentality and sense of inferiority once they were free of the remnants of Japan’s prewar imperial education system.

In a much later interview, Ōta specifically singled out Yamazato as one of the most interesting and talented figures among those who had advocated a pro-independence stance prior to reversion. In many ways, it may be said that Yamazato’s sense of pride in Okinawan history and culture represented a kind of ideal for Ōta, and later Ōta himself lamented that if an anti-occupation, pro-independence movement had taken root in early 1950s Okinawa, it may have been able to provide a formidable force in Okinawan politics. Yet Ōta never took an explicitly pro-
independence position in the pre-reversion period, nor has he since. In an article in
1971, as reversion became an ever closer reality, Ōta gave a rare exposition on what he
saw to be the fundamental dilemma preventing Okinawan independence:

"Can Okinawa be economically independent?" No five words are so effective in
beating Okinawa to submission in one fell swoop. It is clear to all who bother to
see that this issue torments the Yara Administration more than any other. It
encompasses the fundamental reason why Okinawa's intelligentsia and politicians
have since Satsuma's invasion in the seventeenth century promoted the
"Japanization" of Okinawan society to such an abnormal degree. It is also the
fundamental factor which induces Okinawa towards pursuing its "fated relations"
with mainland Japan in spite of itself.147

Up until the transferral of administrative rights over Okinawa from the US to
Japan in 15 May 1972, Ōta thus did not waver on his pro-reversion position. Yet at the
same time he became increasingly disillusioned with the reality of the reversion being
advanced by the US and Japan. This deep-felt sense of disillusionment is most clearly
seen in the transformation of his stance on the issue of national political representation.

In an article published in July 1969, Ōta strongly advocated Okinawans' right to
national representation. By the end of 1970, however, any expectations Ōta had held on
the power of representation in the National Diet as a political tool were severely dashed.
On 15 November 1970, National Diet elections were held in Okinawa for the first time
since the end of World War Two. Less than two weeks later, on 27 November 1970,
Ōta observed from the spectator's gallery of Japan's National Diet as newly elected
Okinawan diet member Uehara Kōsuke, highly critical of the government's position on
Okinawa, directed his first series of questions to Prime Minister Satō. Three days later,
in a published article on the proceedings, he slammed both the LDP members' apparent
utter disinterest in Uehara's appeal, and Satō's equally discouraging well-polished

reply. Embittered by the entire scene, Ōta concluded that the assembly; “provided not one ounce of hope to hearten Okinawa’s younger generation, who, discouraged by Japan’s dysfunctional parliamentary system, speak of national representation as meaningless.”

Ōta’s profound sense of disillusionment with the terms of reversion, the process of negotiation over reversion, and the democratic institutions of Japan in which he had held faith, was even more clearly discernable on the eve of the signing of the final agreement on reversion in 1971. While as critical of the Japanese government as ever, Ōta also expressed increasing frustration towards the Yara administration. Ōta recognized that Yara was being placed in a difficult position, squeezed by pressure from the national government and his responsibility to ensure the well-being of the residents of Okinawa. At the same time, Ōta stressed that Yara should regard the reversion question as one with consequences far beyond the realm of pragmatics. Ōta saw that there was “some truth” to the criticisms levelled at the Yara administration from within Okinawa since he backed down to national government pressure on the eve of the anti-B-52 strike of 4 February 1969. Ōta also warned that Okinawa’s prewar and war experience showed the direction towards which a path of constant compromise would lead. In directing criticism towards Yara, Ōta hinted that the Okinawan administration should follow what he saw as the “will of the Okinawan people,” and openly oppose the signing of the agreement.

As far as Ōta was concerned, by this stage it was clear that the transfer of administrative rights on the terms agreed to by the US and Japanese governments would not guarantee any of what he saw as the three tenets of the reversion struggle—self-government, pacifism, or the protection of human rights. He even feared that Okinawa

150 Ibid., p. 19-20.
would be placed in a worse position after reversion: particularly as the military function of bases on Okinawa were being expanded through the strengthening of the US-Japan Security Treaty and the stationing of Japanese defence forces, while the small level of autonomy enjoyed by the local government was concurrently abolished. Ōta concluded that under the veil of ‘unification’ (ittaika), an unequal structure of institutionalised discrimination would remain. Far from marking the final realization of Okinawa’s ‘rebirth’ after the tragedy of war, he came to equate reversion with the ‘funeral march’ of Okinawa’s failed postwar struggle.¹⁵¹

The issue of Okinawan education, and in particular the selection process for the Board of Education, exemplified the way in which with reversion Okinawa would be deprived of certain democratic and self-government rights gained under occupation. While since 1955 Board of Education members in Japan were nominated by the prefectural administration, Okinawa maintained a system of selection by popular election.¹⁵² As early as 1969, Ōta expressed fears over the implications of the government’s ‘unification’ policy for Okinawa’s Board of Education.¹⁵³ In 1970, these fears were confirmed, as government officials stressed that Okinawa’s education system would be “reformed according to the system in mainland Japan regardless of the question as to which system is better than the other.”¹⁵⁴ In January 1971, Ōta declared that “the question as to whether the various democratic values which they struggled for across the years can be maintained and further advanced in the future has come to rest on the issue as to whether the ‘Education Committee selection process’ can be

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 27.
¹⁵² Originally through postwar reforms, each local Education Committee in Japan, which had extensive powers over education content, were selected through direct election. Yet 1955 under an LDP majority, the National Diet passed legislation implementing a system of selection through nomination. This was despite strong opposition from the National Teacher’s Union.
preserved." With the transferral of rights in 1972, the Japanese nomination system was introduced in Okinawa.

On 17 June 1971, the Okinawa Reversion Agreement was signed by US Secretary of State William Rogers and Japanese Foreign Minister Aichi Kichi in a joint ceremony in Tokyo and Washington connected via communications satellite. The US relinquished all rights to Okinawa claimed under Article III of the Peace Treaty. Japan agreed to provide land and facilities for the US military bases according to the US-Japan Security Treaty. In other related documents signed on 20 June, Japan was to assume responsibility for the ‘immediate defence’ of Okinawa. A month previously, the ruling LDP’s ‘Okinawa Defence Plan’ had already recommended that 6000 members of Japan’s Defence Forces should be stationed on the islands. A portion of the land returned by the US military were now transferred to the JDF.

Yara refused to attend the signing ceremony in Tokyo. He criticized the agreement for failing to meet the wishes of Okinawan residents particularly on the base issue, and on the eve of the ceremony expressly stated his opposition to the stationing of Japanese defence forces in Okinawa for the first time. On the day of the ceremony, the Reversion Council organized a demonstration. That evening, hundreds clashed heavily with police on the streets of Naha, and fourteen demonstrators were arrested. In an article published only days later, Ōta described the day of the signing ceremony as “filled with a cold and dark expression, so dark it was difficult to make out.” Ōta’s repeated references to the day as “expressionless” reflected his own momentary loss of a position from which to speak, as well as the inability for Okinawa to articulate its own

157 Including sections of Naha Military Airport, White Beach, and the Setake Training Area. Sugeyama Shigeru, Okinawa Henkan Kyōtei no kenkyū, p. 312.
158 Fukugi Akira, Okinawa no Ashioto, p. 354.
159 Ibid., p. 358.
voice. It coincided with Okinawa’s absence from the process by which history was made and determined, just as Yara’s physical absence from the ceremony corresponded with Okinawa’s own exclusion from the reversion agreement.\(^{160}\)

**Between Illusion and Reality: Reversion and its Legacies**

During the occupation period, USCAR sought to emphasize the cultural and historical differences between Okinawa and mainland Japan. A stream within conservative Japanese thought similarly concluded that Okinawans would concede to US occupation because ultimately they saw themselves as different to mainland Japanese. The reversion movement emerged in direct opposition to such attempts to maintain and legitimise the occupation of Okinawa. In a similar way to the prewar period, Okinawans sought to contest the hierarchical set of postwar power relations by claiming their rights as Japanese nationals. Under prewar imperial expansion, claiming commonalities with the rest of Japan was a way to contest Okinawa’s unequal position within Japan, and distinguish it from the ‘outer’ colonial territories of Taiwan and Korea.\(^{161}\) In the postwar period, cultural, historical, and emotional expressions of Japanese affinity and nationalism became a means to resist US military occupation.\(^{162}\) In this sense, Arakawa’s insights—that assimilationism and the struggle for equality have historically been intimately connected, and that the reversion movement took on many of the assumptions of prewar assimilationist ideology—are highly relevant.

Ōta contested US occupation, and the institutionalised discrimination of Okinawa within Japan’s postwar system, by claiming the rights of Okinawans under the

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\(^{161}\) See Julia Yonetani, “Ambiguous Traces and the Politics of Sameness: Placing Okinawa in Meiji Japan,” pp. 15-32. See also Oguma Eiji, Nihonjin no kyōkai.

\(^{162}\) David Tobaru Obermiller suggests in this way that USCAR’s attempt to promote a sense of Okinawan or Ryukyuan ethnic identity ironically produced a backlash resulting in the further swelling of the reversion movement (“The Okinawan Struggle over Identity”).
Japanese constitution. He saw the call for reversion as fundamentally different to prewar assimilationist ideology: as the pursuit of autonomy and equality under the principles of peace and democracy born from repentance over the war. Yet in doing so, he evaded confronting the continuities between prewar assimilation and the reversion movement, divulged in their most blatant form in the revival of anti-Okinawan dialect campaigns of the 1950s and early 1960s.\(^{163}\)

As the call for reversion became incorporated into neonationalist and centralized government policies, Ōta sought to redefine Okinawa’s struggle. Ultimately, he conceded that the reversion movement was founded on the idealization of the Japanese constitution. Yet Ōta saw that Okinawa, stuck between a rock and a hard place, had no choice but to pursue such illusory ideals even in the face of a more sombre reality. For Ōta, Okinawa’s struggle and the reversion movement was a process of seeking to overcome “repeated betrayal” by mainland Japan by negotiating the tyrannical gap between “illusion” and “reality” at each step:

Okinawan residents sought reversion while at the same time opposing it, opposed reversion and yet still pursued it. This seemingly contradictory position was also taken in relation to the constitution. In other words, Okinawans pursued the peace constitution while resisting the reality it had taken, opposed the current reality of the constitution but still had no choice but to seek to ‘return’ under it. This has been Okinawa’s so-called ‘lot’ (shukumei).\(^{164}\)

Many of the issues within Okinawa’s reversion debate prefigured more recent debates over the deconstruction of national narratives, subjectivity, and history. Arakawa concluded that Okinawa’s potential as resistant and critical space could only be realized within a deconstructive project. That is, in order to uphold the struggle to construct Okinawa as the “fortress of peace” against US imperialism, its unique position

\(^{163}\) Oguma Eiji outlines this campaign in *Nihonjin no kyōkai*, pp. 556-96.

\(^{164}\) “Okinawa: kenpō no kyozō to jitsuzō no tanima de,” *Sekai* (June 1972), p. 33.
as “the ‘periphery’ within” should be utilized in the cultivation of an “unyielding fortress of the anti-nation.” He envisaged that by securing Okinawa’s presence as the focal point of the anti-nation, such a presence held the explosive capacity to “break down the nation-state” and “strangle the throat of Japan.”165 As a theory defined according to its negative, Arakawa differentiated himself from pro-independence Okinawan nationalists, emphasizing that Japan could not be relativised through the construction of an essentialized ethnic difference between Okinawans and Japan/ese, but only by breaking down the ideological construction of the nation-state from within.166

Arakawa’s analysis provided highly perceptive insights into the construction of national historical narratives in the realm of discourse, and contradictions within the reversion movement and postwar Japanese progressive politics as a whole. He saw that the reversion struggle was ultimately based on an illusion of the emancipatory powers of Japan’s constitution, of Japanese postwar democracy, and of the modern nation-state system itself. Arakawa denounced Jahana Noboru’s movement for equal representation in the Meiji era for working within the ideological assumptions of the Emperor system, thereby ultimately facilitating the incorporation of Okinawa into the nationalist militarist authority of the state. His denunciation of Jahana was intimately connected to his rejection of the reversion movement, and opposition to national representation.

To an extent, Ōta conceded this, as well as the fact that, in looking in retrospect at the modern history of Okinawa, including the postwar struggle for reversion: “One becomes only too aware of the way in which, due to the massive power of state authority, the will of the individual or a particular group...can operate to its own disadvantage. In other words, even the great achievements of individuals and groups

165 Arakawa Akira, Han-kokka no kyoku, p. 80.
166 Ibid., p. 135.
can be absorbed into state policies, and work in their service.” Yet Ōta criticized Arakawa for failing to outline how a theoretical position of the “non-nation” could be expressed in political practice, particularly in the context of relations whereby US occupation was precisely based on an ambivalent positioning of Okinawa within Japan and yet beyond its jurisdiction. Ōta saw the reversion question as rather largely determined by pragmatic politics—and the Japanese constitution as a “weapon” which Okinawa could use in the struggle for the guarantee of human rights and “self identity” (serufu aidentiti) under US occupation.

On 27 March 1972, less than two months before reversion, Japanese Socialist Party member and lower house representative Yokomichi Takahiro disclosed documentary evidence in parliament proving that a secret financial agreement had been made between the US and Japanese governments over Okinawan reversion. The documents cast serious doubt on the Satō cabinet’s claims to the contrary. Yet far from leading to the toppling of the government, after it became apparent that the documents had been leaked by a female worker within the foreign ministry and passed on via Mainichi newspaper journalist Nakayama Takaichi, both were charged with violating Japan’s Public Servants Law. Eventually Nakayama was sentenced to four months confinement by the Supreme Court in 1978. In an article published soon after the arrest of Nakayama and the Foreign Ministry employee, Ōta was highly critical of the

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169 While the reversion agreement had stated that the US would bear the rehabilitation costs of returned base land to placate public opinion, the leaked papers revealed that in actual fact the Japanese government had agreed to bear these costs.
170 More recently disclosed US documents attest to the authenticity of the secret papers quoted by Yokomichi. For an outline of events and an interview with Nakayama close to thirty years after the fact, see the Shūkan Kinyōbi special, “Okinawa mitsuyaku 30 nenme no shinsō,” Vol. 341 (24 November 2000), pp. 9-28.
arrest, of the Japanese media’s failure to see the implications of the incident for Okinawan reversion, and of the government’s violation of the public’s right to knowledge. He noted that the incident drew to question fundamental democratic principles, and the entire negotiating process on reversion. He also emphasized that the government’s stance on Okinawa weighed on the future of democracy in Japan as a whole.171

Just as the fragmentation of Okinawa’s reversion movement intertwined with the fragmentation of Japanese progressive politics, Okinawan reversion coincided with the consolidation of the process whereby “democracy was reduced to a formalized process of negotiation, universal peace watered down to a mere quotidian version, and the labour struggle to a ritualised and corporate unionism” in postwar Japan.172 The loss of a viable political channel between state and society was accompanied by a transformation in the mode of national hegemony, a shift in the government mechanism of the state brought about by the maturing process of capitalism, and technological changes which brought about a massive transition in relations of production and imaginative capacities.173 The consolidation of one-party LDP rule was also accompanied by the further remilitarisation of Japan, which now held a more active role within the US and Japan’s strengthened bilateral security system.

Okinawan reversion played a vital role in securing these trends. The Nakayama incident was in turn emblematic of such historical conditions on a number of levels. The existence of the documents confirmed the two-faced stance of Japanese government

171“Okinawa: kenpō no kyozō to jitsuzō no tanima de.”
172Yumiko Iida, Rethinking Identity in Modern Japan: Nationalism as Aesthetics, p. 121.
173Ibid., p. 7. As Beverley Smith noted the effect of technology on citizen’s movements in Japan in 1986: “Saturated with television and other alienated forms of entertainment, the generation of the 1980s compares poorly with the politically-aware and literate generation of the 1950s. For a combination of reasons, the challenge to conservative power has been checked. At the local government level, the progressive gains have not been sustained” (“Democracy derailed: citizens’ movements in historical perspective,” in Gavan McCormack an Yoshi Sugimoto (eds.) Democracy in Contemporary Japan, p. 166.
policy, and invited further scepticism about whether there did not exist other undisclosed deals on nuclear weapons, the US military's freedoms on land and sea usage, and other issues. In spite of this, and the serious implications the incident held for journalistic freedom, the media largely focused on alleged sexual relations between Nakayama and the Foreign Ministry official, indicative of the commodification of the mass media and the depoliticization of society in general.

The implementation of the Okinawan reversion agreement secured the political future of the Satō cabinet, and strengthened the LDP's stronghold over the Diet. The US was able to largely maintain its presence in Okinawa, and a political elite in Japan complicit with US regional hegemony. The hierarchical power structure on which these joint hegemonic relations were based also remained. Okinawa continued to form a core nexus of this reified bilateral security structure, and to be excluded from the negotiating table. Many of the contradictions which Okinawa's military occupation had posed to the democratic principles and so-called peace clause of Japan's constitution were incorporated within national institutions. As Ōta had warned and as he himself proved in 1995, the unequal burden imposed on Okinawa also served to compromise the stability of US-Japan security relations as a whole.

This structure similarly reified many of the contradictions within Okinawan society and politics which had crystallized in the years prior to reversion. Okinawan politics, economy, and education became integrated into Japan's highly centralized administrative system. At the same time, a large US military presence remained, and the ratio of US bases in Okinawa in comparison to the rest of Japan grew. The economic significance of the bases in Okinawa gradually declined, yet in its place a system of economic dependence on largely centrally-funded public works projects became increasingly entrenched under both progressive and conservative prefectural administrations. Okinawa's integration into Japan's so-called "construction state system" in turn coincided with the commodification of culture, urbanization, and the
weakening of the labour movement. Dilemmas born from an entrenched system of economic dependence, a cycle of conflict and compromise with the national government, and political fragmentation and disillusionment—many of the issues which had plagued the Yara administration in the years leading up to reversion would be faced by Ōta himself over twenty years later. In an ironic repetition of history, Ōta also became subject to fierce accusations of betrayal and complicity by groups from within his support base.

Meanwhile, in the wake of reversion Ōta maintained at once a certain faith in postwar idealism, and an ambivalence towards the conceptualisation of Japan as the site of individual and collective liberation. As examined in the following chapter, he simultaneously sought the “revitalization” of Japan’s constitution and democracy, and conceived of Okinawa’s struggle as the attainment of “human” and “cultural” (Okinawan) identity in ambiguous relation/opposition to a (Japanese) “national identity.” Reversion was achieved, yet contests over Okinawa’s positioning—within Japan and in US-Japan relations—were far from over.

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\[^{174}\] In April 1972 for example Ōta concluded: “That the Okinawa problem is breaking out of its shell as a parochial issue and becoming universalized, as an issue of the human race (jinrü no mondai), is an inevitable process” (“Okinawa: kokka no hen'yō to gisē no naka de,” p. 111).
CHAPTER THREE

The Other Within

Okinawa in Japan

"When I say ‘Okinawa’ I am not referring to Okinawa per se. While it relates to the real Okinawa per se, what I am referring to is more than that. It is the ‘Okinawa’ which I have continued to hold in my heart, that is to say which I have continued to passionately seek, since the end of the war.

I thought this ‘Okinawa’ had taken root in my soul as I sought ‘rebirth’ in the turning point after the Battle of Okinawa. Yet now, four years after ‘reversion’, it is already on the verge of destruction. And as the decline of Okinawa’s primary industry and the devastation of its environment attests, I cannot help fearing that Okinawa itself is also coming to ruins."

Ōta Masahide, 1976

Okinawa in Japan

Prior to 1972, Ōta saw reversion as the struggle to fulfil the ideals of peace and autonomy which he equated with his own and Okinawa’s postwar “rebirth.” He repeatedly condemned the ideology of assimilation which marked Okinawa’s prewar history, and viewed the reversion movement as the antithesis of prewar nationalism. By at least 1976, however, Ōta reached the conclusion that, in direct contrast to this ideal, reversion had in fact taken the form of Japanisation (Nihon-ka). He saw Okinawa’s

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incorporation into Japan as resulting in what he profoundly lamented as the “loss” of Okinawan identity and sense of community, and the “destruction” of Okinawa as a whole. He traced connections between the dissolution of Okinawan culture, and Okinawa’s incorporation into a centralized system of economic dependence.

Ōta also came to see not only the national government but the prefectural administration as directly at fault for facilitating this destruction and deepening dependence. He warned that: “Without a revolutionary transformation in the consciousness of its inhabitants, at the present time I do not believe that Okinawa has the power to survive the threat of ‘destruction’ on its own. If the present situation is maintained, the ‘ruination’ of Okinawa is as certain as it is inevitable.”

Okinawans’ embrace of “GNP-ism”—that is the prioritising of large increases in income over quality of life and the survival of local industry and agriculture—paralleled the prewar process of “the Japanization of Okinawa.” Namely both were “advanced through the institutionalisation of the notion that modernization could only be achieved through the renunciation of all things Okinawan.”

Yet Ōta did not entirely renege on the ideals of the reversion struggle per se. He rejected the suggestion that the reversion movement was entirely to blame for Okinawa’s post-reversion predicament. In a similar way to Franz Fanon’s inscriptions

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 2.
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 3. Emphasis in original.
of the "native" and "people"—as at once deprived through colonial relations and empowered in their ability to resist these relations⁴—Ōta's depiction of Okinawa wavers with ambivalence. He both despaired of the dissolution of an idealized image of Okinawa, and reclaimed this idealization and with it the perceived possibility of Okinawa as a site of resistance. In doing so, he also maintained the ideals of the liberating potential of Japan's postwar constitution.

Following reversion Ōta called for a "rediscovery" of early postwar idealism and sense of community. He came to conclude that it was precisely in the wake of defeat and destruction, when Okinawans were denied citizen rights and placed under foreign occupation, that they had been able to "regain their sense of self as Okinawans" and "rediscover" a sense of communal sharing, generosity, and autonomous spirit. In the face of the post-reversion "ruination" of Okinawa, he sought to "return" and "start again" (saishuppatsu) from this historical point.⁵ As Dipesh Chakrabarty observes, the politics of nostalgia involve a "call for the realization of a future that is also a gesture of return to a historical past."⁶ In the pre-reversion period the postwar project of "rebirth" had been construed as a progressive path towards democratic revolution and demilitarisation. Following Okinawa's return to Japan, Ōta sought to realize reversion's failed struggle for autonomy through a metaphoric and nostalgic return to the point of this rebirth.

On the effect of displacement through rampant development in the modern world Ashis Nandy observes:

As in the case of the environment, the sheer scale of human intervention in social affairs has destroyed cultural elasticities and the capacity of cultures to return to

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something like their original state after going through a calamity. This massive uprooting has produced a cultural psychology of exile that in turn has led to an unending search for roots, on the one hand, and angry, sometimes self-destructive, assertion of nationality and ethnicity on the other. As the connection with the past is weakened, desperate attempts to reestablish this connection have also grown. Paradoxically, this awareness of losing touch with the past and with primordial collectivities is mainly individual, even though it uses the language of collectivity. It has to use the language of collectivity because the community has in the meanwhile perished for many who are a party to the search. 

In Japan, the social and economic dislocation and epistemological ruptures which accompanied rapid modernization fuelled a desire to “reclaim” a sense of tradition and community. As Yumiko lida observes, in the prewar era, “Japan” became the empty non-signifier embodying all loss, torment, and desire within romantic and reactionary anti-rationalist celebrations of nationalism. In the early postwar era, a sense of nostalgic authentic rural community as embodied in the notion of kyōdōtai (community or collective) was integral to efforts to revaluate and promote activities by localists and anti-central government forces. From the 1970s competing visions of a nostalgic furusato (native place) were drawn on the one hand by conservative and state forces to reinforce dominant constructions of homogeneity and gender, and on the other by local environmentalists groups opposed to large-scale resort, industrial, and public-work investment projects.

In the modern era Japan has both embraced and been defined against “Westernisation.” In Okinawa, however, modernization and national consolidation also

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8 Rethinking Identity in Modern Japan, pp. 2-24.
comprised the ambiguous process of “becoming Japanese.” As may be discerned in the work of Iha Fuyū, the sense of profound loss and disruption accompanying this process coincided with a double “return”—to a claimed common “origin” with Japan, and an immutable sense of Okinawan self. In the post-reversion era, the sense of profound loss and social disruption which accompanied rapid development further intertwined with identity contests and moves to reclaim a sense of immutable Okinawan-ness. A traditional sense of Okinawan community was envisioned in opposition to the process whereby Okinawa was reincorporated within state-centred constructions of a homogenized Japanese national culture, centralized structures of capital, and the US-Japan security framework.

Ōta evoked the communal spirit of early postwar Okinawa—a period when “people’s spiritual wellbeing stood in inverse proportion to their material poverty”—in lamentation of, and in the effort to resist, the very loss of community which accompanied social and environmental dislocation after reversion. As examined in Chapter One, Ōta also envisioned a sense of Okinawan identity and the “Okinawan Spirit” through evocations of the peaceful culture and traditions of the Ryukyu Kingdom. In a thematic of loss, and in the attempt to reclaim an autonomous and unique collective Okinawan “self” in the present through evocations of the past, Ōta’s work paralleled Iha Fuyū’s. In both there lies an inherent ambivalence towards modernity and “progress”—envisaged as at once an emancipatory project, and resulting in untoward destruction. The past provides a source from which to envisage futures able to redeem the profound losses of the present. Perceiving pervasive parallels between prewar assimilationism and Okinawa’s reincorporation into Japan, Ōta also drew directly on Iha’s evocations of an autonomous Okinawan self, as multiple cross-referential “networks of time” intertwined.

In the period from reversion in 1972 to his retirement from the University of the Ryukyus in 1990, Ōta published the large body of his academic work to date. Much of
the extensive analyses laid forth in these voluminous works is beyond the scope of this chapter. What I seek to explore is the way in which within these works Ōta lamented the loss of self which he associated with the incorporation of Okinawa into Japan, sought to reclaim an Okinawan identity through the past and in the present, and stressed the significance of Okinawa’s historical experience within Japanese postwar history.

Identity Loss and the “Destruction of Okinawa”

Development Policies in Post-reversion Okinawa

The ambivalent inscription of Okinawa as both site of resistance and subjugated within multiple structures of dependence most clearly emerges in Ōta’s analyses on the economy. On the one hand, Ōta despaired of the way in which Okinawa’s centralized and vulnerable economic structure promoted toadyism and pork-barrel politics. During the occupation, he was particularly critical of the way in which High Commissioner funds were dispersed amongst local communities directly prior to elections to ensure the victory of pro-military conservative candidates in GRI legislature elections.¹¹ Ōta also conceded that while on the one hand the people of Okinawa were fiercely opposed to the US military bases, they were also highly dependent on them. Okinawa’s economic survival, and the economic growth of the late 1950s and 1960s, was to a large extent contingent on the bases, a reality which he saw formed the core of Okinawa’s “contradiction” and its “anguish.” In 1967, Ōta noted that it would be difficult for Okinawa, which had little resources of its own, to break away from a base economy unaided. He called upon the national government to provide assistance to Okinawa and advocated the implementation of a long-term plan which aimed to achieve economic

¹¹ "Okinawa no osoru beki shosenkyo-ku-sei," Ushio, No. 93 (March 1968), pp. 152-166. See also Chapter Two.
autonomy. Neither the base issue nor economic issues facing Okinawa could be solved “without the power of the mainland Japanese government (hondo seifu).”\(^{12}\)

While denouncing Okinawan “toadyism,” Ōta thus also saw that the reversion movement held the potential to overcome a cycle of economic dependence. He upheld the way in which workers, including members of the All-Okinawan Military Base Union, had actively participated in the movement calling for the withdrawal of the US military despite their dependence on it. He also championed Yara’s election as a victory against pork-barrel politics and a clear rejection by the people of Okinawa of the “potatoes and barefoot theory” (imo to hadashi ron). According to this theory, espoused by the US high commissioner and reiterated by members of the Okinawa LDP, without the bases Okinawans would become destitute, forced to walk barefoot and survive on sweet potatoes and fish.\(^{13}\) In 1969, disparaging of mainland Japan’s materialism, Ōta upheld the way in which, in direct contrast, the people of Okinawa were putting their wellbeing on the line in the struggle to be liberated from dependence on the military bases. For Ōta such struggles and ideals embodied the “Okinawan spirit.”\(^{14}\)

On the one hand Ōta thus saw assistance from the national government as necessary in order for Okinawa to break free of the debilitating restraints of a base-dependent economy. On the other, he upheld the anti-materialist ideals of the reversion movement as embodied in the “Okinawan spirit,” conceived in direct contrast to the consumerism of high growth Japan. Okinawa was seen as entrenched in subjugated relations yet also containing the potential to overcome them. This ambivalence arose out of the dilemma of Okinawa’s own implication within and subjugation to the multiple hegemonic regimes—of the Cold War military structure, Japan’s LDP-


\(^{13}\) See for example Ōta Masahide, “Kakushin shuscki no tanjō wa, igaika, hitsuzenka,” Waseda gakuhō (December 1968), pp. 6-7.

dominated security policy, hegemonic narratives of nation, the nation-state system, and centralized economic systems.

As reversion neared, the complexities of this position became apparent. As Ōta himself lamented, economic dependence on the bases formed the central dilemma of the Yara administration.\(^\text{15}\) This dependence also compounded the multiple economic issues arising from the transfer of administrative rights over the islands. The national government was able to use this situation to its advantage in the effort to secure Okinawan compliance to the terms of reversion. The promotion of economic stimulus and mainland Japanese investment in Okinawa formed an integral component of the government’s ‘unification’ (ittaika) policy. In 1969 the national cabinet announced the Okinawa Economic Stimulus Plan, and in April of the following year the Japanese Economic Planning Association (Nihon keizai chōsa kai), representing mainland Japanese business interests, published recommendations on the economic development of post-reversion Okinawa. The report warned that if Okinawan inhabitants were “sensitive” towards pollution, resisted the introduction of technological innovation, or contested the economic integration of Okinawa on the grounds of protecting local business and industry, that industrial development and the narrowing of the “economic gap” between Okinawa and mainland Japan would be delayed, resulting in severe regional depopulation.\(^\text{16}\) As different interests vied for investment opportunities in the islands, friction also arose between US multinationals seeking to utilize investments in pre-reversion Okinawa as a stepping stone to bypass Japan’s heavy restrictions on foreign investment, and Japan’s Ministry of Trade and Industries (MITI). MITI applied various forms of pressure on the firms in question and on the GRI in an effort to restrict


\(^{16}\) Cited in Miyamoto Ken’ichi, Kaihatsu to jichi no tembō: Okinawa (Tokyo: Tsukuma Shoten, 1979), p. 31.
foreign investment prior to the return of administrative rights, and in late 1969 expressed explicit opposition to investment in Okinawa which would conflict with Japanese domestic restrictions.17

To a significant extent the Yara administration worked within the Japanese government’s restrictions. 18 The GRI lacked the funds required to develop a comprehensive plan to foster the diversification of Okinawan agriculture, local small and medium-sized businesses, and urban redevelopment while at the same time laying down measures to combat economic dislocation as a result of reversion. The mass displacement of Okinawan workers from within the bases and US administration, and a bloated service sector stemming from Okinawa’s base-dependant economy further induced the Yara administration to prioritise the promotion of investment. In the face of strong government pressure, this investment largely took the form of mainland Japanese companies.19

In September 1970 the GRI announced its Long Term Economic Development Plan (Chōki keizai kaihatsu keikaku) for the islands. The plan sought the “transferral from a base-dependent to an independent economy (jiritsu keizai)” and the “amendment of the economic gap between mainland Japan and Okinawa.” According to the plan, this was to be achieved by maintaining an economic growth average of 13.9% for ten years, fed by heavy and chemical industry investment, including crude oil storage facilities, a

18 Though Thomas Howell points out that Yara did seek to resist the pressure from the government, in the effort to promote foreign investment and protect local businesses. Howell notes that on 12 March 1970 Yara declared at a press conference that: “In induction of foreign capital, we will give priority to the prefectural interests of Okinawa and will not be submissive to the homeland government” (“Foreclosing a Japanese Hong Kong,” ibid. p. 5, Howell citing from Yomiuri Shinbun 14 March 1970).
19 Miyamoto Ken’ichi, Kaihatsu to jichi no tenbō: Okinawa, p. 34; Fukugi Akira, Okinawa no ashioto, p. 236. Miyamoto also cites a distrust of foreign firms as a reason inducing the Yara administration to lean towards mainland Japanese companies.
refinery, petrochemical plant, steelworks, and an aluminium refining plant. To support these large-scale industries, the GRI also planned extensive infrastructure development, through the building and improvement of roads, bridges, ports, electric power plants, dams, telecommunication facilities, and the reclamation of coastal land, including a large-scale reclamation and development plan for Kin Bay. In short, the plan uncritically incorporated and even expanded the tenets of 1960’s Japan’s rabid industrial development policies while washing over the issue of the military base presence, and equated the reversion movement’s calls for “parity” and “equality” with a deduction in the income gap between Okinawa and the mainland.\(^20\) In this sense, as Gavan McCormack observes, “the immediate post-reversion government of Yara Chōbyō dreamed great dreams of development, but the dreams were fed by [Tanaka] Kakuei fantasies.”\(^21\)

In the face of growing criticism and an upsurge in fears of industrial pollution amongst local residents, however, the GRI to an extent reviewed this policy at the end of 1971. The legislature passed a recommendation which detailed the benefits of light manufacturing over heavy industry, and advocated the prioritisation of welfare, the establishment of local autonomy, and “anti-war pacifist principles” as fundamental tenets of economic development. In actual fact, however, manufacturing in general never prospered and indeed it steadily declined as a ratio of GDP post-reversion. This was compensated by a large growth in public works projects ultimately implemented with little regard to the “principles of development” outlined in the GRI legislation. In 1971 Japan’s Diet passed the Special Measures Law for Okinawan Development (Okinawa shinkō kaihatsu tokubetsu sochihō), and in December 1972 the national

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government announced a ten-year Okinawan Stimulus Development Plan for Okinawa, heavily centred around public works.\(^{22}\)

This formed the foundations of Okinawa’s post-reversion economic structure. In the year from 1972 to 1973 alone, public investment in Okinawa tripled, and by 1974 it was 4.5 times the 1972 amount.\(^{23}\) In February 1972, on the eve of reversion, the government also announced its decision to select Motobu, in the northeast of Okinawa’s main island, as site for the 1975 International Marine Expo.\(^{24}\) The Okinawa Expo was a major catalyst for the massive inflow of national public money into Okinawa in the years from 1972 to 1975, and the “golden egg” of the national government reversion policy.\(^{25}\) It both ensured a rapid increase in GDP through the massive influx of investment for infrastructure, and served to further entrench a public-works centred economy.

Ōta contested the emerging fortification of this economic structure from as early as 1971. In a symposium on Okinawan development held at the University of Ryukyus in June 1971, Ōta saw the way in which economic stimulus policies were being advanced, like the reversion agreement itself, as at direct odds with the “spirit of Okinawa.” He evoked the sense of an “Okinawan spirit” as the antithesis of

\(^{22}\) Ibid., and Miyamoto Ken’ichi, Kaihatsu to jichi no tenbō: Okinawa, p. 34; Fukugi Akira, Okinawa no ashioto, p. 41-8.

\(^{23}\) Miyamoto Ken’ichi, Kaihatsu to jichi no tenbō: Okinawa, p. 44

\(^{24}\) On the social dislocating effects caused by the Expo, see for example “Kono shinnen ‘kaiyōshaku wa kaihatsu no kibakuzaï’,” Asahi gurai (1 June 1971), pp. 61-3.

\(^{25}\) In the words of economist Miyamoto Ken’ichi: “Reversion policy sought to incorporate Okinawa into Japan’s highly centralized administrative system while at the same time promoting development with maintenance of the bases as a central focus. The Marine Expo served as a way to dissolve the contradictions which arose in this tumultuous period through an ‘event-based model of mass public investment.’” Miyamoto Ken’ichi, Kaihatsu to jichi no tenbō: Okinawa, p. 42. Miyamoto was one of the first economic professors from mainland Japan to conduct extensive research on the Okinawan economy and issues related to development and the US bases. He coauthored an article with Kuba Masahiko as early as June 1970 critical of the government’s reversion and development policies, entitled “Okinawa keizai kaihatsu no gensoku,” published in Sekai in June 1970 (as cited in Kaihatsu to jichi no tenbō, p. 39).
uncontrolled development and materialism. At the same time, he emphasized the importance of the establishment of local autonomy as an issue facing all of Japan. By May 1972, Ōta’s concern over economic policies reached a tone of urgency, and while admitting he himself was not an economist, he came to the conclusion that as a resident of Okinawa he could no longer avoid confronting these issues. He conceived of his relation to economic issues as synonymous with the inhabitant of a house—who, while not a professional builder, holds the right to judge the structure’s design and practicality. On one level, Ōta sought to open debate on the very meaning of prosperity. He stressed that, “through the outbreak of terrible ‘pollution’ on a world scale, the contents of ‘prosperity’ (yutakasa) are coming under question.” In particular, he suggested the need to include a “good living environment” together with prosperity as a goal of society. Ōta saw that to ensure such an environment, one must seek to guarantee autonomy in the face of the “allure” (mashō) of capital. Ōta stressed that the promotion of capital held the danger of evolving into the “self-propagating” pursuit of profit. He emphasized the need for people to “able to be in control of their own lifestyle” against this potentially destructive force. For the first time, Ōta also directly related the post-reversion rush to promote Okinawan development to Okinawa’s prewar “history of self-identity loss.” Prewar imperialist ideology had promoted the indiscriminate pursuit of

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26 Ōta’s presentation from this symposium was published as “Keizai to Okinawa no kokoro,” Chiiki kaihatsu (October 1971), and reprinted in Okinawa no hōrai, pp. 27-45.
27 Ōta Masahide, “‘Mazushisa’ o kōdo shita mono: Okinawa keizai kaihatsu no kako to mirai” (Part One), Asahi Joanaru (19 May 1972), pp. 8-13; “Shūdatsu o kurikaeshita mono: Okinawa keizai kaihatsu no kako to mirai” (Part Two), Asahi Joanaru (26 May 1972), pp. 88-95; “Kaihatsu no shutaisei o mizukara no te ni: Okinawa keizai kaihatsu no kako to mirai” (Part Three), Asahi Joanaru (2 June 1972): pp. 31-9
28 “‘Mazushisa’ o kōdo shita mono: keizai kaihatsu no kako to mirai,” p. 9.
29 Ibid.
assimilation with Japan as well as the expulsion of all ‘Okinawan characteristics’ and individual autonomy, and Ōta feared that Okinawa was once more heading down this well-trodden path. He warned: “Once we accept the expansion of ‘capital’, and the logic of self-propagation which it contains, it will most likely be almost impossible to return once again to this point of departure.”

Under US military occupation the pursuit of autonomy had been conceived in union with the pursuit of reversion, in the face of the mass influx of mainland Japanese capital it now became defined as “the ability to control one’s own lifestyle” against the destructive forces of consumerist desire and capital expansion.

On another level, Ōta also contested the notion that Okinawa’s structure of economic dependence was inevitable. In October 1969 the Prime Minister’s Special Regional Network Office (sōrifu tokubetsu chikiken renraku kyoku) had announced its Basic Outline for the Economic Stimulus of Okinawa (Okinawa keizai shinkō no kihon kōsō). The report recognised that it was the “obligation” of mainland Japan to “bridge the gap” between Okinawa and the rest of Japan. Yet it also warned: “On the other hand, if the Okinawan side makes a deal of the past, holds suspicions, expresses opposition to new developments or such like, true economic development cannot be guaranteed, and economic growth will soon stagnate.” Ōta saw this threat as revealing of the government’s attitude towards Okinawa. He was particularly critical of the government’s attempts to negate Okinawan claims to history. In contrast, he stressed that it was vital to examine history in the attempt to ensure that the same mistakes were not repeated: “The more I seek to envisage a positive future, the more I find it necessary to delve into the realities of the past.”

Through a historical analysis of Okinawa’s prewar economic conditions, Ōta sought to trace the causal factors in Okinawa’s

30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., p. 11.
32 Ibid.
economic stagnation and financial dependence, in the effort to conceive of an alternative future.

A series of famines struck the Ryukyu chain from around 1895, when Japan annexed Taiwan, to the years following the crash in sugar prices in 1920. Some Okinawans were reduced to eating the fruit of the Sotetsu (Cycad) Palm, which needed to be soaked for up to a week in water to extract its potent poison before being eaten. Okinawa as a whole became renowned throughout Japan for its poverty, and referred to as the “Sotetsu Palm hell” (Sotetsu jigoku).³³ Ota drew upon extensive historical material to argue that Okinawa’s economic devastation during this period was in fact largely a result of discrimination and neglect on the part of the national government. He saw that this neglect was compounded by vestiges of Satsuma’s exploitation of Ryukyu Kingdom prior to the Meiji period. He concluded that delays in land reform, fundamental flaws in the system of tax implemented under Satsuma, and the severity of Japan’s tax on sugar were factors which contributed to Okinawa’s prewar economic ailments.³⁴

The primary factor seen as driving economic delays in Okinawa in the late nineteenth century was the national government’s policy of “preservation of old customs” (kyūkan onzon), which largely conserved the feudal tax system of the pre-Meiji era. Ota conceded that the national government had held this system in place partly as a way to avoid further confrontation with the Ryukyuan elite, who had fiercely resisted the disposition of the kingdom and held extensive connections with China. Yet he also saw that the national government’s policies after Meiji were consistent with a historical mode of thinking, entrenched within the Tokugawa system, which viewed

³³ See also Alan Christy, “Imperial Subjects in Okinawa,” p. 144-9.
³⁴ Ota Masahide, “Shūdatsu o kurikaeashita mono: Okinawa keizai kaihatsu no kako to mirai,” p. 90;
Ryukyu as inferior to mainland Japan or Naichi.\textsuperscript{35} In 1899, thirty one years after the Meiji restoration, the government finally introduced land reforms in Okinawa after extensive peasant unrest in Okinawa's Yaeyama Islands in particular. Still, however, Ōta concluded, the government remained primarily concerned with promoting its own interests. Hefty sugar taxes prevailed while sugar prices fell, transportation costs from Naha to Osaka remained much higher than from the relatively prospering colony of Taiwan to mainland Japan, a net drain of capital from Okinawa to the national treasury was maintained, and little to no attempt was made to remedy Okinawa's over-dependence on sugar production.\textsuperscript{36} Ōta concluded: "It is often said that in relation to economic issues, 'Okinawa cannot survive without Japan.' Perhaps this is true. Yet at the same time, we should also take due note of historical experience, that 'when we rely on Japan, we have continually found ourselves on the verge of death.'"\textsuperscript{37}

\textit{The 1975 International Marine Expo}

In 1973, on the first anniversary of Okinawan reversion to Japan, Ōta also expressed anxiety over the way in which the Japanese government, prefecture, and businesses within and outside Okinawa were in unison celebrating the holding of the International Marine Expo. In particular, he expressed concern over the link between the Expo and the maintenance of the US military stronghold in Okinawa—as interrelated core components of state policy. In further hinting of this link, he stressed the importance of questioning why and for what explicit purpose the Marine Expo was

\textsuperscript{35} "Shūdatsu o kurikaeshita mono: Okinawa keizai kaihatsu no kako to mirai," p. 89.
\textsuperscript{36} On the economic plight of prewar Okinawa Alan Christy observes: "The problems of the sugar-centered Okinawan economy were compounded by lowered production of other foodstuffs (and increased dependence on imports of food), the doubling of Japanese sugar imports from places such as Java (even as other colonial powers were placing tariffs on foreign sugar to protect sugar produced in their own colonies), a net drain of capital to the national treasury, and the lack of supporting labor markets in Okinawa to absorb excess agricultural labor from an expanding population" ("Imperial Subjects in Okinawa," p. 145).
\textsuperscript{37} "Kaihatsu no shūtaisei o mizukara no te ni: Okinawa keizai kaihatsu no kako to mirai," p. 39
being held in Okinawa. By 1975 this anxiety had expanded into direct criticism. In the months leading up to the Marine Expo, held in July of the same year, the massive increase in the influx of money into the island (by June it was said that over 200 billion yen had already been poured into the event) triggered a boom in consumer spending (70% increase from the previous year) and accompanying inflation.

As Ōta noted with concern in an article published in June 1975, it was estimated that the prefecture would spend a total of over 5.1 billion yen on the event. In order to gather these funds, the prefecture had borrowed 210 million yen from a commercial bank, with another 200 million yen loan deemed necessary, at an interest rate of 9.25%. A further 170 million yen of the total approximately 210 million yen required to acquire private land within the designated site had been raised through the issuing of bonds. Local Okinawan businesses had procured only approximately 13% of the total outlying costs of Expo-related construction projects. As up to 90% of lifestyle necessities in Okinawa were imported from the Japanese mainland, Ōta pointed out that even with an increase in consumer spending a large amount of this profit would be drained out of Okinawa. Accompanying sharp rises in inflation moreover placed further pressure on those locals most struggling to make a living.

Up to this point, Ōta had not directed strong criticism towards the Yara administration, which he saw was subject to Japanese government pressure and the contradictions twenty-seven years of US occupation had vested on Okinawa’s politics and economy. Now, however, Ōta became explicitly critical of the prefecture’s lack of an autonomous policy. The Okinawan Prefectural Council of Unions (Okinawa-ken

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40 Ōta Masahide, “Obiyakasareru Okinawa no jichi,” Ushio (May 1975), pp. 223-4. Ōta was citing figures published in the Okinawa Taimusu and Ryūkyū Shimpō.
rōdō kumiai kyōgikai) and labour activists from within the Reversion Council opposed the holding of the Expo in Okinawa, and farmers and small business owners were fearful of the economic spill-over effect of inflation. Many were also opposed to the planned visit of Prince Akihito, eldest son of the Emperor and heir to the throne, and his wife to Okinawa for the event. In reaction to the planned visit of the Prince, Okinawa’s leading literary journal, Shin-Okinawa Bungaku, published a special on Okinawa and the Emperor system. Intellectuals such as Arakawa Akira, Kawamitsu Shin’ichi, and Migayi Eishō were highly critical of the Emperor system and its truncated postwar version, particularly in the context of Okinawa. Yet the national and prefectural governments were determined to go ahead with the Expo. Moreover, in relation to the Prince’s planned visit, Yara purportedly stated in a press conference that: “Some talk of the sentiment of the people of Okinawa, but we must also consider the sentiment of the people of all of Japan. Opposing the Prince’s Okinawan visit will not be beneficial to the future of Okinawa.”

The Expo came to symbolize the interconnection between large-scale public works investment and the permeation of nationalist constructions of homogeneity within state structures. In opposition to these multiple structures of incorporation, struggles over Okinawan identity interwove with contests over national and prefectural government economic policy. Within these contests, tensions that had been inherent in the reversion movement—as at once containing both pro-assimilationist and pro-autonomy forces—also came to the fore. Divisions within Okinawa’s progressive forces became clearly discernable—as manifest in the difference in opinions on the Prince’s visit.

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42 “Tokushū: Okinawa to Tenōsei,” Shin Okinawa Bungaku No. 28, 1975, pp. 6-100.
Ōta saw the national and prefectural government’s prioritisation of the “state-sponsored event” (kokka gyōji) over the will of local residents as a “re-enactment of the pattern of centre-periphery relations which have marked Okinawa’s history since its integration as a prefecture into Japan.”\(^{44}\) He concluded that: “In this sense, neither the government nor the prefecture seem to have learnt anything from the harsh experiences of the prewar period and defeat.”\(^{45}\) In August 1971, the GRI had unanimously passed a resolution endorsing the Expo to be held within Okinawa, and applauding the effect it would have in promoting Okinawa’s economic development. On reflection, Ōta saw that such judgements were based on the delusion that increases in GNP alone would ensure Okinawa’s release from the “shackles” of historical poverty. He stressed that in this way: “Okinawa’s politicians and administrators in particular...not only lacked political awareness, but the precautionary sense to delve into the substance of government and business-sponsored policy outlines from an autonomous local perspective.”\(^{46}\)

Ōta saw Yara’s comments on the Prince’s visit, and his decision to seek the cooperation of the Japanese Defence Forces in the case of natural disaster (seen as amounting to an indirect acknowledgement of their presence in Okinawa), as exemplary of the way in which Okinawa was “losing” (sōshitsu) its sense of identity and spirit. For Ōta, the Battle of Okinawa had provided Okinawans with an opportunity to regain a sense of subjectivity (shutaisei) “as Okinawan”—a sense which had been forcefully abandoned in the prewar period. Yet the road to the Marine Expo was a process whereby this identity was gradually being destroyed: “The government...has not only induced the renunciation of people’s sense of identity as Okinawans, but through the

\(^{44}\) Ibid.

\(^{45}\) Ibid.

Marine Expo has at least for the time being consummated the making of imperial subjects in its postwar form.\(^47\)

Through this reference to the “making of imperial subjects” Ōta drew an explicit connection between the emerging post-reversion economic and political system, and prewar imperialist ideology. In the prewar era, assimilation and imperial education had induced the destruction of an Okinawan self; now it was seen that this sense of identity was again being destroyed by an expansion of mainland Japanese private and public capital. Ōta saw that the push to combine the holding of the Expo with the visit of the Emperor’s heir reinforced this link, and the continuities between the prewar Emperor system and postwar Japan. In the months leading up to the Expo, Ōta also drew direct connections between the destruction of Okinawan tradition and sense of community and the environmental destruction which the massive Expo-related construction boom had brought to the main island.

From at least 1972, criticism of the permeation of mainland Japanese capital, the arrival of Japanese Defence Forces to Okinawa, and the fortification of Japan’s centralized and LDP-dominated structures of authority coincided with images of the “destruction” of Okinawa—as also coinciding with the physical destruction of the islands’ natural environs.\(^48\) In 1973, the Committee of Ten for the Protection of Okinawan Culture and Nature, made up of various well known academics, and the heads of both the Okinawan Women’s League and Okinawa Cultural Association, submitted a petition to Okinawan Governor Yara and the GRL legislature. They strongly opposed the way in which the Marine Expo, while promoting the “establishment of a new marine culture,” was in fact precipitating the destruction of the natural

\(^47\) Ōta Masahide, “Okinawa kaiyōhaku no kaimaku o mae ni.”

environments which had “protected the Okinawa spirit” for “two thousand years.”49 By
1974, numerous intellectuals, environmentalists, and scientists in Okinawa lamented
and strongly opposed Okinawa’s environmental, cultural, and social dislocation and
destruction, drawing explicit connections between the destruction of the agriculture
industry, village life, a sense of community, and pollution of the islands’ subtropical
landscape.50

On the eve of the Expo, the implications of reversion’s failure to provide local
autonomy seemed to increasingly come to light. In this context, Ōta endorsed a pro-
independence stance to an extent unseen in his pre-reversion work: “As the movement
to restore a sense of Okinawan identity gains momentum, a pro-independent type of
thinking is on the upsurge, including within myself.”51 Having himself just returned
from a year sabbatical in Hawaii, Ōta introduced the anti-reversion arguments of
Kakazu Hashiji, a Hawaiian immigrant of Okinawan decent. Kakazu had fled to Hawaii
at the age of sixteen to avoid military conscription, and during the war composed
pamphlets distributed by the US military urging civilians to try to avoid becoming
involved in the ensuing military combat. In 1961, he contributed an article to an
Okinawan newspaper critical of the pro-reversion movement. Ōta stressed that Kakazu
did not oppose reversion from a pro-American, anti-Japanese standpoint, but in the
name of Okinawan autonomy. For Kakazu, to seek reversion to Japan was tantamount
to desiring one’s own confinement. Ōta concluded: “The present condition of Okinawa
does not resemble the conditions which we sought in the slightest. From this, of late I
have come to feel that, no matter what our intentions were, those who advocated the
reversion movement, including myself, cannot repudiate the countenance of these criticisms from Hawaii.  

At the same time, Ōta also continued to seek to achieve increased local autonomy for Okinawa within Japan—as vital for both Okinawa and the functioning of Japanese democracy as a whole. He continued to uphold the constitution and Local Autonomy Laws as guaranteeing decentralization at least on principle, and saw the problem as being rather that these principles were not ensured in practice. Ōta saw that in order for autonomy to be guaranteed, tasks and financial resources should be separated between national and local government according to the “capacities of each” and “on equal terms.” In contrast, in reality: “In the vast majority of cases, even local public servants do not hold themselves accountable to the local residents, but to the state, which is to all intents and means the supreme ruler.” Reforming this institutionalised system of centralization required, Ōta concluded, a fundamental transformation in the mentality of the government. Such a transformation was in turn seen as vital for Japan as a whole: “Unless prioritisation of the national treasury is supplanted by prioritisation of the will of local residents, and the government acknowledges the simple truth that it exists for the sake of local inhabitants, the establishment of local autonomy will remain nothing but a chimera....”

On 20 July 1975, the opening of the International Marine Expo in Motobu, Okinawa, was attended by a host of political and other dignitaries, including Prince Akihito and his wife. In preparation for the Prince’s visit, an additional 2,400 police had been sent to Okinawa from the mainland. On 18 July, directly prior to Expo’s opening

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52 Ōta Masahide, “Okinawa no yūtsu: ‘kaiyōhaku’infure to aikawarazu no ‘kichi’.”


54 Ibid., p. 221.

55 Ibid., p. 223.


ceremony, the royal couple conducted a visit to the Himeyuri Monument, built in commemoration of those members of the schoolgirl corps who died during the Battle of Okinawa. Only three of the select group of twenty who greeted the couple were actual survivors of the Himeyuri Corps, although approximately forty survivors of the corps remained. In explanation for her non-attendance, one survivor was quoted as replying: "I feared with a fierce sense of dread that from the darkest depths of the cave, where my friends fell to their death one upon the other, a voice would demand that I confront the true meaning of spiritual remembrance."57 During the Prince's visit to the site, one left-wing radical threw a makeshift firebomb towards the royal entourage. The couple were unhurt.

The level of investment which poured into Okinawa in the four years from 1972 to the end of 1975 was equal to the total cumulative amount invested in the islands in the twenty-one year period prior to reversion. By 1976, the prefecture was heavily dependent on central government funds, with incomings from the national treasury reaching four times the level of outgoings from the prefecture. As with the Tokyo Olympics and Osaka Exposition before it, the Okinawa Marine Expo resulted in a massive influx of investment from related public works projects. Yet the primary aim of this development was to secure the infrastructure needed for the one-off event, rather than improve the residential environment of local inhabitants in the long-term. Much of the profits were fuelled back into mainland Japanese companies, and the years leading up to and directly after the Expo were accompanied by a flood of local bankruptcies.58 The thoroughfare from Naha to Nago was greatly improved. Yet Okinawa remained the

58 One of the largest of these was the collapse of the Okinawan transportation company, Ryūkyū Kaiun, which declared bankruptcy in October 1976 with a total debt of 14.67 billion yen. Its losses in the previous financial year were said to be directly related to the Marine Expo (Arasaki Moriteru, Okinawa gendaishi, pp. 49-52).
only prefecture in Japan without rail, after the government rejected the prefectural administration’s appeal for a rail track out of concern over operation costs.\textsuperscript{59}

The large influx of public investment into Okinawa in the years directly following reversion helped to provide a buffer against much of the economic confusion which it was feared would accompany the transfer of administrative rights in 1972.\textsuperscript{60} Yet, as Ōta had expressed concern over and warned against, the Expo and related investment also formed an intrinsic part of the central government’s policy of integrating Okinawa into Japan’s centralized economic administrative system. At the core of this policy was an increase in compensation for public works projects funded in part or even whole from the national treasury.\textsuperscript{61}

From 1971 to 1976, the amount of compensation paid to the owners of land utilized by the US military increased by 8.5 times. This massive increase triggered a further increase in land prices, lending a blow to agriculture and further entrenching dependence on the bases within an influential section of the population. All these policies combined to result, as Ōta had feared, in a large concentration of population around Okinawa’s largest city, Naha. According to a survey conducted in 1975 the population of Tomigusuku Village, adjacent to Naha, had increased 90\% in comparison to five years previously, while all the nine villages which experienced a population decrease of over twenty percent were in the northern district of Okinawa’s main island or in outlying islands.\textsuperscript{62}

According to one estimate, while in 1972 base revenue made up close to half of Okinawa’s total GDP, by 1975 this ratio had decreased to less than one fifth. In contrast, by 1975 public spending made up close to one third of GDP, which in itself

\textsuperscript{59} Miyamoto Ken’ichi, \textit{Kaihatsu to jichi no tenbō: Okinawa}, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{60} As also noted by Miyamoto, ibid.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{62} As cited in Miyamoto, ibid., p. 53.
had increased over threefold in four years. In short, Okinawa was able to lessen its dependence on the bases as the primary source of revenue for the islands and attain massive increases in GDP. Yet base dependence was replaced by the entrenchment of a system of fiscal dependence on the national government, and economic growth was to a significant extent fed by public spending, largely on often environmentally damaging public works. Moreover, to the extent that national government policy advocated compliance with the US in support of the maintenance of the large US military presence within the islands, Okinawa’s newly compounded structure of dependence remained intimately linked to the bases.

In June 1976, the progressive candidate and chosen successor of Yara Chōbyō, Taira Kōichi, was victorious in Okinawa’s gubernatorial elections. Not only was it the first time in the whole of Japan that the successor of a progressive administration had gained office as governor in a nation largely dominated by the ruling LDP, but the progressive coalition also gained a majority of seats in the prefectural assembly. Ota saw this victory as testimony of deep-seated opposition to the government’s centralist development policies and pork-barrel politics, and a strong desire for autonomy and the upholding of the pacifist principles of the constitution within Okinawa. Yet the urgent question as to whether Okinawa’s progressive coalition held the power or will necessary to resist increasingly indirect and insidious structures of authority remained. Ota cautioned that the prefectural administration and newly instated Governor Taira faced a mountain of issues in relation to the bases and economic development. He stressed the urgent need for the prefecture to draw up a plan detailing specific measures to be implemented in order to increase autonomy and transfer Okinawa fully from a “base

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63 Ibid., p. 48.
64 As Miyamoto Ken’ichi observes: “The prefecture, bogged down with the implementation of national treasure-compensated public-works projects and the strings to which they were attached, lost its free agency (jishusei), and in the formulation of fiscal and development policy came under the direct control of the national government” (ibid., p. 52).
economy” to a “peace economy.” Such reform required an overhaul of the prefecture’s bureaucratic administration and a clear awareness of the implications of the crisis facing Okinawan society and sense of self. 65

Yet by the 1976 elections, the opposition movement against the Central Terminal Station (CTS) development at Kin Bay had already reached an impasse. This development planned to be world’s largest oil storage facilities, built on a massive expanse of reclaimed land across Kin Bay. The struggle against this plan grew into the largest environmental movement of the early post-reversion period. The Kin Bay issue became, as much as the Marine Expo, a symbol of the resistance, incorporation, and political fragmentation which marked this period. 66 Under the initial support of both local and prefectural authorities, Okinawa Mitsubishi, affiliated with the large mainland Japanese conglomerate, had begun work on the land reclamation in October 1972. Less than a year later, however, in the wake of a large oil tanker leak and the environmental destruction accompanying preparations for the Marine Expo, the Prefectural Teachers Union and the All-Prefecture Labour Union expressed opposition to the CTS, and a large umbrella organization, the Kin Bay Protection Society, was mobilized against the project. From 1973, the Kin Bay Protection Society (also supported by the Committee of Ten for the Protection of Okinawan Culture and Nature) organized a series of mass

65 “Kakushin keizoku o sentaku shita Okinawa kenmin: uchinaru hōkai no kiki o sukueru ka,” Ekonomisuto (29 June 1976), pp. 52-6.
66 Miyume Tanji points out that another important dimension of the anti-CTS movement was the discovery of a local identity as part of the Ryūkyū region, as an alternative to the inscription of Okinawa as a marginalized part of Japan. The idea of Ryūkyū is based on Shimao Toshio’s writings on ‘Yaponesia’, which envisioned Okinawa and Amami as a bridge connecting the Japanese archipelago with other South Pacific islands such as Polynesia, Micronesia, Melanesia and Indonesia. The term presented an alternative way of viewing Okinawa’s geographical imaginary and: “The anti-CTS activists promoted the use of the term...to describe the islands of the Ryukyu region and demarcate a new sphere of solidarity” (Miyume Tanji, “The dynamic trajectory of the post-reversion ‘Okinawa Struggle’: Constitution, environment and gender” in Richard Siddle and Glenn Hooks (eds.) Okinawa and Japan: Structure and Subjectivity). For a description of Shimao Toshio’s ‘Yaponesia’, see Philip Gabriel, Mad Wives and Island Dreams: Shimao Toshio and the Margins of Japanese Literature (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), esp. pp. 160-225.
protests and sit-ins, and in January 1974, facing large pressure from within his support base, Yara Chōbyō issued an anti-CTS declaration, backed unanimously by the prefectural assembly’s ruling progressive coalition. Yet under threat of legal action from Mitsubishi, Yara effectively reversed this decision in October 1975, permitting the project’s completion.

As Leo T. S. Ching observes: “Colonialism continues, albeit in a different form and under changing conditions. In most postcolonial countries decolonialisation is followed by neocolonial practices that, despite political autonomy, continue to invent and construct new kinds of domination (economic and cultural) that strengthen, rather than weaken, the dependent relationship of the ex-colonies to the imperial centres.” In a series of articles published in 1977, Ōta continued to lament the loss of Okinawan identity and the “destruction of Okinawa.” Lament was accompanied by self-questioning and disillusionment, as well as deep-felt criticism of contemporary materialism. On the one hand, the failures of reversion presented Ōta with an impasse over how to conceive of a political project and position for himself and Okinawa. Underlying this crisis of representation was the dilemma of a dual disillusionment—towards the postcolonial condition for failing to ensure the ideal of autonomy envisaged within the framework of the restoration of citizen rights under a sovereign state, and towards the postwar as an emancipatory project embodying the awakening of the Okinawan subject. Prior to reversion Ōta celebrated the sense of self which Okinawans

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70 As Ōta writes: “In one sense, prior to reversion it was feared, and in fact predicted, that Okinawa would face the predicament it now faces after reversion. This being the case, it is difficult to say anything beyond the fact that we must acknowledge that it is our own powerlessness and inability to prevent such conditions which is at fault” (“Okinawa minzoku to wa: sono aidentiti o motomete,” p. 56).
had gained through the profound loss of war. Now, however, he lamented: “I can only say it seems as though Okinawans have not learnt anything from their historical experience and the legacy of the past.”

Ōta drew a direct link between the inability of Okinawans to attain a sense of autonomy and the limitations of excessive materialism. Quoting extensively from E. F. Schumacher, Ōta warned of the crisis facing human society as a result of the excessive drive for capital and the decline in respect for spiritual values. The growing recognition of the importance of indigenous and traditional customs which had hitherto been discarded as backward was seen as an “inevitable” part of the re-evaluation of spiritual values. In drawing connections between centralizing forces of capital and homogenisation of culture within Japan, Ōta evoked a sense of Okinawan culture and identity directly opposed to the joint subsuming forces of both capital and nation.

In reality, however, divisions among progressive groups, the incorporation of Okinawan politics within a public works-centred economy, and the effects of mass increases in economic output and consumption levels combined to strengthen Okinawa’s conservative forces. Only two years after his election victory, Okinawan Governor Taira collapsed from a sudden attack of thrombosis, and was forced to retire from politics. In the subsequent gubernatorial elections of December 1978 LDP-backed Nishime Junji, who had lost to Yara ten years previously, was victorious. As local, domestic, and international structures of authority intertwined within increasingly opaque and encompassing relations of power, Ōta’s analyses also became increasingly academic and introspective. In the context of a new wave of conservatism from the mid-1970s, Ōta came to focus primarily on the retrieval of “Okinawa” as ideal—through a metaphorical “return” (Ōta used the term “kaiki”) to the essence of Okinawan identity.

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71 “Okinawa minzoku to wa: sono aidentitii o motomete,” p. 65.
73 “Okinawa minzoku to wa: sono aidentitii o motomete,” pp. 60-5.
In the highly politicised years directly following reversion, Ōta provided a poignant critique of the process whereby Okinawa was incorporated into Japan’s centralized administrative, ideological, political, and economic systems. Many of his concerns on the lasting effects of economic stimulus policies—the penetration of centralized corporate capitalism, mass consumerism, a loss of sense of identity, and disintegration of the local cultural fabric and natural environs—proved correct. From an early period, Ōta struck at root of issues relating to the Okinawan economy and the entrenchment of its system of dependence through penetrating criticism on the design of the “house” which was economic stimulus policy over Okinawa.

Yet this analysis did not present in detail an alternative “draft plan” able to lay the foundations of economic autonomy. Neither was it alone able to effect a significant transformation in systems of dependence. In the years following, Okinawa became further integrated in Japan’s political and economic system. Its economy became centred around public works projects and the bases remained. In the first twenty-five years after reversion, 54 percent of all disbursements by the provincial government came under the head of “Okinawa Development Works.” Many of these projects contributed to the severe environmental damage of Okinawa’s fragile coastline and ecosystem. 74 Reflecting on the significance of the Expo in the year 2000, Kang Sang-jung observes: “Okinawa’s post-reversion development was also a process whereby the Okinawan economy became further dependent on central government public spending and mainland Japanese investment activity. The Marine Expo of 1975 symbolized the fortification of the neo-colonial structure that was established directly following reversion and which remains to this day.” 75 In its ideology of self-improvement, reform, and drive to reach the “constantly receding horizon of parity,” the impetus for economic

74 Gavan McCormack, “Okinawa and the Structure of Dependence.”
development in the name of “on parity with the mainland” paralleled the lifestyle reform movements of the prewar era.\textsuperscript{76} What was entailed by a “peace economy” and how could it be envisaged and implemented without relying on central government funds? Did Okinawan “development” necessitate “achieving parity with,” and becoming the same as, mainland Japan, and if not what did it entail? Many years after the 1975 Expo, Okinawa’s “economic question” remained an inherently divisive issue within progressive politics. It would become the bane of Ōta’s own administration during his time as governor.

**The Politics of Recovery: Reclaiming an Okinawan Self**

*Iha Fuyū, Yanagita Kunio, and the Subject of Nostalgia*

In comparison to the tumultuous years directly prior to and proceeding reversion, the second half of the 1970s saw a general retreat from engagement in economic and political issues both within Ōta’s analysis and Okinawan intellectual discourse as a whole. This retreat coincided with a wave of conservatism within Okinawan politics and the splintering of social movements. It was also strongly related to the depoliticisation of society and fragmentation of political opposition throughout Japan. Yet in the context of Okinawa at least, a partial retreat from direct engagement in political and economic issues of the day did not entail a complete withdrawal from politics itself. Needless to say, the overwhelming US military presence remained a constantly persistent issue, which Ōta also continued to raise.\textsuperscript{77} The realms of history and identity too continued to be sites of resistance, just as contests over Okinawan history and identity intertwined with wider struggles concerning such issues as

\textsuperscript{76} As pointed out by Christopher T. Nelson, “Huzuki Hayato, the Storyteller: Comedy, Practice and the Politics of Everyday Life in Okinawa,” p. 191.

education, security policy, and the constitution. Within this context, in focusing on the retrieval of an Okinawan identity, Ōta also sought a discursive space from which to re-envision Okinawan subjectivity, relativise dominant claims to homogenous Japanese culture, and retrieve political agency in the present.

As Dipesh Chakrabarty observes:

Nostalgia is located in an experience of loss and calls for a politics of recovery and recuperation, and for a political agency adequate to that task. That agency could be the state. It could also be the individual. The political task of nostalgic memory, whether individual or collective, is to recover and preserve, make the past a part of the present.78

Calls for the recovery and recuperation of a lost sense of Japanese community and spirit have been integral to discourses of resistance seeking to mobilize against the dislocating effects of state bureaucracy and the project of modernization, and incorporated within hegemonic official constructions of the Japanese national imaginary. This process of resistance and incorporation is not necessarily clear-cut. Yanagita Kunio and his studies on Japanese folklore (minzakugaku) for example have been concurrently seen as both a “scholarship of resistance” and as inherently connected to official prewar ideology of Japanese cultural uniqueness and the “family state.”79

In asserting the importance of the marginal over the centre, of rhetorical speech over writing, and of romanticism over realism, Yanagita’s evocations of a timeless Japanese “folk” stood in direct odds with bureaucratic rationalism and Eurocentric discourses on race. As J. Victor Koschmann points out, a radical posture of disbelief with respect to the documents, objectives, and methods that formed the basis of

79 On these seemingly contradictory depictions of Yanagita Kunio and their significance, see J. Victor Koschmann, “Folklore Studies and the Conservative Anti-establishment in Modern Japan,” in J. Victor Koschmann, Ōiwa Keibō, and Yamashita Shinji (eds.) International Perspectives on Yanagita Kunio and Japanese Folklore Studies (Ithaca, New York: Cornell China-Japan Program, 1985), pp. 131-64.
authority in the academic and religious establishments was built into the constitution of minzokugaku as a discipline. Folklore studies: "Suggested a different way of thinking about history and culture, one which might have encouraged an attitude of scepticism toward the overly centralized and homogenized representation of the past sponsored by the state." At the same time, however, parallels between Yanagita's depiction of the Japanese folk as at once hybrid and yet inherently essentialized, and the dual protean and jingoistic rhetoric of prewar imperial ideology are not difficult to find. As Marilyn Ivy notes: "It is possible to see the entire trajectory of nativist ethnology, with its emphases on the unwritten, the marginal, and the impoverished, as a species of resistance to elite, documentary, modernist scholarship... Yet to the extent that it became constituted as the study of what was uniquely Japanese, that is, outside the corruptions of western modernity, Yanagita and his folklore studies... contributed to the chauvinism and cultural nationalism of the wartime period."

A tense and yet often mutually reinforcing relation between ethnic and state-centred nationalisms lies at the core of this dual process of resistance and incorporation, and the politics of nostalgic recovery in modern Japanese discourse. Endeavours to retrieve a lost sense of Japanese culture and tradition are frequently conceived in reaction against government policy and the state-led modernization project. In modern Japan at least, however, nationalist tropes of aesthetic romanticism have often served to ultimately bolster centralized and totalitarian structures of state authority, capital, and militarism.

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80 Ibid., pp. 156-7.
81 Oguma Eiji also notes the similarities between Yanagita’s depictions of the “yamabito” (mountain people) of Japan and the state-sanctioned evocations of the Japanese people as the descendents of the Emperor (tenson minzoku) in Tanitsu minzoku shinwa no kigen (Tokyo: Shinyaisha, 1995), p. 209.
83 Dipesh Chakrabarty makes an important observation in this regard. Namely: “A note of Benjaminian suspicion — that the ‘aestheticization of the political...’ is a] distinguishing mark of fascism’ — sounds
Yet in relation to the works of Iha Fuyū and the discipline of “Okinawan Studies” (Okinawagaku), this process of incorporation is complicated by a further tension—between the simultaneous evoking of a common (hybrid) Japanese “origin”, and an immutable Okinawan “self.” Iha was himself deeply indebted to Yanagita and the folklore studies movement—both intellectually and financially. Though while Yanagita sought to discover in Okinawa a surviving Japanese essence, for Iha this project also coincided with his endeavour to recover a unique Okinawan ethnicity. In the words of Ōta: “Just as Yanagita Kunio’s folklore studies were termed the new Nativist studies, and were a ‘discipline of self-introspection’ to determine what it means to be Japanese, ‘Iha Fuyū studies’ is also a ‘discipline of self-perception’ in pursuit of what it means to be Okinawan.”

On one level advocating a “theory of common ancestry between Ryukyu and Japan” in accordance with the Meiji state’s project of national consolidation, Iha also reclaimed authority to an Okinawan uniqueness which he deemed was unknowable by others:

Regardless of the level of progression in history a particular race (jinshu) has reached, every ethnic group (minzoku) has a particular characteristic bestowed from god. The fundamental thought held in place by individual characteristics is the principle of uniqueness. In other words, each person finds providence in the condition of uniqueness and certainty. Providence discovers in Okinawans a place naturally legitimate in discussions of modern Japanese nationalist thought. Yet I know from the Indian examples of Gandhi and Tagore that there is no inevitable logic or process of historical inevitability that must always, anywhere and everywhere, lead romantic/aesthetic nationalism into statist and fascist jingoism. This happened in Japan, and happened in particular instances in Indian history, but these were instances in which, in my terms, the state was able to assimilate to its own ends the much richer, older, and more complex histories of the training of the senses that the subject of modernity embodied. How this happened, and where, is for the historian to explain” (“Afterward: Revisiting the Traditional/Modernity Binary,” pp. 295-6). On the connection between a public yearning for nostalgia and totalitarianism in China, see Geremie Barné, In the Red: On Contemporary Chinese Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), especially Chapter Twelve (“Totalitarian Nostalgia”), pp. 316-44.

which those who are not Okinawan can by no means find. If a place which can ultimately never be discovered by those who are not Okinawans is found by Okinawans (themselves), then Okinawans also possess a reason for being (ikigai). 85

Iha’s (re)discovery of an uniquely Okinawan discursive space and site of knowledge coincided with and was integral to his own attempts to retrieve and transcribe the history, songs and language of the Ryukyuan Kingdom. Through a dialogue with Ryukyuan history and language, Iha sought to reclaim an Okinawan cultural identity within, and yet also in ambivalent opposition to, a Japanese national historical narrative. In the reawakening of Ryukyuan history and culture, Iha evoked an autonomous Okinawan uniqueness known only by the subaltern self, and thereby impervious to Japanese integration and the calamitous transitions of the present. As Okinawa became reincorporated into Japanese state structures following reversion and twenty years after his own death, Iha again emerged as central to an Okinawan politics of recovery through a major revival in interest amongst Okinawan intellectuals in his life and body of work.

In 1961, fourteen years after Iha’s death, his monument was erected in the grounds within Urasoe Castle ruins in Okinawa from funds contributed privately from throughout Okinawa as well as Hawaii and mainland Japan. 86 During the anti-reversion debates of 1971-2, Iha’s framework of analysis became an issue of contention, and in the same period a joint short study of Iha’s life and work was published. 87 Yet it was not until the post-reversion era, and particularly during the second half of the 1970s, that Iha’s life and work was revived in lengthy analyses and discussions. Debate about the possibilities and limitations of his vision of an Okinawan autonomous self (kosei) came

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to both unite and divide intellectuals in their endeavour to conceive of Okinawan agency and identity in the present. Two events very directly served as catalysts to this surge in interest—the publication of Iha’s body of collective works, and the one hundredth anniversary of his birth. More abstractly, it was also significantly fuelled by the perception that important parallels linked the Meiji period to contemporary Okinawa. As Ōta himself took note:

People have turned their eyes to the past out of the fact that the conditions during the time Iha was active have been reproduced in postwar Okinawa—from the fact that history has repeated itself. Faced by the multiple issues which plague Okinawa in the present, the first thing that comes to mind in the endeavor to find a solution to these issues is the desire to take note of the lessons of the past. I think that is why our attention is drawn to these historical works.

Ōta and “Iha Fuyū Studies”

In an article in 1976, Ōta outlined at least three reasons why Iha Fuyū remained central to the study of Okinawa. Firstly, because the issues which he raised and pursued “have not been solved, and remain real questions for us today.” Secondly, because of the vital inroads that Iha made within the study of Okinawan history and culture. Thirdly, and to Ōta the most important factor drawing him to Iha was the fact that; “because, more than anything else, I believe the distinct consciousness and passion (what I view to be ethnic pathos) as an Okinawan which lies at the core of Iha’s thought and work, provides us with a guide on how we can live within Okinawa as human beings.” If Iha’s field of intellectual study could be summarized within a few words,
Ōta concluded, “it was the pursuit and confirmation of the identity (proof of existence) of Okinawans.” Iha carried out this pursuit primarily through the transcription, translation, study, and analysis of “Omoro,” a collection of 8,886 songs composed under ancient Ryukyu which chronicled the traditions, political events, natural environment and lifestyle of the kingdom. Omoro, Ōta observed, was “for Iha not only a mirror reflecting the society of ancient Ryukyu, but also the most powerful channel from which to pursue the origins and trace the sentiment, thought, and language of Okinawans.” In a similar way, in the fifth year after reversion, as “the unique individuality of Okinawa becomes completely subsumed within Japan in its totality...and factors leading to the ‘destruction of Okinawa,’ as revealed in the depletion of cultural legacies and devastation of the environment, only increase by the day,” Ōta embarked on an analysis of Iha’s work. Just as Iha had evoked through the poetics of Omoro a condition of nostalgic permanence to fulfil and overcome the profound ruptures and losses of the present and empower a reclaimed Okinawan subject in the future, Ōta thus returned to the life and work of Iha himself.

On the one hand, Ōta acknowledged that Iha’s theory of common Ryukyuan and Japanese ancestry was a product of, and served to promote, assimilationist policies. He also to an extent acknowledged that Iha’s research on “the southern islands” (nantōron), which traced the ancient Ryukyu Kingdom’s expansion southwards, was ultimately utilized in the production of an imperial ideology promoting Japan’s “southern advance” (nanshin) during the war. Yet Ōta stressed that primarily Iha’s work focused upon the issue of how to maintain a sense of Okinawan self while also seeking equality under the Japanese state. Ōta also stressed the contemporary relevance of these issues:

92 Ibid., p. 15.
93 “Iha Fuyū no gakumon to shisō,” p. 109.
Theoretically it is said that minority ethnic groups are guaranteed equality, and officially this may be so, but in reality often they are not. At the same time, how can minority groups within the state system ensure that their self is not annihilated but survives? I cannot help thinking Iha predicted from long ago these very contemporary problems.94

Ōta saw that it was precisely in response to this dilemma that Iha took a seemingly contradictory stance—on the one hand advocating national unification in accordance with the theory of common ancestry, while on the other emphasizing the uniqueness of Okinawan culture. Iha sought to envisage a program of national unification that guaranteed "happiness for Okinawans" and the "thriving of Okinawa's uniqueness," and it was in this respect that Ōta saw his work as providing a vital lead in the present.

Pro-assimilationist ideology—as promoted by the national government and institutionalised within Okinawa's prewar education system and organs of public opinion—advocated the abolition of all "things Okinawan" (Okinawa teki na mono). In contrast, Ōta noted, Iha had focused on the importance of preserving Okinawan culture while at the same time promoting national consolidation. Ōta placed Iha's theory of common ancestry in the context of the Meiji state's annexation of Okinawa, noting that it was integral to Iha's attempt to confirm "common ground" (icchiten) between Okinawa and mainland Japan in the face of forced and inevitable integration. Moreover, Ōta stressed, while on the one hand Iha emphasised commonalities between Okinawa and mainland Japan, he also promulgated the unique features of Okinawa—that excess difference not subsumable to or confined within this claim to sameness (icchi shinai ten). Just as it was important to respect each person's individuality, Iha saw respect for the autonomous "individuality" (kosei) of Okinawa as vital to its own survival and to the functioning of the Japanese state (kokka) as a whole.

94 "Iha Fuyū to gendai: sono konnichi teki igi o kangaeru," p. 50.
Ota concluded that Iha’s vision of national consolidation directly contrasted with the arbitrary and one-sided policies of the central government. Iha emphasized the importance of respecting and preserving difference against the central government’s lack of respect towards the wishes of local entities. Ota drew direct parallels between the central government’s discriminatory policies and forceful denial of Okinawan identity criticized by Iha in the prewar period, and what Ota saw as the continued institutionalisation of this structure of discrimination and denial in the postwar era.

Through Iha’s conceptualisation of an immutable Okinawan self and his emphasis on the importance of difference, Ota thus sought to uncover a discursive site of resistance to contest the way in which Okinawa was once again being arbitrarily incorporated within Japan. Ota conceived of this issue in terms of national versus cultural identity:

In the context of assimilation, when Okinawans are conferred an identity as Japanese, national assimilation (as national identity) is prioritized above all else as the only goal to be achieved, and the sacrifice of Okinawan (human) identity to this process is not even considered an issue. However, Iha considered both the consolidation of a national identity and the preservation of a cultural identity as equally important, and advocated the appropriate integration of both....Moreover, the form of national integration which Iha advocated as desirable, that is as I phrase it the appropriate unification and fusion of the attainment of national identity and the attainment of cultural identity, has still not been achieved, and remains a vital issue today.95

Ota thus focused on the empowering potential of Iha’s conceptualisation of an autonomous Okinawan self in the context of contemporary relations. Other Okinawan intellectuals such as Arakawa Akira, however, were far more critical of Iha’s complicity within the Meiji state’s project of consolidation. Carrying on from pre-1972 debates over reversion, in a dialogue with Ota and other intellectuals in 1976, Arakawa rejected the emancipatory potential of Iha’s thought. Arakawa took the view that on the

95 “Iha Fuyū no shisō to sono jidai” in Ōta Masahide et al, Iha Fuyū: hito to shisō (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1976), pp. 204-5.
contrary, in advocating national unification and assimilation according to the assumptions of a homogeneous Japanese ethnicity (*dōitsu minzoku*), Iha reinforced the totalising ideology of the state. Arakawa also argued that these assumptions had in turn formed a fundamental part of Okinawa’s reversion movement. To the extent that an emphasis on local uniqueness worked within totalising assumptions of a homogenous ethnic nation, Arakawa concluded that “ultimately only conformity to centralized structures of state authority and the annihilation of local difference will remain.” Ota continued to take the position that unless an alternative political program to Okinawa’s incorporation within Japan could be envisioned, such criticisms did not provide a vision that overcame the dilemmas inherent to Iha’s project. In response, Arakawa argued that the issues at hand were not reducible to the question of whether or not an alternate vision for Okinawa’s status could be put forth.

Arakawa and Ota’s divergent evaluations of Iha’s thought were a reflection of their differing position on the relation between theory and practice, and their differing conception of Okinawa’s relation to Japan. Arakawa traced the way in which Iha’s analysis was complicit in the formation of an ideology of national consolidation and modern theories of evolution. Ota in contrast to an extent conceded this complicity, but saw Iha’s dilemma as inevitable in the context of Okinawa’s political and economic predicament. Played out in discussions over Iha’s thought, the polemic between Arakawa and Ota was symptomatic of the dilemma involved in conceiving of agency and community in the postcolonial aftermath.

As Arakawa pointed out, it is certain that Western-influenced theories of evolution lay at the foundation of Iha’s theory of common ancestry and assimilationist ideology. While conceived in opposition to centralized state policies and even modernity itself, both Yanagita’s new-Nativism and Iha’s “*Omorō* studies”

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96 “Iha Fuyō to gendai; sono konnichi teki igi o kangaeru,” pp. 54-5.
97 Ibid., pp. 52-3.
(Omorogaku) incorporated western-inspired modern notions of civilization and sovereign national territory. Through privileging the periphery, Yanagita sought to reverse the hierarchy between periphery and centre—and therein a return to a lost Japanese essence neither tainted by nor representable within (Western) modernity and modern rationalist lexicons. Yet in evoking this essence, however, he also maintained the periphery-periphery dichotomy and reified constructions of Japan’s margins as Japanese and yet (in Tessa Morris-Suzuki’s phrase) “stranded in an earlier phase of historical evolution.” 98 Such constructions formed the core of state-centred assimilationist discourse—where the civilizing project of progress of the “backward” frontier was defined according to the process of “becoming Japanese.”

In his earlier work in particular, Iha embraced Meiji Enlightenment ideals of civilization and the evolutionary assumptions of social Darwinism. 99 He conceived of the abolition of the Ryukyu Kingdom as encompassing the “emancipation” of Okinawans from their exploitation under Satsuma—wherein the Ryukyu Kingdom was “prostituted” for the sake of material gain. In viewing subordination under Satsuma as a form of female prostitution, and finding cause for Okinawa’s backwardness in the (female) superstitions of Yuta Shaman, Iha also perpetuated a perceived association between “Okinawa”, “backwardness” and “women.” While promoting women’s education, the need to “educate women”, as with the process of Japanization itself, was conceived within a discursive framework which simultaneously placed the (backward) object—as “women” or “Okinawan”—in opposition to the civilizing (modern) centre.

Ota does not problematize either Iha’s (and Yanagita’s) perception of Okinawa as fixed within a natural historical state (whereby “time” is transformed into “space”), nor his fierce rejection of the “superstitious”—as associated with “female” and Yuta. As a result, the way in which discursive constructions of periphery/periphery and male/female have been employed to legitimise patriarchal and hierarchical structures within the imagined national community is left unexplored. As others have examined in relation to the work of Franz Fanon, passing over such issues ultimately serves to perpetuate a politics of exclusion.\textsuperscript{100} Ota, Iha, and most central (male) figures within Okinawan intellectual debate have unquestioningly incorporated patriarchal assumptions embedded within the construction of an Okinawan (Japanese) subjectivity.\textsuperscript{101}

This is not to negate, as Ota stressed, the fact that Iha resisted state-centred assimilationist ideology and constructions of Japanese particularism—by relativising differences between Okinawa and the rest of Japan, and evoking a unique Okinawan ethnicity. Ota’s analysis of the way in which Iha contested dominant constructions of Japanese-ness were similarly in turn integral to Ota’s own dual project of incorporation and differentiation. In attempting to conceive of an Okinawan subjectivity, Ota duplicated Iha’s ambivalence within his own frame of analysis. This became manifest in Ota’s conceptualisation of the problematic of “cultural” versus “national” identity. On one level, Ota saw that the ideal form of national consolidation involved a fusion of (Okinawan) “cultural” identity and (Japanese) “national” identity without subsuming one into the other. Yet an inherent tension can be discerned between this

\textsuperscript{100} Rey Chow, \textit{Ethics after Idealism: Theory-Culture-Ethnicity-Reading}, pp. 55-73.

conceptualisation of Okinawan "cultural" and Japanese "national" identity—and at times within his analysis Ōta places Okinawan "cultural identity" and a sense of "identity as humans" in opposition to essentialized difference within national identity. 102 Ōta thus also maintained the tension which he had seen at the core of Iha's work—between seeking equality through an embracing of assumptions of national consolidation and endeavouring to (re)claim an autonomous sense of (Okinawan) self. Ōta thus sought to uphold political and historical agency and an agenda of political and social liberalism as conceived within the modern framework of the nation-state yet also to an extent move beyond this framework.

Both Iha's and Ōta's endeavours to reclaim a unique Okinawan self are embedded in problematic assumptions and contradictions. At the same time, these contradictions are intrinsic to the process whereby cultural, social, and economic dislocation accompanying modernity and national consolidation has produced and been contested through (in the words of Dipesh Chakrabarty) a nostalgic "politics of recovery" within (to use Ashis Nandy's term) the "cultural psychology of exile." Notions of the historical subject and a sense of cultural permanency have been repeatedly evoked in the attempt to redeem the losses of the present and envision a program of action for the future. They have thus been central to discourses of political mobilization both by and against the state.

Both Iha and Ōta sought to assert Okinawa's "sameness" and right to equality as "Japanese" against what Tomiyama Ichirō terms a "presentiment of violence." In the case of Iha, this "presentiment" was the fear of the inherent violence of Japanese colonialism—of a concurrent erasure of Ryukyuan history and subjugation of Okinawans as "barbarian" (seiban) Other. 103 For Ōta it was the violence of US military occupation. Iha and Ōta appealed to Okinawan/Ryukyuan "individuality" and "cultural

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102 See for example his analysis in Okinawajin to wa nanika (Naha: Greenlife, 1980), pp. 221-4.
103 Tomiyama Ichirō, Bokyoku on yukan: Iha Fuyū ni okeru kiki no mondai.
identity” respectively in the effort to resist and contend the concurrent loss of self through the forces of assimilation.

As Ōta himself observed in his writing on Iha, the dilemmas and ambivalence inherent to Ōta’s own dual project of incorporation and differentiation became more pronounced as the ideals of emancipation remained unanswered. In the late Meiji period Iha still endorsed Ryukyu’s integration into Japan in 1879 as promising Okinawa’s emancipation from Satsuma’s system of “slavery.” In the Taishō period, however, he came to doubt that any such emancipation had in actuality been achieved. In the context of Okinawa’s reincorporation into Japan following reversion, Ōta too took an increasingly equivocal stance towards Okinawa’s postwar reversion movement.

While in the pre-reversion era Ōta had celebrated the reversion movement as embodying the pursuit of Okinawan autonomy, in his *Who are Okinawans?* (*Okinawajin to wa nanika*, 1980), he is much more critical of the movement’s fundamental tenets. He does not reject the reversion movement as a whole—and continues to stress the way in which, in contrast to prewar assimilationism, the movement had sought not only a national identity but an identity for Okinawans “as human beings.” For the first time, however, Ōta also traces the continuities between the pre- and postwar eras, and the way in which Okinawa’s postwar struggle inherited the ideological assumptions of the prewar and wartime regime. While in the pre-reversion era Ōta had been particularly critical of the group of Okinawan elite closely tied to the US occupation administration, now he also became highly critical of the elite group whom he saw had initially instigated reversion itself. Ōta observes that this elite group were generally much more assimilated than Okinawa’s general populace, and had internalised the process of “becoming Japanese” within the prewar era to the extent that

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104 On Iha’s transition in the Taishō period see Kano Masanao, *Okinawa no fuchi*, and Hiyane Teruo, *Kindai Nihon to Iha Fuyū*. This transition has been directly related to Okinawa’s economic crisis in the 1920s.
they viewed it as natural to seek a restoration of their identity by seeking to “return” (kaiki) not to Okinawa but Japan. Okinawa did not experience purges following war defeat even to the scale of mainland Japan. As a result, Ōta came to conclude, Okinawa’s elite had largely maintained the elite consciousness and nationalist ideology of the pre- and wartime eras.\footnote{Okinawajin to wa nanika, p. 46, 66, 111.}

In contrast, Ōta saw that his own war experience had transformed his thought and awakened his sense of Okinawan “cultural identity.” In a rare analysis of his war experience in relation to questions of identity, Ōta significantly concluded that he was able to discover his sense of (Okinawan) self through his contact with the “Other” (tasha)—in the form of the supposedly “friendly” Japanese army:

> By seeing the “Other” on the battlefield within the friendly army, I was forced into the position of having to think about my own self-conception and origins.\footnote{Ibid., p. 28.}

Ōta also surmises that many Okinawans—in contrast to the elite—similarly faced their “internal Other” (uchi naru tasha) through their experiences on the battlefield. Through this, and their experience within the internment camp separated from “Japanese,” Okinawans were able to confirm their sense of autonomous subjectivity.

Ōta thus came to see that, stripped of their Japanese citizenship in the wake of defeat, at the onset of the postwar period Okinawans were in fact provided with a “unique opportunity” to regain their “self” as Okinawans—a self which had been relinquished through the process of Japanization.\footnote{Ibid., p. 104.} In this way, he maintained his belief in the emancipatory potential of the postwar era for an Okinawan subjectivity, but lamented that Okinawans had not been able to utilize this self-discovery in the pursuit to attain subjectivity and “cultural identity.” He did not explicitly state that Okinawans
should have sought independence over reversion. Yet he did lament the fact that no movement against reversion able to provide a clear and achievable blueprint for Okinawa had emerged in the 1950s. In either case, Ōta noted, by the early 1950s, pro-independence movements were largely subsumed by the pro-reversion movement. The reversion movement in turn did not adequately incorporate nor was it able to utilize an “autonomous mode of thinking” (shisō teki jiritsusei). Consequently, Ōta concluded, the reversion movement had not provided a contesting force “against the state” (kokka to taiketsu suru), and in this regard “various issues which were conferred upon Okinawan reversion are still to be solved.”

In September 1975, Ōta lamented the way in which with the onset of the International Marine Expo the traditional Okinawan folksong “Ashi mijibushi” (literally “Beads of Sweat”), symbolic of the Okinawan island “way of life”, seemed to have “suddenly disappeared from people’s lips.” The disappearance of such songs, which formed a base of traditional agricultural lifestyle, was seen as symbolic of the post-reversion “destruction of Okinawa.” In the preface to Who are the Okinawans?, published five years later, Ōta recounts how, in the ship on the way back from his studies in the US over twenty years previously, he and other Okinawan passengers had become overwhelmed with emotion when the sound of Okinawa’s sanshin (three-stringed instrument) had suddenly blared from the ship’s radio speaker as they neared the islands. Just as Ōta had equated the disappearance of traditional Okinawa song with the loss of community, now its nostalgic remembrance was evoked as a prelude to conceiving of the significance of an Okinawan sense of identity.

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108 See also Ōta’s discussion in Ōta Masahide, Okamoto Keioku et al. (dialogue), “Okinawa no sengo shisō: fuuki mondai o chūshin ni,” Sekai No. 362 (January 1976), pp. 92-3.
109 Okinawajin to wa nanika, p. 240.
In the conclusion to *Who are the Okinawans?*, Ota notes with regret that he does not have a “cure-all” to solve the “identity crisis” currently facing Okinawa. In an attempt to begin to solve the issues left over from reversion, however, he explains that: “I have in this book considered the possibilities of actively promoting the formation of an identity as human beings able to attain a global (sekai teki) universality, and the restoration of an identity as Okinawan (Okinawa-jin toshite no aidentiti).” Also citing Franz Fanon’s call for a national consciousness removed from ethnic nationalism, he ultimately expresses agreement with novelist and colleague Ōe Kenzaburō’s observations on the concept of the nation: “While on the one hand it comprises an ideal indicating a place to conceive of a person’s individual identity, on the other hand and at the same instant it is representative of and hides within it a sinister force which on the contrary cancels out this very identity.” Ota observes that in the realm of theory at least, globally there is a move towards recognition of the importance of guaranteeing cultural plurality within nations. In conclusion, he maintains the hope that the current crisis in Okinawan identity may be overcome through this trend:

I hope that we too may maintain our sense of hope and strive towards the attainment of self-identity, without being defeated by the very real barriers we currently face. For, such a pursuit also signifies the proof of our existence as human beings...

In reality, however, claims to internationalism in the late 1970s and 1980s also became interspersed with conservative nationalism and the reassertion of assumptions of ethnic homogeneity. As Jennifer Robertson points out, the catchword of “internationalisation” (kokusaika) was “not antithetical to ‘Japanese culture’: rather it is both a product of and central to the ongoing...formation of a Japanese national cultural

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111 *Okinawajin to wa nanika*, p. 242.
112 Ibid., p. 241.
The fragmentation of the subject and even the breakdown in the legitimacy of the nation-state in late modern capitalist society has proved far from antithetical to a rise in state and/or ethnic nationalism. In the 1990s, the so-called phenomenon of “globalisation” has been accompanied by the celebration of a particular depoliticised form of multiculturalism conducive to consumerist desires for difference. In this context, as we shall see in Chapter Five, in a way reminiscent of Yanagita’s “theory of the South Islands” study group of the prewar period, ambiguous claims to an Okinawan uniqueness have become appropriated within new nationalist discourses.

**Okinawa, Japan, and the Ghosts of Shōwa**

*Placing Okinawa in Postwar Japan as History*

Ōta’s analysis of Iha’s views on the post-Meiji incorporation of Okinawa into Japan, his reflections on the significance of an Okinawan “cultural identity,” and his re-evaluation of the reversion movement were thus intimately connected to contests over Okinawa’s position within Japan in the post-reversion period. Ōta lamented both the “loss” of Okinawan identity and the fact that many of the goals of reversion remained unachieved. The predicament facing Okinawa was seen as symbolic of the general hollowing out of Japan’s postwar democratic institutions. In the context of increasing nationalist conservatism within political and academic discourse in Japan from the late 1970s onwards, Ōta also focused on the significance of Okinawa’s position within Japan’s postwar history—as essential in order to revaluate and retrieve the ideals of the early postwar period. In other words, as Ōta noted in 1979:

> Those of us who seek to protect the merits of the postwar era cannot deny the fact

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that one factor contributing to an increase in attempts to negate these merits has been the inability to adequately grasp Okinawa’s postwar experience... (I)t has become increasingly clear that an analysis of Okinawa during the period [from the Battle of Okinawa to Okinawan reversion] not only provides us with an important opportunity to reevaluate Japan’s “postwar reforms,” but can widely benefit such a reevaluation...  

Ôta placed Okinawan postwar history in the context of Okinawa’s “one hundred year history” of “Japanisation.” He was highly critical, among others, of the analyses of former Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru, particularly the fact that Yoshida hardly gave Okinawa a mention in his publication *The Hundred Years which Determined Japan* (*Nihon o kettei shita hyakunen*) even though he had played a central role in securing prolonged US occupation of the islands. The omission of Okinawa’s history from analysis of postwar Japan was seen as indicative of unequal and centralized policy-making structures—and intimately connected to questions pertaining to Okinawa’s modern relations with Japan. As Ôta observed, “US postwar occupation policy toward Japan and toward Okinawa are essentially two sides of the same coin.” To ignore Okinawa’s postwar historical experience was to overlook the structure behind postwar Japan. He stressed that just as the separation of Okinawa was central to US occupation policy towards Japan, it was an essential component of postwar Japanese history. Failing to take note of the central role which Okinawa played in the consolidation of Japan’s postwar system was thus seen as ultimately fatally detrimental to postwar Japanese studies as a whole.

Ôta sought to draw attention to Okinawa’s central position in Japan’s postwar historical experience and US occupation policy. He also drew direct connections

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between this experience and Japan’s historical discrimination against Okinawa. In particular, he rejected the claim that the “separation of Okinawa was an unavoidable consequence of Japan’s unconditional surrender.” He came to conclude rather that Okinawa’s separation was a result of a coincidence of interests between occupier (the US) and occupied (Japan)—as, in short, the “product of US-Japanese collaboration, albeit collaboration between somewhat unequal partners.” Through joint US-Japan negotiations, Okinawa was “not only detached from Japan proper but, against the will of its people, was compelled to play the role of a military and political pawn.”

From numerous research trips to the US both alone and with University of Ryukyu colleagues Miyagi Etsujirō and Hosaka Hiroshi, Ōta gathered extensive historical material on the US and Japanese government’s policies towards Okinawa from the wartime period onwards. In his subsequent historical analyses, very broadly it may be said that Ōta made at least two significant and controversial conclusions. Firstly, he noted that the plan to separate Okinawa from Japan and place it under US control was largely decided prior to US military forces landing on Okinawa in March 1945. Secondly, he concluded that as revealed in both Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro’s wartime draft of possible conditions for Japanese surrender and Yoshida Shigeru’s assertions prior to the singing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, the Japanese government was willing to sacrifice Okinawa for the sake of its perceived national interests. Ōta saw this stance as indicative of the fact that “Okinawa was not considered as an integral part of Japan,” and symbolic of “the Japanese attitude toward


During and after the war, the US military also sought to exploit the fact that Japanese have historically discriminated against the islands for their own ends. The principle of "divide and rule" in Okinawa, Ōta surmised, "was not a unilateral decision by the United States but had the active support of the Japanese government and, at least to that extent, was the product of a joint US-Japanese effort."¹²¹

Ōta concluded that the prolonged US military occupation of Okinawa was both an integral part of the occupation policy towards Japan, and the focal point of inherent contradictions within this policy. For while the US occupation forces came to view the separation of Okinawa as a precondition to Japanese demilitarisation and democratisation, US military attempts to democratise Okinawa itself while securing it as a major military base in the Pacific were tantamount, Ota observed, to "trying to square a circle."¹²² Moreover, Ōta pointed out that these contradictions expose to question the democratic system of Japan as a whole. For, he asked: "What is one to think of a Japanese government willing to detach part of its own territory and cede it to foreign military rule in blind pursuit of its own narrow interests?"¹²³

Ōta cited the so-called "Emperor's Message," thought to detail Emperor Hirohito's position on the possible separation of Okinawa in the wake of Japan's defeat, as exemplary of the way in which the will of Okinawans was ignored in the name of such self-interests. The "Emperor's Message" is a historical document in fact made up of two letters composed by US Political Advisor for Japan William J. Sebald to the US Secretary of State and Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers General Douglas MacArthur on 20 and 22 September 1947 respectively. In his communication to MacArthur, Sebald describes in detail the Emperor's position on Okinawa as conveyed

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 302.
¹²² Ibid., p. 293.
¹²³ Ibid., p. 294.
by Terasaki Hidenari, an adviser to the imperial court. According to Sebald, the Emperor conveyed his “hope” that “the United States continue the military occupation of Okinawa and other islands of the Ryukyus.” The Emperor purportedly felt that the occupation would “benefit the United States and also provide protection for Japan,” and would no doubt “meet with widespread approval among the Japanese people.”

The contents of these letters were first divulged and analysed by Tsukuba University professor Shindō Eiichi in an article in the journal Sekai in April 1979. In the same month, its implications became the subject of parliamentary debate after Communist Party member and Okinawan representative Senaga Kamejirō questioned the constitutional legality of the Emperor’s involvement in crucial questions of national policy. The historical and political significance of the letters was discussed and analysed in mainland Japanese press, and has been the subject of repeated outrage and controversy in Okinawa—in 1979, on the eve of Emperor Hirohito’s scheduled visit to Okinawa in 1986-7, and after the historical validity of their content was confirmed in the publication of high court official Iriye Sukemasa’s diaries in 1989.

While acknowledging that historical opinion is divided as to the extent to which Sebald’s letter or the will of the Emperor affected US policy, Ōta drew the conclusion that whether directly or indirectly, the “Emperor’s Message” did have an effect on policy making. He cites as evidence the fact that US State Department Policy Planning Staff Director George Kennan outlined the Emperor’s stance on Okinawan separation in a policy document in October 1947. Ultimately, as can be discerned from [Sebald’s]

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letter,” Ōta concluded, “the [Emperor] was completely unconcerned with the fate of the residents of Okinawa, who were to be separated from Japan and placed under a foreign military administration. He had in mind only the safety of the Japanese polity (kokutai) centred around the Emperor himself or the Japanese mainland.”

Moreover, Ōta related this to the Battle of Okinawa, and the fact that the Japanese Minister for Military Affairs announced preparations for the final battle on “Imperial soil” (kōdo) after the battle on Okinawa had already begun. Just as Okinawa was considered outside the imperial territories which had to be “protected at all costs,” this perception was seen to persist within the imperial court and government even after Japan’s defeat, and ultimately to have assisted in securing Okinawa’s prolonged military occupation.

Modern narratives of nation, as Prasenjit Duara points out, incorporate an inherently ambivalent conceptualisation of linear time. A commitment to the Enlightenment discourse of modern civilization is, as a commitment to modernity and progress, a commitment to “the celebration of the new, the breaking of old shackles.” At the same time, however, the nation is constantly reconceived and reproduced in its national essence—as “an already-always of the nation-space.” As a result: “Thus while on the one hand, nation-states glorify the ancient or eternal character of the nation, they also seek to emphasize the unprecedented nature of the nation-state, because it is only in this form that the people-nation has been able to realize itself as the self-conscious subject of History.”

In Meiji Japan, the Emperor—as the restoration of a perceived national essence and the central symbol of a modern kokutai (nation-body) nation-state system—became a powerful signifier in the incorporation of these dual frameworks of

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129 This historical interpretation is still debated. Robert Eldridge concludes that the “Emperor’s Message” is rather proof of the Emperor’s efforts to try to ensure that Japan maintained residual sovereignty over Okinawa rather than forfeit it to US military strategic trusteeship. See Robert Eldridge, “Shōwa Tennō to Okinawa: Tennō messeiji no saikōsai,” pp. 152-71. This still, however, exposes to question the Imperial court’s stance towards Okinawa during the war and under US occupation.
130 Prasenjit Duara, Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China, p. 29.
time. Moreover, as Western-inspired conceptualisations of civilization became the central schema both within and against which Japanese narratives of nation were often defined, the *kokutai* served as an over-determined signifier encompassing past and present, both particularised essence and universalised civilization project. The Emperor became the central symbol of a protean construction of Japan—as concurrently essence and universal centre able to subsume difference within through the process of assimilation.\footnote{131 Tessa Morris-Suzuki draws important connections between the subsuming of racial and cultural difference and gender within Japanese nationalist tropes in *Re-inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation* (Armonk and London: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), p. 119.}

In Okinawa, at the border between Japanese nation and empire, the contradictions inherent to this project of “becoming Japanese imperial subjects” were often acute. As Ōta himself has outlined, the symbol of the Emperor was both pivotal to the ideology of national consolidation in Okinawa in the prewar era and a central component of the contradictions embedded within assimilationist policy. Okinawans were both upheld as the subjects and children of the Emperor and estranged from Japan proper. As Ōta notes, this antimony of incorporation and estrangement forms a core component of Okinawa’s modern history.\footnote{132 As Ōta outlines for example in the *Asahi Tapes* (8 February 1999).}

In historical debates within postwar Japan, as Carol Gluck observes: “It was impossible to discuss the past without coming up against the emperor system. Yet it was admitted of no easy explicability. It was like a ghost at the historical feast, always in attendance, related to both the past and the present, both elusive and morally and politically charged.”\footnote{133 “The Past in the Present,” in Andrew Gordon (ed.) *Postwar Japan as History*, p. 79.} This is all the more the case in Okinawa—not only site of the only ground war, but also historically highly ambivalently placed within Japan’s so-called “imperial territories.” In tracing the pervasive connections between the ambiguous positioning of Okinawa within Japan’s *kokutai* in the prewar period and its

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\footnote{131 Tessa Morris-Suzuki draws important connections between the subsuming of racial and cultural difference and gender within Japanese nationalist tropes in *Re-inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation* (Armonk and London: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), p. 119.}
\footnote{132 As Ōta outlines for example in the *Asahi Tapes* (8 February 1999).}
\footnote{133 “The Past in the Present,” in Andrew Gordon (ed.) *Postwar Japan as History*, p. 79.}
postwar separation, Ōta touched upon issues central to perceiving both postwar Japan and Japanese modern history as a whole. In particular, his analysis raised vital questions regarding connections between inequalities and contradictions embedded within Japan’s postwar system, and legacies of Japan’s colonialism. It also problematized the way in which the ambiguity of Okinawa’s prewar position was utilized within US wartime military strategic planning, carried over in US occupation policy, and formed a central component of US cold war policy in the Pacific. In the context of Okinawa, this policy in turn contained its own set of contradictory claims to democracy under the rubric of direct military occupation.

*The End of an Era and the Ghosts of Shōwa*

At the same time, the issue of consistency between prewar, wartime, and postwar Japan and Okinawa posed a central dilemma for Ōta, and formed an inherent tension in his analysis. The weaker left-wing progressive forces in both mainland Japan and Okinawa became, the more Ōta sought to revive the postwar ideals of peace and democracy—based on conceptualisation of the postwar period as a break with the past. This endeavour was also connected to the attempt to “revive” the sense of Okinawan subjectivity which Ōta saw was awakened through Okinawa’s war experience. Ōta also began to delve into the historical roots of the weakening of these forces by tracing the continuities between pre- and postwar Japan, and ultimately between prewar assimilationist ideology and the reversion movement itself. In Ōta’s historical analysis of the evolution of Japan’s postwar system and the emergence of Okinawa’s reversion movement, pervasive tensions can be discerned between his endeavour to perceive of the postwar era as a personal and collective social and political “rebirth”, and his critical tracing of parallels and direct connections between pre- and postwar systems of relations. When *nihonjinron* (theories of Japanese uniqueness) emerged as an influential
discourse and served as a nurturing ground for claims to Japanese homogeneity in the 1980s, these tensions increased.

As Yumiko Iida observes, in contrast to the politicised identity of social mobilization which Leftist progressives sought to defend in the 1960s, the identity pursued in *nihonjinron* discourse in the 1980s was “an abstract, idealized and homogenized, collective identity, seeking to assert Japan’s national right on the international stage.” Most significantly, in this shift “the element of social resistance was completely lost, resulting in a situation where popular sentiment, formerly a motivating cause for progressive movements, came to be channelled in and articulated for the benefit of conservative politics.”¹³⁴ The insular discursive space of *nihonjinron* often erased minority claims to cultural and historical pluralism. It also corresponded with the state-nationalism of Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro, who in 1986 was fiercely criticized by groups within Japan for claiming that no minorities existed in racially pure Japan.¹³⁵ In the summer of 1985, Nakasone announced a “nationalist manifesto” critical of the “self-tormenting ideological trend” which spread after the Tokyo War Crimes Trials, and asserting the need for the Japanese state and people to discard their sense of shame and “aim for glory”. He also became the first Prime Minister in the postwar period to attend an official mourning ceremony at the controversial Yasukuni Shrine.¹³⁶

Around the same time, in September 1985, the Ministry of Education sent a notification to Municipal Board of Education heads throughout the country, advising them to take an “appropriate and thorough stance” towards those schools which did not raise the Rising Sun Flag or sing the *Kimigayo* (Reign of Our Lord) anthem during

¹³⁵ Richard Siddle notes that Nakasone’s comments actually led to a boost in Ainu activism after being received with much resentment (“Ainu: Japan’s Indigenous People” in Michael Weiner *Japan’s Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity*, p. 43).
¹³⁶ Ibid., pp. 194-5.
official ceremonies. A month earlier, the ministry had announced the results of its national survey on school observance of these patriotic activities. Nationally, an average of 92.5% of elementary, 91.2% of junior high schools, and 81.6% of senior high schools raised the Rising Sun at official ceremonies, while 72.8% elementary and 53.3% of senior high schools sang the *Kimigayo*. Okinawa ranked far below any other prefecture—with only a 6% average observance for the former, and zero for the latter. The prefectural superintendent of education was highly critical of Okinawa’s low figure, and called upon all schools to “strengthen guidance” in regards to the flag and anthem. The Okinawan Teacher’s Union, in contrast, expressed “pride” in these figures, and directly related them to the fact that Okinawa was the only place in Japan which had experienced a ground battle during the war. Once again, a struggle over the nature of education in Okinawa ensued, and interspersed with contests over history, autonomy, and identity.

Ôta saw that, while the Rising Sun/Kimigayo issue was on the surface merely one concerning the format of official school ceremonies, it touched at the foundation of issues on education. He related it to the issue of the Board of Education selection process which had arisen on the eve of reversion, and warned that, as in that case, Japanese government policy threatened to extinguish the important gains for education which had been made in Okinawa under occupation. He saw such government-induced attempts to “homogenize” (kakuitsuka) education according to a “neo state-nationalist” (shinkokkashugi) ideology as indicative of the “fascist education” system of the prewar era.

The Ministry of Education’s attempts to further promote the popularisation of the flag and anthem as national symbols also coincided with contests over preparations.

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137 As outlined by Ôta in “Kenmin yoron o nibun suru ‘hi no maru, kimigayo’ mondai: genten ni kaette fusen no chikai o,” *Shakaitō* No. 377 (June 1987), pp. 26-38. See also Norma Field, *In the Realm of a Dying Emperor: Japan at Century’s End*, pp. 54-6.
for the National Athletic Meet, to be held in Okinawa in 1987. The Emperor’s attendance at the annual event had become ritualised since the second National Athletic Meet was held in Ishikawa Prefecture in 1947. The Emperor had not attended the Commemorative Arbour Festival nor the International Marine Expo, held in Okinawa in the years directly following reversion, and Okinawa remained the only prefecture he had not visited during his reign. By the mid-1980s, however, it was deemed that, while Okinawan feelings towards the Emperor remained “complex”, now an appropriate environment existed for the Emperor’s visit. Indeed, according to an Asahi Shinbun poll conducted in Okinawa in early September 1987, only 11% of respondents opposed the Emperor’s visit while 57% welcomed it—although over half (54%) of respondents felt “nothing in particular” towards the Emperor, and “old battle sites” were deemed by far the place Okinawans most wanted the Emperor to see on his visit.138

Ōta saw both the government’s attempts to ensure the singing of the anthem and raising of the flag at the National Athletic Meet and the Emperor’s visit as, together with the Ministry of Education’s earlier notification, indicative of the rise of “neo state-nationalism.” He directly related the National Athletic Meet to the Marine Expo of 1975, reminiscing of the way in which, in spite of the Expo’s claims to “establish a new marine culture,” the Okinawan Committee had warned of the way in which the Expo threatened Okinawa’s traditional culture and environment. In a similar vein, Ōta warned that the outcome of contests over the government’s attempts to enforce the rising sun and Kimigayo at the National Athletic Meet stood to affect the future of both Okinawa and Japan as a whole.139

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By the holding of the Meet, however, after a series of bills passed in the Prefectural Assembly and LDP-dominated municipalities, the percentage of schools which raised the Rising Sun flag during official ceremonies in Okinawa had soared to close to 100%. 18.5% of elementary, 8.1% of junior high, and 8.8% of senior high schools also sang the Kimigayo. 149 On the eve of the National Meet, Ōta expressed strong apprehension towards the extent to which schools had yielded to national and prefectural pressure, and related it directly to the “beast-like devotion” of Okinawans during the war. In the face of a “second kōminka” and a “return” to the ideologies of the prewar period, Ōta called upon Okinawans to remember the ideals of peace, democracy and autonomy as laid down in the constitution. 141 While critical of what he saw to be the “institutionalisation of violence” in the form of Japan’s remilitarisation, he did not criticize the economic policies of the prefecture nor the impact of the national government’s public works-centred funding at all to the extent he had on the eve of the Expo. This was in turn indicative of the extent to which public-works centred development had become embedded within Okinawan politics and society, conservative trends in Okinawa’s political conditions, and, while still present, the general fragmentation of environmental and pro-autonomy movements. 142

140 As cited in Norma Field, In the Realm of a Dying Emperor, p. 54; and Ōta Masahide, “Kenmin yoron o nibun suru ‘hi no maru, kimigayo’ mondai: genten ni kaette fusen no chikai o,” p. 38.
142 One important environmental movement of the 1980s was the political opposition mobilized against the planned building of a new Ishigaki Airport off the coast of Shiraho, renowned for its rare formations of coral. In July 1983, locals opposed to the plan formed the Concerned Citizens’ Group against the Airport (Kūkō Mondai o Kangaeru Shimin no Kai), and in Tokyo the Yaeyama and Shiraho Ocean Protection Group (Yaeyama Shiraho no Umi o Mamoru Kai) was formed. The building of the airport emerged as an election issue in the gubernatorial elections of 1990, and in 1991 Ōta announced his decision to move the airport to an alternative site further inland. However, in March 2001, the Inamine prefectural government returned the construction site of the New Ishigaki Airport to the Kara Mountain area, next to Shiraho. For a summary of this movement see Miyume Tanji, “The dynamic trajectory of the post-reversion ‘Okinawa Struggle’: Constitution, environment and gender” in Richard Siddle and Glenn Hooks (eds.) Okinawa and Japan: Structure and Subjectivity.
This is not to say that resistance to the implementation of the flag and anthem in both schools and at the National Athletic Meet, and toward conservative LDP-centred definitions of national belonging in general, did not exist. At Yomitan High, students snatched the flag from its stand during graduation ceremony and threw it in the gutter,\(^{143}\) and at Naha City’s Labour Council workers went about setting preparations for the National Athletic Meets bearing badges that read “The Emperor’s War Responsibility Will Not be Forgotten.”\(^ {144}\) Progressive Yomitan Mayor Yamauchi Tokushin (later to become prefectural treasurer under Ōta’s administration) backed down to pressure to fly the Rising Sun and play the anthem at the National Athletic Meet after the head of the Japan Softball Association threatened to take the games elsewhere otherwise. Yet on 26 October 1987, on the day of the Meet, anti-war landowner, supermarket owner, and vice-president of the Yomitan Chamber of Commerce Chibana Shōichi tore down the flag and burned it, for which he was prosecuted for violating state property.\(^ {145}\)

Moreover, while Prefectural Governor Nishime had hoped the occasion would finally mark the “end” of Okinawa’s postwar, Hirohito himself never made it to the National Athletic Meet, nor would he set foot in Okinawa as Japan’s Emperor. Falling ill with cancer, he died two years later, on 7 January, 1989. The Emperor’s death symbolized a closure in Japanese history and society, and evoked the atmosphere of nostalgia, reflection, and amnesia which marks the end of an historical epoch. Yet this sense of closure was also clouded by the pervasive issues of rupture and perpetuation embroiled within Japan’s two eras of Shōwa—the pre- and postwar periods. Whether

\(^{143}\) Norma Field, \textit{In the Realm of a Dying Emperor}, p. 55.
\(^{145}\) Norma Field, \textit{In the Realm of a Dying Emperor}. See also Chibana Shōichi, \textit{Yakisuterareta Hi no Maru: Kichi no Shima Okinawa Yomitsanson kara} (Tokyo: Shinshansha, 1988). Emperor Hirohito’s planned visit also prompted the publication of an anthology of ruminations on the Emperor and Okinawa, Aniya Masayuki et al. (eds.) \textit{Okinawa to Tennō} (Naha: Akebo Shuppan, 1987).
they were seen to provide an inviolable link between the nation's prewar and postwar eras, were rewritten into a narrative of democracy and peace, or were damned as the personification of the failures of Japan's postwar reforms, the two ghosts of Hirohito—as the centre of Japan’s imperial kokutai and as the symbol of a nation reborn—remained to haunt historical narratives of his period of reign.

In an article in the wake of Emperor Hirohito’s death, Ōta greeted the extent of the nationalist commercialism which accompanied the Japanese media’s coverage of the events with a mixture of cynicism and despair, noting: “The fact that, on the day of the funeral ceremony, all television stations covered in length the entire proceedings without commercials was as predicted. Yet I still hoped that if the media is going to rush in unison to present Shōwa retrospectives, at least one station, somewhere, would provide serious coverage of war responsibility, and the losses caused by the war.”

The massive funeral ceremony, attended by dignitaries from around the world, was upheld as an indication of Japan’s influential international status. Yet Ōta concluded that on the contrary, it rather “exposed the poverty in spirit of Japanese.” Ōta was particularly critical of Prime Minister Takeshita Noboru’s statement doubting whether Japan’s had been an aggressive war, and cynical of the way in which Takeshita subsequently rushed to account for his statement in the face of domestic and international criticism. While Hirohito himself had passed away, in relation to Okinawa’s military bases, Ōta also sarcastically noted, “Shōwa is not over, nor does it look to end any time soon.” In the context of Okinawa, not only did the two ghosts of Hirohito take on a particularly controversial and problematic significance, but they persisted in the form of the legacies of Okinawa’s wartime and postwar experience.

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147 Ibid.
148 Ibid.
Yet while the legacies of Shōwa remained, the end of the 1980s and the onset of a new decade were also marked by two other major domestic and international events: the end of the Cold War and the arrival of the "new world order" and the collapse of Japan's "bubble economy" and onset of prolonged economic recession. These endings, as Yumiko Iida points out, "were simultaneously the beginning of something new, whose structuring principle is yet to be defined in the continuing process of history in the making." As Rick Siddle and Glenn Hook observe, a "combination of geography and strategic significance has historically meant that the 'Okinawa problem' becomes most acute precisely at key moments of transition or crisis within the modern Japanese state: the early Meiji transition to modernity; war, defeat and the Occupation after 1945; and most recently the post-Cold War realignment." As Japan's political, social, and economic structure was transformed, redefined, and stagnated in the tumultuous and "forgotten" decade of the 1990s, Okinawa's position within US-Japan bilateral relations and Japan's domestic political, social, and historical structures once again emerged as a pervasive, and highly volatile, question.

With the onset of the Persian Gulf crisis and subsequent war of 1990-1, intense antagonism between those political "hawks" who sought to ensure the deployment of Japan's Self-defence Forces (SDF) through the United Nations Peace Cooperation Bill (Kokuren Heiwa Kyōryoku Hōan) and those "doves" who opposed the legislation resulted in a paralysis in foreign policy. In Okinawa, where the deployed US forces played a direct if peripheral role in the Gulf crisis, the implications of the "new world order" were immediate, just as the deployment of Japanese forces remained a particularly divisive and controversial issue. The election battle between incumbent LDP-supported Okinawan Governor Nishime Junji, who sought to stress the success of

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150 Glenn D. Hook and Richard Siddle, "Introduction" in Hook and Siddle (eds.) *Japan and Okinawa: Structure and Subjectivity*.
his economic stimulus policies, and opposition candidate Ōta Masahide, who called for the realization of a “peaceful Okinawa”, occurred in the midst of this crisis. As Nishime expressed implicit support for the deployment of Japanese forces, and activity on Kadena Airbase intensified in preparation for war in the Persian Gulf, Ōta’s pleas for peace took on a direct significance. On 18 November, 1990, boasting the lead by a significant 30,000 votes, Ōta became the first progressive party-backed candidate to take office as governor of Okinawa in twelve years.\footnote{151}

As has been pointed out: “The void left by the collapse of the Cold War order has in fact opened up possibilities for more diverse, localized, and contradictory narratives and memories about the past to emerge and compete in the various public spheres.”\footnote{152} It was precisely in this context that the Ōta administration arose. Post-Cold War fluidity, however was also accompanied by a nationalist historical revisionist backlash, and a crisis in party agenda-making across Japan’s political spectrum. Less than two years after Ōta’s victory and in the wake of international and in particular US criticism over Japan’s lack of direct logistical support in the Gulf War (although the Japanese government did contribute $13 billion towards the coalition against Iraq), the Peacekeeping Bill was passed by the Diet in June 1992. By May 1994, close to half of Japan’s public (48.4%) expressed support for SDF participation in peacekeeping operations. In the same year, in what has been described as the “most dramatic moment in the history of the Socialist Party,” the party made a historical decision to reverse course on a number of key policy issues. This included now recognizing the SDF as constitutional, expressing support towards the US-Japan Security Treaty, and accepting

\footnote{151} OT (19 November, 1990), p. 5. For a detailed analysis of Ōta’s election victory and early years in office, see Egami Takayoshi, “Ōta kakushin kensei no kenkō to kichi mondai (1990-4)” in Egami Takayoshi (ed.) Gendai Okinawa no seiji to shakai (Nishihara, Okinawa: Ryukyu Daigaku Högakubu, 1997), pp. 87-107.

\footnote{152} Fujitani, White and Yoneyama (eds.) Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific War(s), (Introduction), p. 5.
the Rising Sun and *Kimigayo* as Japan's national flag and anthem respectively. In another historical irony, just as Japan's postwar political system—as embodied in the 1955 parliamentary system which placed the "conservative" ruling LDP hegemony against the "progressive" Socialist and Communist Party opposition—itself collapsed, Ota sought to enact his vision of the postwar ideal.

In the context of emerging post-Cold War relations, the tensions of rupture and continuity embedded within Japan's postwar system, as well as the historical legacies of the Shōwa era as a whole, continued to haunt Okinawa's volatile political landscape. Within the reaffirmation of security relations, the US and Japan sought to incorporate these legacies—in particular the large US military presence which remained in Okinawa—under a reified and strengthened security framework. In this context, Ōta emerged to take a decisive role within struggles over the making of this history.

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Negotiating Base Politics and the “Okinawa Issue” (1995-8)

"'Resolutions' often change the course of history. Governor Ōta’s recent refusal to act as proxy [in the signing of the leases of land used by the US military in Okinawa] is precisely such a historic decision, and one which poses a direct challenge to the modern Japanese nation-state system. Governor Ōta is at this very moment, while placing himself within the 'system,' also attempting to move beyond it—exposing himself to the most difficult trial of history...”

Hiyane Teruo, 19961

The 1995 Rape Incident and Ōta’s Refusal to Act as Proxy

It was a pre-meditated and anticipated moment, the result of extensive discussions and negotiations within the governor’s offices and amongst various supporting groups which had only come to an end in the late hours of the previous night.2 On the afternoon of 28 September 1995, during question time in the Okinawan prefectural assembly, member of the progressive coalition Tomoyori Shinsuke requested that governor Ōta clarify his “true sentiment and intentions” in relation to the recent rape incident. Less than one month previously, it had been alleged that an Okinawan schoolgirl had been abducted and raped by three members of the US military.

2 OT (29 September 1995).
In response, Ota rose to the floor. In a prepared speech, he expressed his anger at the "violation of human dignity" which had occurred, and noted the "historical conditions" of Okinawa under which the land utilised by the US military had been "arbitrarily requisitioned" under occupation. He stressed the fact that while only 0.6% of the total national land mass, Okinawa was host to approximately 75% of US military facilities within Japan. He also expressed regret towards the fact that, contrary to his hope that the breakdown of the Cold War structure would lead to the demilitarisation of Okinawa, the planned reaffirmation of the US-Japan Security Treaty that coming November threatened to only further entrench the US military presence. Ota declared that, on the basis of these conditions, he could not comply with the leasing procedures for land utilized by the US military, and intended to notify the Japanese government as such.3

On 4 September 1995, three US military soldiers had allegedly abducted a twelve-year-old Okinawan schoolgirl at knife-point in the small northeast town of Kin. They forced her inside a rented car, sealed her mouth with tape and bound her, and then raped her on a nearby remote beach. Once the men had left, the girl dragged herself up to a neighbouring house overlooking the beach and give a description of the car and men, who were apprehended within hours.4 Less than a week later, the incident was leaked to the local Okinawan press. Almost immediately it became connected to the issue of the US bases in general, and the fact that Japanese authorities were not given the right to demand the handing over of criminal suspects for custody prior to indictment in the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) signed between the US and Japanese government.5
On 11 September, representatives from each major party in Okinawa visited prefectural offices and the Defence Facilities Administration Agency (DFAA) branch in Naha, the central agency charged with dealing with issues relating to the US military bases stationed in Japan, in protest against the incident. On the same day, major women’s groups held a joint press conference, protesting against the rape incident and outlining several demands including the expeditious handing over of suspects to Japanese police. On 13 September, prefectural administration representatives protested to the US Embassy, Japan’s Foreign Ministry, and the DFAA, calling for the expeditious turning over of suspects and restrictions on the movement of US military members outside the base. Ōta met with US Ambassador Walter Mondale and made similar requests a week later.

“The moment Ōta made clear his decision to refuse to act as proxy for the government,” a local newspaper reported, “cheers of support echoed across the prefectural assembly floor, and the observation gallery burst into applause.” Landowners who had refused to comply with the leasing process welcomed Ōta’s “historic” move and pledged support in working towards withdrawal of the bases. Even the Okinawa Chapter of the ruling LDP, while criticizing Ōta’s obstruction of the

which outlined this provision, soon also escalated into calls for more comprehensive revisions of the entire agreement (Alliance Adrift (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1999), p. 299.

6 OT (12 September 1995), p. 19. The editorial in the Okinawa Times on the same day denounced the rape as a “criminal act that belies the army of a supposed democratic country which upholds ‘human rights’ and ‘equality’ as its motto,” and warned that: “If the US wishes to maintain friendly relations with Japan, and an alliance formed by ‘equal partners’, it is strongly urged the unequal SOFA be revised immediately.”

7 The US Embassy expressed regret over the incident, but did not immediately guarantee the early transfer of the suspects over to Japanese authorities.

8 In the days prior to Ōta’s announcement on 28 September, a series of protests were held across the main island of Okinawa demanding the revision of SOFA and the reduction and withdrawal of the US bases (OT (26-7 September 1995)). The three US servicemen who carried out the rape were eventually charged by the Naha district attorney on 29 September, and handed over into Japanese police custody the same day.

administrative process for “political gains,” was hesitant to denounce Ōta’s decision. Government officials and national LDP representatives sought to take a strong stance against Ōta. Yet Ōta also took an obstinate stance back—not even meeting with Director-General of the DFAA Hoshuyama Noburu who travelled to Naha following Ōta’s announcement. Anti-base sentiment further swelled, and on October 21 an estimated eighty to ninety thousand people gathered in Ginowan City and other locations across the Okinawan archipelago in a bipartisan “Okinawan People’s Rally for Peace.” In a direct reference to the large-scale protests which had followed USCAR’s land expropriation policies in the 1950s, activists and the local media quickly designated it Okinawa’s second “island-wide struggle.”

In a series of interviews with Asahi journalist Sotooka Hidetoshi, Ōta described his wish to be accountable to and take responsibility for his own opinions and analysis as the main factor which motivated him to originally stand in the gubernatorial elections of 1990. As a scholar, Ōta’s intellectual writings and thought were always infused with a strong political consciousness, a sense of ideals, a discontent with existing conditions, and a desire for change. While himself much more an analytical and idealist thinker than a strategist, he also quickly grew impatient with intellectual pontificating, and with a detached academic mindset that was divorced from everyday political issues and social action. At the same time, Ōta’s frank personality were in many ways at odds with the secret manoeuvrings and underhanded negotiations which are most often seen to typify Japan’s political world. As Yoichi Funabashi put it, Ōta’s had too sharp a wit as an activist to be an academic, while his historical consciousness was “too

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10 LDP assembly member Ishii Seigen went as far to concede that if Ōta had consented to signing the documents in the midst of the current wave of protest, he would be forced to resign from office (OT (30 September 1995)).
11 On 29 September, the Naha Branch of the DFAA refused to accept Ōta’s official notification of noncompliance. LDP Policy Committee Head Yamazaki Taku pronounced that “if Ōta does not change his stance” he would make the utmost effort to “persuade” him to comply. OT (30 September 1995).
12 The Asahi Tapes. Ōta also recounts this in his Okinawa no ketsudan, p. 111.
consummate” for being a politician. In Ōta’s political career, these incongruities in fact served as a source of political strength, as his charismatic personality helped him gain widespread popular support, as well as a weakness, particularly in negotiations.

Both widespread indignation over the rape and Ōta’s subsequent historical decision to refuse to act as proxy in the signing of the leases worked to impel the subsequent upsurge of a mass anti-base movement in Okinawa such that it is difficult to separate one factor from the other. The rape became a focal point for conceptions of a sense of collective self around which Okinawans rallied, and the highly politicised climate which directly followed the rape incident undeniably worked to further secure mass support behind Ōta’s stance. Ōta in turn incorporated tropes of Okinawan victimhood and challenged dominant discourses of nationality and security in a counter-narrative of mobilization—against the US military presence and in the name of local Okinawan autonomy.

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14 Yoichi Funabashi observes: “The rape in September definitely acted as a trigger for the ensuing anti-base protests in Okinawa. It is also certain that it made Ota’s refusal to sign the public notice and inspection papers inevitable. Nor is there any room for doubt that his refusal was an indictment of the government’s lack of sincerity up until that time” (Alliance Adrift, p. 312). Opinion differs on the rhetorical question as to whether Ōta would have signed the leases supposing the rape incident and subsequent mobilization of anti-base sentiment had not occurred. Political scientist Egami Takayoshi suggests that Ōta did look as if he would sign prior to the rape incident (“Okinawa no senjō seiji ni okeru ‘68-nen taisei’ no keisei to hōkai,” Ryūkyū Daigaku Hō bun Gakubu Kenkyū Kyōkō No. 57 (September 1996), p. 26). On the other hand, legal professor Takara Testumi recounted in an interview with the author that he discussed the possibility of forcing the issue into the courts by refusing to act as proxy with close advisors to the governor as early as July 1995 (interview with author, 20 April 2001). Deputy Governor Yoshimoto also attests that Ōta had decided to refuse to act as proxy by the beginning of August, and that Yoshimoto himself notified Murayama’s government as such prior to the rape incident (Interview with author, 25 May 2001). In any case, it is certain the possibility of refusing to act as proxy already existed prior to the rape incident.

15 For the text of Ōta’s speech at the October rally, see Okinawa kara ‘Nihon no shukan’o tou (Tokyo: Rimusha, 1995), pp. 37-8. As Linda Angst observes, these tropes of Okinawan victimhood were also gendered, and drew on images of Okinawa as pure and innocent female body already prevalent in depictions of the Himeyuri (Angst, “The Sacrifice of a Schoolgirl: The 1995 Rape Case, Discourses of Power, and Women’s Lives in Okinawa,”).
Yet this seemingly unified voice of dissent also incorporated a variety of at times competing agendas. The rape was appropriated by different groups as a political metaphor for the defilement of the sovereign Japanese body politic, the dual subjugation of Okinawa to the US and Japan, and the violation of women’s rights, attesting to competing constructions of both gender and (Okinawan/Japanese) ethnic identity. Ota attempted to negotiate competing positions within Okinawa while also contesting Okinawa’s position in Japan and under US-Japan security relations. As a consequence, he was faced with ultimately irresolvable tensions between his legal obligations to the central government as head of the prefectural administration and his focal role in the anti-base movement. He also faced deep-seated dilemmas in his endeavour to both negotiate within as well as contest the framework of the Japanese nation-state, and in his attempt to conceive of an economic program for Okinawa that would promote autonomy and sustainable development.

The “Okinawa issue” exposed to question Japan’s democracy and system of governance, and challenged dominant discourses of national security and Japanese cultural homogeneity. Ultimately, however, the contest between Ota and the Japanese

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16 As pointed out by Linda Isako Angst, “The Sacrifice of a Schoolgirl: The 1995 Rape Case, Discourses of Power, and Women’s Lives in Okinawa.”
17 As also pointed out in detail by Angst (ibid.). Gendered discourses which presented the rape metaphorically as the defilement of Okinawa and/or the national body politic of Japan worked to reinforce patriarchal assumptions. In contrast, Okinawan women activist Takazato Suzuyo strongly protested against the rape as a violation of woman’s rights while also criticising the way in which (male) politicians denied the subjectivity of the young girl by conceiving of the rape as a political “opportunity” to promote their own agendas (Interview with Takazato Suzuyo by Urashima Etsuko, “Kichi to josei no jinken,” Impakushon, No. 96 (20 January 1996), p. 15). Linda Angst also criticizes the process whereby the girl’s subjectivity was denied by objectifying the incident and appropriating it within political agendas, and women’s issues tend to become differed within identity politics (ibid.). At the same time, as Miyume Tanji points out, it may be said that the fragmentation and diversity of political agendas and strategies within Okinawan social movements has served as a source of both strength and weakness (Miyume Tanji, “The Dynamic Trajectory of the Post-reversion ‘Okinawa Struggle’: Constitution, Environment and Gender” in Rick Siddle and Glenn Hook (eds.) Okinawa and Japan: Structure and Subjectivity).
18 As Aurelia George Mulgan observes: “How the Okinawa base problem has been handled by the central government since late 1995 generates insights into the workings of Japanese democracy: the extent to
government highlighted the limitations and dilemmas faced by local politicians who “attempt to sustain a policy of challenge against the national government.” The combination of mass citizen activism with Ōta’s recalcitrant stance focused national and international attention on Okinawa, provided an unprecedented challenge to centralized administrative processes, forced a response from both the US and Japanese governments, and even resulted in qualified gains in base reductions. Yet through a series of judicial, legislative, and economic measures, the “Okinawa issue” was also largely contained and reduced to the question of financial compensation, as the contradictions embedded within Okinawa’s economic and political structure remained and even became further entrenched. This process reveals the indirect mechanisms of control and structures of dependence integral to local-national relations in Japan, and symptomatic of contemporary post/neo colonial conditions.

Ōta was the spearhead of a movement which sought to transform these relations, and yet also highly compromised within them. In his academic work, the historical and political conditions by which Okinawa was incorporated within hegemonic and centralized power relations formed a core philosophical dilemma for Ōta as he attempted to conceive of Okinawan subjectivity. As governor, the dilemmas of Okinawa’s conditions became crystallized in the trials of his own position. Ōta stood at the centre of, and found himself embroiled within, the process whereby these conditions were fiercely contested and reproduced.

which individual property rights are subordinated to national policies; the level of judicial independence from political interference; the use of economic compensation as an adjunct to more coercive instruments of state authority; the balance of power between central and local governments; the level of state responsiveness to minority interests; and the effectiveness of local protests movements in eliciting concessions from national policymakers” (“Managing the US Base Issue in Okinawa: A Test for Japanese Democracy,” p. 159).

While the US, Japan, and Okinawa form three vital elements in the axis of US-Japan security relations, they do not appear as equal parties at the negotiating table. The US government has often taken the position that the “Okinawa issue” is a domestic issue for Japan. As a result, from the Okinawa side contests over base issue since reversion have largely involved negotiations with the Japanese government and are intimately linked to the pursuit of economic, political, and cultural autonomy. This chapter traces these contests from the announcement of Ōta’s refusal to act as proxy in September 1995 to his electoral defeat of November 1998. It focuses in particular on how Ōta sought to negotiate relations with the central government, structures of local economic and political dependence, and related internal divisions within Okinawa. It is important to note that within subsequent negotiations the US itself often remains an “absent centre”—a fact itself symptomatic of the indirect relations of power which have become intrinsic to the contemporary condition.

Land Expropriation Procedures and Court Action

Procedures for Utilizing Expropriated Land and Refusal to Act as Proxy

The complex set of procedures which have applied to the leasing of expropriated land in Okinawa are legacy to the reversion process, whereby aspects of the structural inequalities produced by prolonged occupation became institutionalised within Japan’s legal and administrative system. Following the protracted contest over land expropriation policies in the 1950s, in 1958 USCAR agreed to abandon its lump payment policy in favour of five year land leases at an annual rent of more than six

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20 Aurelia George Mulgan observes: “The US bases in Okinawa have unquestioningly constituted a form of institutionalised discrimination against the Okinawan people. The issue they raise is fundamentally one of the equitable distribution of the social, environmental and economic costs of the American military presence in Japan” (“Managing the US Base Issue in Okinawa,” p. 160).
times the amount originally offered in 1953. As a result a majority of landowners acceded to land leasing procedures, although there remained a number of "non-contract" landowners particularly in municipalities where US military facilities comprised a significantly large ratio of total land area. At the time of Okinawa reversion in 1972, initially approximately 3,000 of a total of 25,000 holders of land utilized by the US military within Okinawa refused to enter into contracts with the Japanese government. They galvanized within the Anti-war Landowners Committee (Hansen jinushikai). The DFAA initially sought to legalize the expropriation of this land by drafting a law on the "Provisional Expropriation of Land for Public Use." After this expired in 1977, a revised law on land boundary clarification was adopted to legalize occupation, ostensibly until land boundaries within the region were fully clarified. In 1982, the Japanese government resuscitated a controversial law originally used in relation to land utilized by US military facilities in mainland Japan, the "Special Measures Law on Land Utilized by the US Military," and applied it to Okinawa. The last time this legislation had been used in mainland Japan was 1961. In protest against the 1982 application of this law, and in the effort to revitalize the force of the anti-war landowners movement, a campaign was organized where supporters of the landowners cause bought small plots of the land in contention and mobilized into the One-Tsubo Anti-war Landowners Association.


23 The clarification of land boundaries was historically a complex issue in Okinawa after much relevant documentation and many landowners (and sometimes whole families) died during World War II.


According to land legislation as it applied to the Special Measures Law up to and including 1995, consent from the owner of the land in question was requested twice during leasing procedures. The first time is when the DFAA originally requests use of the land (shomei dairi). The second is when the DFAA discloses its intention to use the land and requests public inspection of it (kōkoku jūran). This takes place after the Prefectural Land Expropriation Committee has carried out public hearings on use of the land in question (which on average take between six months to a year). If at either of these times the landowner refused to consent, then the head of the local municipality was obliged to act as proxy by sealing the documents themselves. The local government was required by law to carry out this so-called “delegated function” on behalf of the central government. “Delegated functions” have been a core feature of Japan’s system of centralized administration, in which local officials are often perceived as the agents of central government-controlled policy. 26 If the local municipality head refused, the prefectural governor, as head of the local administration, was required to seal the documents in the landowner’s stead. 27

Soon after gaining office, in the first months of 1991, Ōta was requested to act as proxy at the second stage of these procedures, in relation to public notification and inspection. During this time he was in the midst of carrying out negotiations with the central government over Okinawa’s Third Development Plan (1992-2001). After three months of intense negotiation and in the face of opposition from within his support base, he agreed to consent to the leasing procedure. In return the government agreed to work towards base reduction—a promise which, Ōta stressed when the issue again

26 See for example Aurelia George Mulgan, “Managing the US Base Issue in Okinawa,” p. 162.
arose in 1995, was not fulfilled. Up until Ōta’s announcement in September 1995, no Okinawan governor had refused to carry out either of these proxy functions.

The documents Ōta refused to sign were at the first stage of the leasing procedure. The mayors of Okinawa City, Yomitan Village, and Naha City had already refused to act as proxies on the leases, which involved close to 3,000 land owners, roughly 367,705 meters squared of land, and 13 different US military facilities. Most of the leases, generally five or ten years in length, were set to expire on 14 May 1997. Yet there was also one twenty-year leased-plot within Sobe Communications Facility which was owned by anti-war activist Chibana Shōichi and which was set to expire on 1 April 1996. According to land expropriation laws at the juncture of 1995, in the case that Ōta refused to act as proxy, the prime minister could “advise” and then “order” the governor to implement his designated functions. If Ōta continued to refuse, the prime minister must file a lawsuit against the governor. Moreover, this was only the first stage of the leasing process: once this issue was resolved in the courts, the Prefectural Land Committee still had to carry out public hearings on the land, and after this the governor was again required to act as proxy for public notification of the lease and land inspection. In short, from the moment of Ōta’s announcement of his refusal there existed the very real possibility that the land leases would expire in the meantime, placing the US armed forces in the position of unlawfully occupying Japanese territory.

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28 Egami Takayoshi details the negotiations made at this time in “Ōta kakushin kensei no kenshō to kichi mondai 1990-1994-nen,” pp. 90-5.  
29 As representative of the One-Tsubo Anti-war Landowners movement, Arasaki Moriteru put it: “The arbitrary legal applications [used to expropriate land up to this point] have in unison backfired, and the chickens come home to roost” (Arasaki Moriteru, “Beigun yōchi kyōsei shiyō to dairi shomei,” p. 59). Arasaki is a representative of the One-tsubo Anti-war Landowners Association and one of its founding members. In the words of Yoichi Funabashi: “By refusing to sign...Ōta markedly weakened the Japanese government’s Achilles’ heel in dealing with the bases” (Alliance Adrift, p. 312).
In “taking on” the US and Japanese governments, as one New York Times article phrased it, by refusing to act as proxy, Ōta caused major ripples in both Tokyo and Washington.\(^{30}\) Up to this point Okinawan attempts to influence the formulation of a post-cold war security structure, and Okinawa’s role within it, had been largely ignored. Yet as a result of Ōta’s ardent stance against the bases and the land expropriation process, US-Japan security relations were shaken at their foundation and Ōta was able to take a leading role within political processes.\(^{31}\) His action highlighted the extent to which the “Okinawan issue” implicated the core foundations of US-Japan security relations and the democratic principles of Japan’s postwar system. Okinawa emerged repeatedly within international headlines.\(^{32}\) On the historical significance of Ōta’s action, Ryukyu University Professor Hiyane Teruo later reflected:

Ōta’s decision to refuse to act as proxy was one local head representative’s impeachment against the national government (kuni), and in the sense that it shook the foundations of national policy, was an epoch-making event. It was an act unparalleled in the postwar history of local government, and in this sense will no doubt become a historical and ideological symbol for local autonomy. Behind Ōta’s decision, and compelling him to make it, lay I believe, Okinawa’s past.\(^ {33}\)

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\(^ {33}\) As cited from an interview in Ōta Masahide, Okinawa no ketsudan, pp. 179-80.
Court Action: The “Okinawa Issue” and post-“1955 System” Japan

Ōta thus took advantage of an administrative loophole within leasing procedures to mount a forceful challenge against the disproportionate ratio of US bases within Okinawa. Ōta’s criticism was directed at the historical position imposed on Okinawa within US-Japan’s bilateral security structure, and the reification of this role within a post-Cold War framework. In an appeal to the constitutional ideals of peace and democracy, it was also made against the further remilitarisation of Japan under strengthened US-Japan security relations.34

However, conservative trends in public discourse and calls for a more active military role for Japan particularly after the Persian Gulf War had resulted in the increasing estrangement of pacifism on a national level. The end of the Cold War and the bursting of Japan’s bubble economy saw the breakdown of the LDP’s political stronghold, accompanied by fragmentation in ideology and policy within the national political system as a whole. From the beginning of 1993 the Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDP) made concrete moves towards changing its traditional opposition to Japan’s Defence Forces, the US-Japan Security Treaty, and the enacting of a military role for Japan. These moves increased in pace following the LDP’s electoral defeat of July 1993, as influential elements within the SDP schemed to take hold of power in a non-LDP coalition government. The following mismatched coalition of rivalling left, moderate, and right-wing groups under the leadership of New Frontier Party leader Hosokawa Morihiro and later Hata Tsutomu lasted less than a year, and in April 1994 the SDP announced its secession from Hata’s government. At the end of June 1994,

34 US plans to maintain the existing number of US military personnel (approximately 47,000) within Japan had been outlined in the Pentagon’s “Nye Report” of February 1995. Officially entitled “U.S. Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region” or EASR, the report was released by the US Department of Defense in February 1995. See for example “Pentagon affirms Asia commitment,” The Japan Times, Tuesday, February 28, 1995, p. 1. Ōta mentioned both the Nye Report and the scheduled November meeting in his statement outlining his reasons for refusing to act as proxy, republished in Ōta Masahide, Heiwa no ishiji, pp. 127-32.
Murayama Tomiichi became the first socialist leader to be prime minister in close to fifty years.35 Yet this was as a leader of a minority party in a coalition together with the LDP, who had up to this point been the socialist party’s main political rivals since the emergence of what came to be known as the “1955 political system” almost forty years previously.36

The Okinawan chapter of the Social Democratic Party was a major supporter of Ōta’s administration, and while extremely tenuous, Murayama’s position as head of government certainly provided an important channel for concerns over the base issue.37 Yet the SDP’s about-turn over fundamental aspects of policy at the national level from the Hosokawa cabinet onwards also hastened its subsequent near-demise both nationally and locally. No clear consensus was reached on an alternative vision for the party as a substitute to orthodox pacifist ideals. This situation contributed to the party’s severe weakening, and a general popular disillusionment with politics. It also resulted in the fragmentation of the party and the dissipation of any political alternative to the LDP. The “Okinawa issue” exploded in this midst, and tested the alliance between the SDP and LDP as well as factional rifts within the SDP itself to their limit. The weakening of the SDP at a national level as a perceived bulwark on anti-base, pacifist issues compromised the position of the progressive political coalition which supported Ōta

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35 The last socialist leader to head a ruling coalition within the Diet was Katayama Tetsu (1947-8).
37 In one example, as a result of extensive lobbying largely through the JSP, legislation was passed in May 1995 detailing the government’s obligations in relation to base land marked for return, including guarantee of compensation revenues for three years following return (Law on Special Measures in Relation to the Return of Foreign Base Land in Okinawa Prefecture). Ōta and Yoshimoto recount the process leading to the drawing up of this legislation in Ōta Masahide Okinawa no ketsudan, pp. 153-6.
within Okinawa. It thus also ultimately served as a factor in the fragmentation of Okinawa’s progressive movement as a whole.\(^{38}\)

From the outset there was little consensus within the government over how to respond to Ōta’s stance on the proxy issue or demands for the revision of the SOFA. Left-wing factions and Okinawan members within the central SDP were strongly opposed to Murayama carrying out the procedures necessary to enforce the leasing process.\(^{39}\) Officials within the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and Japan’s Defence Agency (JDA) as well as key figures within the LDP were in contrast primarily concerned with smoothing bilateral relations in preparation for the reaffirmation of the security treaty scheduled in November.\(^{40}\) SDP members within the cabinet wavered between attempting to respond to the requests of the Ōta administration and demands of left-wing groups on the one hand, and working primarily to maintain their tenuous position within the LDP-dominated coalition government on the other.

In his meeting with Murayama on 4 November 1995, which lasted over five hours, Ōta outlined requests for the revising of SOFA and reiterated his refusal to sign the documents. Murayama expressed deep regret over the rape incident and sympathy for the plight of Okinawans, and agreed to establish a high-level consultative body

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\(^{38}\) For a detailed analysis of the dilemma the Okinawa chapter of the JSP faced over the proxy issue and its impact see Fukushima Yoshikazu, “Nihon Shakaito (Shamintō) ni okeru ‘genjitsu’ to ‘rinen’,” Nihon shisō no chihetō to suimyaku (Tokyo: Perikansha, 1998), pp. 577-605.

\(^{39}\) Vice Chairman of the SDP and member of the House of Representatives elect from Okinawa, Uehara Kosuke, was particularly assertive in calling for the need to draw out a specific plan for a reduction of the bases in Okinawa, and a revision of SOFA. In an interview with Mainichi Shinbun, Uehara explained that he had detailed his proposals for base reduction to SDP Secretary General Kuho Watarn, and called on the need for the prime minister and cabinet to take the initiative in policy-making over bureaucrats on the Okinawa issue (Mainichi Daily News (15 October 1995)).

\(^{40}\) In a meeting with Ōta soon after the rape incident, Foreign Minister Kono replied that Ōta was “pushing too far too quickly” (hashirisugi) by making demands for revision, a comment which further incensed Ōta and was widely reported in mainland Japanese and Okinawan press (See for example Funabashi, Alliance Adrift, p. 303-4). Kono also confirmed with US Ambassador Walter Mondale that the government had no intention of requesting revision, though both governments agreed to review the way in which the SOFA’s criminal procedures were implemented (See for example Pacific Stars and Stripes (5 October 1995), p. 6).
between the national and prefectural governments to discuss base issues, including possible reductions.\footnote{This was to become the Committee on US Bases in Okinawa, formally established by a cabinet decision on 17 November 1995. The Committee's aim was "to discuss issues concerning facilities and areas [utilised by the US military] under Article 6 of the security treaty signed between the United States of America and Japan." Primary members included vice cabinet-secretary, director general of the North American Affairs Bureau, director general of DFAA, the Okinawan vice-governor, and policy affairs adviser (see Okinawa Prefecture Base Affairs Department \textit{(Okinawa-ken kichi taisaku-shitsu)} (ed.) \textit{Okinawa no beigun kichi}, Naha: Kichi taisaku-shitsu, 1998, p. 221; and Smith, "Challenging National Authority," p. 91).} At the same time, under the direction of SDP Secretary General Kubo Wataru, the SDP made preparations to outline a specific proposal for the reduction and realignment of US military bases in Okinawa. In an interview directly following Ōta's announcement of his refusal, Kubo stressed that "the government should not force the governor to sign by exercising its authority to order" the carrying out of functions, and that the solution to the issue at hand "ultimately lay in outlining a set of specific guidelines towards the decrease and withdrawal of the military bases."\footnote{Fukushima Yoshikazu, "Nihon Shakaitō (Shamintō) ni okeru 'genjitsu' to 'rinken'," p. 585.} According to this subsequent proposal, made public on November 8, the size of Okinawa's US bases was to be cut in half by the year 2020. The SDP called for the "necessity of an early review" of Japan's recognition of the Pentagon's policy on maintaining US military presence at the current level,\footnote{Ibid., p. 587.} and outlined its opposition towards the government's new defence program, including the dispatch of Japanese Self Defence Forces overseas.\footnote{Ibid., p. 587.}

Yet even these proposals did not nearly meet the requests that Ōta outlined to Murayama on 3 November in his Okinawa "Action Program"—which called for the complete withdrawal of US bases from Okinawa by the year 2015.\footnote{"Japan Social Democrat Unveils 'More Pacifist' Defence Plan", \textit{Kyodo News Service}, Tokyo (11 November 1995).} Nor did the SDP have enough influence in either the Diet or government agencies to implement policies

\footnote{On details of the Action Program see Okinawa Prefecture Base Affairs Department \textit{(Okinawa-ken kichi taisaku-shitsu)} (ed.) \textit{Okinawa no beigun kichi}, p. 240-1.}
clearly in contradiction with those outlined by top bureaucrats and the LDP. On November 13, officials confirmed that the prime minister would convey to US President Bill Clinton in their scheduled meeting the following week that he intended to use his authority to force through the leases. On 19 November, Murayama met with US vice-President Al Gore, filling in for US President Clinton who had cancelled his Japan visit in the midst of a domestic budget crisis. Both leaders reaffirmed the importance of US troops to the peace and stability of the region, and announced the establishment of a bilateral Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO). Assenting to pressures within the ruling coalition and from government agencies, Murayama confirmed his intention to Gore to use his authority to push through the Okinawa land leases.

Since the swell of a nation-wide pro-reversion movement in the 1960s, the Socialist Party, like left-wing political groups in general, historically upheld the Okinawa base issue in particular as a central tenet of the anti-war, pacifist principles which formed the foundation of its political agenda. As Communist Party members berated Murayama in the Diet, only a very short time ago the socialists themselves had taken an opposing view against the treaty, the SDF, and the bases. Murayama’s decision to carry out the procedures which would directly lead to the filing of a court action against Ōta was highly revealing. It exposed the limits of the SDP’s tenuous hold on power within the LDP-dominated coalition. It confirmed the extent of the dissolution of postwar liberal ideals, and the breakdown in political consensus and clear agendas within Japan’s parliamentary party system. It may also be seen as exemplary of the

46 In meetings between US Defense Secretary William Perry, and Japanese Foreign Minister Kano and Japan Defense Agency (JDA) Director-General Eito Seishiro on 1 November, both governments had confirmed there would be no cuts in US forces stationed in Japan. The extent of conflict between the SDP and government agencies over the Okinawa issue was clearly exposed after Director-General of the DFAA, Hoshuyama Noboru, was quoted as calling Prime Minister Murayama “stupid” in his handling of it. Hoshuyama was forced to resign over the incident on 19 October 1995.

47 In particular, Cabinet Secretary Nosaka Koken. OT (14 November 1995), p. 3.

48 See for example OT (20 November 1995).
“differences in perception” between progressive political groups in mainland Japan and Okinawa which Ōta had lamented of at least since the publication of The Ugly Japanese over twenty-five years previously. The Okinawan chapter of the SDP was in particular placed in a dilemma as it sought to uphold Ōta’s stance against the position of the party’s central organs.49

On hearing that Murayama had agreed to push the lease process through on the night of November 19, Ōta announced an emergency press conference. The closing ceremony of the World Uchinaanchu (Okinawan) Congress, which unites people of Okinawan descent from around the world, was just over, and the press packed into a room in the convention centre where it had been held. In high spirits from the lively congress proceedings, Ōta flared up as the topic of the bilateral meeting and security treaty arose. Prefectural officials looked on with increasing alarm as Ōta flung criticisms towards both the central government and mainland Japan. “I denounce the fact that Okinawa should become the means to protect the fortune of mainland Japanese,” Ōta declared. Turning to the topic of the Battle of Okinawa, he concluded: “We already made too many sacrifices for the fortunes of others during the war.” Ōta was highly critical of the government’s refusal to respond to calls for compensation for Okinawan war-malaria victims and for Japanese aggression in Asia in general. He declared: “What kind of people are the Japanese? That is why they are not trusted in Asia!” He also lamented Okinawa’s complicity—as an “aggressor” through the hosting of bases—and declared his desire to “end these conditions.” At the end of the uniquely emotional and unreserved press conference proceedings, Ōta’s final indictment reverberated throughout the room as he made his exit: “Is Okinawa Japan?”50

49 Fukushima, “Nihon Shakaito (Shamintō) ni okeru ‘genjitsu’ to ‘rinen’.”
50 OT (21 November 1995), p. 2. In a regular press conference the following day, Ōta was much more careful with his words, conceding that the Prime Minister had his “position” as head of national government and the “bilateral treaty” to consider, but that at the same time Ōta had the “position of the prefecture” to keep in mind (transcript of Governor’s regular press conference, 20 November 1995, p. 2).
In response to the central SDP’s turnaround in basic policies and as the prime minister moved towards going ahead with leasing proceedings, the head of the SDP Okinawa Chapter Aragaki Zenshun observed: “Murayama has dug his own grave.”51 Indeed, just over a month after his meeting with Vice-President Gore, on 5 January 1996, Murayama announced his resignation from the post of prime minister, ostensibly over factionalism. Yet not before the leasing procedures had been carried through. On 7 December 1995, after Ōta continued to refuse the prime minister’s order to carry out proxy on the leases, Murayama filed legal suit against Ōta for failing to fulfil the duties required by his office.

Contest: The Court Case and the Prefectural Plebiscite

The Legal Case and Political Mobilization

With the onset of a legal battle between Ōta and the national government, both sides also galvanized for a political contest which extended far beyond the courts. Japan’s Supreme Court has a consistent record of supporting the central government position in controversial legal cases. This is particularly so in cases involving Japan’s security policy and interpretations of the peace clause of the constitution, where the court has consistently abstained on what it has seen as a “political issue” and therefore beyond jurisdiction.52 From the outset, it was predicted to be highly unlikely that Ōta’s counsel would win.

51 Cited in Fukushima, “Nihon Shakaitō (Shamintō) ni okeru ‘genjitsu’ to ‘rinen’,” p. 591.
52 The fifteen justices of the Supreme Court are directly appointed by Cabinet, and as a result of prolonged one-party rule, this has ensured extensive LDP influence in the courts (as observed by Aurelia George Mulgan, “Managing the US Base Issue in Okinawa,” p. 164). Mulgan also notes that the tendency for the courts to avoid taking a stance in opposition to the government on political controversial case has been a legal tradition in Japan since the famous Sunagawa case of 1959, which also involved the Special Measures Law on Land Utilized by the US Military, and involved charges of trespass by Japanese demonstrators on the Tachikawa US Air Base.
Yet the court case was still conceived as vital as part of a larger citizen movement and an important forum to air Okinawan issues. As Eric A. Feldman points out, the assertion of rights through the courts has formed a vital part of legal and political contest in Japan. Legal proceedings have been utilized both to seek concrete judicial remedies and provide a forum within which to legitimise political claims.

The extent of the legitimacy crisis which the US military faced in Japan following the end of the Cold War, as well as the widespread support which Ōta’s anti-base pro-autonomy stance received in Okinawa, should not be underestimated. By 16 November 1995, Ōta had received 13,682 letters in response to his refusal to act as proxy, the large majority of which expressed support for his stance. By May 1996, this number had reached 55,000. On 9 November 1995, head of the Okinawa Prefectural Federation of the Japan Trade Union Confederation (Rengō Okinawa), Toguchi Masahiro, handed over a collection of over half a million signatures supporting Ōta’s cause to then Prime Minister Murayama. The prefectural administration and Ōta’s progressive support base sought to utilize this backing through two primary means: by exploiting the court case itself as a public and publicized forum to present the historical and political conditions facing Okinawa, and through implementing a prefectural

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54 Ibid., p. 111.
55 In a public opinion poll jointly conducted by Asahi newspaper and the Okinawa Times in May 1997, for instance, support for Ōta’s stance against the bases stood at over 90% (46% strongly support, 45% support). Only 10% of Okinawans agreed that the US bases should be maintained at the present level, with over 85% calling for either gradual reduction or immediate withdrawal. Only a minority (37% agreed in contrast to 49% disagreed) of Okinawans thought that maintenance of the US military presence in East Asia was necessary at all (Asahi Shinbun, 12 May 1997, p. 15).
57 Ōta Masahide, Heiwa no ishijii, op cit., p. 158.
plebiscite on the base issue. Academics versed on Okinawan issues spoke at forums throughout Japan and the US, the prefectural administration and peace and women’s groups in Japan and the US placed advertisements on the base issue in the print press, and Ōta himself led an Okinawan delegation in a highly publicized visit to Washington.

These activities saw intellectuals, lawyers, activists, politicians, journalists, and even high school students throughout Okinawa and beyond who supported Ōta’s stance working in corporation with local bureaucrats and the prefectural administration. Historically, local officials in Japan have often been seen as servants to the national government rather than representatives of their local electorate. In direct contrast, Ōta came to play a highly unusual and exceptionally visible role as at once the administrative head of the prefectural government and the spearhead of a wide legal, political, and citizen-based movement against national government policy and the US bases and in the name of local citizen will, welfare and autonomy.

On 8 December 1995, only the day after Murayama filed suit against Ōta, the High Court set the date to initiate hearings for two weeks later. The court case was carried out with exceptional speed—in four separate hearings over the space of three months. The court refused repeated requests from Ōta’s legal counsel to allow anti-war landowners to testify and limited the testifiers to only one from each side—an official from the DFAA representing the government, and the defendant, Governor Ōta. Ōta’s

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61 In this regard Shiela Smith observes: “While local politicians have refused to abide by national laws in other instances of social protest in Japan, Ōta played a strikingly visible role in the protest of US bases in Okinawa. Summoned by the citizens who organized the prefectural rally in October 1995, he was in essence given the mantle of leadership of the movement” (“Challenging National Authority: Okinawa Prefecture and the US Military Bases,” p. 79).
legal counsel and anti-war landowners fiercely criticized this decision and the rushed nature of the entire proceedings as revealing of the court’s pro-government bias.

Both in the High Court proceedings and later in the Supreme Court appeal, the question at issue centred on whether or not Ōta’s refusal to carry out the acting of proxy could be regarded as a violation of the “public interest” (kōeki). The national government argued that the functioning of the US-Japan Security Treaty and SOFA was a highly political issue which touched the basis of foreign policy and national defence and therefore clearly lay within the authority of the prime minister. The prefecture argued in contrast that the national government could only enforce delegated functions to the extent that they did not violate local autonomy law. The prefecture also challenged the legality of the entire leasing process. It was argued that the Special Measures law, as legislation which applied solely to Okinawa, violated the constitutional principles of equality, as well as property rights and the right to a peaceful existence (heiwa teki seizonken). In short, the prefectural side placed the fundamental inequalities and contradictions of Okinawa’s location in Japan’s postwar system within a broad historical and political context. The national government avoided debating these issues, focusing rather on the way in which Ōta’s refusal to carry out administrative procedures obstructed the implementation of a fundamental aspect of national policy and therefore the public interest. The case had far reaching implications for the legal interpretation of delegated functions and the Special Measures Law and raised central issues concerning the balance of power between central and local governments.

62 The constitution states that legislation which applies only to one particular regional group must obtain a majority consensus by ballot in the region in question.
Directly following Ōta’s announcement of his refusal to act as proxy, teachers and students from the seven universities located in Okinawa mobilized in his support. As it became clear the issue would most probably be fought out in court, this group formed the “Citizen’s and University Members Association” (shimin, daigakunin no kai). While Ōta’s legal team drew up the strategic legal argument for the case, the University Association, which included academics from numerous fields, assisted in incorporating a historical and political framework. The Association also served as a bridge between the counsel and thousands of supportive citizens mainly in Okinawa but also across Japan. Throughout the court proceedings, members participated in explanations of each hearing, lined up in hundreds to attend the hearings, passed resolutions in support of Ōta, and conducted protests outside the courts. Citizen groups thereby directly participated in the process whereby legal argument was formulated and the legal case made in turn encompassed wider historical, social, and political issues.65 Members of the University Association became key figures in conceiving and promoting the prefectural plebiscite, and within the nation-wide forum, “Message from Okinawa,” sponsored by Okinawa Prefecture as part of proceedings for the fiftieth anniversary since the end of the Battle of Okinawa.66 The formation of the “Women Acting against Military Violence” group in the wake of the rape incident and subsequent court case also coincided with a rise in the public profile and influence of women’s organizations within the anti-base citizen movement.67

65 The record of the Citizens and University Association is detailed in; Okinawa kara heiwa o tsukuru shimin, daigakunin no kai ed.) Dairi shome kyōhi saiban: tomo ni kangaeru kōdō shita kiroku (Naha, Okinawa University 1999).

66 Kichi to heiwa to bunka o kangaeru Okinawa kara no masseiji (Naha: Okinawa Prefecture, 1997). Also recounted in interviews with Takara Tetsumi (20 April 2001) and Miyagi Etsujirō (4 May 2001).

67 The first general meeting of the “Women Acting Against Military Violence” was held on 29 November, 1995. The organization lobbied in Okinawa, Tokyo, and the US, including within the “Okinawa Women’s America Peace Caravan.” See for example Takazato Suzuyo, Okinawa no onna-tachi. Information on activities of the organization also kindly provided by Asato Etsuko.
In the first court hearing, Ōta presented a statement calling for the court to “deliver a decision which will withstand the judgement of history according to the principles of independent judiciary, the constitution, and local autonomy.” In his subsequent testimony to the High Court on 11 March 1995 Ōta drew upon the tenets of his previous historical analyses. Many of these issues were also reiterated in Ōta’s later statement to the Supreme Court delivered on 10 July 1996.68 In outlining his reasons for refusing to carry out the proxy functions, he emphasized the three principles of “peace, coexistence, and autonomy” which his administration upheld. He stressed the fact that his election platform had included the promise that he would build a “peaceful Okinawa prefecture.” He recounted his experiences in the Battle of Okinawa, and the unique history and perceived peaceful traditions of the Ryukyu Kingdom. He also drew upon pacifist principles which he saw to be symbolized in the Cornerstone of Peace and its commemoration of all those who lost their lives during the Battle of Okinawa. In short, Ōta presented a criticism of the ideology of cultural, linguistic, and historical homogeneity in Japan, Okinawans’ sense of inferiority, policies of assimilation, and historical discrimination against Okinawa. He also mounted a challenge against the fundamental tenets of national security discourse—in particular the assumption that dominant definitions of the national interest coincided with the protection of people’s, and in particular Okinawans’, safety.

Ōta criticised the fact that the land in question was originally forcefully expropriated by the US military under occupation. He saw that the so called “Nye Report” of February 1995 confirmed the maintenance and even possible strengthening of the US military presence and thus the continued expropriation of this land. He stressed that he saw Japan’s bilateral relationship with the US as vital and did not take an anti-US stance. Rather, he argued, it was precisely because he valued bilateral

68 For the full text of the Supreme Court statement see Ōta Masahide, Okinawa: Heiwa no Ishii, pp. 168-81.
relations that he saw it as essential that the base issue in Okinawa be resolved. Recounting the failures of reversion, Ōta concluded: “Historically, Okinawa has not been able to determine its own livelihood but has been forced to submit to the will of others.” He expressed the desire for autonomy, and endeavoured to envisage a future that would “enable Okinawa to stand on its own, or to put it more simply, to enable Okinawa to determine its own destiny.”

On 25 March 1996, the day of the High Court’s ruling, a group of Japanese intellectuals, including such nationally renown figures as Maruyama Masao, Yamada Yōji, Ueno Chizuko and Ienaga Saburō, placed an advertisement in the Okinawa Times expressing their support for Ōta and stressing that the rule of law exists in the name of “humanity” and justice.” The High Court judgement however found in full favour of the plaintiff, rejecting the claim that the Special Measures Law conflicted with constitutional principles. Ōta’s refusal to carry out the proxy function was found to be a violation of the “public interest.” A day later, on 26 March, Hashimoto himself acted as proxy in the signing of the leases.

_Futenma Return, the Plebiscite, and the Final Judgment_

The government was thus able to break the standstill on the leasing procedures. Yet tension over the Okinawa issue and between the national government and the prefectural administration far from ceased. On the morning of 1 April 1996, the day his land lease expired, landowner Chibana Shōichi and hundreds of his supporters were met by police in full riot gear as they arrived at the gate of Sobe Communications Base demanding access to Chibana’s land. The DFAA sought emergency rights to access,

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69 The full text of Ōta’s testimony to the High Court is printed in “Okinawa kenchiji shōgen: kichi no nai heiwa na shima e,” (Tokyo: Niraisha, 1996).

70 Aurelia George Mulgan observes: “The way in which the…Court handled the Ōta case and the method of the courts’ rulings support arguments that the Japanese judiciary is a tool of executive, especially on matters that embody a challenge to state policy and authority” (“Managing the US Base Issue in Okinawa,” p. 165).
arguing that the US-Japan Security Treaty required continued use of the base land. Yet the US military was now undeniably placed in the position of "unlawful" occupation. This situation was "fraught with political overtones," as Okinawa's political protest had become "gripping news on national television." 

The same day, Ōta announced his decision to appeal on the High Court's judgement to the Supreme Court of Japan. He criticised the High Court for "failing to adequately consider the issues at hand," and in particular for its failure to take account of the fundamental legal principles of the constitution and of local autonomy. 

Following the High Court defeat, groups in Okinawa also strengthened their resolve to carry out a prefectural referendum on the base issue. Rengō Okinawa union leader Toguchi Masahiro initially conceived of the possibility of a prefectural-wide plebiscite as a powerful means to appeal the Okinawa issue both domestically and to the world. At an early stage the Ōta administration expressed its support for the idea. With the prospects of the Supreme Court overturning the original judgement extremely slim, it was hoped that the plebiscite could serve as an important display of majority support for Ōta in his enduring legal battle. As Okinawan political scientist Shimabukuro Jun observed: "While the government also held the power of authority in the courts, the prefecture did not have an opposing counter force. The only power enabling the..."

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71 Funabashi, *Alliance Adrift*, p. 311.
73 Transcript of Press Conference (1 April 1996).
75 Egami Takayoshi, "Okinawa no ken-min tōhyō," p. 6. See also Shimabukuro Jun, "Dairi shomei kyōhi to kenmin tōhyō o meguru Okinawa no sei-jì teki dōkō to haikai" in Egami Takayoshi (ed.) *Gendai Okinawa no sei-jì to shakai*, p. 150. Rengō Okinawa had first hoped to carry out the referendum prior to Clinton's April visit, yet the complex procedures for implementing the referendum took much longer than originally expected.
prefecture to carry through the refusal to act as proxy was support from the prefecture’s citizens.” On April 10, enough signatures to satisfy the requirements necessary to request a referendum were presented to local election administration committees. Just over a month later, Ōta strongly argued in support of the plebiscite in an extraordinary session of the prefectoral assembly, noting: “For the people of Okinawa prefecture to display independently (shutai teki ni) their own will and for that will to be reflected in prefectural policy is an essential principle of local autonomy. It also holds the significance of working to increase the opportunity for citizen participation in the workings of public administration and promote decentralization.”

Meanwhile, Ōta also utilized various means to lobby the US government and bring further attention to the Okinawa base issue within the US. Soon after his announcement to refuse to act as proxy, Ōta had met with Hawaiian Governor Benjamin Cayetano to discuss the possibility of relocating military facilities to Hawaii, a suggestion Cayetano made in a personal letter to Ōta. In March 1996, Ōta wrote a letter to US President Clinton, in which he noted the “unfair and discriminatory burden” placed on Okinawa through the disproportionate US military presence, and stressed that the Okinawan base issue must be “addressed fully” in order to “enhance cordial relations between our two countries.” Ōta persistently requested Japanese government assistance in the attempt to arrange a direct meeting with Clinton during his visit to Japan in April in vain. Yet through the assistance of US Ambassador Mondale, Ōta was able to greet Clinton briefly at a luncheon during the president’s Japan visit. On
meeting the president, Ōta appealed to Clinton to visit Okinawa and see the situation there for himself.

In June, Ōta headed an Okinawan delegation to the US. It was not the first time an Okinawan governor sought to take issues relating to the US bases directly to Washington. Even conservative Governor Nishime, frustrated with MOFA’S failures to communicate or address Okinawan concerns, lobbied through the American Okinawan Association to arrange a meeting with Pentagon heads in May 1985, to the chagrin of the Japanese government.⁸⁰ Ōta had lobbied in the US every year since entering office. Yet in 1996, the explosion of the Okinawan issue now brought unprecedented publicity and swiftly opened doors to the offices of top military and government officials, including Defence Secretary William Perry and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for Asia and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell.⁸¹ Ōta was accompanied by policy advisor Matayoshi Tatsuo, senior members of the prefectural government, mayors from municipalities with a large US military presence, and reporters from the Okinawa Times, the Ryukyu Shinpō, and Television Ryukyu.⁸²

By the time of Ōta’s Washington visit in June of 1996, however, the political leverage that mass international publicity on the Okinawan issue had given his administration since September 1995 had already begun to wear thin. In preparation for Clinton’s visit to Japan in April 1996, together with US officials the Hashimoto government sought to respond to anti-base sentiment by presenting a program for the “consolidation, realignment, and reduction” of US military facilities in Okinawa. At an

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⁸¹ For a full schedule of the trips Ōta made to the US see Okinawa Prefecture Base Affairs Department (Okinawa-ken kichi taisaku-shitsu) (ed.) Okinawa no heigun kichi, pp. 237-9. In 1997 Deputy Governor Tomon Mitsuko also led a women’s delegation to Washington and made various requests on US military base issues including in relation to crimes committed by US military members, the environmental impact of military activity on the islands, etc.

⁸² See Funabashi, Alliance Adrift, 152-6.
official level, this program was drawn up by the SACO group, comprising military and civilian members of government on both the US and Japanese side, yet without Okinawan representation. At an unofficial level, negotiations on the Okinawa issue also progressed outside of SACO through the top echelons of both governments. These resulted in the surprise announcement on 12 April 1995 of the decision to return Futenma Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS). Three days later, the SACO Interim Report detailed proposals to also return and relocate various other facilities.

The agreement to return Futenma, a large airbase in the centre of Okinawa Island surrounded by the sprawling and overcrowded city of Ginowan, was the trump card of Hashimoto’s political manoeuvrings on the Okinawa issue. As a symbolic and timed gesture, it ensured that the Okinawa issue did not overshadow the joint Hashimoto-Clinton declaration on the US-Japan “global security partnership” announced less than a week later. From the time of this announcement and the publication of the SACO interim report, both the US and Japanese governments took the position that the “realignment, consolidation, and reduction” outlined by SACO comprised an adequate resolution to the Okinawa base issue.

The SACO report outlined some significant steps towards lessening the impact of the military presence on Okinawa, including the transferral of live ammunition training (which had hitherto been regularly carried out across Highway 104, a major thoroughfare) to mainland Japan. Yet the SACO agreement was also severely criticized as in many respects comprising rather a mere “reshuffling” of existing facilities. If all of the items listed in SACO were implemented, a decrease of approximately 20% in land utilized by the US military in Okinawa could be achieved.

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83 See also “Playing Base Politics in a Global Strategic Theater: Futenma Relocation, the G-8 Summit, and Okinawa,” Critical Asian Studies, Vol. 33 No. 1 (March 2001), pp. 70-95.
84 Other reforms made to US military base operations in Okinawa include the cessation of military hikes on public roads, the building of noise baffles on Kadena, and new regulations which require US personnel to obtain car license numbers.
However, Okinawa would still hold a ratio of 70% of all US military facilities in Japan. Seven of the eleven facilities marked for return included the condition of partial or whole transferral to an alternative site within Okinawa prefecture. As of March 2002, the Aha Training Area at Kunigami Village was the only site in Okinawa which had actually been returned as stipulated within the SACO agreement.85

Within Okinawa, as it became fully apparent that “complete return” in fact entailed the relocation of large-scale heliport facilities to another location within Okinawa, the “Futenma relocation issue” also fiercely intensified divisions within and between local municipalities. These divisions ultimately worked to fragment the support base of Ōta’s administration. In the face of increasing political division between conservative and progressive camps within Okinawa, the foundations of Ōta’s administration began to shake. The SACO agreement marked the point at which divisions within the non-partisan prefecture-wide anti-base sentiment that had swept across the Okinawan archipelago in 1995 became manifest.

The entrenchment of divisions between conservative and progressive camps in Okinawa in turn exerted a direct impact on the implementation of the prefectural plebiscite. The referendum ordinance was passed in the prefectural assembly on 21 June. Yet the Okinawan Chapter of the LDP decided to oppose the ordinance and thus it failed to gain the unanimous vote which organizers had originally hoped for.86 At the beginning of August, Major General Murata Hidenobu declared to 1,800 members of the SDF residing in Okinawa that “there was no point in voting for or against the

86 Though the LDP cited “disavowal of the democratic parliamentary system” as the reason, Egami Takayoshi observes “the true fact was that they took the return of Futenma and the SACO Interim Report as a positive outcome, turning against the progressive party initiated prefectural plebiscite in order to actively cooperate with the government.” Egami Takayoshi, “Okinawa no kenmin tōhyō,” p. 7. See also Shimabukuro Jun, “Dairi shomei kyōhi to kenmin tōhyō o meguru Okinawa no seiji teki dōkō to haikei,” p. 154.
questions in the referendum as the plebiscite is meaningless.\textsuperscript{87} At the end of the same month, LDP Okinawan Chapter head Nishida Kenji followed suit by calling on voters to boycott the plebiscite. Two other important groups also announced their opposition. They were the Okinawan Federation of Landowners of Land Utilized for Military Purposes (Okinawa-ken Guñyō Tochi Jinushi-kai Rengōkai), and the All Okinawan Foreign Military Base Workers Labour Union (Zenchūryūgun Jūgyōin Rōdō Kumiai). In the words of Egami Takayoshi: "After the decision to return Futenma Airbase, with conditions, within between five to seven years, base workers and owners of land within the bases became perturbed about uncertainties in the future, and the unified prefecture-wide movement calling for base reduction began to break down..."\textsuperscript{88}

The hope that the referendum would provide a powerful display of popular support for Ōta in his legal battle was further dashed when the Supreme Court announced at the end of July that it would make its ruling on the proxy issue much earlier than had been expected. The date for the referendum had already been set at September 8. The Supreme Court set the judgment date for Ōta's case at August 28, eleven days prior to this. Once again the courts were severely criticized for displaying pro-government bias by rushing proceedings.\textsuperscript{89}

The massive preparations necessary for the implementation of the plebiscite still went ahead. The prefectural administration had to walk a fine line between promoting the plebiscite and not appearing biased. 180 million yen was delegated to promoting voters to take part in the plebiscite, and well known Okinawan musicians, actors, and

\textsuperscript{87} His comment generated criticism for working to influence the voting behaviour of SDF members from the media, after which Defence Agency director Usui Hideo reprimanded Murata. As recounted in Robert Eldridge, "The 1996 Okinawa Referendum on US Base Reductions: One Question, Several Answers," p. 895.

\textsuperscript{88} Egami Takayoshi, "Okinawa no ken-min tōhyō," p. 16.

\textsuperscript{89} Egami, ibid.; Eldridge, "The 1996 Okinawa Referendum on US Base Reductions: One Question, Several Answers"; and Shimabukuro Jun, "Dairi shomei kyohi to kenmin tōhyō o meguru Okinawa no seiji teki dōkō to haikai," p. 155-6.
cultural figures featured in a large scale advertisement campaign, which included 978 television and 830 radio commercials, over 50 different press advertisements, 20,000 posters and over a million pamphlets. Resources were plentiful, but from the outset the referendum was a race against time. The Prefectural People’s Plebiscite Promotion Committee was only established in late June, its office did not start fully functioning until August 11, and local offices were never even formed in many municipalities. Apart from the prefecture itself, Rengō Okinawa was the only organization to invest a major effort into promoting the plebiscite, with other groups merely playing a peripheral role.  

Meanwhile, on 28 August 1996, all fifteen of Japan’s Supreme Court judges unanimously rejected Ōta’s appeal. Ōta’s failure to carry out his “delegated functions” as agent of the central government was deemed a “serious infringement of the public interest.” The legal counsel for the Okinawa side was forced to admit unqualified defeat. In a press conference following Supreme Court’s ruling, Ōta expressed his strong regret that Okinawa prefecture’s claim had been rejected. He once again took note that, in spite of the judgement, “the conditions surrounding the US military bases in Okinawa persist in their severity.” He added: “While the fact that the strong wishes of the people of Okinawa prefecture were largely ignored in the final judgement was in a sense predictable, it is also a direct reflection of the state of so-called ‘democratic politics’ in Japan today.”

The ruling also confirmed the extreme likelihood of an early defeat in the case on the second proxy function, in relation to public notification and inspection of the land. On July 12, Hashimoto had filed a lawsuit against Ōta for his persistent refusal to

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90 Shimabukuro Jun, ibid., pp. 156-9.
carry out delegated functions in relation to the second stage of leasing procedures on
July 12, and by August this case was already being considered by the High Court.
Speculation was raised that Ōta’s office was preparing to back down on this second
proxy case, yet Ōta refused to comment, merely reiterating his support for the upcoming
referendum. He stressed the importance of the plebiscite given the “historical conditions” where “Okinawans have been denied the right to determine their own
course.” In this context, Ōta reaffirmed: “The chance for Okinawans to determine their
own will and to express this will through a social means is extremely important, and it
is with these reasons in mind that I fully support the referendum.” ⁹³

The plebiscite was held as scheduled on September 8. It marked the first of its
kind in Japan on a prefecture-wide scale and the first time that the issue of the now fifty
year-long US military presence had been put to the Okinawan people. Of a voter turnout
of 59.53%, approximately 89% voted in agreement with the reduction of US military
bases in Okinawa and the revision of SOFA. This amounted to a total of 53% of all
eligible voters. In a press conference following the result announcement, Ōta vowed to
“work towards solving the base issue and respecting the will of the people of Okinawa
prefecture.” ⁹⁴ While voter turnout was particularly low in those municipalities with a
high ratio of US military facilities, Ōta commented that such as result was “inevitable”
given the way in which the military base structure had become “institutionalised in
Okinawa for over half a century.” Stressing the fact that over half of Okinawans voted
for reduction of the bases, he noted: “It is my understanding that an overwhelming

⁹³ Transcript of the Press Conference of Governor Ōta Masahide following Supreme Court Ruling on the
Order to Carry out Delegated Functions (28 August 1996), p. 5. In a statement a day later, on 29 August,
Ōta similarly noted: “The prefectural plebiscite is an additional complement to parliamentary democracy
based on the principles of direct citizen participation in politics. I believe that it provides a great
opportunity for the people of Okinawa to perceive the conditions which Okinawa has been placed under,
and begin building Okinawa’s future with their own hands” (Ōta Masahide, “Kenmin Tōhyō ni tsuite no
mesejie” (29 August 1996)).
⁹⁴ RS (9 September 1996).
number of people perceive the bases as a hindrance to their wellbeing and the natural
environs of Okinawa, and that this perception was reflected in the plebiscite results.95

**Trials of History: Negotiation and Compliance**

*The Impending Decision*

Ōta faced increasingly contradictory demands between his legal obligations as
the head of a local administration in the implementation of policy, and his leading role
as representative of Okinawa’s citizen movement. Having exhausted all possible legal
channels in the face of defeat in the Supreme Court at the end of August 1996, the
tensions arising from these conflicting pressures reached a tumultuous head. On
September 9, the day after the prefectural plebiscite, Ōta left Okinawa for Tokyo in
anticipation of a meeting with Hashimoto scheduled for the following afternoon. The
original purpose of the visit was to convey the results of the plebiscite and Okinawans’
strong desire for base reduction to the central government. However ultimately the
plebiscite and its significance became overshadowed by speculation that Ōta was
planning to back down on the second stage of the proxy issue, and the trip itself was
dominated by negotiations with Hashimoto over finalizing such a deal.

The prefecture, and in particular Deputy Governor Yoshimoto, had been
exploring the possibility of reaching an accord with Hashimoto since at least the end of
July.96 Yoshimoto was formerly the Chief Secretary of the Reversion Council during
the Yara era, and following reversion was Executive Committee Head of the Okinawa
Prefecture Public Servants Union and Executive Secretary of the Prefectural Labour
Cooperative. He was a central organizer behind the first mass human chain around

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95 Transcript of the Press Conference of Governor Ōta Masahide following the Announcement of the
Results of the Okinawan Prefectural Plebiscite on the Reduction of Military Bases and the Revision of
SOF/A (8 September 1996).
Kadena Airbase in 1986, a highly symbolic protest against the bases, and was a long-time player in progressive political circles. In 1990 he was appointed policy advisor to the governor, and in 1993 deputy governor.\textsuperscript{97} He was undoubtedly the central political broker behind the Ōta administration. It was Yoshimoto, along with other progressive party representatives, who had originally approached Ōta when he was still a university professor on two separate occasions and beseeched him to stand as a candidate in the gubernatorial elections.\textsuperscript{98} It was also Yoshimoto who utilized ties with the JSP and later a direct channel through National Land Development Council Chairman Shimokobe Atsushi to negotiate with the Hashimoto government over issues concerning the bases and Okinawa’s economy.

Shimokobe Atsushi was former Undersecretary of the Land Development Agency, and brain of the Tanaka Kakuei government (July 1972-December 1974). He had in other words played a central role in the consolidation and expansion of the structural system of public works-centred development which integrated LDP politicians, construction companies, and government bureaucrats within what has become known as Japan’s “construction state” system. He had been involved in the implementation of central government economic development policies towards Okinawa since the reversion period, and now played a pivotal role as Hashimoto’s “secret envoy” in the effort to win over the Ōta administration.\textsuperscript{99}

On the afternoon of September 10, directly prior to meeting Hashimoto, Ōta met with Yoshimoto in Tokyo. Yoshimoto detailed the specifics of the deal which had been finalized with the government, largely through Shimokobe’s contacts. In return for Ōta settling the proxy issue, Hashimoto would set an additional five billion yen “adjustment

\textsuperscript{97} Interview with author (25 May 2001). See also published interview with Yoshimoto, OT (18 June 2002), p. 4.
\textsuperscript{98} Interview with author (25 May 2001).
\textsuperscript{99} On Shimokobe’s role, see also Ōta Masahide, Okinawa no ketsudan, pp. 239-40.
fund” for Okinawa, and establish a new top-level organization to discuss issues relating to the US military presence in Okinawa and economic development, to be entitled the “Okinawa Policy Council.” The prime minister would visit Okinawa in the next few days and present the government’s policies to the Okinawan people. According to this deal Ōta was required to announce his agreement to back down on the second proxy issue within the week. Yoshimoto agreed to explain Ōta’s position to citizen support groups for Ōta.

Yoshimoto later criticized Ōta, forever the deliberative academic, for being inexorably indecisive. Whether seen as obstinately irresolute or prudently guarded, there is no doubt that Ōta was incessantly plagued by the dilemmas of his position. He asked Yoshimoto to seek to delay Hashimoto’s visit to Okinawa for a few more days, yet Yoshimoto argued that this would be impossible. The negotiations had been finalized on the condition that Hashimoto would enter Okinawa on September 17 and that Ōta announce his decision to comply with the leasing process before this, that is within the week. Yoshimoto implored to Ōta to finalize his resolve on the deal.

Only hours later, Ōta met with the prime minister. As planned, after the meeting, Hashimoto announced in a cabinet resolution his will to “take with utmost seriousness the Okinawan people’s wish for a realignment and decrease in the US military presence and for the revision of SOFA, as was displayed in the recent prefectural plebiscite.”

Three days following, from the early morning hours of September 13, anti-war landowners and their supporters conducted a protest in front of the Okinawa Prefectural Offices. Media reports had speculated that Ōta would soon back down on the second proxy case, and the landowners sought in some way to prevent this scenario. At around noon, Ōta finally agreed to meet with the protesters. Several representatives from each

100 Interview with author (25 May 2001).
group, including activist Chibana Shōichi, whose land within the Sobe military communications site was still occupied unlawfully, crowded into the governor’s office. They reiterated their support for Ōta’s stance against the leases, and implored the governor to continue the “struggle of the people of Okinawa” against the central government and the US military presence in accordance with the results of the “historical” prefectural referendum. Ōta reiterated his strong will to resolve the base issue, yet stressed the fact that unfortunately Okinawa did not enjoy an equal voice within US-Japan relations. Forced to abide by the law of Japan, and facing unanimous defeat in the courts, Ōta lamented: “There exists real limitations as to what one local government can do using administrative methods [to resist the policies of the central government].”

Compensation Politics and Consent

On the afternoon of the same day, Ōta officially announced his decision to comply with the land expropriation process. This moment marked the end of almost a year of political and legal contest between the prefectural and national government on a scale unprecedented in postwar Japan. In a press conference following his announcement, Ōta confessed that this decision was the most difficult he had had to make during his entire time in office. He continued: “Having to decide as a part of my duties in office to comply with procedures for leasing land which both landowners themselves and the municipalities to which they belong have refused to undertake is truly difficult and painful.” As Ōta explained it: “This decision essentially conflicts with the beliefs which I have maintained. Yet I came to the conclusion that to the extent that

102 The entire conversation between the two sides is transcribed in “‘Kōkoku jūran daikō hantai: Ōta Kenchijī to no kaikenroku,” (Urasoe: Hansen jinushi-kai, hito-tsubo hansen jinushi-kai, 1996).
I hold responsibilities as administrative head of the prefecture, I felt I must overcome the sense of anguish [which comes from taking this decision].”\(^{103}\)

As reasons for his decision, Ōta cited: his unqualified defeat in the first proxy case; the fact that the US and Japan had shown a “pro-active stance” in response to the base issue through the implementation of various measures including the establishment of SACO; and the additional measures outlined by Hashimoto in the prime minister’s recent cabinet resolution in relation to Okinawa’s base issue and economy.\(^{104}\) Behind these official reasons, as he hinted in his confrontation with anti-war landowners, there also lay at least two other major factors motivating Ōta. The first was the fear that if he did not back down legislative revisions would be made to the Special Measures Law. Such revisions would likely endow the prime minister with the direct authority to intervene in the leasing process and act as proxy without having to resort to legal action. The second was the fear that a prolonged standoff between the government and prefecture might increase tensions between the LDP and SDP in the central government coalition. This would in turn likely prove a negative factor in upcoming Diet elections, and perhaps in the worst case scenario even lead to a breakdown in the current coalition government.

From early in the contest with Okinawa prefecture, conservative and right-wing forces within the government held the belief that legislative measures should be introduced to deprive Ōta, as prefectural governor, of his existing powers to delay the procedures. Such measures could be implemented either by revising the existing Special Measures Law, or drawing up an entirely new law giving the prime minister direct power over the functions currently “delegated” to local authorities. In light of the

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\(^{103}\) Transcript from Press Conference (13 September 1996).

\(^{104}\) Ōta Masahide, “Chiji happyō: kōkoku jūrō no daikō mondai” (13 September 1996). The prefecture also later published an pamphlet outlining reasons for complying with remaining leasing procedures, “Kōkoku jūran daikō ni ojita riyū ni tsuite” (10 November 1996).
upsurge in anti-base sentiment and extensive media publicity over the Okinawa base issue in early 1996, the latter alternative was not actively pursued. Yet particularly after the lease expired on Chibana's land on 1 April 1996, influential LDP members and Defence Agency Director-General Usui Hideo explicitly advocated the need to consider legislative revision.105

This opinion further gained ground in conservative circles after the Okinawan Land Expropriation Committee refused the DFAA's request for emergency use of Chibana's land on May 11. Hashimoto had overestimated central bureaucratic influence over the committee. Three days later, as a result of a provisional ruling in the Naha District Court, Chibana was given temporary access to his land. On May 14, Chibana's family and friends danced inside the base's large wire fence to the sound of the Okinawan sanshin. This symbolic picture of defiance against the US and Japan was publicized nationwide. Meanwhile, on the same day Hashimoto and Chief Cabinet Secretary Kajiyama Seiroku declared that the government was considering legislative revisions to the Special Measures Law. The government clearly sought through such statements to intimidate the Ōta administration into negotiations.

By mid-1996, it was also becoming more and more likely that the remaining land in question would also come under unlawful occupation when the leases expired in May 1997, affecting land owned by close to 3,000 people. Ōta refused Hashimoto's requests to place pressure on the Okinawan Land Expropriation Committee to speed up the hearing process, on the grounds that it would undermine the committee's independence.106 Fearing the revision of legislation, and the predicted severe impact this legislation would have on SDP-LDP relations on the eve of general elections, however,

106 Funabashi, Alliance Adrift, pp. 313-4.
the prefectural administration and in particular Yoshimoto did begin exploring the possibility of reaching a deal with the central government on the second proxy case.

Ōta lamented that as a minority within Japan Okinawans had virtually no power within the national diet to prevent the passage of legislation which increased the prime minister’s powers over the expropriation process. Ōta particularly expressed the fear that, if the Hashimoto cabinet fell and a coalition government between conservative and right-wing factions emerged, the prefecture would only be placed in a worse negotiating position than before. On the one hand, the SDP’s compromises over policy undermined their own dwindling support base. Yet on the other the presence of the SDP within the government coalition also provided, or so Ōta hoped, a line of defence against more hard-line policies on Okinawa and the further expansion of Japan’s defence role.

Economic issues were also a central underlying factor working to induce the Ōta administration’s turnaround in policy on the second proxy case. Central government compensation policies in particular held far-reaching implications for the Ōta administration and Okinawan politics as a whole. As defined by Aurelia George Mulgan, compensation politics is “a government strategy for inducing specific communities, groups and individuals to accept large-scale public works with potentially deleterious social and environmental consequences.” Along with utilizing the “sticks” of lawsuits and special legislation, the “carrot” of economic incentives has formed an essential component of the Japanese government’s strategy over the Okinawan base issue. Compensation politics “exploits the economic weakness and subsidy dependence of Okinawa, because financial stimulus and government handouts have become such a necessary prop to the prefectural economy.” Compensation strategies may act as a

107 As he argues for example to anti-war landowners on the morning of 13 September, as transcribed within in “Kokoku jūran daikō hantai: Ōta Kenchiji to no kaikenroku.”
form of "soft coercion" in order to obtain agreement with government objectives. They
carry the advantage of not appearing as "patently authoritarian" as legal compulsion,
and thus not further inciting opposition to government policy. Yet ultimately they have
a similar effect, with the additional side-effect of increasing apathy and cynicism
towards political processes.

Around the crucial period of August-September 1996, during which the
Supreme Court ruled against Ōta and the prefectural plebiscite was held, the
government introduced a series of additional economic compensation packages for
Okinawa. Firstly, on August 6, Cabinet Secretary Kajiyama announced the
establishment of an Informal Council on Okinawa Municipalities Hosting US Bases.
This was to be an "advisory body" (shi teki shimon kikan) to the prime minister. The
idea for the advisory body was said to have been first proposed by Okamoto Yukio, a
former MOFA official who held his own consultancy on US-Japan affairs and who
would months later (November 1996) be appointed as "special advisor" to Hashimoto
on Okinawan affairs. The advisory body was to be headed by Keio University professor
and well-known economist Shimada Haruo, and came to be known as Shimada’s Group
or Shimadakon, in reference to Shimada’s leading role. Under the Shimadakon proposal,
suggestions from municipalities on desired economic "projects" were made to the
Shimada Group’s Principal Council (yūshokusha kondankai). This council was made up
of five members from Okinawa and six from Tokyo, including Shimada and Okamoto.
Inamine Keiichi, president of Okinawa’s leading petroleum company and later
victorious candidate over Ōta in the gubernatorial elections of 1998, was appointed vice
president of the group. Okinawan economist and acting auditor of the Bank of Ryukyus,
Makino Hirotaka, who later become Okinawan Deputy-Governor under Inamine’s
administration, was also a member. Other Okinawan members included Okinawa Rengō
head and organizer of the prefectural plebiscite, Toguchi Masahiro, and the presidents
of Okinawa’s two leading newspapers.
The group's role was to advise the cabinet on which economic stimulus projects to implement. All projects were funded directly by the central government, and the group was given a budget of one hundred billion yen over a seven year period. \(^{109}\) In its policy statement, Shimadakon argued that: "Taking account of the fact that the burden [of US bases] is concentrated in Okinawa and in particular in those municipalities which host bases, special consideration should be given by the government in these areas." \(^{110}\) In the words of Shimada, the group was set up in the attempt to "ease" the "insularity" (heisokukan) of the residents of these municipalities and work to obtain "people's trust" in order "ensure security for the twenty-first century." This was to be done by "supporting autonomous economic development from the perspective of the residents" of these municipalities. \(^{111}\)

In short, "improvement" of the base problem and Okinawa's unique opportunity for "autonomous" economic development may be interpreted in this context as a cash-for-base deal. Okamoto was most explicit in divulging the cash-for-base logic at the foundation of government policy: "Up to now, Okinawan economic development has largely been implemented through the Okinawa Development Agency. Security Policies have been the domain of MOFA, the JDA and the DFAA. There has been no exchange linking these two together. Politics is where these links can be made. Politics must provide the political balance between disproportionate burdens and special measures..." \(^{112}\)

Financial aid has been employed in Okinawa since US occupation as a means to placate opposition to US military policy and the forced expropriation of private land for

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\(^{109}\) For various testimonies on the making of Shimadakon see Ota Masahide, Okinawa no ketsudan. From 1997-2000, 11 of the 35 proposed Shimadakon projects were completed. The peak for the implementation and completion of further projects was predicted to be from 2000-2001 (OT (1 June 2000), p. 1).


\(^{112}\) Okamoto Yukio, "'Okinawa mondai' wa kō kaketsu seyo," Tōyō Keizai (November 1996), pp. 96-103.
military use. Yet Shimadakon was unprecedented in at least two ways. Firstly, it brought together the Prime Minister’s aides, key members of Okinawa’s business community, and the heads of local municipalities that host US military bases within Okinawa under one informal umbrella organization. Secondly, although informal and thus politically unaccountable, Shimadakon had the power to approve large-scale public projects financed directly and in full by the national government. As the group’s principal report boasts, this marked a first for central government policy towards local municipalities.

As Shimada himself recounts, following the rape incident in Okinawa in September 1995, the Japanese government responded to the Okinawa base issue: 1) on the bilateral front through the establishment of SACO; 2) on the national domestic front through the establishment of the Okinawa Policy Council (see below); and 3) on the local front through Shimadakon. Shimadakon was the national government’s attempt to “ease” (kanwa) anti-base sentiment by deepening the connection between the US military presence and economic stimulus packages at the most local level. In strengthening links between local politicians, business interests, and national

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113 Of course, in other regions within Japan too, compensation politics has long been a government strategy for inducing specific communities to accept large-scale public works projects with potentially deleterious and undesirable consequences, such as in the case of nuclear power plants. This is also pointed out by Aurelia George Mulgan in “Managing the US Base Issue in Okinawa: A Test for Japanese Democracy,” pp. 166-7.

114 A report of the Shimadakon’s Principal Council reads: “The promotion of such projects through direct funding from the government (kuni) is a first not only for Okinawa but for any local municipality in Japan” (Principal Council Report on the Implementation of the Proposal of the Discussion Group in relation to Municipalities Host to US Bases in Okinawa, 13 May 2000). Cited in Miyagi Yasuhiro, “Tankō no kanaria no utagoe: ‘Shimada kondankai’ jigyō hihan,” Kenchiku to machizukuri, no. 282, (11 November 2000), 40. Shimadakon thus had parallels with the system of local financial subsidies promoted by the US High Commissioner under occupation, the difference being this system had now become a part of Japanese government domestic policy.

115 Shimada himself uses this expression, see his testimony in Ota Masahide Okinawa no ketsudan, p. 249 and Shimada Haruo, “Okinawa: kusa no ne no koe o kike,” pp. 64-5.
government funding, it also worked to further compromise local autonomy and
democratic processes.

The second set of compensation measures implemented by the central
government on the eve of the plebiscite were announced on 24 August 1996 by a
government delegation to Okinawa lead by LDP Secretary-General Katō Kōichi. In a
meeting with Yoshimoto, Ōta, and other prefectural officials, the government
degregation, which also included LDP heavy-weights Nonaka Hiromu and Suzuki
Muneo, outlined a two-part package to help boost Okinawa’s flailing economy. The
package included the promise to provide government support in the effort to effect a
3000 yen decrease each way on airfares between Okinawa and mainland Japan, and
fund an investigation into ways to revitalize Naha’s largely defunct free trade zone.116
Katō refrained from directly linking the package to the base issue. Yet in light of the
visit’s timing, the measures offered, and the close affiliation between its highly
influential bearers and the prime minister’s office, the package can be interpreted as part
of Hashimoto’s policy of “soft diplomacy” towards Ōta.117

The third set of compensatory measures announced around this time were those
outlined by Hashimoto in the cabinet resolution of September 10 and included the
formation of the Okinawa Policy Council. The council was made up of national cabinet
members and prefectural heads and was chaired by the Chief Cabinet secretary.
According to a JDA document, the aim of the council was to “see to it that the quality-
of-life in Okinawa prefecture will be improved under the current situation of USFJ
facilities and areas, and that Okinawa prefecture will be rebuilt as a region contributing
to Japan’s socio-economic development.”118 It became a core instrument by which the

government could secure a political framework that, as Okamoto envisaged, would directly link Okinawan economic development with the bases.

Fissure

As Ōta’s recourse to legal and administration channels was severely limited by the Supreme Court ruling of August 1996, he was left with a series of limited options. These options differed in the level of compromise or conflict with the central government which they signified. They included the option of either taking the deal which Yoshimoto had secured with Hashimoto, of at least waiting until the High Court ruled on the second proxy case, or of resigning from office in protest and taking the issue once again directly to the Okinawan people by calling another election. In the context of increasing divisions within Okinawa, the relatively low voter turnout in the prefectural plebiscite, contradictions emerging from Okinawa’s economic weaknesses and its entrenched system of public works-centred development, prolonged recession and increased unemployment rates (double the national average and the worst in Japan),¹¹⁹ and the quagmire of Japan’s political system as a whole, Ōta sought the former of these alternatives, and took the deal arranged with Hashimoto.

Later Ōta recounted that he did consider resigning from office, but came to the conclusion that this would not guarantee a more comprehensive solution to the base issue. He also recounted that he considered at least continuing his refusal to comply with the land expropriation process until the final judgement on the second proxy case had been brought down. Yet with virtually no hope of a legal victory, upcoming Diet elections, and the looming possibility that revisions would be made to the Special Land Law, Ōta determined that his administration’s position would ultimately be worse

¹¹⁹ At this time, the unemployment rate of Okinawa was approx. 7.2%, with youth unemployment approx. double this figure (As recounted by Ōta in Heiwa no ishiji).
off.\textsuperscript{120} Given the speed and force with which the national government was able to subsequently implement extensive legislative revisions to land expropriation measures, it is certainly doubtful Ōta could have played the “trump card” of refusing to comply with proxy functions for much longer.\textsuperscript{121}

For many of those who most avidly supported Ōta’s anti-base stance and devoted extensive energies towards promoting the prefectural plebiscite, however, Ōta’s recant directly in its wake amounted to a painful betrayal. It is certain that the results of the prefectural plebiscite—and in particular the voter turnout, which was lower than the last two prefecture-wide elections—reflected the deep divisions within Okinawan society and politics.\textsuperscript{122} It is also certain that these divisions were at least in part the direct consequence of fifty years of US military presence and corresponding multiple systems of dependence. Yet the prefectural plebiscite still confirmed that a majority of Okinawans desired military base reduction. It also provided a forum for direct citizen participation in local political processes on an unprecedented scale. In this sense, Egami Takayoshi observes: “By using the prefectural plebiscite as a tool for political manoeuvring...in what strongly appeared as underhand negotiations with the central government, ultimately the prefectural heads, who should have been sufficiently aware of the significance of the referendum for local government, undermined the will of the people of Okinawa and the original force and meaning of the plebiscite....This was the greatest pity of all.”\textsuperscript{123}

As survivor of the war, historian, public figure, long-time critic of the role imposed upon Okinawa in postwar US-Japan relations, and defiant governor, Ōta’s multi-faceted, charismatic, and focal presence undoubtedly provided a centrifugal force

\textsuperscript{120} As recounted in Ōta Masahide, \textit{Okinawa no Ishiji}, pp. 204-12.
\textsuperscript{121} Also pointed out by Kanno Toshio, “Okinawa, jichi moderu no sentaku,” pp. 266-7.
\textsuperscript{122} The voter turnout for the prefectural assembly elections of June 1995 was 66.4%, and for the 1994 gubernatorial elections was 62.5%.
\textsuperscript{123} Egami Takayoshi, “Okinawa no ken-min tōhyō,” p. 16.
and inspirational symbol galvanizing the largest citizen movement in Okinawa since Japanese reversion. It is precisely for this reason that the widespread frustration, cynicism, and despair which followed his decision to back down on the second proxy function was so intense. Ōta, still no doubt himself anguished over making a decision which he admitted ran against his own principles, also avoided appearing in front of citizen groups to explain his position. As had been earlier agreed, it was Yoshimoto who collected opinions from various citizen and business groups within Okinawa on the desired direction of prefectural policy and set about explaining the prefecture's stance to Ōta's support network. The day Ōta announced his intention to back down on the second High Court case, the University Association issued a declaration in protest. In a gathering a week later, several participants were fiercely critical of Ōta. Grasping the microphone, others burst into tears the moment they tried to gather their thoughts into words.124

On October 26, Ōta did agree to meet with a group of university and high school students protesting against his decision to back down on the second proxy case. On the eve of the prefectural plebiscite, an identical mock referendum had been carried out in all public high schools across Okinawa. Several students who had played a central role in organizing these mock elections formed a protest group following Ōta's announcement of September 13, entitled "'What was the Prefectural Plebiscite Anyway?' Committee." Their meeting with the governor was originally scheduled to last only twenty minutes, yet it went for over an hour. In the transcript of the intense debate which ensued, it almost reads as if Ōta, in actively encouraging and even provoking argument, was endeavouring to confront his own ulterior conscience. One high school student questioned the governor: "The reason there are military bases in

124 Okinawa kara heiwa o tsukuru shimin, daigakunin no kai (ed.) Daiiri shomei kyohi saiban: tomo ni kangae, kōdō shita kiroku, op cit.. It was also reported that the number of letters of support arriving at the governor's office each day dropped dramatically (Asahi Shinbun (12 November 1996)).
Okinawa is because of the US-Japan Security Treaty. But do you think the US bases protect the people of Okinawa?” Ōta replied: “No, I don’t.” The student continued: “Then, if we can take care of ourselves, I think we should be able to get rid of the bases!” Ōta bitterly answered: “You say to get rid of them, but if you declare ‘leave!’ and they don’t go, then what do you do? Tell me, how do you get them out?”

Nothing could be resolved, Ōta came to argue, without sitting at the negotiating table together with Hashimoto. He later contended: “I came to the difficult realization that it was necessary to seek a solution to the base issue in a different form to political groups and citizen activists ....” Ōta continued to identify himself with the anti-base pro-autonomy cause, while differentiating the means he used—and advocating compromise over conflict. Yet in stressing the weight of his legal duty as the “administrative head” (gyōsei no chō) of the prefecture to abide by the Supreme Court judgement, Ōta affirmed to the very tendency to prioritise bureaucratic process over democratic principle to which he had mounted such a forceful challenge.

As Ōta distanced himself from anti-base citizen support networks a schism between them and his administration also inevitably emerged. Hashimoto and his inner circle of influential brokers were in turn able to use and exacerbate these divisions to their advantage while further securing the compensation system which had been methodically laid down in the preceding months. The deal between Ōta and Hashimoto strengthened linkages between the economic and the military presence, increasing Okinawa’s “economy” versus the “bases” predicament, leading to further local divisions, and ultimately undermining Okinawa’s progressive political support base from within. From a strengthened position, Hashimoto’s cabinet was also able to enact

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125 Transcript of meeting between members of “‘What Was the Meaning of the Plebsicite Anyway?’ Committee” (ken min tōhyō tte nan datta baa jikōinkai) and Governor Ōta (8 November 1996).

the very legislative revisions which Ōta had sought to prevent with less fear of the political ramifications.

Ōta strongly refuted accusations that in taking the deal he had used the proxy issue as a bargaining chip in return for financial subsidies. Certainly, the Ōta administration sought to incorporate central government-initiated economic subsidy plans within an agenda which aimed to achieve economic autonomy and base withdrawal. Days before Katō’s delegation to Okinawa, Yoshimoto submitted a series of requests to Hashimoto calling for the implementation of special measures to ease trading and custom regulations in Okinawa as conceived within the prefectural administration’s “Cosmopolitan City Formation Concept” (kokusai toshi keisei kōsō). This concept sought to utilize Okinawa’s central location within the Asia-Pacific region to promote sustainable development and Okinawan economic independence. The Ōta administration sought to implement this concept according to the three principle tenets of “peace, coexistence, and autonomy,” and in conjunction with the “action program” on the reduction and withdrawal of US bases. The concept was an attempt, in other words, to break out of a cycle of economic dependence by drawing up a blueprint for an economically autonomous Okinawa—seen as in turn an essential condition for the realization of base reduction and withdrawal.¹²⁷

Yet for Hashimoto’s influential circle of power brokers, economic subsidies held the very different aim of securing Okinawan cooperation with national policy. For the central government, concurrence with the implementation of SACO and the redefinition of the US-Japan security treaty was an essential proviso of new economic stimulus measures towards Okinawa.¹²⁸ As negotiations between the government and prefecture progressed without this fundamental difference being addressed, underlying

¹²⁷ “Kisei kanwa nado sangyō shinkō tokubetsu sochi ni kansuru yōbōsho,” (Okinawa Prefecture, 19 August 1996).
¹²⁸ As also noted by Kamo Toshio, “Okinawa, jichi moderu no sentaku,” p. 267.
contradictions intensified and ultimately came to a head over the Futenma relocation issue.

Negotiating Base Politics and the Futenma Relocation Issue

Emergence of the Futenma Relocation Issue

When they announced the return of Futenma on 12 April 1996, Hashimoto and Mondale also listed three conditions for return: the consolidation of part of the functions of the marine airbase facilities into nearby Kadena Airbase; the construction of a new heliport to equip the marine helicopter corps within Kadena; and the relocation of refuelling facilities to Iwakuni in return for transferring Iwakuni-based Harrier aircraft back to the US.\(^{129}\) This agreement was included within the SACO interim report, announced three days later.

Ota appraised the agreement to return Futenma as a “step in the right direction” towards base reduction and the building of a “bright future” for Okinawa in the twentieth century.\(^{130}\) On the disclosure of SACO’s interim report, Ota welcomed the fact that progress was being made towards base reduction and expressed gratitude towards the agreement to cease live munitions training exercises across the prefecture’s Highway 104, but was also critical of the fact that almost all of the sites marked for return included the condition that existing facilities be transferred to other sites within the prefecture. Without detailed knowledge of the options available on relocation, Ota stopped short of stating that he would refuse to consent to the agreement of Futenma’s

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\(^{130}\) Directly after Hashimoto and Mondale’s announcement, Ota held his own press conference in Naha. Ota described how he had received a telephone call from Hashimoto earlier in the evening explaining that an agreement to return Futenma in its entirety within five to seven years had been reached only hours before. As Ota explained it, he had thanked both the prime minister and the ambassador on the phone for their efforts, and stressed the need for the government’s cooperation in working to provide adequate compensation to landowners, and in implementing an agreed plan on the land use following return (Transcript of Press Conference (12 April 1996)).
return if it included the condition of relocation of functions within Okinawa prefecture. He reasoned to the press: “At a point when two separate countries are negotiating and determining policy completely regardless of what we ourselves think or perceive, can we afford to take a stance which will take us back to the question, ‘well then, should Futenma be left as it is?’”

In short, from the outset Ōta oscillated over how to respond to the SACO agreement. As by far the largest and most controversial of the facilities marked for transferral by the US and Japanese governments, this was especially the case for Futenma. On the one hand he refrained from overtly denouncing the SACO process out of fear that any possible gains would be lost before they were ever made. On the other, there was a real possibility that the relocation of functions would ultimately only prolong the US military presence. Fierce opposition was also certain to emerge in the areas designated as alternative sites for facilities marked for transferral within the small and densely populated prefecture. By not initially taking a strong stance against relocation, Ōta further alienated anti-base groups, leading to increased fragmentation within his support base.

Local municipalities cited as possible alternative sites for the Futenma heliport quickly mobilized in opposition. Kadena, Chatan, and Yomitan local assemblies all unanimously passed resolutions against Futenma relocation within a month of the SACO interim report. Yoshimoto worked behind the scenes in an effort to obtain a consensus on the consolidation of Futenma’s functions within Kadena Air Station, as the most workable and least environmentally damaging alternative. Local residents in Kadena, already suffering severe noise pollution from Kadena Air Station, fiercely

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121 Transcript of Press Conference (15 April 1996).
122 For an outline of these events see Shimin Tōhyō Hōkokushū (ed.) Nago shimin moeyu (Nago, Okinawa: Heri kichi hantaikyō, 1999).
123 As recounted in Funabashi, Alliance Adrift, especially pp. 177-96.
opposed this plan. Heavyweights from within the US Marines and the Air Force also strongly opposed this proposal. In a clear rejection of the Kadena Airfield consolidation proposal, at the end of July the US announced three other possible alternative areas for the relocation of Futenma.\textsuperscript{134} However local municipalities again expressed fierce opposition. In the midst of this, Hashimoto unexpectedly announced during his pre-election visit to the islands on September 17 a proposal to build a mobile offshore heliport off the coast of northern Okinawa.

The decision-making process which led to the adoption of the mobile “offshore heliport” proposal is unclear. While Hashimoto was the first to publicly announce the offshore proposal as an option, it is thought that it was originally conceived by the US side. It also only recently (at least from April 2000) emerged that a US military plan to build an offshore base off the coast of Camp Schwab has existed since 1965. This, combined with the speediness of negotiations, has lead to allegations from within Okinawa that the deal over Futenma was in fact no more than an effort to replace the outdated and inconveniently located Futenma Airbase with new facilities better equipped to house controversial MV-22 Osprey tilt-wing aircraft.\textsuperscript{135} In any case, just over two months later, the SACO Final Report of 2 December 1996 advocated the construction of a “sea-based facility” (SBF) off the eastern coast of Okinawa to “absorb most of the helicopter operational functions of Futenma Air Station.”\textsuperscript{136} The report did

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\textsuperscript{134} Kadena Munitions Storage Area, Camp Hansen, or Camp Schwab. 83% of Kadena Town was taken up by US base facilities. See also Yoichi Funabashi, ibid..
\textsuperscript{135} See Makishi Yoshikazu, “Naze ka keita kaigai isetsu keikaku,” Shūkan Kinrōbi (7 April 2000), pp. 16-19; Makishi Yoshikazu et al (eds.) Okinawa wa mō damasaranai (Tokyo: Kōbunken, 2001). Also reported in Asahi Shimbun (21 May 2002). Ota also later conjectures on the possibility that US military officials sought to redirect anti-base sentiment in order to realise this 1960s scheme in Okinawa, kichi naki shima e no dōkyō, p. 97.
\textsuperscript{136} “The SACO Final Report On Futenma Air Station” (an integral part of the SACO Final Report) (Tokyo, Japan: 2 December 1996). The report detailed: “This facility will be approximately 1500 meters long, and will support the majority of Futenma Air Station’s flying operations, including an Instrument Flight Rules (IFR)-capable runway (approximately 1300 meters long), direct air operations support, and indirect support infrastructure ....” The requirements of the base are further specified in “SBF Sea Based
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not specify a proposed alternative area within the eastern coast region for fear of further inciting local opposition. Yet from documents leaked to Okinawan press, it was clear that the US and Japanese governments had reached an agreement amongst themselves that the coast off Camp Schwab be designated the relocation site.\textsuperscript{137}

Residents, politicians, and local media within Nago, the municipality host to Camp Schwab, and throughout Okinawa strongly criticised SACO's final report and the fact that Okinawa was excluded from the entire SACO process. On the eve of the SACO report release, over 2,000 people attended a protest in Nago against relocating the Futenma heliport within the municipality. The day after the report's release, a local newspaper editorial declared: “The US and Japanese governments should appreciate the sincere desire of the people of Okinawa that alternative sites outside the prefecture be considered, rather than decide on Camp Schwab from the very outset. We have been let down by the Final Report of SACO. I protest the way in which the Okinawan people’s call for base consolidation and reduction has been brushed aside. This is no doubt the sentiment of the majority of people within the islands.”\textsuperscript{138} On December 21 approximately 22,000 people gathered in Ginowan in protest against SACO and in opposition to the relocation of facilities within Okinawa.\textsuperscript{139}

However, in contrast to the mass people’s rally at Ginowan just over a year previously, where his emotional speech had been met with an outburst of applause, Ōta did not attend the anti-SACO protest. He did stress the fact that “strong local opposition” existed against the relocation of facilities within Okinawa during comments to the press on the SACO Final Report.\textsuperscript{140} Yet he avoided taking a clear stance on the

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\textsuperscript{137} Facility Functional Analysis and Concept of Operations MCAS Futenma Relocation” (3 September 1997), \textit{F\textsc{4}CD} Vol. 1 Executive Report, US Department of Defense.

\textsuperscript{138} ‘\textsc{RS}’ (1 December 1996).

\textsuperscript{139} ‘\textsc{OT}’ (3 December 1996).

\textsuperscript{140} ‘\textsc{OT}’ (22 December 1996).
Futenma relocation issue, maintaining the position that at this stage it was a question which should be deliberated between the national government and the local municipality in question.  

From the onset of the contest over Futenma relocation, prefectural heads were acutely wary of the fact that the dispute held the potential to topple the entire administration. If Ōta rejected relocation within Okinawa outright, his administration would be forced to face the political implications of both a standstill on the agreement to return Futenma, and a breakdown in negotiations with Hashimoto over economic measures. The national government did not hesitate to make either of these threats. One figure close to the prime minister was reported as declaring that: “Without the return of Futenma, realization of Cosmopolitan City Concept and economic stimulus policies will also reach an impasse.” On the one hand claiming that the government would “not go above the heads of local residents,” Hashimoto himself also stated; “I just want to make it clear that if a relocation site cannot be found, then Futenma cannot be returned.”

Ōta attempted to avoid mounting pressure by abstaining from playing a role within negotiations. Yet the contest over the Futenma issue continued to brew. Without prefectural support, local politicians were even further susceptible to government pressure, and divisions within Nago and across Okinawa deepened. Influential local construction lobby groups galvanized in support for the base construction, and local union, citizen, and women’s movements began to mobilize in opposition. As community divisions grew, local politicians, media, and interest groups on both sides pressed the prefecture to clarify its position. While the US and Japanese governments

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141 Ibid. See also OT (3 December 1996).
142 As one top prefectural official was cited as stating: “If the prefecture rushes on this issue...it will be the end of the governor’s political career” (RS (1 December 1996).
143 RS (22 January 1997).
144 On these movements see especially Shimin Tōhyō Hōkokushū (ed.) Nago shimin moeyu.
145 The RS was critical of the prefecture’s stance for example in an editorial on 22 January 1997, calling for the prefectural administration to “sit down at the negotiating table” together with the national
maintained their stance that the SACO proposals provided a workable resolution to the Okinawa base issue, in Okinawa the release of the SACO Final Report only marked the beginning of a new protracted struggle. As Ōta himself reiterated at an end-of-year press conference, while the tumultuous year of 1996 had come to a close, the Okinawa base issue was “far from over.”

_Same Bed, Different Dreams: Negotiating Futenma, Negotiating Japan_

In playing both sides of the court by remaining obstinately removed from the Futenma issue, Ōta attempted to avoid being pressured by the national government into choosing between “no bases” and the “economy” while at the same time he promoted the Cosmopolitan City Concept. In advocating “economic autonomy” (_keizai no jiritsuka_), Ōta in particular sought to lessen Okinawa’s economic dependence on both the bases and national government funding. As Ōta outlined in an interview with economist Nishikawa Jun, from the time of reversion public expenditure ratios in Okinawa ranged between 30% and 40% of total expenditure, twice the national average. Okinawa continued to be highly dependent on central funds, hold the lowest average income of all prefectures, and have a weak manufacturing base (6% of output, in comparison to the national average of 24%). Both Yoshimoto and Ōta took the view that under these conditions it was essential to promote autonomy in order to be able to break away from the structures of dependence which prevented Okinawan politicians from withstanding pressure from Tokyo and resolve the base issue. 

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146 As noted in OT (7 December 1996).
147 OT (29 December 1996).
149 As Yoshimoto outlines, one of the major objectives of the Okinawa Development Plans was “to facilitate economic independence: it was assumed that if the basic foundation was provided, the economy would gradually become independent over time. But as we know, this scenario has not come to pass in Okinawa. The reasons for this failure are related to the inability of the Okinawan economy to switch from a base-dependent economy: the continued presence of the bases prevents this” (Interview with Hoshino, 285)
Economic issues were never Ōta’s strong point, and the Cosmopolitan City Concept was seen as largely the initiative of Yoshimoto. An outline of this concept was completed in November 1995, and in April 1997 a deliberative committee was established to make recommendations to the prefecture. Based on the results of these recommendations, a draft of the “Policy on the Stimulation of New Industry Towards the Formation of a Cosmopolitan City” was outlined by the prefecture in November of the same year. The concept sought to utilize Okinawa’s geopolitical position to promote “international peace through exchange,” “technological cooperation,” and an “economic and cultural network within the Asia-Pacific region.” It called for policies including the relaxing of stringent tariff, trade, and visa regulations according to a “one country two systems” principle. The administration’s vision of a new regional economic, cultural, and political role for Okinawa within the East Asian region strongly drew upon historical ideals of Ryukyu as a peaceful independent kingdom. Through relativising mainland Japan, Ōta’s administration endeavoured to re-conceive of Okinawa’s location not as a periphery of Japan but as the centre of an Asia-Pacific network of relations. In the words of Yoshimoto: “If we consider...Okinawa as the centre, then we should interact with Japan as a country in the same manner as we do the other countries on our doorstep. I think this approach makes the most sense given the realities of our post-cold war world.”

It is certainly debatable as to whether trade liberalization should be seen as the key to promoting an autonomous sustainable economy, and the Cosmopolitan City

Shinyasu, available at http://gate.nira.go.jp/publ/review/97spring/okinawa.html). As Ōta lamented, the base issue “is intimately and complexly linked to the institutionalisation of base-related income within the financial budget of local municipalities as well as to the question of employment” (Transcript of Press Conference (2 December 1996)).

150 “Kokusai toshi keisei ni muketa aratana sangyō shinkōsaku” (draft) (Okinawa Prefecture: November 1997). See also a series of interviews with Yoshimoto “Okinawa no kaizu”, OT (18, 19, and 20 June 2002).

151 Interview with Hoshino Shinyasu, available at http://gate.nira.go.jp/publ/review/97spring/okinawa.html
Concept was the subject of extensive discussion and criticism within Okinawa. Economist Miyamoto Ken’ichi, a long-time supporter of Ōta, raised the point that the implementation of an extensive free trade zone system in Okinawa threatened to merely replace a public works-dependent economy with a multinational enterprise-dependent economy.¹⁵² Agricultural industry and Communist Party representatives were also critical of extensive deregulation and the predicted effect it would have on local industry.¹⁵³ These criticisms highlighted the problems involved in attempting to conceive of economic autonomy and sustainable development within the framework of free-market neo-liberalism.¹⁵⁴

Yet in any case, and regardless of these large and intractable economic issues, the most immediate obstacle facing the attempt to negotiate an increase in local economic autonomy for Okinawa lay in the discrepancy between prefectural and national government agendas over the bases. The essential differences between the Ōta and Hashimoto agendas were highlighted in clashes over revision of the Special Measures Law in April 1997, and came to a head in the wake of the Nago City plebiscite on Futenma relocation in December of the same year.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Miyamoto “Okinawa no iiji kanō na hatten no tame ni” in Miyamoto and Sasaki (eds.) Okinawa: 21 seki e no chosen, pp. 20-4.
¹⁵³ In an explanatory meeting on the issue with prefectural heads, Communist Party Representative Uehara Kameichirō questioned: “The easing of regulations for whose benefit? If an easing in regulations is promoted, it will result in increases in foreign competition, but is that beneficial to Okinawa?” (“Kyōsantō setsuneikai (12 August 1997)). Economist Kurima Yasuo also criticised: “Ultimately it is most likely impossible to fight against the global tendency towards ‘liberalization.’ But this is the ‘logic of the fittest,’ and should not be voluntarily promoted by the ‘weak’ such as Okinawa” (OT (5 August 1997)).
¹⁵⁵ From an early stage Okinawan critic Arasaki Moriteru was highly sceptical of the prefecture’s attempts to play the Futenma card to enact economic measures to increase autonomy, stating: “The prefectural government seeks financial subsidy and system reform (a one country two systems-style easing of trade regulations) in the attempt to envisage a blueprint for economic development in a base-free Okinawa. The
From the beginning of 1997, with the expiry of over 3,000 leases looming on May 15, the LDP began taking concrete moves to revise the controversial Special Measures Law. In principle SDP members of the coalition were strongly against the passing of any revisions to the law. Yet initially they also sought the possibility of reaching a deal with the LDP on supporting legislative revisions in exchange for the passing of a resolution which called for a reduction in US Marine presence in Japan, and particularly Okinawa.\(^{156}\) As Ōta later outlined, the US Marine Corps comprise the majority of the US military presence within Okinawa—75% of the total land area utilized by the US military, and 17,000 or 60% of the total 28,000 military personnel stationed on the islands.\(^{157}\) Calls to decrease the number of US Marines in particular were repeatedly made from within the anti-base movement, and became a major demand of the anti-SACO protest of December 1996.\(^{158}\) From the beginning of 1997, Ōta pushed the government and in particular Okamoto to work towards negotiating a reduction in the US Marine presence in Okinawa.\(^{159}\) He again strongly appealed for a reduction in the Marine presence after an article in the *Washington Times* in February divulged that in 1995 the US forces had fired approximately 1500 depleted uranium bullets into the ocean surrounding Okinawa, close to Ōta’s birthplace, Kume Island.\(^{160}\)

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\(^{156}\) On negotiations between the SDP and LDP on the issue of the revision of the Special Measures Law see Fukushima Yoshikazu, “Beigun yochi tokubetsu sochihō keisei to shakaiminshu.”


\(^{158}\) *OT* (22 December 1996).

\(^{159}\) *OT* (9 January 1997). It is also thought that Yoshimoto worked behind the scenes in the attempt to negotiate a consensus between SDP and LDP members within the national government coalition on calling for US Marine reduction (As recounted in Yoichi Funabashi, *Alliance Adrift*, especially pp. 328-30. See also Ōta Masahide, *Okinawa no ketsudan*, p. 250).

However Hashimoto strongly resisted calls to request such a reduction. The SDP had experienced a massive defeat in the National Diet elections of October 1996 and, though still a member of the coalition, held even less negotiating power than previously. The LDP displayed little interest in negotiating the issue, and instead sought support for revision of the Special Measures Law from the conservative opposition New Frontier Party, lead by former LDP member Ozawa Ichirō. Hashimoto notified Ōta of his intention to revise the law in a meeting on March 25, and on April 3 Ozawa agreed to cooperate with the LDP to ensure that the legislation was successfully passed before Hashimoto’s scheduled trip to Washington at the end of the month.¹⁶¹ Only a week after the proposed amendments had been submitted for deliberation, they passed through the lower house with an overwhelming majority.¹⁶² The revisions allowed the DFAA temporary use of land occupied by the US military even after leases expired.

The legislation met with fierce criticism throughout Okinawa, particularly from anti-war landowners and their supporters, who denounced the legal amendment as “the second abolishment of Ryukyu Kingdom.” On the submission of the revisions to the Diet, Japan’s Bar Association (Nichi Benren) strongly opposed the legislation in a statement which declared:

> From the period prior to reversion we have held a strong interest in the Okinawa base issue and conducted numerous ground investigations in Okinawa, based upon which we have made recommendations and proposals. The current proposal for the revision [of the Special Measures Law] not only brings about a further infringement on the rights of the residents of Okinawa prefecture, but is against constitutional and democratic principles, and threatens to lead to general despondency with the law.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ OT (4 April 1997). See also Fukushima Yoshikazu, “Beigun yōchi tokubetsu sochihō kaeisei to shakaiminshū.”
¹⁶² Only the SDP and Communist Party opposed the bill.
¹⁶³ Cited in Ōta Masahide, Okinawa: kichi naki shima e no dōhyō, pp. 130-2.
From the onset of the proxy issue in 1995, Ōta fiercely opposed national government attempts to implement such a revision. What he had most feared now eventuated—the LDP and splinter right-wing parties cooperating to pass legislation to limit Okinawan gubernatorial powers over the land expropriation process. Later Ōta cited the swift implementation of this highly controversial legislation as the Japanese government’s worst act of betrayal of Okinawa during his time as governor. On the day of the bill’s passing, Ōta left Japan for his sixth trip as Governor to the US to lobby the Okinawa issue. At the airport he spoke to reporters on hearing of the passing of the amendment: “Firstly, I can only say that I am totally lost for words...I have pleaded over and over to the government not to amend or enact legislation which only applies to Okinawa, and which is likely to be taken as discriminatory.” He continued: “One has to question exactly what Japan thinks Okinawa to be. I hoped that there would be more earnest deliberation over the effects of the bases for the over one million people who live in Okinawa, yet the bill was passed with hardly any discussion at all.”

In the US, Ōta lobbied government and military officials, and presented a speech to a Senate study group on the US-Japan alliance. Yet without the support of the Japanese government, calls for a reduction in the US Marine presence in Okinawa had little political weight. Meanwhile in Nago as the Japanese government sought to progress with plans for the offshore base, local groups opposed to the plan mobilized into an umbrella organization calling for a referendum on the issue. On August 13, the Nago Committee for the Promotion of a Plebiscite submitted a petition to Nago Mayor Higa Tetsuo calling for a referendum on the heliport relocation plans with the signatures of close to half the eligible voters within the municipality. Two months later, the municipal council agreed to endorse the referendum in a revised form.166

164 Interview with author (4 May 2001).
165 Transcript of interview (11 April 1997).
166 The petition included 17,539 signatures, 46% of all eligible voters. Mayor Higa Tetsuya changed the
As divisions between opposing camps in Nago intensified and split the community, Ōta's administration came under increasing criticism within Okinawa for failing to clarify its stance on Futenma relocation plans—in local newspapers, from within Ōta's support base, throughout Nago, and from both sides of the prefectural assembly floor. In October, a majority of Nago assembly members from both the LDP and progressive opposition parties petitioned Ōta to clarify his position. Ōta argued that he could not take a definitive stance on the issue without knowing the specifics of the planned base and the position of the majority of Nago residents on the relocation issue. The extent of division within Okinawa's progressive coalition was revealed when on October 17 the Communist Party, suspicious of the Ōta administration's dealings with the Hashimoto government, rejected Yoshimoto's application for an extension of his term as deputy governor.

The Catch 22 of the Ōta administration's endeavour to avoid confronting the national government over the Futenma relocation issue—in the attempt to negotiate economic reforms in the name of base reduction and withdrawal—became fully concentrated within Nago. With a population of approximately 55,000, this northern municipality is on the periphery of Okinawa's peripheral economy. Even prior to the implementation of the post-SACO economic stimulus packages, the ratio of national funding for public works projects was roughly double that of Naha, and the income from public land utilized by US bases close to half of total municipal revenue. In wording of the proposed plebiscite, however, to include four instead of two alternatives. For a detailed discussion of this issue see also Julia Yonetani, "Playing Base Politics in a Global Strategic Theater: Futenma Relocation, the G-8 Summit, and Okinawa."

167 "Nago shigikai to no mendan ni tsuite" (Transcript of proceedings) (13 October 1997).
168 On this issue see for example Ōta Masahide, Okinawa no ketsudan, pp. 265-6.
169 Kawase Matayoshi, "Kichi shinsetsu to jichitai zaisai," Working Paper Series (Shizuoka, Japan: School of Administration and Informatics, University of Shizuoka, 2002). As Kawase points out, in contrast to Kadena Town, the vast majority of land utilised by the US military in Northern Okinawa is owned by the local council, not private landowners (see also Kawase "Fukki seisaku to chihō jichi" in Miyamoto and Sasaki (eds.) Okinawa: 21 seki e no chōsen, pp. 51-77).
short, the institutionalisation of the bases and public-works projects within local economy and political structures which is typical of municipalities in Okinawa takes concentrated form in Nago.\textsuperscript{170}

While Ōta and Yoshimoto negotiated with Hashimoto over introducing measures which they hoped would lead to increased economic autonomy for Okinawa, the national government worked to win local politicians’ cooperation over Futenma relocation plans by introducing a new set of economic compensation packages for Northern Okinawa. In January 1997 Okamoto visited all municipalities host to US bases in Northern Okinawa and outlined government plans to provide supplementary subsidies for economic stimulus projects. In a meeting with Higa in March Okamoto outlined compensation packages for Nago in the endeavour to attain the Mayor’s cooperation on a feasibility survey of the Camp Schwab area. As the date set for the referendum neared, Okinawa Development Agency Director Suzuki Muneo and top defence agency officials repeatedly made clear that financial compensation would be given only on the proviso that local municipalities cooperated with the central government.\textsuperscript{171} On December 17, on the eve of the referendum, top officials laid down a further set of economic stimulus measures in a meeting with Higa and other local representatives with the proviso that they cooperate with Futenma relocation plans.\textsuperscript{172}

In spite of these moves, and extensive pressure from the LDP, central government agencies,\textsuperscript{173} and local construction lobby groups, in the local plebiscite of

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\item \textsuperscript{170} Under the influence of a strong construction lobby, attracting government funding for large public work schemes has been an integral part of local politics, and Ōta already came into direct conflict with Higa after he relocated the national Arbour Day festival away from Nago for environmental reasons. The municipality planned to cut approximately 10,000 trees in order to build new facilities for the national convention—the purported aim of which was to promote the greening of Japan’s countryside. See for example “Shokujusai Itamani ni naitai: hokubu chiki no hanpantsu hisshih” \textit{(OT} (23 January 1991)). Ōta recounts his side of the conflict in \textit{Okinawa no ketsudan}, op cit., pp. 136-7.
\item \textsuperscript{171} As outlined for example in Shimin Tôhyô Hôkokushû (ed.) \textit{Nago shimin moeyu}, op cit., pp. 224-34.
\item \textsuperscript{172} \textit{OT} (18 December 1997).
\item \textsuperscript{173} In one of the most controversial examples, employees of Japan’s Defence Facilities Administration
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December 21, 54% of those who voted (51% of all eligible voters) opposed the base, regardless of the “economic benefits” it was expected to bring. Three days later, however, after meeting once again with Okamoto in Okinawa, Higa announced to Prime Minister Hashimoto his decision to simultaneously accept the base and resign from office. Pro-base construction and business groups within Okinawa praised Higa’s “heroic” actions. Opposition groups, journalists, and intellectuals fiercely criticized Higa for not respecting the majority will of local residents and the central government for laying insurmountable pressure on the mayor. Criticism was also directed towards Ōta, who had refused to meet with Higa on the morning of December 24, and who now had to face the consequences. Ōta was completely taken by surprise by the mayor’s announcement.174 In a meeting with the prime minister the same night, Hashimoto strongly pressured Ōta to respect the “sacrifice” made by the Nago mayor and also announce his acceptance of the base, yet Ōta continued to refuse to clarify his position on the issue.

The “Take Women’s Voices to Heart Network” (kokoro ni todoke, joseittachi no koe nettowaaku), a prefecture-wide women’s group centered in Nago, played a vital role in mobilizing citizen participation in the Nago plebiscite. On January 9, over three hundred women from the group conducted a protest in the lobby of the prefectural offices. From the release of SACO’s interim report, groups in Okinawa strongly criticized US and Japanese policy for effecting a “shuffling” of bases as opposed to any concrete reductions. The Japanese term was “tarai mawashi” or literally “passing around the washtub,” and in a symbolic act of protest women handed over a washtub filled with messages against Futenma relocation plans to Ōta. Since the confrontation

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174 OT (24, 25 December 1997). These events are also recounted in detail in for example Ōta Masahide, Okinawa no ketsudan; Shimin Tōhyō Hōkokushū (ed.) Nago shimin moeyu; and Okinawa Times (ed.) Mini to ketsudan: kaijō heripooeto mondai to Nago shimin tōhyō (Naha: Okinawa Taimususha, 1998).
with anti-war landowners over the proxy issue over a year previously, relations between Ōta’s administration and anti-base groups had been tense. Yet now Ōta smiled and danced as he played along with the joke, passing the washtub around to on-looking subordinates, expressing his gratitude that “women have raised their political voice,” and reassuring the cheering crowd that he “would not make the wrong decision.”

A month later, on 6 February 1998, Ōta officially expressed his opposition to the plan to build a new military airbase/heliport off the coast of Camp Schwab in Nago. As reasons for his decision, he cited the fact that a majority of residents had voted against the plans in the recent plebiscite, the fact that the prefectural assembly had passed a unanimous resolution against the relocation of Futenma within Okinawa, fear of environmental damage to what was one of the prefecture’s most precious natural regions, and the anti-base principles of his administration. Top officials within the central government denounced Ōta’s decision in unison. Suzuki Muneo declared that Ōta’s announcement “displayed an utter lack of faith,” and Hashimoto criticized Ōta for not discussing the issue directly with him. This was despite the fact that Ōta’s policy advisor had since January been trying to arrange a meeting between Ōta and the prime minister to no avail.

Eighteen months after Ōta backed down on the second proxy issue and sought to negotiate with Hashimoto, renewed conflict between Ōta’s administration and the central government had “become a certainty.” Now, however, Ōta faced a weakened support base and internal conflict together with a central government campaign to ostracize his administration from policy-making and negotiation processes.

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175 OT (10 January 1998). One activist later recounted: “That is when we knew for sure that Ōta would not let us down this time” (Interview with Makishi Yoshikazu (22 March 2001)).


Electoral Defeat and the End of the “Ota Era”

Ōta met with Hashimoto to negotiate base and economic-related issues concerning Okinawa seventeen times from January 1996 to December 1997. Yet their extended heated meeting of 24 December 1997 became the final time Ōta was able to meet personally with Japan’s Prime Minister during his term in office as governor. Once Ōta announced his refusal to accept the offshore base plans, top government officials declined to engage in discussions with Ōta unless he agreed to change his stance. Negotiations over Futenma relocation were shelved, and the central government indefinitely suspended meetings of the Okinawa Policy Council, effectively preventing the prefectural administration from implementing policies on the bases or the economy. Ōta in turn solidified his stance against Futenma relocation, and became increasingly critical both of the fact that Okinawa had been totally excluded from the SACO decision-making process and of SACO’s final recommendations. For the first time he also explicitly took the line that if the relocation of Futenma was necessary, the central government should take the responsibility of finding an alternative site in another part of Japan. 179

Following the SDP’s decision to withdraw from the LDP coalition and the establishment of a new cabinet under Obuchi Keizō in July 1998, tensions between the Ōta administration and the central government further intensified. Newly appointed Chief Cabinet Secretary Nonaka Hiromi severely criticized Ōta for not personally coming to Tokyo to pay his respects to Hashimoto as “against human morality.” 180 This was in spite of the fact that Ōta had expressed his sincere gratitude towards Hashimoto for his policies on Okinawa following Hashimoto’s resignation from the office of prime

179 See for example OT (12, 29 March 1998). Ōta also strongly criticizes the SACO process in Okinawa: kichi naki shima e no dōhyō, p. 55.
180 See for example OT (7 August 1998).
minister. Nonaka himself refused to meet with Okinawan Deputy Governor Miyahira Yo, and maintained he would agree to meet with Ota only on the condition that Ota showed a "pragmatic" stance on the heliport issue. Soon after Obuchi took office, the central LDP and its Okinawa Charter agreed to endorse Inamine Keiichi as candidate to oppose Ota in upcoming gubernatorial elections. Inamine was president of the Ryūseki Petroleum Company and the son of long-time LDP politician and leading Okinawan power-broker Inamine Ichirō.

On the eve of the gubernatorial elections in November 1998, the central government announced its decision to withdraw plans for the offshore base. This did not amount to a change of policy in regards to SACO, and Futenma return was still premised on relocation of the heliport within Okinawa prefecture, but the move was an important political tactic to defuse the relocation issue as an election topic. Local construction companies had long been pushing for the base to be built off the coast itself, involving a massive land reclamation project which would guarantee a larger role and greater profits for the less technically-savvy local construction industry. Inamine advocated the construction of a "joint civilian and military airport" with a fifteen year time limit for military use.

Inamine’s electoral campaign focused on the prolonged economic recession which had resulted in an unemployment rate of close to ten percent within the prefecture. Ota took the stance that the recession itself was largely a result of LDP policy: Inamine focused on the impact of the breakdown in relations between the central government and the United Nations, and on the US military presence in Okinawa.

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181 *OT* (19 August 1998). A readers contribution to the *Okinawa Times* criticized Nonaka’s comments as reflecting a “Tokugawa Shogun” mentality. Following the Satsuma invasion of Ryukyu the Ryukyuan court were required to carry out tributary missions to Edo (Ōshiro Osamu, “Kenryoku shikōgata no Nonaka hatsugen,” *OT* (22 August 1998), p. 5).

182 Inamine Ichirō was an official of the South Manchurian Railway in the wartime era, profited from building and services the US military bases in the pre-1972 period, and served three terms as an upper house LDP Diet member (as cited in Chalmers Johnson, “Okinawa Between the United States and Japan,” Joseph Kreiner (ed.) *Ryukyu in World History* (Bonn: Bier’sche Verlagsanstalt, 2001), p. 379
and prefectural governments. In the words of Mulgan: “In his campaign, Inamine emulated the classic LDP electoral technique of turning the financial vulnerability of local government to partisan advantage by arguing that the LDP's pipeline to the centre would keep the local community supplied with development projects and subsidies.”

On 15 November 1998, Inamine defeated Ōta by approximately 30,000 votes. Notably downcast after the unexpectedly wide margin of defeat, a sedate Ōta quietly stated: “I worry about the future Okinawa will now take.”

Economic issues were undeniably a central underlying cause of Ōta’s defeat. From prior to Ōta’s decision to reject the offshore base, Okinawa’s Business Council (keizai dantai kaigi), an umbrella organization incorporating Okinawa’s most influential business groups, lobbied Ōta to accept the base plan. Promising the restoration of relations with the central government and a direct pipeline to the ruling LDP, Inamine was able to gain popular support and instrumental backing from the large majority of Okinawa’s business sector. Other factors cited as reasons for Ōta’s defeat include the effectiveness of Inamine’s election campaign (which was devised using the assistance of marketing experts hired on commission from the advertising giant Dentsū), Ōta’s prolonged stalemate with the central government, the impact of compensation policies and stimulus packages, lack of coordination and fragmentation within Ōta’s progressive supporting coalition, and the sense of disillusionment initially brought about after Ōta backed down on the proxy issue. The Okinawan Charter of the Kömei Party had been

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184 Inamine won 374, 833 votes to Ōta’s 337, 369.
185 OT (16 November 1998).
186 OT (5 February 1998).
187 Including two of Okinawa’s largest companies, Ryūseki and Okinawa Electric. Groups which had previously supported Ōta such as the Okinawan branch of Japan Agriculture (JA) also lent support to Inamine.
188 As discussed in for example Fukuchi Hiroaki, Kichi to jinken: Okinawa no sentaku; Arasaki Moriteru, Saiji o minshū no te ni (Tokyo: Gaifusha, 1999); and Arakawa Akira, Okinawa: tōgō to hangyaku (Arakawa most specifically cites Shimadakon as an important factor).
a part of Ōta’s support base, and from the 1970s Ōta had contributed articles to the Kōmei Party newspaper. Yet under Obuchi the party’s central organs joined the LDP-coalition, in the gubernatorial elections for the first time in Okinawa it backed the conservatives, providing a vital source of votes for Inamine. This showed how the further weakening of progressive parties at the national level affected Okinawa’s progressive coalition.

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Writing after Ōta’s electoral defeat, Hiyane Teruo reflected:

Ōta’s announcement on his refusal to act as proxy and the preceding rape incident of 1995 marked the beginning of a tumultuous period stretching across over three years. In various ways, this time tested the principles and assertions of each individual. Historians of the next generation will no doubt position and view the transition in opinions across this turbulent period in such a light. In this sense, it became a litmus test for postwar intellectual thought itself.

Okinawa’s Decision (Okinawa no Ketsudan) is to date the most detailed and personal account of Ōta’s period as governor. In it, Ōta recounts that on the night of 13 September 1996, the day he announced his decision to back down on the second proxy issue, he sat up late reading historical materials relating to the career and policies of Higa Shūhei (1901-1956) and Yara Chōbyō. Higa Shūhei, Chief Executive of the Government of the Ryukyus from 1952 to his sudden death in 1956, faced multiple conflicting pressures in his position as negotiator between Okinawan landowners fiercely critical of the US military for stripping them of their land, and USCAR and the US government. Yara Chōbyō similarly met with multiple obstacles in his endeavour to influence and contest negotiations over Okinawan reversion. Ōta recounts: “Thinking of the way in which those before me were continually forced to make such decisions, I felt my very being pierced by the vivid reality of these historical materials from the past.”

189 Okinawa no ketsudan, p. 243.
As an academic and intellectual, Ota was highly despondent towards and critical of the institutionalised structure of relations which he saw severely limited postwar Okinawan politicians. At the same time, he was also critical of at least some of the political compromises which Yara for example made on the eve of reversion and after. As Okinawan governor, Ota found himself also compromised with these relations in all their political immediacy. Moving from academia to politics, the fundamental dilemma of how to reconcile theory to practice, and ideals of peace, democracy, coexistence and autonomy with the requirements of political pragmatism became a matter of constant and immediate concern. The weight of Ota’s analyses as an academic—and the voluminous commentary which he produced as a highly public intellectual—lay upon each crucial decision which he had to make during his term in political office. This fact sets him apart from the vast majority of politicians. Moreover, in contrast to the detached world of academia, where often intellectual analysis is perceived as divorced from questions relating to intellectuals’ own everyday mode of ethics, the tensions and discrepancies between Ota’s intellectual discussions and political efficacy were subject to direct public scrutiny. As Hiyane Teruo suggests, the way in which these tensions were played out in the highly significant period from 1995-8 will also come under the scrutiny of historians in the years to come.

Meanwhile, it may be said that Ota’s position against the expropriation process, his appeal to the High and Supreme Court of Japan, and the enactment of a prefectural plebiscite on the base issue exposed to challenge hierarchical structures within local-national relations in Japan and in relation to Okinawa’s position in US-Japan relations. It served to promote the “spirit of democracy,” as conceived as the expression and the unsettling of the connections between personal and collective identity. William E. Connolly observes:

Democratic turbulence disturbs established commonalities: it shows them to be
complex contrivances; it brings out elements of contestability within them; it exposes possibilities suppressed and actualities enabled by contestable settlements. By fostering the experience of contingency and relationality in identity, democracy disturbs the closure of self-identity and, sometimes, provides a medium for modifying the terms of collective identity. This combination increases the chance—when this destabilization is part of struggle against existential resentment—that a larger variety of identities will be allowed to contend with one another on democratic terms.\textsuperscript{190}

Ōta both appealed to principles of equality and democracy within the framework of sovereignty and institutions of the state, and destabilized hegemonic claims to collective identity and historical paradigms of Japanese ethnic and cultural homogeneity. He sought to find a medium to modify the terms of collective identity according Connolly’s perception of “democratic turbulence” and thereby increase the possibilities available for plural identities to contend with one another on more democratic terms.

Ōta’s stance on the proxy issue was made in the context of and in turn itself fuelled a mass movement of critical reflection and analysis within Okinawa. The years from 1995-8 saw a proliferation of works on Okinawan history, culture, and economy, some of which explicitly called for independence or at least a significant increase in local autonomy.\textsuperscript{191} During this period a tremendous amount of critical effort was directed at reconsidering the Okinawan past—not merely in relation to the history of American military occupation, but also Japanese colonialism. In newspapers and journal contributions, on local radio and television, in public forums, and in private conversations people in Okinawa debated issues relating to the Battle of Okinawa, militarism, modernization, and the incorporation of Ryukyu into the Japanese nation state. As Christopher T. Nelson describes:

\textsuperscript{190} William E. Connolly, \textit{Identity/Difference}, p. 200.

Questions of Okinawa’s subjection to nativist analysis and cultural commodification were aired in the mass media. Angry commentators and politicians revisited Okinawa’s history of discrimination at the hands of both the American and Japanese states. Calls were heard for greater regional autonomy, for recognition of Okinawa’s unique status in the Japanese nation, even for independence.\textsuperscript{192}

Yet following Ōta’s ultimate decision to back down on the second proxy issue, the atmosphere in Okinawa also became permeated within a feeling of 
\textit{tirudai}, a state of disappointment and loss.\textsuperscript{193} This sense of disillusionment and powerlessness increased as people witnessed the forthright dismissal of their claims by an overwhelming majority of the National Diet with the passing of the legislative revisions of April 1997, and fed into a general political apathy.

Ōta was unable to utilize conditions to effect a radical change within Okinawa. To this extent, it may be said that he failed to take full advantage of political opportunity. Throughout 1997, Ōta argued that the heliport base issue was a local and not a prefectural issue, and sought to avoid conflict with the central government by remaining distant from negotiations.\textsuperscript{194} However this opened him up to criticism from those who had most avidly supported his earlier stance against the proxy issue. With the prefecture attempting to maintain a distance from the issue, politicians and residents within Nago became even more vulnerable to pressure from the central government and increasing divisions and tensions within the community.\textsuperscript{195} Ōta did not directly contest

\textsuperscript{192} Christopher T. Nelson, "Huzuki Hayato, the storyteller: comedy, practice and the politics of everyday life in Okinawa," p. 190

\textsuperscript{193} Also described by Nelson ibid.

\textsuperscript{194} Ōta further outlines his reasoning for not taking a stance against Futenma relocation plans earlier in \textit{Kichi naki shima e no dōkyō}, pp. 69-70. Ōta explains that he did not want to conflict with government any more than was necessary: "As I believed that in working to solve the base issue it was important to draw a line, to cooperate with the government in areas where we could cooperate and to clearly refuse when we could not.”

\textsuperscript{195} Sheila Smith concludes that Ōta “missed an opportunity to claim his mantle as the representative of Okinawan citizenry. Citizen activism carried the day in Nago, while the prefectural government appeared
the central government’s strategies of financial subsidy as exemplified by Shimadakon. His administration was not able to provide obstacles substantial enough to combat the perpetuation and further entrenchment of Okinawa’s compensation system and subsidy-centred economic development.\textsuperscript{196}

Yet these failures were not solely the fault of Ōta and his administration, nor Ōta’s inability to make the most of political opportunity. Ōta sought at least to an extent to frame his cause within counter-hegemonic national narratives which upheld the ideals of peace and democracy that were seen to be laid down in Japan’s postwar constitution. However his decision to refuse to act as proxy occurred at a time when progressive parties and their support bases were becoming increasingly fragmented, and when voices calling for Japan to play a more active military role were gaining ground. In a similar way to the reversion movement, the upsurge of the “Okinawa issue” from 1995-8 ironically intertwined with processes which have led to the further fragmentation of a clear political opposition within Japan as a whole.

Furthermore, restrictions on local political and economic autonomy and the multiple structures of dependence brought about by centralized financial control and prolonged US military presence underlay Ōta’s anguish and his vacillations between conflict and compromise with the central government. “Colonisation” signals direct colonial occupation and rule: “post-colonial” relations are characterised by “forms of economic development dominated by the growth of indigenous capital and their relations of neo-colonial dependency on the developed capitalist world, and the politics

\textsuperscript{196} After leaving office, Ōta referred to Shimadakon as the “High commissioner mode of rule,” in reference to US compensation policies towards Okinawa during occupation of the islands (Interview with the author, 4 May 2000). Yet he did not publicly criticize the inception of Shimadakon during his time as governor.
which arise from emergence of powerful local elites managing the contradictory effects of under-development.” In Okinawa, the vestiges of colonialism complexly intermix with postcolonial systems of relation. Structures of internal colonialism perpetuate dependency, yet they may also ironically provide comparative economic stability—that is in relation to the economic and social realities faced by peripheral post-colonial nation-states under contemporary international capitalist relations. Attempts to conceive of a blueprint for economic autonomy face this paradoxical condition.

Central government policy towards Okinawa combined financial compensation (the “carrot”) with political, legal, and administrative restrictions (the “stick”). In turn, “Okinawans’ love of the carrot and their hatred of the stick show up as political vacillation between a prefectural government supported by the Japanese government and one representing indigenous forces for reform.” In the elections of 1998, Inamine was able to utilize the predicament posed by a “cash-for-base” ultimatum to his political advantage. As a direct beneficiary of central government compensation policies, however, it is far from clear that he provided a solution to the hierarchical structures of dependency inherent to this system, or to resulting social, economic, and political tensions and contradictions within Okinawa.

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198 A similar paradox is observed by Negrón-Muntaner and Grosfoguel in relation Puerto Rico as an internal colony of the US (Negrón-Muntaner and Grosfoguel (eds.) Puerto Rico Jam, pp. 4-16).

CHAPTER FIVE

Contested Identities in Contemporary Okinawa

The Inamine Administration and the (Re)making of History

"It was a struggle over history in multiple ways, with heated passions, with feverish polemics ... to all history clearly mattered. The question was, who would shape it?"

Barton J. Bernstein, 1995

"As I stand in the sun, the voices locked in my skull from the dark museum room burst out and release their agony into the air. In Mabuni, the wind over the dazzling sea is heavy with the shrieks of the dying."

Norma Field, 1991

Contested Identities in Contemporary Okinawa

In early December 1998, directly after Inamine's inauguration, the central government agreed to hold a meeting of the centrally controlled Okinawa Policy Council (Okinawa seisaku kyōgikai) for the first time in thirteen months. In a momentous gathering attended by the entire cabinet, then Prime Minister Obuchi Keizō

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2 In the Realm of a Dying Emperor, p. 86.
immediately pledged a 10 billion yen ‘stimulus adjustment package’ to Inamine’s administration, double Ōta’s monetary ‘reward’ for backing down on the lease issue in September 1996. Obuchi personally pledged his commitment to Okinawa and the government’s resolve to “work towards a solution to the issue of Futenma’s return through cooperation between the prefecture and government.” In April, 1999, Obuchi announced his decision to select Nago City, Okinawa Prefecture, jointly with Miyazaki Prefecture in Kyushu as the site to host the G8 Summit in the year 2000, despite its low ranking in terms of existing facilities and security capacity levels. As Aurelia George Mulgan observes: “The decision to host the G-8 summit in Nago in July 2000 was yet another gesture to shore up the prefectural economy and to appease Okinawan sentiment over the Futenma relocation issue.” Ōta was highly critical of both the central government and Inamine: “The view that the Summit and base relocation in the name of regional stimulus are mutually implicated does not come from mere conjecture, but as a result of over half a century of the [Japanese] Government’s policies towards Okinawa and the existence of a section of opportunist politicians and entrepreneurs who bow at their service.”

In mid-December, 1999, the government announced its pledge to pour a 100 billion yen supplementary stimulus package into Northern Okinawa over a period of ten years, with the first 10 billion yen to be injected into the area in the year 2000. In return, Obuchi’s cabinet was anxious to secure an alternative site for MCAS Futenma “before the end of the year,” in heed of Clinton’s request that the Futenma relocation issue be resolved well before the President arrived in Okinawa for the G-8 Summit.

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5 Ōta Masahide, Okinawa: kichi naki shima e no dōhyō (Tokyo, Shūeisha Shinsho, 2001), p. 11.
6 It is thought that Clinton made this clear at a meeting with Obuchi at the 1999 G-8 Summit in Cologne. See for example Kamo Toshio, “Okinawa, jichi moderu no sentaku,” in Miyamoto Ken’ichi and Sasaki Masayuki (eds.), Okinawa: 21 seiki e no chōsen, p. 255.
September 1999, the prefectural assembly passed a resolution calling for the prompt resolution of the Futenma relocation issue, and in November, Inamine declared the waters of Camp Schwab to be the most desirable site for “speedy” relocation of Futenma facilities. At the end of December, after a marathon 19-hour deliberation, first the Nago City Assembly and three days later Nago Mayor Kishimoto Tateo consented to the building of new facilities at Henoko on seven conditions. These included consideration of environmental impacts and that the government “substantially engage” (gutaiteki na torikumi) in negotiations with the US to secure a fifteen-year military use limit on the facilities.

Leading up to the Summit, the prefectural government worked in conjunction with the central government to promote a sense of national belonging more conducive to the ideology of the LDP ruling coalition and its national security policies. Inamine’s administration, in other words, became the spearhead of a movement to advance an Okinawan collective identity and historical consciousness more fitting with conservative nationalist credos, and in direct opposition to Ōta’s conceptualisation of the “Okinawan Spirit.” This movement was moreover integrally related to a rise in state-induced and populist nationalism in Japan as a whole, spurred on by sustained economic stagnation, increasing popular distrust in politics, and a legitimacy crisis in Japan’s system of governance—as had been long symbolized in the intimate alliance between business, bureaucracy, and the LDP-ruled government. Building upon conservative politicians’ attempts to secure a more active military role for Japan in the international arena in the wake of the Persian Gulf Crisis, an influential campaign promoting a neo-nationalist historical revisionism emerged in 1996 in the form of the Liberal View of History Group (Jiyūshugi Shikan Kenkyūkai), and expanded a year later to include the Society for the Making of New School Textbooks in History (Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho o tsukuru Kai). As Yumiko Iida observes, feeding off a crisis in identity and social hegemony:
(N)ew nationalism, with revisionism as its vehicle, is a symptomatic manifestation of greater historical problems which encompass all spheres of human life, including the breakdown of the subject and discursive meaning, the eclipse of the transcendental perspective, and the resultant collapse of the structuring frame of objective thought and temporality. Beyond this symptomatic character, however, revisionism also proposed to offer a 'remedy' for the troubled sense of self felt by many Japanese. It attracts resentful souls who seek to ground themselves in concrete history and generate an insular communal space, at the expense of fixing the subject, meaning and history to idealized, singular and homogenous modes. 

Both the attempt to secure a site for the relocation of Futenma base, and the endeavour to redefine Okinawan collective consciousness, however, also met with considerable protest. This chapter traces in particular two highly politicised and intense debates over Okinawan identity and conceptualisations of Okinawan historical experience and its significance, which emerged on the eve of the G-8 Summit, from 1999 to 2000. The first was a controversy over how Okinawa's martial past should be represented in permanent exhibits within two different "peace memorial museums" recently constructed in Okinawa: the Yaeyama Peace Memorial Museum, which opened in May 1999 on the southern island of Ishigaki, and the New Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum, which finally opened one month later than scheduled on 1 April 2000 in the Peace Memorial Park, Mabuni. Alterations made at the behest of the Prefectural Government to displays at Yaeyama served to highlight similar surreptitious attempts to change the content of exhibits at Mabuni. The extent of the attempted changes gradually became known through extensive reporting in the local press from August to October 1999, and a fierce political debate over the displays in the two museums ensued. 

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7 Yumiko Iida, Rethinking Identity in Modern Japan: Nationalism as Aesthetics, p. 252.
8 From August to October 1999, over four hundred news articles and numerous editorials concerning the
The second dispute, known as the “Okinawa Initiative Debate” (*Okinawa inishiatibu ronsō*) emerged over two policy-orientated papers, formulated and sponsored by separate Tokyo-based think tanks and announced respectively in March and April 2000. The origins of both papers can be traced to the highest echelons within the Inamine administration and the national government. They were integrally linked to Japanese government compensation strategies towards Okinawa, as well as comprehensive domestic and foreign policy goals for Japan in “the new millennium.” The Okinawa Initiative was more subtle and employed a distinctly different tactic to the Inamine administration’s earlier more blatant attempts to “change” history within the museum displays. The Initiative papers implicitly acknowledged Ōta’s position that Okinawans had a different history from other Japanese. They sought to disavow the importance of, rather than rewrite, Okinawa’s history, thereby avoiding debate over history per se. While advocating compliance with Japanese and US security policies, they similarly presented this compliance as providing the key to ensuring Okinawan autonomy. Yet these tactics also met with strong opposition from numerous intellectuals and anti-base supporters and activists in Okinawa. In the months leading up to the Summit, prominent writers, journalists, academics and artists throughout the islands published numerous articles and essays disputing or defending the Initiative’s claims and analyses.⁹

Both the attempted museum alterations and the Okinawa Initiative formed part of an attempt to formulate a counter ideology to the Ōta administration, as well as to the

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museum displays appeared in the two main Okinawan newspapers, *Okinawa Taimusu* (OT) and *Ryūkyū Shimpō* (RS). Significantly, the dispute was accorded very little notice in the mainland Japanese press, the exception being the weekly magazine *Shikan Kinyōbi* [Friday weekly], which featured several articles on the peace memorial controversy in conjunction with the Futenma Base relocation issue.

⁹ While a minority, several mainland Japanese intellectuals and journalists also contributed to the debate. The vast majority of all published contributions were critical of the Okinawa Initiative paper. A comprehensive list of these articles is provided in Takara Kurayoshi, Maeshiro Morisada and Oshiro Tsunco (eds.) *Okinawa Inishiatibu: Okinawa hatsu chiteki senryaku* (Naha: Okinawa Bunkō, 2000), 168-175.
credo of progressive movements and liberal intellectuals which had formed the core of his support base. From the summer of 1999, the political stakes involved in representations of peace and the past seemed only to increase with the heat, as a battle of a different kind began to rage over the cliffs of Mabuni. Journalists, intellectuals, war survivors, and anti-base peace groups mobilized in opposition to the prefectural administration, and struggles over history, the war, memory, and the US bases became increasingly fused together. As historical and political struggles intertwined, the ensuing dispute had far-reaching implications for the way in which Okinawa's historical experience was perceived, relations between Okinawa and mainland Japan and the central government, cultural pluralism and democracy in Japan in general, as well as Japan's security policy and relations with the US and Asia as a whole. It also raised pertinent questions concerning the commemoration and memorialisation of history, the formation of collective identity, and the intimate relation between economic structures, policy formation, and contests over conceptions of culture, identity, and the past. History was in the making. Who would shape it?

The New Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum Dispute

Conceiving of a New Peace Memorial Museum

Museums and memorials, as Laura Hein and Mark Selden (1997) remind us, are major organs of the state “dedicated to the instruction and edification of the public” that have served as a means to control the act of commemoration. Yet as public spaces involved in the reproduction of memory, they remain inherently contentious. Earlier disputes in both Japan and the US over museum exhibits planned to commemorate the

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10 Hein and Selden, *Living with the Bomb: American and Japanese Cultural Conflicts in the Nuclear Age* (New York and London: M. E. Sharpe, 1997), Introduction. As sites by which the nation may be remembered and authenticated, they also contribute to naturalizing the state of nationhood in the landscape. See Marshall Johnson, “Making time: historic preservation and the space of nationality,” *Positions* No. 2 Vol. 2 (Fall 1994), pp. 177-249.
fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II demonstrated the difficulties involved in reflecting on the historical implications of war in a public setting. Ultimately, absences from the exhibit displaying the shiny revamped body of the *Enola Gay* at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum (NASM) in Washington and within the polished glass showcases of Tokyo’s Showa Museum, bore testimony to missing historical complexities. Since 1995, peace museums have increasingly become the target of criticism and at times outright intimidation from a growing historical revisionist movement in Japan. It was within this climate, and in the midst of the Futenma relocation issue, that attempted changes to the new Yaeyama and Mabuni museum exhibits took place.

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12 In 1996, plans to include exhibits on Japanese military aggression in Asia within the Nagasaki Atom Bomb Museum were fiercely denounced by the Nagasaki City branch of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and other right-wing and nationalist groups. As a result, several hundred revisions of content were made following the museum’s reopening. Similar campaigns, led by right-wing groups and supported by the LDP and conservative sections of the press, have been launched against the Sakai City Peace and Human Rights Museum, and the Osaka International Peace Center. In October 1996, an LDP Parliamentary Committee report on the exhibit content of local peace museums, ordered by the then Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryūtarō, criticized the Sakai and Osaka sites, the original Okinawa Prefectural Peace Museum at Mabuni, and various other local museums as promoting a “biased ideology.” These events are outlined in Ueyama Kazuo, “Heiwa kinen shiryōkan mondai to zenkokuteki na kagai tenji e no kōgeki no uogoki,” *Keesti Kaji* No. 25 (December 1999), pp. 48-50; Ishihara Masae, “Shin-Okinawa Heiwa Shiryōkan tenji naityō henkō no keii to mondaiten,” *Rekishigaku kenkyū* No. 772 (February 2000), pp. 43-7; Nakakita Ryūtarō, “Heiwa hakubutsukan e no kōgeki o ika ni kankei ni sa,” *Sekai* No. 674 (May 2000), pp. 231-5; and Okinawa-ken Rekishi Kyōkusha Kyōgikai, “Rekishi no shinjitsu wa yugumete wa naranai,” *Rekishi to Jissen* No. 20 (December 1999). On negotiating histories in national museums see also Darryl McIntyre and Kirsten Wehner (eds.) *Negotiating Histories* (Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 2000).
The original Okinawa Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum was officially opened in 1975—also directly prior to a highly publicized international event (the Okinawan Marine Exposition) and in a wave of controversy. In anticipation of the arrival of Prince Akihito and his wife for the Marine Exposition in 1975, plans for the Prefectural Museum progressed with little or no public debate or input from professional historians and researchers. Management was entrusted to the Okinawa Prefectural War Dead Memorial Committee (Okinawaken senbotsusha irei hōsankai), a nationalist remembrance foundation. The entrance to the resulting exhibit featured a large Rising Sun flag suspended from the museum’s wall, complete with a photo of Lieut.-Gen. Ushijima and a poem dedicated to his memory. Outraged, various peace groups and research committees protested to the prefectural assembly and relevant authorities. Yara’s administration responded to the protest, and over two years later a completely revamped peace memorial was reopened to the public. The museum’s newly-established founding principles cited the Battle of Okinawa as “unique in that the number of civilian victims far outweighed military casualties.” Some of these victims, the passage continued, were “driven into taking their own lives, some fell from starvation or malaria, and some were sacrificed in the hands of the Japanese army.” The people of Okinawa “experienced with their own flesh and blood the horrors and absurdity of war,” and this experience formed the basis of the “Okinawan spirit,” fostered in the post-war period while “opposing the oppressive control of the US military.”

The modified museum featured military documents, propaganda posters including a poster campaigning against “espionage activities” on Okinawa, photographs depicting the US military onslaught, and a large darkened room devoted to the display of vivid oral testimonies of the war. Here, reading page after page of oral history

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records, one could learn, as Norma Field observes, that “even Japanese soldiers didn’t
die shouting banzai to the emperor.”

Yet, even revamped, the original museum structure had serious limitations in
storage facilities and availability of space. Ōta released an outline for the relocation of
the Prefectural Museum in 1995. Together with the Okinawan International Peace
Research Institute and the Cornerstone of Peace monument, this new museum was
conceived as a founding backbone of his “peace promotion” policy. It was ensured that
in the construction of the new facilities, the spirit of the (revamped) original museum’s
“Founding Principles” would be respected, and the “realities of the Battle of Okinawa”
would be depicted “without omissions.” The new museum, projected to be a massive
nine times the size of the original, was to be erected on a more prominent site than the
original building, on the northern side of the Peace Memorial Park facing the
Cornerstone. The new museum’s exhibits were also to include an account of “the
historical process leading to war, including the histories of the countries of the Asia-
Pacific, taking into account (Japan’s) responsibility for inflicting suffering on the
countries of Asia.” While the original museum concentrated on the battle for the main
island of Okinawa, new displays would encompass the entire war in Asia and the
Pacific, from the period of the “fifteen-years war” starting with the Manchurian
Incident, and including material on the postwar US occupation. A supervisory planning
committee comprised of thirteen historians was formed in September 1996, and the
committee visited many war museums in Japan and abroad in devising plans for the
new museum. An extension of the oral history component of the displays was to

14 In the Realm of the Dying Emperor, p. 85.
15 OT (10 November 1997). See also Miyagi Estujirō, “Shinheiwa Kinen Shiryōkan kensetsu no kei,” in
Okinawaken Rekishi Kyōkusha Kyōgikai, “Rekishi no shinjitsu wa yugamete wa naranai,” Rekishi to
Jissen No. 20 (December 1999), pp 27-8.
constitute a vital part of the museum, and by May 1998, over 210 testimonies of the war had been recorded on video as part of the permanent exhibit.

The official ceremony that initiated the construction of the new complex took place on 7 November 1997. This endorsement of the site, however, revealed the conjunction of competing claims to public space and a collective past. Before work on the four-storey building, complete with an Okinawa-style red-tiled roof, had begun, the question of how “peace” should be construed had emerged as a contested issue. In a revealing editorial contribution to the Okinawa Times, a schoolteacher from mainland Japan criticized the inclusion of a Shinto purification ceremony for being a manifestation of “State Shinto” (kokka shintō), which should be a target for criticism in a site that purportedly sought to document the “imperialization” (kōminka) of education in pre-war Japan. Such a ceremony, the schoolteacher wrote, sits uneasily in the context of Ryukyuan culture, which has a unique set of rituals and beliefs, and contradicts the constitutional principles of separation of state and religion.  

Disclosure of Alterations and the Ensuing Controversy

The alteration issue was compounded by two other events. In late June 1999, it was reported that Inamine had indefinitely delayed plans to construct the Okinawan International Peace Research Institute in Okinawa, purportedly due to a lack of funds. It was originally envisaged that this institute would manage the Cornerstone of Peace and the new Peace Museum, as well as conduct research on “war and history in the Asia-Pacific, with an emphasis on the Battle of Okinawa.” By June 1999 it also became clearly evident that the prefectural administration had tampered with the contents of another exhibit at the new Yaeyama Peace Memorial Museum, located on the southern island of Ishigaki. The museum had been constructed to commemorate victims of “war

16 *OT* (17 November 1997).
malaria,” namely local inhabitants of the southern Yaeyama islands who had contracted the fatal virus after being expelled to malaria-infested areas by the Japanese army.17

The Yaeyama Museum opened on 28 May 1999 in the midst of fierce wrangling between committee members entrusted with planning the exhibit and the staff from the Department of Peace Promotion. On the public opening of the exhibit, it became apparent that eleven captions out of a total of twenty-seven for photos and diagrams in the exhibit had been significantly altered without the knowledge of Ryukyu University Professor Hosaka Hiroshi, supervisor of the original exhibit plans. Alterations included replacing the phrase “forced expulsion” (kyōsei taikyo) with “ordered to take refuge” (hinan meirei). The caption underneath a photograph panel thought to depict a scene of suicide was altered from “purported death by collective suicide” to “victims of the Battle of Okinawa.” A 5 x 3-meter panel outlining the chronology of Battle of Okinawa and “war malaria” was also omitted, purportedly due to a “risk of fire.”18

The revoking of plans for a peace research centre and alterations to the Yaeyama Museum exhibit hinted at a change in direction in prefectural “peace promotion” policies and suggested a concerted attempt on the part of the prefectural government to alter the way in which the Battle of Okinawa was presented to the public. They also cast serious doubt on the reliability of the government’s assurances that alterations were

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17 The Okinawa Relief Committee for Forcefully Expelled Malaria Victims was founded in 1988 to seek compensation from the central government for the bereaved families of malaria victims. Eight years later, while unsuccessful in their claim, the committee agreed to accept a concession that the government allocate 300 million yen to the construction of a monument and a museum in remembrance of the victims. The history of “war malaria” is summarized by Aniya Masaaki, “Sensō mararia” in Shitte okitai Okinawa, (Tokyo: Aoki shoten, 1998). A detailed account of malaria amongst the inhabitants of Hateruma Island is given in Ishihara Masaie, Mō hitotsu no Okinawa-sen: mararia jigoku no Hateruma-jigoku, (Naha: Okinawa Bunko, 1983).

18 In an article in the Okinawa Times, Ōta Shizuo states that the term “expulsion” emerged at the time the inhabitants of Yaeyama met their deaths, and “is essential to clarifying war responsibility and breaking down the nation’s (kuni) impenetrable stance on the malaria compensation issue, which refuses to recognize expulsion as a military order.” Similar contentions over wording occurred earlier in relation to the epitaph of a monument as part of the same “War Malaria Compensation Project.”
only at a “deliberating” stage and that the committee members’ opinions would be “strictly adhered to” in the Mabuni museum.

The prefectural administration continued to deny that a coordinated plan to change the exhibits existed, or that such a plan had been instigated by Inamine or at the governor’s behest. Yet throughout the summer of 1999 local newspapers reported other changes that were unauthorized by the supervisory planning committee and revealed documents that implicated Inamine and his two deputies (Ishikawa Hideo and Makino Hirotaka) in a plan to make comprehensive alterations. As the issue exploded into a political fireball, the administration’s earlier stance became untenable. On 4 October, opposition parties refused to participate in parliamentary proceedings on the grounds that the government had failed to answer parliamentary questions with integrity after local newspapers reported that further documents had been obtained that implicated the governor. The following day, the leading coalition parties agreed to disclose all administrative documents relating to the museum, and proceedings were normalized.

On the morning of 7 October, a large number of relevant internal papers were handed out at a parliamentary committee hearing, and deliberation on the issue continued for almost ten hours. For the first time since the surfacing of alleged changes, Deputy Governor Ishikawa conceded that prefectural heads had played a decisive role in the process and apologized for inciting the distrust of the people and the parliament.19

The documents submitted to the parliamentary hearing and published in the press the following day revealed that prefectural heads had referred to fundamental differences in “perceptions of the state” between themselves and members of the museum’s supervisory planning committee. The minutes of the meetings of prefectural heads and bureaucrats were in note form and lacked full details. Yet they still revealed that as early as March 1999, Governor Inamine had stated that the exhibits “should not

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19 Deputy Ishihara’s statement was published in full in RS (8 October 1999), p. 2.
be too anti-Japanese,” and that as Okinawa “only amounts to one prefecture within Japan,” commentaries on the war should take into account “museum displays elsewhere in the country.” At a subsequent meeting on 23 July, Inamine chided the bureaucrats for not changing the exhibit content enough, commenting that the plans still hardly varied from the originals “in spite of the change in government.” He further pointed out that “various people” throughout Japan, who presumably may take offence at explicit historical museum displays, were to visit Okinawa in conjunction with the G-8 Summit. In the same meeting, Deputy Governor Makino Hirotaka had even suggested that a totally new planning committee should be set up in order to devise the necessary changes.

*From the Barrel of a Gun: Shaping and Reshaping the Tenets of History*

The attempted changes in content fell into three broad categories: those relating to the Battle of Okinawa, those depicting World War II in general, and those depicting the post-war US occupation of the islands. The most blatant curtailments occurred with respect to displays of Japan’s military role in Asia during World War II. The prefectural officials ordered that the entire section entitled “Japan’s aggression as depicted on film” be eliminated, including pictures of Japanese forces “closing in on Nanking,” a scene showing Unit 731 (the Kwantung Army’s euphemistically-entitled “Epidemic Prevention and Water Supply Unit”) experimenting with and producing biochemical weapons, and photographs of the excavation of victims in Singapore. Historical documents and materials concerning popular opposition to Japanese rule, and a stamp in commemoration of Korean resistance were to be withdrawn. Material on the comfort women issue, and territorial disputes such as the Kurile and Senkaku Islands, were also marked for removal.

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20 The changes were subsequently outlined in RS (7 October 1999), following the public disclosure of the relevant material.
Lisa Yoneyama observes that the mutually reinforcing relationship between conservative politicians in Japan and the United States during the Cold War affected the LDP’s stance on the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In the case of Okinawa, conservative forces continue, at least for the time being, to maintain a direct interest in legitimising the US military presence on the islands. Prefectural administration documents explicitly stated that the museum should include material on the “role that the US-Japan treaty has played in maintaining security” in the Asia-Pacific region, and that an “anti-Security Treaty” (han anpo) stance should be avoided. On the sensitive question of accidents and crimes involving the US troops and Okinawans, it was suggested that “the fact that there are more accidents/incidents in Okinawa not involving the US military than base-related occurrences must be taken into account within the displays.” On 7 August, just prior to the disclosure of attempted alterations in the local press and less than three weeks after being chided by Governor Inamine for not changing the exhibits enough, prefectural bureaucrats ordered that a timeline depicting all US military-related incidents since reversion in May 1972 should be integrated into a general display on the history of post-reversion Okinawa. It was decided that documents on controversial issues relating to the presence of the bases—such as manuscripts of the 1997 Special Measures Law amendment, an outline of the controversial final report of SACO, and former Governor Ōta’s testimony before the Supreme Court in 1996 (See Chapter Four)—should be replaced by a display on the peace-making role of the United Nations. In relation to displays on the US occupation period, where prefectural heads suggested replacing a sample of a hypothetical

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21 Hiroshima Traces, p. 25. In an article on the Smithsonian issue, Yoneyama also elaborates: “(I)nsofar as such national assumptions remain unquestioned, it will not be possible to recognize that during most of the twentieth century, the conservative elite in the United States...and the conservative forces in Japan...are in many respects complicit with each other in their capitalist and nationalist desires” (“Critical Warps: Facticity, Transformative Knowledge, and Postnational criticism in the Smithsonian controversy,” Positions No. 5 Vol. 3 (Winter 1997), p. 797).

22 RS (9 October 1999).
“Ryukyuan National Flag,” a picture of the controversial document addressed to the US State Department known as the “Emperor’s Message” (see Chapter Three), and documents depicting the suppression of political groups under US military administration, with the “positive” consequences of the US occupation, such as infrastructure development and the establishment of the Ryukyu Bank.

The theme was to be, in other words, that of a “natural” peace. In the entrance to the museum, plans for a map illustrating the US military advance in the Battle of Okinawa were scrapped in favour of a design displaying the sea and mountains. The Inamine administration sought to promote a less controversial self-image more conducive to mainland tastes, and one that was in harmony with the islands’ status as popular tourist spot for money-spending leisure-seekers. “It is natural,” LDP representative Ajitomi Osamu claimed, “that alterations and compromises should be made given the fact that many people will visit the exhibition, including people from mainland Japan.” Such a reinvented image of Okinawa does not dwell on the “lessons of history” but emphasizes the island’s iridescent future: “rather than lamenting over the past, it is better to firmly grasp the future.”

The aspect of war most irreconcilable with such an image are depictions of the gama, the caves that dot the Okinawan landscape and that were used as air-raid and battle shelters during the war. As in the earlier textbook disputes of the 1980s, cases of “collective suicide” emerged as a highly explosive issue. By far the most widely-reported incident in the controversy over Mabuni concerned alterations to a life-sized diorama depicting enforced or so called ‘collective’ suicide within a recreated scene of the gama. The diorama was to portray a Japanese soldier pointing his rifle at an Okinawan mother and ordering her to kill her baby because the baby’s cries might be heard by the invading US military. Another scene showed a medical officer forcing

21 OT (5 September 1999).
cups of condensed milk laced with potassium cyanide onto injured soldiers. However, when Hoshi Masahiko, a member of the supervisory committee, visited the workshop on the eve of the outbreak of the revelations over the attempted changes, he found that the soldier no longer had a rifle but was merely staring at the family hiding in the cave. The soldier with cyanide had disappeared.

Museum planning committee member Ōshiro Masayasu reflected on the meaning of the Japanese soldier diorama in the reconstructed gama stating:

The gun on the foot soldier at the entrance to the cave is not pointed towards any one person in particular, but towards all the civilian refugees. The gun symbolizes the rationale of the military, which holds the power of life or death over the civilians. At any moment, the civilians may be murdered, they may commit mass suicide, or they may be blasted by flame throwers from the US army’s indiscriminate onslaught. An extreme situation, where you have no idea what is going to happen next—this is what we re-enacted in the gama display.24

Work on the diorama ceased after the alterations became publicly known. Following Deputy Governor Ishikawa’s apology, the museum planning committee ordered that the gun be restored but agreed to slightly lower its position so that it did not point directly at the mother, making it ambiguous as to whether the soldier is threatening or protecting the civilian family. A month later, the Bereaved Families Association, trustees of the Break of Dawn Monument, met Inamine to submit a formal complaint about the soldier display and its potential to “discourage national sentiment.”25

In the Name of Peace: Memory and Protest in Okinawa

In his epic work, Embracing Defeat, John Dower traces the process through which Japan as a defeated nation came to remember and atone for its dead. The

24 Ōshiro Masayasu, “Kenjū wa dare ni mukerareta ka,” in Okinaawaken Rekishi Kyōikusha Kyōgikai, “Rekishi no shinjitsu wa yugamete wa naranai,” Rekishi to Jissen No. 20 (December 1999), p. 35.
emergence of a rhetoric of democracy and peace was, he observes, in many respects a "nationalistic plea to forgive the dishonoured dead"; a "smoke screen" which obscured the horrendous realities of Japanese war atrocities, and inevitably worked upon a sense of victim consciousness. Yet though the ideology of the peace movement in Japan was from the outset tied to a nationalist narrative, its critical stream of thought should not be underestimated nor discounted. This is especially pertinent in the case of Okinawa. As with Ōta's analyses on war, the Okinawan peace movement as a whole has accommodated a complex conjunction of at times contradictory elements—including both a sense of victimization and a radical critique of Japanese nationalism.

Critics spoke out against the Inamine administration's alteration plans for the Mabuni Museum as soon as they were made public. The protests focused on four related issues: the secrecy surrounding the attempted alterations, the lack of consultation with the respective oversight committees, the government's continual denials that alterations had been made, and the attempts to alter the "truth" of the Battle of Okinawan. In reality the decisive feature viewed as encompassing the "truth" of the Battle of Okinawa, expressed by the phrase "Okinawasen no jissō," was not always the same. A shared collective memory and sense of critical thought, however, did exist, working to ensure solidarity between the disparate groups which make up the "peace movement" in Okinawa. The urgency and importance of displaying the "realities" of war in the context of the museum was also repeatedly expressed in association with the dwindling numbers of war survivors, and the sense of a prevailing crisis of memory of the war.

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26 Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II, p. 521.
27 See for example the important discussion of war remembrance within Japan's anti-Vietnam War movement and after in Ishida Takeshi, Kikoku to bōkyaku no seijigaku (Tokyo: Meiseki Shoten, 2000), especially pp. 181-237.
Shimabukuro Muneyasu, committee director of the Socialist Popular Party, stated that the inescapable historical truth of the Battle of Okinawa lay in the fact that “the Japanese army had directed their guns towards the people of Okinawa prefecture, and that the atrocities of collective suicide occurred.” In an emotional meeting with high-level prefectural bureaucrats who had monitored the alteration process, the Director of the Okinawa Prefectural Teachers Association, Aragaki Hitohide, condemned their actions as “a serious betrayal of the people of Okinawa.”

On 18 September, a symposium was organized by peace groups in protest of the attempted alterations, entitled “How Should the Realities of the Battle of Okinawa be Portrayed? Urgent Symposium on the New Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum Issue.” At the gathering, anti-base peace activists, often the most vocal at such meetings, fell solemnly silent while survivors from the war took the stage and recounted their personal experiences.

In his paper given at the symposium, Aniya Masaaki focused on the sufferings of Okinawans during the war, concluding that: “A determined stance which perceives objectively the realities and causes of the war, which brings to light the injuries incurred by the people, and which prosecutes those who inflicted this harm, is needed. Otherwise, the distortion of the Peace Memorial will prevail.”

An editorial piece in the Okinawa Times rather sought to move beyond historical perceptions which promoted a sense of victim consciousness through the separation of the “state” from the “people”, noting:

In issues relating to the Battle of Okinawa, the presence of a strong sense of victimization has been the target of frequent criticism. However, from this debate is has also come to be perceived that Okinawans were also the aggressors in

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28 OT (1 September 1999).
29 RS (2 September 1999).
30 RS (19 September 1999).
Japan's wars...From there, people reflected on war as something carried out by both states and the people. These are vital factors which form the basis of "Okinawan pacifism."

In another well-reported act of protest, Kudeken Kentoshi, a local historian and collector of war memorabilia, visited the original Mabuni museum and retrieved the first portion of the 150 items that he had donated to it, including an iron canteen dented with bullet holes, army documents containing regulations for the administration of "Comfort Women" stations in Okinawa, and a wedding dress made from a parachute. Asked why he was withdrawing the items, Kudeken stated: "I have heard that the Governor is prohibiting any displays which may conflict with the central government. As all my material conflicts with the government, it has become at odds with the exhibit content advocated (by the prefectural administration)."

Local newspapers were flooded with letters on the controversy. A poem entitled "The Battle of Okinawa and Consoling the Spirits" contributed to Ryūkyū Shinpō by Shimabukuro Tetsu was a highly critical rendering of war, expressing the necessity of remembrance through anger and remorse. It begins:

The 32nd Division was the 'sacrifice' offered by Imperial headquarters and the Emperor.
It was just as in Saipan and Ijima.
They were the 'sacrifices' placed into the hands of the US military as a means of biding time, in the face of imminent defeat.
Soldiers who killed the defenceless in China now, in Okinawa, were themselves killed by overwhelming forces, Embroiling Okinawan civilians into the battle, even more defenceless.
It was just as in the Philippines.

The last four lines read:

31 RS (11 September 1999). Also reported in the Okinawa Times Weekly (21 August 1999).
The irresponsibility, recklessness, terrorism, stupidity, debauchery, amorality, and cruelty of the Imperial Army had no confines. Do not tell lies to those fallen. If you want to console the spirits, speak to them of the true rationale for their deaths.\textsuperscript{32}

Of the readers’ contributions on the peace memorial issue, the one which most succinctly avoided a “traffic accident” version of war (that which made out that no one wanted it and that everyone was a victim)\textsuperscript{33} was a letter to the Okinawa Times (“Opinion”, 29 September 1999) submitted by a “construction worker” from Urasoe City, Okinawa. The letter directly associated the obscuring of responsibility for the war in Japan, the object of criticism by other countries in Asia, with the institutionalisation of unaccountability in domestic politics—a system to which the people of Japan seem oblivious. The contributor concluded that the prefectural government should take responsibility for having attempted changes to museum exhibits, as a step towards breaking free of this system.\textsuperscript{34}

In a book published on the eve of the Summit, Ōta Masahide himself stressed the difference between his and Inamine’s conceptualisations of “peace,” and placed the Peace Memorial Museum issue in the context of Inamine’s position on Futenma relocation. He was particularly critical of the so-called “fifteen year limit” which Inamine at least officially held as a condition for accepting base construction. If such a limit was conceivable, Ōta reasoned, there was no reason to relocate the base at all. In reality, Ōta concluded, the “fifteen year-limit” was a patent ploy. He disparaged: “It is precisely because the current prefectural administration holds such a totally

\textsuperscript{32} RS (5 October 1999).
\textsuperscript{33} Brian Ladd citing a comment made by historian Reinhart Koselleck in relation to controversies over the building of the national memorial in Neue Wache, Berlin (Ladd, Ghosts of Berlin, (New York: W. W. Norton/ New Press, 1999), p. 221).
\textsuperscript{34} OT (29 September 1999) (“Opinion,” p. 5).
contradictory ideology that they show no compunction in changing the exhibition content of the Peace Memorial Museum. 35

Much of the protest centred on the Inamine administration’s attempts to curry favour with the Japanese government. For many, this was the most alarming aspect of a dispute—the symbol of a historical and political Rubicon which Okinawa seemed on the brink of crossing. At the end of December, 1999, under pressure from Inamine and the national government and after a nineteen-hour marathon debate, the Nago City Assembly and Mayor Kishimoto Tateo agreed to accept relocation of Futenma Base to Camp Schwab, adjacent to Henoko village on the northeast coast of Okinawa. For the first time in the history of Okinawa, the prefecture’s head and local elected representatives had actually requested the construction of a new base on the island.

Ironically, the most tangible position taken by Inamine throughout the museum controversy (apart from denying his connection to the alterations) was a relativist one. There are, he suggested at the end of August, “various choices available in conveying the realities of the Battle of Okinawa,” because there are “various ‘truths’ of the war” (sensō no jissō wa iroiro aru). While the truth was always to be conveyed, the issue of which opinion was “the best” was “a matter of choice” (sentakku no mondai). However, Inamine never clarified the substance of these different “truths.” Far from encouraging historical debate on the issue, the process of alteration was conducted behind closed doors and, until public outrage made it untenable, in the utmost secrecy. As James E. Young observes in relation to Holocaust memorials in Europe, in planning a memorial, debate and the disclosure of information are both essential in ensuring that the act of remembrance does not become the unshouldering of memorial burdens—and the end of memory itself. 36 Lack of public disclosure on the memorial issue also coincided with attempts to ostracize anti-base political activists, as the prefectural assembly passed

35 Ōta Masahide, Okinawa: Kichi naki shima e no dōhyō, op cit., pp. 199-200.
36 At Memory’s Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture.
legislation in early 2000 recommending that members of Okinawa’s Anti-war Landowners Association should not have the right to become public servants within the prefecture.37

The Okinawa Initiative Debate

Less than a year after the museum dispute erupted, Okinawa became embroiled in yet another fierce debate over its identity, history, and the base issue in what was known as the “Okinawa Initiative” dispute. The “Okinawa Initiative” was actually two different but interrelated papers. The first, entitled “Toward an ‘Okinawa Initiative’: A Possible Role for Okinawa in the Asia-Pacific”38 was a presentation made by Inamine’s “brain trust,” professors Takara Kurayoshi, Ōshiro Tsuneo, and Maeshiro Morisada at the Asia Pacific Agenda Project forum held in Okinawa at the end of March, 2000. The other was an earlier and more detailed report entitled “Okinawa Initiative: Okinawa, Japan, and the world” compiled by a committee of four members including Takara and chaired by Shimada Haruo, a professor at Keio University. It was sponsored by the Japan Productivity Centre for Socio-Economic Development (JPC-SED). The four authors compiled the paper in their capacity as members of an “Economic Stimulus Workshop” (keizai kasseika bukai) established by JPC-SED in anticipation of the Okinawa-Kyushu G-8 Summit.39 The Initiatives disavowed the significance of Okinawan history and called for a re-evaluation of the role played by the US-Japan security alliance, as well as Okinawa’s “contribution” to this role.40

37 OT (30 March 2000).
38 The title of the English translation presented at the forum is: “Toward an ‘Okinawa Initiative’: A Possible Role for Okinawa in Asia Pacific” (sic.). All citations are my own translation from the Japanese original.
39 While the content of both the APAP and the JPC-SED Initiative is very similar, the JPC-SED paper is lengthier and includes more detailed policy formulations.
40 “Okinawa inihiitatebu: Okinawa, Nihon, soshite sekai” was compiled by the Japan Productivity Center for Socioeconomic Development (JPC-SED), at http://www.jpc-sed.or.jp/index/html.
The JPC-SED, formed in 1994, was designed to prepare Japan to be economically competitive in a new global environment. The JPC-SED’s “Okinawa Initiative” lays out their ideas on how to incorporate Okinawa into that larger goal. While similar to the APAP Initiative, the JPC-SED Initiative’s tone is in parts very different. For example, the APAP Initiative asserts the need for Okinawa “to display an independent governance...in contrast to an extremely Tokyo-centred form of governance,” but that concern for autonomy is missing in the JPC-SED-sponsored paper (herein referred to as the “Shimada Okinawa Initiative” after workshop leader Shimada Haruo).

In his chapter in the Shimada Okinawa Initiative, Takara advocates a “pragmatic” solution to the Futenma relocation issue, one that is not dominated by “historical issues” such as the fact that the land within the base was originally appropriated by force in the early stages of the cold war. Uehara calls for a new airport and special infrastructure in the northern and more “backward” region of Okinawa. Both propositions mirrored Inamine administration and central government attempts to secure Nago, in the northern area of Okinawa, as the site for the new base, now under the concept of “Joint Civilian and Military Airport.” The Shimada Initiative endeavoured to reaffirm the political, economic, and ideological ‘foundations’ necessary to secure this site, as well as US and Japanese strategic interest in Okinawa.

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41 It was created when the Japan Productivity Center (JPC) and the Social and Economic Congress of Japan (SECJ) merged, and its honorary board includes representatives from some of Japan’s largest companies, such as Sumitomo and Toshiba, as well as the chairman of the Japanese Trade Union Confederation. JPC was established in 1955 and was at the forefront of promoting a policy of tripartite cooperation among management, labor, and academics in Japan, a fundamental aspect of the Japanese management system. Facing the breakdown of Japanese-style ‘consensus’ management in the 1990s, the revamped JPC-SED upholds as its founding principle the creation of a “highly productive society,” and the need for Japan to, “through the attainment of structural reform, come out on top in this era of megacompetition and in the midst of the advancing globalization of the world, and carry out a role worthy of its economic power.” See http://www.jpc-sed.or.jp/engleng01.htm.

42 Summary and full text available at http://www2.jpc-sed.or.jp/fil. See also summary and analysis by Egami Takayoshi, “Shinhoshu no ronri tenkai 3kyōju to seisansai honbu no teigen,” RS (5 June 2000).
on a broader level. A focal point of this policy, and the Initiative proposal, is the holding of the G-8 Summit in Nago. “Just at this time, in July of this year,” Shimada noted in the introduction, “the G-8 Head of States meeting will be held in Okinawa.” “Utilizing this Okinawa Summit as an opportunity,” Shimada claimed, “Okinawa is being asked to redefine its own potential, and, as an Okinawan initiative, to conceive of and advance a plan as active player.” “For the first time ever,” he continued, “Okinawa possesses in its hands the opportunity to pragmatically and rationally improve the US military base issue through its own judgement, and furthermore use this as a chance to autonomously develop the Okinawan economy.”

As well as leading the workshop, Shimada authored the first section or approximately half of the total final paper. As examined earlier (see Chapter Four), Shimada holds intimate ties to the national government and played a key role in the conception and implementation of government compensation policies in the wake of the surge of the anti-base movement in late 1995. The Okinawa Initiative sought to disarm the anti-base movement by building the ideological foundations of a pro-base, pro-Japanese government stance for Okinawa. In the context of compensation policies, the alliance linking local business (including influential construction lobby groups), the LDP, and the Kōmei party ally has proven particularly effective in securing election victories for Okinawa’s conservative coalition in recent years—notably in the Nago mayoral election of February 1998, the gubernatorial election in November of the same year, and the Naha mayoral election of November 2000. At the same time, however, anti-base sentiment still exists. In a joint Asahi/Okinawa Times opinion poll taken in December 1999, a large majority (59% against, 23% for) of Nago residents remained opposed to the relocation of Futenma Airbase to Nago.

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Summary and full text available at http://www2jpc-s&!.or.jp/.

Cited in editorial, OT (22 June 2000), p. 5.
The Okinawa Initiative was thus part of the contemporary process whereby a depoliticised idea of Okinawan-ness is reappropriated into reified hegemonic conservative constructions of the nation state. In a presentation to Obuchi’s Prime Ministerial Commission in July 1999, Takara made the point that: “Okinawa’s unstable local sentiment and a perception of being historically victimized has the tendency to obstruct future debate on the US-Japan security system.”45 In other words, Okinawa’s sense of identity and longstanding unequal treatment holds the potential to conflict with—or for the Inamine administration and the Japanese government “obstruct”—future attempts to secure US and Japanese government interests in Okinawa. Takara warned that unless a way was found to “incorporate” and “absorb” Okinawan local sentiment within national policy-making processes, the “stability” of Okinawa could not be ensured. Takara’s commission paper, the APAP Okinawa Initiative, and the Shimada Okinawa Initiative may be seen as an attempt to find this “way.”

This is not to say Takara’s position is in complete consonance with central government interests. In comparing the two initiative papers, Inamine’s brain trust was more inclined to support Okinawan “autonomy” than were the central government or Shimada. Takara and his colleagues, Maeshiro and Ōshiro, presented the “Okinawa Initiative” as an Okinawan-based proposal aimed to empower Okinawans. They called for Okinawa to display an “independent” role beyond the framework of Japan within the Asia-pacific region. Yet at the same time, the three Okinawan professors acquiesced in national policy—above all, by accepting the bases, including the construction of the new base in Nago—in return for financial benevolence. In coordination with the Shimada Initiative, the APAP paper is integrally connected to the type of compensation policies epitomized by Shimadakon. As Takara suggested, the Initiative itself was part of a “cognitive strategy” endorsed by the Japanese government: while indulging in an

etiolated form of multiculturalism, it would thereby "absorb" a sense of Okinawan identity and call for political autonomy within hegemonic national claims.

From "History Problem" to "Soft Power Solution": Taking the Initiative

Takara, Maeshiro, and Ōshiro called for a shift from an "emotional" position on the US military bases to a more "logical" one. They argued that Okinawans, who had been unable to devise an effective policy to resolve the base issue, should accept their role as host to the bases as the only economically viable option. Takara in particular articulated his stance in direct opposition to Ōta's—which he saw as exemplifying the tendency for Okinawans to see themselves as "historically victimized." In an interview with the Asahi newspaper in May 2000, Takara elaborated: "The former governor Ōta Masahide's argument puts an excessive emphasis on the relevance of the past in the present context. In other words, he utilizes history—as in his assertions as to why Okinawans love peace, etc. He is not necessarily wrong. But there are other issues. How do we view the issue of the bases or security, problems that we should responsibly consider? It is not enough to leave these issues in the air, and merely explain the cause of your actions through past experiences. At the same time that we face up to history, we must also face up to the problems we meet today."

As in the case of the attempted museum alternations, Takara's argument against "victimization" sought in particular to counter criticisms of the Japanese military's actions during the Battle of Okinawa. Unlike the Okinawa Times editorial on the attempted museum alterations, Takara did not expand his criticism of this consciousness

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46 Miyagi Kimiko explores these issues in "'Shinwa' e no shiten," Uramaneshia, no. 2 (February 2001), p. 11.
47 Aspects of the Okinawa Initiative argument were anticipated in two previous books, Takara's 'Okinawa' hihan jōsetsu, ('Okinawa' Critique: an Introduction) (Naha: Okinawa Bunko, 1997); and Okinawa no jiko kenshō, (Verifying the Okinawan Self) (Naha: Okinawa Bunko, 1998), co-authored with Maeshiro and Makino Hirotaka. Ōta Masakuni points out common threads between these works in "Misugosenai tosaku no rongi: hijo dekimu chiiki kunô," OT (6 May 2000).
48 Asahi Shinbun (15 May 2000).
to include a historical analysis of the way in which Okinawans had also played a role as aggressors within Japanese imperialism and military actions. Rather, his argument was made in the context of Japanese historical revisionism, and attempts to envisage a more active and positive Japanese subjectivity in the past as integral to conceiving a wider military role for Japan in the present.

Takara included in his analysis many of the historical factors which have become tenets of Okinawa’s anti-war movement. The Okinawa Initiative group even recognized that the Japanese military had carried out “barbarous” actions towards Okinawan civilians during battle. It discussed modern Japan’s rejection of “its own Asian-ness” in the pursuit of a Western model of industrialization, contempt of Okinawan culture for its “Asian” or backward elements, and Okinawa’s disproportionate burden of the bases. Yet this historical analysis was followed by the call for a “break” with history. “The important thing,” the Initiative group argued, “is the question of how we face our ‘history’ and our future, not remaining controlled by history, but assuming our responsibility and subjectivity as people living in the present. It is precisely we, in the present, who possess the capacity to take on our history in its entirety, and the ‘regional assets’ supplied by history to the future are also only realized through us, living in the present, as its heirs.”

Takara, Ōshiro, and Maeshiro employed a similar tactic in their observations on Okinawa’s historical relation to mainland Japan. The three professors initially conceded that Okinawa possesses a unique history which is different from the rest of Japan. They outlined a historical narrative of Okinawa, beginning with the formation of the Ryukyu Kingdom. They emphasized the hardships which Okinawa had experienced—the lingering wounds of war; US occupation, and the unfair base burden. While

49 Takara Kurayoshi, Maeshiro Morisada and Ōshiro Tsuneo (eds.) Okinawa Inishiatibu: Okinawa hatsu chiteki senryaku, p. 47.

50 The entire text of the APAP paper is reproduced in Okinawa Inishiatibu, 38-55.
rhetorically affirming Okinawa’s historical uniqueness, however, the Initiative emphasized the need for Okinawa’s integration within Japan, and argued that Okinawans had always desired that integration.

The authors asserted that Okinawa possesses a unique culture different from that of mainland Japan, yet qualified Okinawa’s uniqueness by stressing that this culture is “not ‘totally foreign’ (kanzen na gaikoku) to Japanese culture,” and that its “roots are the same.” 51 Analysing the Okinawan reversion movement under US occupation, Takara and his colleagues stress that “for the people of Okinawa, Japan was culturally their closest presence.” The Initiative paper concluded that the people of Okinawa “chose Japan as the country to which they should belong.” 52 In the analysis of both Okinawan culture and the reversion movement, the authors maintain this conflation of distinctiveness and Japaneseness by separating “origins” from “history:” “If origins are emphasized, both Okinawa and Japan maintain a close affinity, but if one emphasizes historical outcomes, they are comparatively separate.” 53

The Initiative also claimed that the Okinawan reversion movement from 1952-72 was fuelled by an Okinawan desire to reunite with Japan and was inherently nationalist in character. In other words, in direct opposition to Ōta’s stance, the Okinawa Initiative wrote over the long history of Okinawa’s anti-base movement and disappointment with the terms of reversion, and instead stressed the positive aspects of reversion.

The Initiative group acknowledged that Okinawa carried the burden of hosting approximately 75 percent of all US bases in Japan, and recognized that anti-base sentiment was “deep rooted” in Okinawa. They outlined the reasons why Okinawans opposed the bases—the legacy of the Battle of Okinawa, the forceful expropriation of

51 Ibid., 42.
52 Ibid., 45.
53 Ibid., 42.
base land from Okinawan landowners in the 1950s, and the ongoing damage the base inflicted on local communities. Yet the Initiative also attempted to “separate” these reasons from the contribution the bases made to Japanese national security. In an implicit attack on Article Nine of the Japanese Constitution, the group rejected what they referred to as “absolute pacifist” ideals, and affirmed the importance of military intervention to ensure security. “The present issue of the US bases is not an issue of the propriety of the bases,” the group concluded, “but an issue of how their effective operation and the security of local residents may be reconciled.”

The Initiative praised Okinawa for making the “greatest contribution” to Japan’s security of any region of Japan.

The Initiative sought to diffuse Okinawa’s history of discrimination and strong pacifist sentiment by conceiving of them in “universal terms” (fuhen teki na kotoba). Here too it presented a counter ideology to Ōta’s envisioning of both an “Okinawan” and “human” identity in ambivalent opposition to a Japanese “national” one. In contrast, the Initiative’s definition of universalism was premised on the primary importance of a homogenous national identity: “In the present, when the foundations of the nation-state have begun to crumble, it is vital not to side with this trend, but rather for Okinawa to conduct a new self-definition that helps construct Japan’s emerging national image.”

The Initiative argued that Okinawans’ concern for their own history was a “problem” that must be “overcome” for Okinawa to “become a joint partner in the process of constructing a new national image in the twenty-first century.” History was a tool for state-building: “We in the present are the ones who define history, and for this very reason, our responsibility and awareness in possessing ‘universal terms’ will be scrutinized by history.”

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54 Ibid., 49-51.
55 Ibid., 52-5.
56 Ibid., 48.
Those "universal terms," the Okinawa Initiative argued, required Okinawans to reaffirm their commitment to Japan's national project. In return, the Japanese Government promised greater financial compensation to Okinawa. The Initiative authors used the logic of the capitalist market to support their reasoning. Takara observed: "Economic factors, as expressed in the term market economy, are in this day and age the determining factors which govern the world and our lives. I believe that a realistic debate is one which holds a comprehensive perception, knowledge, and stance."57 Expanding on Takara's observation, Ōshiro spelled the base-for-cash logic out as follows: "The Japanese government will not recognize it officially, but the reality is that, in order to maintain the stability of the bases, the cornerstone of the US-Japan security alliance, a form of economic management has been employed that links the bases with the economic stimulus of Okinawa."58 The Initiative's prioritisation of national ideology and financial subsidy over local sentiment and history in the name of "universalism" was an implicit call to recognize and accept this "reality."

Yet the Initiative also supplemented appeals to the importance of financial gain with a focus on the issues of cultural identity. It suggested that Okinawa's place in the new millennium may be "discovered" at the intersecting point of two inscriptions, which read: "Here Japan Ends and Asia Begins," and "Here Asia Ends and Japan Begins." Reaffirming the very construction of Japan apart from Asia that they earlier had criticized as the dilemma of Japan's modernity, the Initiative treated Okinawa as both part of and not part of Japan or Asia. It claimed that Okinawa can be the "nexus of a problem-solving solution" (chi teki na kaiketsu sochi) linking Japan with the Asian region. Ultimately this entailed not only the negation of Okinawans' own cultural and historical experience, but the separation of Japan from "Asia."59

57 Ibid., 24.
58 Ibid., 24-5.
59 Laura Hein and Ellen H. Hammond provide insightful observations on Japan's ambivalent and
The Initiative group hoped to use Okinawan difference to pave the way for better Japanese relations with other Asian nations. In the APAP paper, Takara, Oshiro and Maeshiro concluded that the Initiative concept comprised: "our self-awareness and sense of responsibility in seeking a solution to various 'historical problems' within the Asia-Pacific region, using the 'soft power' of Okinawa as a key." Maeshiro defined "soft power" as the ability "to hold pride in our culture, to utilize the suffering felt as a minority, to hold a strong will in the love for peace and hatred of war, and furthermore, to speak in universal terms of the fact that Okinawa is a region which desires to convey such experiences to the people of the world." Yet the Initiative evaded, rather than provided a solution to, the issue of past Japanese military aggression. It sought to play down the significance of historical responsibility, and emphasize the importance of national paradigms.

Within visions of Okinawa as the cultural and historical stepping stone to Asia, the Initiative also reconfirmed Okinawa's paramount role as Japan's most vital military strategic link to the US, within a framework which both expanded Japan's military role and maintained its subordination to US global military power. The Initiative was itself intimately connected to JG policy tools set in place in an effort to ensure Okinawan deference to this designated role. In this sense, critics of the Initiative pointed out that the Initiative's calls to "soft power" were in fact premised on, and complicit with, the "hard power" of the US military and US-Japan security relations.

**Opposing Claims to "Okinawan" Peace, Place, and Past**


60 Okinawa Inishiatibu, p. 55.
61 Ibid., p. 129.
The claims of the Initiative paper were significant precisely because of the politicised context in which they were made, and because they represented a stance intrinsic to Inamine’s new administration. While numerous Okinawan economists and business entrepreneurs had long supported the bases for economic reasons, the Initiative questioned the very importance of Okinawa’s history. The majority of Okinawa’s prominent postwar historians, including Takara himself in earlier years, were critical of Japan’s assimilationist policies and homogenizing forces. The Okinawa Initiative countered the historical perception and political position of Ōta and his supporters, and it bore the imprimatur both of the national and prefectural governments. Moreover, it was applauded by the right-wing Sankei newspaper as leaving a “deep impression” on its audience. At least since the eve of reversion, claims to Okinawan identity had been intimately connected to attempts to resist both the terms of reversion and the way in which Okinawa was incorporated into Japan. Yet the Okinawa Initiative was indicative of the process whereby constructions of Okinawan-ness themselves were being reincorporated within neonationalist discourse.

Following publication of the full text of the APAP presentation in local print media, Arakawa Akira severely criticized the paper as displaying a “sycophantic mentality” (dorei shisō). Takara’s subsequent defence and counter-attack was followed by a flood of responses, almost all critical of the Initiative. These criticisms focused on four interrelated issues: military security, Japan and Okinawa’s role in Asia, the historical significance of Okinawa reversion to Japan, and the Initiative’s “assimilationist” and “collaborationist” stance towards the central government.

Many respondents reiterated that the key lesson of the Battle of Okinawa was that the military protected the interests of the Japanese state, at the expense of

Okinawan civilians. In an interview in the *Asahi* newspaper, Ōta claimed that the Initiative “could only be made by those who do not know war, or the sufferings of the people.” Ōta connected the lessons of 1945 to the debate on security strategy today: “If Okinawa is said to contain some potential, it is precisely in the cherishing of peace. For what purpose, and to protect whom, was the Battle of Okinawa fought? Does the military really protect the safety of the people? How can one merely affirm that security is gained by the use of military force while brushing these issues aside, as is the current trend?”

Others criticized the Okinawa Initiative for not differentiating between limited military intervention based on international cooperation and the military role of the US bases in Okinawa. Shimabukuro Jun, University of the Ryukyus associate professor and a central supporter of the prefectural plebiscite on the base issue held in September 1996, acknowledged that limited military intervention may be a legitimate means to resolve international conflicts in cases where diplomatic measures fail. Yet he criticized the Initiative’s security analysis for failing to state the site, circumstances, or form by which military action would or should be carried out. He called for a coherent Japanese foreign policy which strictly confined the US-Japan military alliance to defence, restricted use of military force to instances in accordance with UN procedures and international law, and prioritised “above all else the building of relations of mutual trust with neighbouring countries,” rather than one in which Japan sought to exercise military force on a global level with the US as joint hegemonic power.

Ōta rejected outright the notion that Okinawa contributes to Asia by hosting the US military bases. In a direct reference to World War II, he asserted rather that such
militarisation holds "the potential to once again inflict suffering on the region." Okinawan poet and former journalist Kawamitsu Shinichi went even further, suggesting that Japan’s "initiative" towards Asia backed by the US-Japan Security Treaty is dangerously close to the aims and rhetoric of the “Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere” prewar and wartime ideology. Journalist and editor Nakazato Susumu concluded that the increase in information flow and cultural exchange through globalisation provided opportunities to open up new transnational networks across Asia, and should not be met by a reaffirmation of national ideals and further militarisation. In short, the Initiative’s critics opposed both the US military bases in Okinawa and the increased militarisation of Japan. They saw both this military presence, and the Initiative’s rhetorical moves to depict Japan as apart from Asia, as only further reinforcing Japan’s separation from, and increasing tensions within, the region.

Critics rejected the Initiative’s analysis of Okinawa’s historical relations with Japan. In particular, they did not see the Okinawa reversion movement as solely premised on a sense of common nationhood. Both Shimabukuro Jun and academic and activist Arasaki Moriteru emphasized that Okinawans’ aspirations to realize democratic and civil rights were the core aim of the movement to return to Japan. The reversion movement was, from this perspective, primarily a call to uphold the pacifist and democratic ideals of the Japanese constitution. Arasaki quoted the reversion efforts to struggle against both the US military control of Okinawa and the militarisation of Japan. He noted that the reversion movement had aimed for the reduction or complete withdrawal of the US bases. But reversion to Japan actually strengthened the US-Japan

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65 Interview with Ōta Masahide, Asahi Shinbun (16 May 2000).
66 Kawamitsu Shinichi, “‘Ajia’ gainen ni gimon: kokka shugi wa rekishi teki tanraku,” OT (13 June 2000). See also Tanaka Yasuhiro, “Chūshin shikō to anī na sutansu; ‘Ajia to Nihon o kibetsu suru ishi” (Centralism and the easy position: the will to separate Japan and Asia), OT (25 May 2000).
alliance and preserved intact the inequitable base structure. In other words: “they asked for bread, and were given stone.”

All critics rejected the Initiative’s claims that reversion was accomplished according to the terms and wishes of Okinawans. However, they did not all agree among themselves as to how to evaluate the reversion movement. In a carry over from the reversion debates of thirty years previously, Arakawa in particular criticized what he saw as Arasaki’s idealization of the reversion movement. Reminiscent of his anti-reversion stance in the early 1970’s, Arakawa argued in the Initiative debate that even if the reversion movement had been premised on an ideal of Japan’s potential, as opposed to how it actually was, by working within Japan’s national framework it still played into the hands of Japanese conservative nationalists. Arakawa also questioned the nationalist reversion-era slogans such as the call for Okinawa to “catch up” (kakusa zesei) and “become the same” (Hondo nami) as mainland Japan. Arakawa saw such slogans as inherently assimilationist, and accepting of the system of public work-centred development in Okinawa today. Arakawa explicitly criticized economic stimulus and development policies which he saw as increasing Okinawa’s economic dependency and environmental degradation. He challenged the idea that “prosperity” (yutakasa) should be the goal for Okinawans, and argued that satisfaction lay not in reinforcing the modern system of nation-states, but through what he termed “spiritual prosperity” (seishin no yutakasa) and the “indigenous” (dochaku). He concluded that all of us in the contemporary world need to discover a set of values to fight against the new

69 For an analysis of the impact of these policies see Gavan McCormack, “Okinawa Dilemmas: Coral Islands or Concrete Islands?” in Chalmers Johnson (ed.) Okinawa: Cold War Island, 261-83.
“wave” of nationalist “assimilation” symbolized by the Okinawa Initiative in order to live in the twenty-first century. “The intellectual struggle necessary to critique and overcome the new form of ‘assimilationist’ ideology propounded by Takara et al.,” Arakawa concluded, “is certainly not only an Okinawan problem.”

The most detailed criticism of the Japanese government’s “economic stimulus” compensation policies and what was seen as their “morally hazardous” effect on both local politics and democratic procedures was made by Miyagi Yasuhiro, Nago City councillor and former representative of the citizen group that had fiercely called for a referendum on the building of the new base off the coast of Nago in 1997. In Nago, in the northern region of Okinawa—in economic and development terms the periphery of Japan’s periphery—the links between economic stimulus and the base issue are the most pervasive, as are the damaging effects on the environment of the proposed base expansion and public works-centred development. Miyagi pointed out that, in an obvious bid to buy local support for the base, Nago city was the beneficiary of seven out of twenty-three of the projects advanced by Shimadakon, the highest of any municipality. Japanese government funds related to the bases jumped from 6.5% of the Nago municipal budget in 1996 to 21.3% in 2000. The overall budget increased by approximately 25% over the same period. Shimadakon projects already implemented within Nago include the construction of a “Multi-media Centre” that provides free space and facilities to private multi-media companies.

Miyagi argued that such projects mark the breakdown (and privatisation) of the public sphere at the local level, as taxpayers’ funds are used to directly fund the activities of private corporations. He predicted that the massive influx of money would result in an environmentally destructive development without solving the “drain effect” of base-related compensation—that is, the injection of large amounts of public funding

70 Arakawa Akira, Okinawa: Tōgō to hangyaku, pp. 248-59.
into costly construction projects which only increase local government debt and economic dependence. Miyagi noted that the area marked for the airbase runway will destroy one of the few remaining living coral reefs on the main island, as well as a feeding area for what are thought to be the last remaining dugongs (an endangered marine mammal) in Japan. The Inamine administration's plan to combine the military airbase facility with a civilian airport calls for a much larger runway than originally envisaged, threatening to cause even more environmental damage. Miyagi concluded: “I can only view the role played by Shimadakon as that of an opiate set to destroy Okinawa from within.”

The divisions discernible within the camp of the Okinawa Initiative's critics were a direct reflection of tensions within Okinawa's progressive movement, which are in turn in many ways a legacy of tensions inherent within the reversion movement itself. In particular, these divisions highlight pervasive questions relating both to conceptualising Okinawa's position within (or against) Japan, and the tenets of postwar economic development ideology as a whole. Are Okinawa's discontents focused only towards the US military bases per se, or are they also directed at the larger development agenda of the Japanese state, including the structure of economic compensation and public works projects? To what extent is this movement influenced, or limited by, mainland Japanese ideologies of peace and the upholding of Japan's so-called “Peace Constitution”? How do these ideologies negate, or reinforce, Japanese nationalism, and what is Okinawa's position in relation to Japan? Integral also to these issues is the dilemma of political action. Are Okinawa's struggles best fought within the Japanese political system, or do they require a rejection of these structures? If the latter, does such a “rejection” logically translate into a call for independence? Or does it entail the

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71 According to plans under negotiation, it was estimated the runway would be up to 2600 meters long and cost up to an estimated 1 trillion yen to construct.

72 Miyagi Yasuhiro, "Tankō no kanaria no utagoe: 'Shimada-kondankai' jigyō hihan," p. 36.
broader yet extremely difficult task of challenging both the modern system of nation states and the conceptualisation of progress as economic development?

In spite of these differences, the Initiative’s opponents were highly critical of what they perceived as the group’s “neo-assimilationism” (shin dōkashugi), and the strategy to integrate Okinawa into centrally conceived notions of the “national interest.” In 1999, the Obuchi cabinet passed extensive legislation in the effort to strengthen or legitimise state power, including laws designating a national flag and anthem, expanding state power during a time of military crisis (yūji) within “the area surrounding Japan” (shūhen), and enlarging police authority to conduct surveillance on the Japanese population. In July 1999, a further revision of the Special Measures Law on land utilized by the US military was also passed under the rubric of “promoting devolution” giving the Prime Minister direct power over the proxy functions that had been hitherto been delegated to local government. Many of the Okinawa Initiative critics saw the Okinawa Initiative as part of an attempt to reaffirm state power and promote homogenisation.

The Initiative’s critics shared a deep dissatisfaction with the present US base situation in Okinawa, and a sense that the Okinawa Initiative was an instrument designed to help incorporate Okinawa within the US-Japan security framework. In an interview almost a year after the G-8 Summit, anti-base activist and local councillor Chibana Shōichi succinctly summed up the frustrated sentiment of anti-base activists and intellectuals when he observed: “The logic of the Okinawa Initiative is that no matter how much Okinawa has resisted the bases they remain, so therefore we should accept them and utilize their presence for our own gain. But the argument is premised

73 OT(9 July 1999).
on the notion that Okinawa cannot choose its own destiny. If this is accepted as ‘reality’ the future necessarily will be that simply nothing changes.”

Picking Up the Pieces: A New Peace for the Twenty-first Century?

Directly prior to the Okinawa G-8 Summit, moves were also made to integrate the Cornerstone of Peace within both a Japanese nationalist narrative and a pro-US–Japan security treaty stance. On the Day for Consoling the Spirits in June 2000, Inamine invited the Commander of US Forces in Okinawa to commemorations at Mabuni for the first time. There, Inamine and Prime Minister Mori Yoshiro presented flowers in front of a large Rising Sun motif. In a contribution to a local newspaper, novelist Medoruma Shun denounced the “Yasukuni-ification” of the Cornerstone of Peace, and the presence of the US military commander, stating: “it is necessary to be aware that this is, following on from the alteration of the new peace museums’ exhibits, a modification of the contents of ‘the Day for Consoling the Spirits’ and...the historical perception of the Battle of Okinawa.”

The climactic soliloquy reaffirming such an integration was given by then US President Bill Clinton, who in a three-day trip to attend the G-8 Heads of State Meeting became the first US president to visit Okinawa since Eisenhower was met with large-scale pro-reversion protests forty years previously. The day before Clinton’s momentous visit, on the eve of the G-8 Summit, former Okinawan governor Ōta Masahide denounced the Japanese and US governments’ intentions to perform a ceremonial confirmation of “peace” and US-Japan security relations at Mabuni. In an article in the Japan Times, he wrote:

Why did we want to leave for posterity a monument which has carved on it the

75 Interview with Chibana Shōichi (3 July 2000).
76 RS (22 June 2000).
names of all those fallen in the Battle of Okinawa—regardless of whether they be friend or foe, soldiers or nonsoldiers?

This was so that we would admonish ourselves, be sure to lend an ear to the voices of the dead and look squarely at the stark fact that war leaves the bereaved family and friends with irreparable scars and unfathomable sorrow for as long as they live, no matter whether they are victor or loser.

Thus, if the governments of Japan and the US and top officials in the US armed forces in Okinawa think that in the name of securing “peace and security” in Japan and the Asia-Pacific region, they can reaffirm the importance of the bases in Okinawa and praise the US presence as a “deterrent” in front of the Heiwa no Ishiji monument, I can only say that such an act not only desecrates the dead, but also runs counter to the spirit of the monument, which Okinawans erected with the hope and prayer for peace.77

A day later, on 21 July 2000, US President Bill Clinton made his planned historic speech in front of the Cornerstone. Clinton cited a famous poem said to have been read out by the last Ryukyuan king, Shō Tai, before he was banished to Tokyo in 1879: “The time for wars is ending, and the time for peace is not far away. Do not despair. Life is a treasure.” “May Shō Tai’s words,” concluded Clinton, sweltering under the Okinawan sun, “be our prayer as well as our goal here today.” Through explicit references to King Shō Tai, Clinton sought to appeal to Okinawan’s perceived traditional desire for peace—now translated as necessitating the maintenance of the US presence in East Asia, the US-Japan military alliance, and the US military presence in Okinawa.

Takara Kurayoshi’s prediction that the G-8 Summit would prove an “opportunity” for Okinawa to “learn” about the essence of “global power” certainly proved true.78 In a similar way to the Marine Expo over twenty five years earlier,

preparations for the Summit in Okinawa became integrally tied to both the further entrenchment of a public works project-centred system of compensation, and the promotion of a certain definition of national belonging—now also framed in opposition to Ōta’s policies and his conceptualisations of Okinawan history and identity. Within this context, as revealed by both the museum controversy and the Okinawan Initiative debate, the discursive realm of Okinawan identity emerged as a highly contested battle ground within which wider political and cultural struggles were fought out. The ensuing contests revealed important connections between political, economic, and cultural power relations, and highlighted the connected process whereby historical knowledge, security discourse, and political, economic, and military structures are both contested and reified.

In the context of Okinawa and Japan as a whole, the fall of the Soviet Union and the advance of capital on a global scale has not led to either demilitarisation or a decline in nationalism. The breakdown of the Cold War order was accompanied in Japan as elsewhere by the opening up of possibilities for more diverse historical narratives and memories, the emergence of movements calling for the recognition of responsibility for atrocities committed in the past, and a challenging of essentialized claims to national identity and homogeneity. At the same time, and in part as a backlash against these currents, there has emerged a widespread reactionary tendency to reinforce a sense of social and cultural stability through exclusionist claims to a sense of national belonging, and the imposition of abstractly and symbolically imposed formulations of a hegemonic national ideal. Such reactionary movements also often call for a reinforcement of disciplinary and security regimes, as the line between domestic and global structures of surveillance and control has increasingly broken down. As William E. Connolly observed as early as 1990 “As obstacles to efficacy apply, the state increasingly sustains collective identity through theatrical displays of punishment and revenge against those elements that threaten to signify its inefficacy. It launches dramatized crusades against
the internal other (low-level criminals, drug users, disloyalists, racial minorities, and the underclass), the external other (foreign enemies and terrorists) and the interior other (those strains of abnormality, subversion, and perversity that may reside within anyone).” 79

In Japan, as the dictates of the free market and increased competition threaten the foundations of its developmentalist state structure, the ruling government coalition has sought to expand the state’s symbolic-ideological resources in order to ensure its own legitimacy. 80 In this way, as Kang Sang-jung and Yoshimi Shunya point out, globalisation and nationalism have become often mutually reinforcing rather than opposing phenomena. The breakdown of social security networks embedded within the system of life-employment, increasing mass and highly fluid globalised monetary flows, and a general increase in social and international instability have combined with stagnated recession and the collapse of the “Japanese miracle” to promote manifold hegemonic crisis. In this context, two contradictory yet at times mutually reinforcing inclinations can be discerned. On the one hand, the increasing proliferation of “postmodern cultural conditions” further promotes the hybridisation and fragmentation of the subject, while on the other, these phenomenon are accompanied by a concurrent “return” to the desire for closed identity, subjectivity, and transcendental meaning.

As Yumiko Iida observes, as a result, a new type of nationalism has emerged within Japanese public discourse since the 1990s which is directly linked to the breakdown of national hegemonies and ruptures within the discursive terrain. A widespread ambiguity of meaning and dislocation in logic within public and intellectual discourse in fact served to accelerate the emergence and popularity of this new nationalism. Neo-nationalist historical revisionist discourses have cultivated anxieties in

the subject and rechannelled them into a reified nationalist narrative structure, often working within a framework which exploits the very discursive fragmentation of constructions of subjectivity and rationalist logic which precipitated the breakdown of narrative structures in the first. As Iida concludes: "In this sense, the seemingly contradictory phenomena of the self-indulgent play with language and the desire for subjectivity/meaning were both manifestations of a single historical event, namely, the troublesome maturing process of Japanese identity, taking form as a highly advanced ‘postmodern’ consumer society in which the absence of exteriority or the Other (i.e. that which stands outside of the hermeneutic surface) is increasingly felt."

The at once tense and yet often mutually reinforcing relation between the commodification of culture and increasing nationalism is a widespread phenomenon by no means restricted only to Japan. Prasenjit Duara observes a similar process in his analysis of gendered regimes of authority within contemporary Chinese nationalism, concluding:

As we look outward from the last decade of the twentieth century, at a time of accelerating globalisation and the transformation of customary notions of sovereignty, there appears to be an increasing commodification of the symbols of authenticity. This would appear to breach the demarcation of the two spheres of the market and authenticity, and in some cases it is possible that such a commodification...has already eroded its symbolic capacity to represent the identifiable core of an evolving nation. But we also see a paradoxical development in which the discourse of cultural authenticity intensifies with the commodification of its symbols. Thus, in China today, where the tornado of global capitalism has whipped up an unprecedented pace of change, we are also witnessing a wave of nationalism not seen in a long time. The nationalist rhetoric resorts to arguments about national inviolability based upon old and new images of authenticity.  

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81 Prasenjit Duara, "The Regime of Authenticity: Timelessness, Gender, and National History in Modern China," pp. 380-1.
The Inamine administration’s attempts to change museum displays, and the Okinawa Initiative policy papers, emerged within this context and were an integral part of it. Inamine’s attempts to justify the display changes through claiming a historical relativism, and even more clearly the dislocations in logic of argument and ruptures in meaning embedded within the “Okinawa Initiative”, were indicative of the way in which a postmodern discursive displacement of the subject may be strategically evoked to reify hegemonic national narratives and a homogenous national subjectivity. In this sense, the Okinawa Initiative employed a logic not dissimilar to historical revisionists such as Fujioka Nobukatsu, Tokyo professor and leading figure within the Liberal View of History Study Group and Society for the Making of New School Textbooks in History historical revisionist movements. As Gavan McCormack has observed, Fujioka on the one hand presented his argument as moving beyond ideological dualism and a historical orthodoxy which separated the “good” (zendama) from the “bad” (akadama). Yet this “liberal” rejection of polemical historical debates in the name of historical relativism was also accompanied by a call to “correct history” through the upholding of a sense of pride in Japan and a distinctive Japanese historical consciousness.82

The Okinawa Initiative called for Okinawans to reject a “victimized” historical perception in order to achieve subjectivity, and consequently become the determiners of their own destiny. On one level the Okinawa Initiative promoted the envisioning of a collective Okinawan identity and sense of history through focusing on the uniqueness of Okinawan culture and historical experience, and Okinawa’s “suffering” experienced in the war and post-war eras. On another level, the Initiative promoted a semiotic rupture between this past and the present. A sense of Okinawan political agency in the present was evoked, in other words, through a simultaneous upholding and rejection of an Okinawan historical subject. This historical rupture enabled Okinawan Initiative

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82 Gavan McCormack, “The Japanese Movement to ‘Correct’ History” in Mark Selden and Laura Hein (eds.) Censoring History: Citizenship and Memory in Japan, Germany, and the United States, pp. 53-73.
advocates to speak for “Okinawans”, while avoiding engaging in highly contentious issues relating to the historical position of Okinawa, and the contradictions such a position may pose for re-authentication of a homogenized Japanese national identity.

The Inamine administration’s stance on the peace museums, and even more clearly the Okinawa Initiative, thus signified a significant semiotic and ideological shift within Okinawan public and intellectual discourse. From at least the years directly prior to reversion, a sense of Okinawan identity, as symbolized in Ōta’s vision of the “Okinawan Spirit,” was most frequently evoked in the pursuit of a discursive site of resistance to mobilize against Okinawa’s incorporation within centralized cultural and political frameworks of power. In contrast, through the double evocation and rejection of claims to Okinawan identity and history, the Okinawa Initiative group laid claim to a sense of “Okinawan-ness” at the same time as incorporating excessive and overdetermined claims to a homogenized “Japanese-ness.” This discursive shift was in turn an integral part of an ideological shift—wherein Okinawan autonomy was presented as compliance with central government policies, and political agency the ability to negotiate financial subsidies in return. Under postmodern conditions, as Zygmunt Bauman observes:

Diversity thrives; and the market-place thrives with it. More precisely, only such diversity is allowed to thrive as benefits the market. As the humourless, power-greedy and jealous national state did before, the market abhors self-management and autonomy—the wilderness it cannot control. As before, autonomy has to be fought for, if diversity is to mean anything but variety of marketable life-styles—a thin varnish of changeable fashions meant to hide the uniformly market-dependent condition. 83

The contemporary shift within Okinawa’s political and discursive terrain may be seen as inherently related to the market-driven conditions whereby difference is

concurrently celebrated within a postmodern hybridised discursive space and globalised cultures of consumption, and reincorporated into centralized economic and political structures and conceptualisations of national belonging. Within this process, which Tessa Morris-Suzuki has termed “cosmetic multiculturalism,” cultural difference is commercialised and consumed at the same time that alternative claims to cultural, political, and economic autonomy are often denied.\(^4\) Morris-Suzuki cites both the “Ainu Cultural Promotion Legislation” (Ainu bunka Shinkō hō) and the promotion of Okinawan culture during the G-8 summit as typical examples of “cosmetic multiculturalism” within Japan.\(^5\) Attempts to alter museum displays on the eve of the Summit exemplified the way in which the celebration of a certain definition of “cultural pluralism” can come hand in hand with the endeavour to erase more politicised and resistant plural conceptualisations of history and claims to autonomy. The Okinawa Initiative also clearly exposed the intimate connection between this process and the reification of structures of economic dependence and compensation politics.

While placing themselves in direct opposition to Ōta, in the endeavour to legitimise this opposing conservative agenda the Inamine administration and advocates of the Okinawa Initiative also utilized ambiguities and practices of authentication inherent to the Ōta administration’s visions of a collective Okinawan identity and desire for peace. In particular, the ambiguities of the Cornerstone of Peace helped enable its symbolic incorporation into Clinton’s appeals to the necessity of the US military presence in Okinawa, and historical revisionist discourses within Japan. Soon after the

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\(^5\) Ibid., pp. 185-6. Significantly, in a comparative analysis of the Liberal View of History Study Group and the commercial aestheticization of Asian within contemporary Japanese film, Aaron Gerow similarly concludes that the consumption of historical revisionism and exoticized difference are manifestations of the same phenomenon of consumerist nationalism (Aaron Gerow, “Consuming Asia, Consuming Japan: The New Neonationalistic Revisionism in Japan,” in Laura Hein and Mark Selden (eds.) Censoring History, pp. 74-95).
attempted changes to the New Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum were made public, Vice Director of the International and Cultural Affairs Bureau sought to explain the alterations by citing the need for the Peace Memorial be “at one” with the Cornerstone. In other words, the fact that the Cornerstone is a place “where those who died in the Battle of Okinawa lie together, not as allies or enemies” was cited to justify attempts to water down Japan’s war aggression in comparison with earlier exhibit plans.86

Ōta’s vision of “Okinawa’s spirit” sought to work within the struggle to claim a “Japanese” subjectivity, as envisaged according to the ideals of peace and democracy, while also maintaining an (ambiguous) opposition to “national identity”. He sought to authenticate an Okinawan sense of identity against mainland Japan often through what may be termed an “atavistic” return to Okinawan history. Atavisms are present acts of constructions and legitimisation based on a constructed past-in-the-present. Such uses of the past for present purposes envisage the present and the future in terms of this past.87 The Okinawa Initiative in turn utilized the authenticating potential of these claims to Okinawan identity, while at the same time (re)incorporating them within the assumptions and ideologies of Japan’s “civilizing project.” This is maintained by placing an arbitrary discursive rupture between “history” and “the present.” A tamed version of “Okinawan-ness” is reincorporated within claims to a homogenous essentialized Japanese-ness, as a commodified form of “Okinawan” difference is also consumed within increasingly hybridised cultures of economy. This forms an essential part of the process whereby the deauthenticating potential of hybridisation and increasing fragmentation is also met with increasing nationalism.

86 RS (20 August 1999).
87 Uses of atavism in constructions of ethnic identity were the topic of the Panel “Political Faultlines in Southeast Asia: pre-modernist atavisms in post-colonial nation-states” at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Asian Studies in Chicago (22-25 March 2001). Information kindly provided by Chris Ballard, Australian National University.
As implicated within this process, the APAP Okinawa Initiative presented by Takara, Ōshiro, and Maeshiro maintained an inherently ambivalent stance towards globalisation. On the one hand it called upon Okinawans to recognize and embrace the supremacy of the market. At the same time, it saw globalisation as a threat to the nation-state, and called upon the urgent need for Okinawans to construct a new “self-definition” conducive to Japan’s emerging national image in an effort to combat this “crumbling” effect. This ambivalence is indicative of the tensions present within the attempt to embrace globalised market capitalism while reinforcing the power of the state and national paradigms. Such tensions are exacerbated in Japan by the legacies of the developmentalist state and postwar system of governance—whereby the LDP has been heavily reliant on both US support and public works subsidies for the maintenance of its power base. In the Okinawa Initiative these contradictions become blatant, as the need to recognize the “supremacy” of “market rule” is equated with the need to recognize the “reality” of Japan’s subsidy policies towards Okinawa.

It is also important to note that while historical revisionists, conservative LDP politicians, and advocates of the Okinawa Initiative may be seen as part of a new nationalism, by no means do they speak in one and the same voice. As much as their critics, historical revisionists hold a hybrid amalgam of differing stances, united only in a general criticism of pacifist ideology and Article Nine of the Japanese Constitution, and the upholding of a need for national pride. In the context of Okinawa, these differences are exacerbated by deep-rooted tensions between Naha and Tokyo, even within the LDP party. In relation to the Okinawa Initiative, such tensions can be discerned, for example, in subtle differences between Shimada and Takara, with the latter far more ready to claim the need for Okinawan “autonomy” (jiritsu) and a unique Okinawan history. To the extent that significant opposition to the US military presence in particular remains, local politicians in Okinawa remain placed between local opinion and national government policy. As Sheila A. Smith observes in relation to the Futenma
relocation issue: “As long as the policy solution devised by the national government continues to be the construction of a new US military base in Okinawa, the fiscal and regulatory power of Tokyo will have to contend with the strength of local citizen activism. And stuck in the middle of the fray will be the men and women that Okinawans have elected to office—the very same local officials that Tokyo depends on to implement its policy.”^88

As the museum controversy and the Okinawa Initiative debate both clearly revealed, the economic and ideological incorporation of Okinawa within this process has moreover been fiercely contested. In the case of the New Prefectural Peace Museum, opposition to the tide of historical revisionism had at least some effect, and the intentions of the original planning committee were honoured to an extent. The Okinawa Initiative’s critics presented a strong argument against the Initiative’s vision of nationalism, its assumptions on security, and its negation of the significance of Okinawan history. The memory of wartime suffering at the hands of the Japanese is still powerful in Okinawa. While the Okinawa Initiative attempted to play down the importance of history, the “history question” was a vital and highly contested issue within the Initiative debate. The debate itself revealed the extent to which history, far from ending or fading in significance, remains connected to the present and wider political and cultural struggles in multiple ways.

At the same time, Arakawa Akira’s observations on the political situation in Okinawa made just after the G-8 Summit also proved valid. No broad-based anti-base movement which encompasses local municipalities in Okinawa and which could mobilize effective resistance against compensation strategies as typified by Shimadakon has emerged. Inamine’s arrival on the political stage was intimately connected to Shimadakon, and his administration has remained supported by and supportive of public

works-centred economic stimulus policies. The Inamine administration has continued to promote both large-scale military and civilian construction projects, including a new airport at Ishigaki, the large reclamation of the Awase tidal flats area, and the building of a new US military port in Urasoe and the new military runway at Henoko. Subsidy policies have assured electoral victories for Okinawa's LDP coalition, reinforcing existing economic and political structures and deepening links among private enterprise, national government funds, and local politics. As Gavan McCormack observes of Okinawa's predicament: "As with the drugs of dependence so with the economy of dependence: the more the subject is hooked, the more difficult it becomes to break free of the addiction, which in turn requires higher and higher doses to maintain."

The reification of this structure has also contributed to increased environmental damage, disillusion and the increasing alienation of citizen-based groups from the political process, and intensified the polarisation of public opinion. This has resulted in a deepening division within communities, particularly in Nago. Soon after the G-8 Summit, Okinawan novelist and Nago resident Medoruma Shun lashed out at politicians at all levels: "Prefectural leaders and local heads in the northern Okinawan district, to say nothing of the Japanese government, are so sunk in debauchery they are not even…"

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89 This fact was further confirmed in the overwhelming victory of incumbent Kishimoto Tateo over progressive coalition-backed Miyagi Yasuhiro in the Nago Mayoral elections of 3 February 2002.  
90 "Okinawa and the Structure of Dependence."  
91 The Inamine administration maintained its support behind massive civilian as well as military public works projects. Two of the most controversial examples are an airport at Shiraho, Ishigaki Island, next to an internationally renowned reef containing rare species of blue coral; and the reclamation of Okinawa Island's largest tidal flat, in Awase, Okinawa City, now a breeding ground to hundreds of sea creatures and bird life. On the environmental impact of the Ishigaki Airport plans, see for example Amanda Sutari, "Concern over Threat to Blue Coral Reefs," Japan Times (20 December, 2001). According to a recent Asahi Shinbun/Okinawa Times opinion poll, over 70% of local Okinawa City residents are against the reclamation of Awase. At the time of writing, however, the local, prefectural, and national government were still pushing for the project to go ahead, expressing opposition to a local plebiscite on the issue.
ashamed at openly confessing to the link between the relocation of Futenma base ‘within Okinawa’ and the northern district economic stimulus policies.”

On 23 June 2001, a blazing sun once again greeted Okinawa’s day for consoling the spirits. In June of 2000, the remembrance day had been a prelude to the upcoming G-8 Summit. A year later, for the newly appointed Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi Junichirō it was clearly a rehearsal for his planned homage to Yasukuni Shrine in the coming August. With an entourage of prefectural and central government officials and accompanying bodyguards, Koizumi paid his respects to the defeated Japanese military command during the Battle of Okinawa. At the Cornerstone of Peace, he paused with interest at the rows of names of war dead from the US and allied forces, and slightly nodded his head at a group of weeping Korean women as he headed towards the site of the official ceremony some hundred meters away. Many of the thirty or so Korean bereaved family members attending a small ceremony in front of the Cornerstone were seeing their family and loved ones’ names on the imposing granite walls for the first time. Director of the Myongji University Institute for Okinawa, Hong Jong-Pil, who had spent the last four years confirming and seeking approval for new Korean names to be added to the Cornerstone, looked on at Koizumi’s retreating figure in contempt. Affronted by the prefectural government’s change in manner and Koizumi’s stance on Yasukuni, the Cornerstone of Peace Korean Bereaved Families Association had decided for the first time in the history of the monument not to take part in official prefectural commemorations.

In many ways, the process of ‘Yasukuni-fication’ of Mabuni to which Medoruma referred on the eve of the Summit has taken place. Yet the Cornerstone’s principle of transnational inclusiveness and the inherent tensions between an Okinawan and (national) Japanese collective identity embedded within its stone formations has

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also ensured that this process of closure is not complete. The Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum and the Cornerstone of Peace remain contested sites, just as the cacophony of competing narratives within the park itself may be still be heard. While struggles for autonomy, difference, and democracy invariably overlap with fierce contention over militarisation, nationalism, imperialism, and the meaning of war, peace, and the past, the restless ghosts of Mabuni look set to haunt Okinawa’s volatile political landscape for some time to come.

Chaperoning a group of mainland Japanese tourists around Mabuni peace park on the day to console the spirits, an Okinawan bus tour-guide paused in front of the walls reserved for Korean war dead. Pointing to the expanse of largely blank granite wall before her, she explained: “I feel these walls of yet-to-be-filled names represent more than anything the complexity of Okinawa’s tragic past and its remembrance.” The group looked on, as did I, contemplating the gravity of her words. As has been pointed out, the authenticating power of remembered tradition and history has a double edge, as “a cultural means for propagating hegemonic powers of the state and/or dominant groups on the one hand, and a strategic device for recuperating the voice of marginalized groups on the other.”93 The blank walls of irretrievable names and unmemorialised tragedies in the Cornerstone of Peace testify to the difficulties involved in this process of recuperation, and in the trans-nationalization of the act of remembrance. They also serve as a vivid reminder of the violent historical and political erasures which often accompany dominant commemorative narratives of war, and corresponding hegemonic national security claims in the present.

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"In the retrospective rephrasing of modernity, colonialism... is seen as a global system of power, production and knowledge shaped by conflicts in the colonised 'periphery' as much as in the colonising 'centre,' and giving birth to the globalised order in which we all live today. In this sense, to understand our contemporary world as 'postcolonial' is to perceive the so-called 'globalization' of the 1990s as a new, globalized re-working of the age of colonial empires, within which the accumulated problems of the old order have also survived and become ever more clearly exposed to view."

Tessa Morris-Suzuki, 2001¹

As academic, public commentator, and politician, Ōta has played a key role in the making and shaping of Okinawan history. In his work and career, he has negotiated and crossed geographical, ideological, and political borders—between Okinawa as a military colony and the US "homeland", between the Okinawan "periphery" and Japanese "metropolis," between history and politics, and between "theory" and "practice." His energies and body of work seem larger than life, and during his term as governor he became, at least for a time, a symbol of Okinawa's struggle and a centrifugal force galvanizing groups together. The impact of his presence was reflected in the wave of disillusionment which followed his decision to back down on the second proxy case. In the attempt to deflate this galvanizing force, central government officials also sought to ensure that Ōta did not emerge as a "tragic hero" in the contest over the

¹ "'Posutokoriarizumu' no imi o megutte," Gendai Shisō Vol. 19 No. 9 (July 2001), p. 185.
proxy issue.\textsuperscript{2} In this sense, as Yoichi Funabashi notes, it is difficult to judge Ōta by normal measures. Funabashi concludes:

Ōta is Okinawa. He is the personification of its modern history of war and peace. Each of his words is plucked leaf by leaf from the tree of modern Okinawan history. If Ōta has his contradictions, it is because Okinawa is itself one huge contradiction in the annals of modern Japanese history.\textsuperscript{3}

Yet I would stop short of concluding either that Okinawa's historical experience may be represented as an essential totality, or that Ōta is its personification. History, as a negotiation of the past and vision of the future, is open-ended. Played out against and within the homogenizing forces of the Japanese state and US-Japan security relations, the negotiation and (re)invention of Okinawan identity, historical remembrance and cultural representation has been and remains an intensely political process. Tensions between competing historical paradigms, political agendas, and personal interests also further entrench divisions within the islands. As Matthew Allen points out:

\begin{quote}
(C)ulture, language, and identity are negotiable values that are destined to be endlessly renegotiated as new forms of identity clash at sites throughout the prefecture. This is not to negate the value of a political 'Okinawa.' Rather, it is to confirm that underneath the bridging discourse of 'Okinawan-ness' lies a multitude of voices that challenge for control of the body Okinawan.\textsuperscript{4}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{2} Yoichi Funabashi writes: "There was something that the core of the administration had decided. Ōta should not be made into some tragic hero. 'If we made him into a tragic hero, Okinawa would be done for good. So would Japan. So we worked towards avoiding that at all costs.' 'He can't be a tragic hero now that we've come this far; he's in the same boat as the rest of us.' These were the whispers that could be heard in the heart of the administration" \textit{(Alliance Adrift}, p. 142).

\textsuperscript{3} Yoichi Funabashi, \textit{Alliance Adrift}, p. 149.

\textsuperscript{4} Matthew Allen, \textit{Identity and Resistance in Okinawa}, p. 236.
Throughout the postwar period and today, identity within Okinawa has been negotiated and re-negotiated within a constant dynamic. It is precisely in this context that Óta has claimed an Okinawan political and historical location and sense of identity.

Furthermore, while it may be said that Okinawan historical experience forms a contradiction within the annals of Japanese modern history, the reverse appears as at least equally pertinent. That is, to put it another way, these contradictions lie at the centre of the "annals" of modern Japanese history itself. They trace back to an obsession in the modern era with classification and order, and to the very process of national consolidation. Founded upon the concept of inclusion and exclusion, the consolidation of political, social, and cultural power structures of the sovereign territorial nation-state has been "an act of violence perpetrated on the world." The contradictions, tensions, and erasures inherent to this process have been concentrated within modernity's drive to "assimilate" difference.

Assimilation is a contradictory declaration of war on semantic ambiguity and cultural and political ambivalence. As Zygmunt Bauman points out in the context of Jews in nineteenth century Germany, it was also "a bid on the part of one section of society to exercise a monopolistic right to provide authoritative and binding meanings for all—and thus to classify sections of the state-administered body that 'did not fit' as foreign or not sufficiently native, out of tune and out of place, and thereby in radical need of reform." This project of reform assumed the superiority of one form of being and the inferiority of another. It effectively reinforced inequalities by treating the

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5 Ibid., p. 238.
6 It should be noted that in its original Japanese, Funabashi's statement could be interpreted to mean that the contradiction of Okinawa is the contradiction of Japanese history itself (see Dōmei hyōryū, p. 166).
7 Zygmunt Bauman, Modernity and Ambivalence, op cit., p. 2.
8 Ibid., p. 105.
rejection of enforced hierarchical categories as a criminal betrayal, and justified discrimination on the grounds of “otherness.”

In Japan the contradictory policy of assimilation (discrimination) overlapped with the process of imperial expansion. As Tomiyama Ichirō observes, Okinawa has been frequently relegated to an ambiguous position as neither fully “homeland” (kokunai) nor “colony” (shokuminchi). The drive towards “becoming Japanese” was enforced not only by the process of national consolidation, but through a “pre-sentiment” of the violence inherent to colonization. Up until defeat in war, it was a fear of colonial subjugation and the internalisation of a sense of inferiority in Okinawa which fed what Ōta criticized in 1988 as a “beast-like devotion” to the Japanese militaristic state. In the postwar era, axioms of the assimilationist program were transformed and re-channelled within the context of high-growth economic ideology into a drive for “parity” with mainland Japan. Contradictions and inequalities have been negotiated, contested, and reproduced within Japan’s postwar system and under US military hegemony.

Negotiations over Okinawan history and identity have been part of the process whereby a sense of national belonging, paradigms of Japanese racial and cultural homogeneity, hierarchical structures within the project and discourse of assimilation, and the project of modernity itself are negotiated and contested. As Ōta has repeatedly said, “Who are Okinawans?” is a question that forces a (re)appraisal of the very meaning of Japanese-ness. It also implicates US military colonization and foreign policy, the US-Japan security system, and Japan’s national political, social, economic, and cultural structures of power. Ōta has highlighted these issues in his analyses of the Battle of Okinawa, the formation of Okinawan popular consciousness, US colonization of Okinawa, historical relations between mainland Japan and Okinawa, and Okinawan

9 Ibid.
10 Tomiyama Ichirō, Bōryoku no yokan, p. 68.
identity. Ōta sought to expose the extent to which Okinawa’s historical experience both encompassed (to use Ōta’s own expression) the “other side of the coin” of Japan’s postwar system and implicated the core ideological and political structures of the modern Japanese state.

While interrogating these contradictions, Ōta, like Okinawa as a whole, has also been embedded within them. As Ōta noted in his *Who are Okinawans?*, the nation-state in its modern form has displayed a distinct “Janus-faced” quality—presenting an ideal mien that indicates a territorial and ideological location from which to perceive of individual autonomy, and also a “sinister force” that threatens to cancel out these promises. The modern nation-state was “born as a crusading, missionary, proselytising force, bent on subjecting the dominated populations to a thorough once-over in order to transform them into an orderly society, akin to the precepts of reason.”¹¹ Yet nationalist discourse has also at least presented itself as the guarantor of political and social emancipation within the project of modernity.¹² Enlightenment political ideals such as equality, liberty, justice, and democracy were largely conceived within the parameters of the sovereign territorial nation-state.¹³ The state is: “the institution of last recourse and highest appeal, the one that enacts what we seek to be through its institutions of accountability and effectivity. It is the sovereign place within which the highest international laws and policies are enacted and from which strategies toward external states and nonstate peoples proceed.”¹⁴ It is the ultimate agency and official centre of self-conscious political action. As such, it has been and remains an inherently contested site, within and against which ideological, political, and social struggles proceed.

¹¹ Ibid., 20.
In postwar Japan, the search for shutaisei—in incorporating notions of individuality, autonomy, and subjectivity to different degrees and in varying contexts—formed a core focus of political and cultural struggles. Ōta framed the “Okinawa struggle” within such counter-hegemonic conceptions of national identity, political participation, and democracy. He embraced the assumptions of postwar enlightenment ideals and the project of modernity to the extent that he saw them as promising the formation and emancipation of the individual as autonomous subject, and appealed to state institutions and processes in the attempt to attain rights to equality and autonomy.

At the same time, he was acutely wary of and strongly contested assimilationist discourse and state-centred policies of incorporation—from the prewar period and as they emerged on the eve of reversion. Bauman remarks on the way in which the modern offer of assimilation “lured” its victims into “a state of chronic ambivalence” with the “bait of admission tickets to the world free from the stigma of otherness.”15 In a similar fashion to Bauman, Ōta severely criticised the false promises and contradictions of prewar assimilation policies, the assumptions of superiority and conformism on which they were based, and the toadyism and sense of inferiority which he saw pervaded Okinawa as a result of hierarchical and dependent structures of control. From the eve of reversion, he sought to combat disillusionment and a deep-felt sense of loss through a “return” to a sense of community and Okinawan-ness. He evoked an Okinawan “cultural identity” that was situated within, against, and beyond a Japanese “national identity.”

Expressed in Foucauldian terms, Ōta’s endeavours to (re)claim and emancipate Okinawan subjectivity have been implicated in the power relations which they have resisted.16 His attempt to “make history”—by participating in discussions of the past

15 Zygmunt Bauman, Modernity and Ambivalence, p. 120.
while working to effect political, social, and knowledge-related changes in the present—is contained and defined within existing ideological, political, and historical relations. At the same time, this containment is never absolute. As has been pointed out in relation to questions of historical agency, neither the past nor the present should be seen as fully resolved in totalising practices of hegemonic structures. Through effecting choice—even in its limited form as the failure or inability to choose—Ōta has also participated in highly significant ways in the processes whereby these structures have been both transformed and reproduced. Ultimately, as governor he was unable to combat the multiple political and economic structures of dependence facing Okinawa to effect a substantial resolution to the US base issue or provide a working alternative to subsidy-based development. The dilemmas he faced as a result of these conditions and the tensions and contradictions inherent to his own agenda largely remain unresolved.

On 29 July 2001 Ōta was elected to the Upper House of the National Diet as a proportional representative candidate for the Social Democratic Party. In his election platform, Ōta expressed opposition to the plan to relocate Futenma to Nago, to the introduction of “contingency” or “emergency” legislation to give the government extensive special powers in the case of the threat of foreign attack (yūji hōseifi), and to the revision of Article Nine of the constitution. Over thirty years previously as an academic Ōta had made the journey from Tokyo back to the Okinawan periphery in the attempt to contest the conditions of reversion from “within the island military garrison” which was Okinawa. Now, having faced political defeat and despair in the prefectural

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17 In the words of Christopher T. Nelson: “individuals do not simply instantiate cultural forms...they are not merely interpellated into social structures. It is the action of individuals that reproduces these forms...and there are points at which the action of individuals have the capacity to transform them” (“Huziki Hayato, the storyteller: comedy, practice and the politics of everyday life in Okinawa,” p. 202).
18 OT (30 July 2001).
gubernatorial elections, he moved back to the “centre” in the attempt to effect changes inside the very nexus of the Japanese state.

Yet by the time of Ota’s election to the National Diet, the SDP was already severely weakened, comprising only a minority party within the severely fragmented government opposition. The breakdown in Japan’s hegemonic structure has been even further accompanied by a decay in the efficacy of political and administrative mechanisms, and the lack of a sense of political, social, or economic alternatives. As Yumiko Iida notes, the present period is not characterised so much by the global ascendance of the democratic ideal as a decline in the universal goal of striving for ideals. It marks what may be seen as a “post-postwar era” and a retreat from the liberal and utopian ideals which arose from war experience and its aftermath. The predicament of liberal progressive forces was paralleled in the irony of Ota’s own political position. For now he represented at a national level the very party which Murayama Tomiichi had led when he filed suit against Ota for refusing to act as proxy in the land lease process.

This crisis in state hegemony, democracy, and existing political mechanisms has found expression in a particular and concentrated form in post-bubble Japan. Yet it is also part of a global trend. As the effects of global processes exceed the reach of sovereign states, late modernity emerges as a “time without a corresponding political place.” Within this world, “state power is simultaneously magnified and increasingly disconnected from the ends that justify its magnification.” In the face of fragmentation, hybridisation, and political, social, and economic alienation, corresponding counter-claims to collective identity have become more exclusionary and jingoist. Ambivalence may be celebrated, yet to the extent that it conforms to market

19 Yumiko Iida, Rethinking Identity in Modern Japan, p. 274.
20 William Connolly, Identity/Difference, p. 216
21 Ibid., p. 206.
centred-definitions of difference. Diversity is largely contained within the structures of capitalist investment and accumulation and, as seen in the context of the Okinawa Initiative, may be re-appropriated within hegemonic national narratives without guaranteeing either self-government or autonomy.

If Ōta's contradictions are the contradictions of Okinawa, these contradictions are also the contradictions of the Japanese state, and of the project of modernity. They are contradictions which emerge from the "Janus-faced" quality of nationalist discourse, and from the modern condition whereby identity struggles have often been framed as the only effective means available—to cope with the trauma of disfiguration and disorientation of colonization and modernization, and to engage in political contest. In postmodern relations, these contradictions now emerge as an acute global condition, embedded within the asymmetry between territorialized political space and the globalisation of contingency—as most clearly apparent in the effects of mass environmental destruction on a global scale.22

On one level, increasing fragmentation is accompanied by a countermovement of closure in claims to a collective identity and historical consciousness. On another level, traditional political struggles—over welfare, equality, autonomy, and democratic processes—which have been largely played out within the political and social mechanisms of the nation-state lose their impetus as the state itself loses its efficacy. As the territorial state increasingly becomes a conduit of global market pressures, "the sovereign state as the exclusive site of democracy places the established terms of democratic accountability under tremendous stress." 23 One result is the further entrenchment of the conditions which have brought about a large-scale withdrawal from politics in its conventional form.24

23 Ibid., p. 217.
The contradictions of modernity and their acute manifestations within postmodernity call upon us to find alternate ways to articulate a political site and sense of historical belonging. It also calls for what Tessa Morris-Suzuki has described as a “new critical imaginary”—to reconceive of the mutual relations between political action and critical thought.\textsuperscript{25} This requires a form of critical engagement beyond the traditional disciplinary regimes of history, philosophy, and political science.\textsuperscript{26} As an attempt to reconcile the gap between sovereign political space and global processes, it also necessitates a form of political mobilization which challenges the very framework of “identity politics.”

At the same time, rather than merely dismissing all claims to identity as essentialist, it is vital to conceive of the importance of identity struggles—as they have been fought out in and against the nation-state, between nationalist narratives and counter-narratives, and within the complex process of history-making. As Stuart Hall observes: “It is only too tempting to fall into the trap of assuming that, because essentialism has been deconstructed \textit{theoretically}, therefore it has been displaced \textit{politically}.”\textsuperscript{27} From at least the reversion and anti-reversion debates of the 1970s, Okinawan intellectuals have been grappling with this fact, and with the subsequent dilemma posed by attempting to negotiate a position within and against nation-state structures. As emerged within the debate between Ōta and Arakawa Akira on the eve of reversion, questions relating to the connection between “theory” and practise” lie at the core of this dilemma. Intellectual debate in Okinawa, as it has been carried out under intensely politicised conditions, reveals for “post-colonial studies” as a whole the importance of continually relating the implications of theoretical observations to political practice. Conditions in Okinawa also highlight the vital need to reconcile

\textsuperscript{25} Tessa Morris-Suzuki (Tessa Mōrisu-Suzuki), \textit{Hihanteki sōzōryoku no tame ni}, pp. 59-60.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., p. 59.
\textsuperscript{27} Stuart Hall, “When was ‘The Post-Colonial’? Thinking at the Limit,” p. 249.
studies on postcolonial culture with observations on the structure of global capitalism. Put another way, this thesis has hopefully provided at least a glimpse into the interconnectedness between economic, political, and cultural structures and contests within Okinawan "identity politics," as well as the vital importance of conceiving this interconnectedness.

Following the attacks of 11 September 2001 on New York and Washington, the issue of the US bases in Okinawa has been affected by a new set of circumstances—the international "war against terrorism," increasing calls for a stronger military role for Japan, heightened military security and security policy secrecy, and an initial severe decline in Okinawa's tourism industry as mainland Japanese avoided the island and its large concentration of US military facilities. Under these conditions, the already existing trend towards an increase in Japanese defence cooperation with the US has quickened in pace as Japan's political climate moves further and further towards greater "burden sharing" with the US, the "normalisation" of its regional and international security roles, and an increase in voices advocating a stronger military presence in the context of a heightened sense of insecurity. These developments lead Japan into two contradictory directions: towards the further consolidation of its role as a US strategic satellite and towards becoming an increasingly assertive military power. The Okinawa base issue lies at the centre of resulting tensions between these dual positions.

On 19 May 2002 the official ceremony marking the thirtieth anniversary of the return of administrative rights over Okinawa to Japan was held in Okinawa, and attended by a host of Japanese, US, and Okinawan dignitaries. Once again, contests over political conditions in the present intermixed with reflections on the meaning and significance of Okinawa's return to Japan. As predicted, at the ceremony the US side stressed the vital importance of its forces in Okinawa, while the Japanese government...

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emphasized the extent of recent further economic stimulus policies towards the islands. Okinawan Governor Inamine Keiichi walked the tightrope of appearing critical towards both the US and Japanese governments while also avoiding raising the issue of Futenma or the SACO agreement. Long-time progressive politicians and anti-base activists were far more disparaging. Fukuchi Hiroaki, who had been a founding member of the Reversion Council, declared: “When [the Prime Minister] returns to Tokyo, he will forget about Okinawa, and do nothing. It is a repetition of the last thirty years since reversion.”

Prior to the ceremony, Ōta announced his refusal to even attend. He expressed a “strong sense of despair” towards the conditions of Okinawa over the thirty years since reversion, growing calls for a stronger Japanese military, and severe restrictions on individual rights and local autonomy contained within the “emergency legislation” under deliberation within the Diet. He also despaired over his inability to influence the situation. While as governor Ōta had enjoyed a limited but central role in political negotiations, as member of a minority opposition and increasingly weakened party in the upper house of the Diet, he found this role severely restricted. Ōta again strongly criticized the Japanese government and Okinawan opportunism and materialism—what he expressed as a move away from the Okinawan dictum “life is a treasure” towards the belief that “money is everything.” He also called for an autonomous spirit and charismatic leader in order to combat the predicament facing Okinawa. The statement seemed imbued with a strong sense of regret that Ōta himself has not been able to take

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29 Full text of Koizumi’s speech is published in OT (20 May 2002). Also available on the Okinawa Times website at http://www.okinawatimes.co.jp. US Ambassador to Japan Howard Baker emphasized the importance of Okinawa “in every dimension” of the relationship between the US and Japan and the “crucial role” the US forces played in Okinawa in “ensuring the continuing peace and security that we all want.” The full text of Baker’s speech is available at http://usinfo.state.gov/topic/poll/terror/02052000.htm.

30 OT (20 May 2002).

31 RS (17 May 2002).
on such a role. Yet under present conditions at least, it seems unlikely that any figure could fill this void and take even more of a political risk than Ōta was prepared to make.

Ōta did not become a martyr in the Battle of Okinawa. Nor has he emerged as a “tragic hero” in the prolonged struggle over Okinawa’s postwar conditions. As a survivor, following the Battle of Okinawa he was forced to face the deep-felt sense of guilt and remorse which accompanied survival itself. In the realm of politics, he must live with the consequences of compromise and inefficacy. The dilemma which Ōta now faces symbolizes a contemporary predicament: what role can individuals play in the attempt to transform a system which encompasses multiple structures of dependence and is in acute crisis? This dilemma is also related to the breakdown of political paradigms within postcolonial conditions: and a part of our desperate attempt to understand what making an ethnical political choice and political position, and participating in politics itself, can comprise within open, contingent, and fragmented political fields.32

In the context of Okinawa, just as historical contests carry expression in a particularly politicised form, these issues also appear to take on a particular urgency. As noted by the Okinawan press, the ceremony commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of reversion once again revealed the “perception gap” between Okinawa, the US, and Japan.33 It also reflected the divisions manifest within Okinawa itself—as the drive for subsidised development results in the increasing entrenchment of systems of dependence and large-scale environmental degradation. Only two months following the thirtieth anniversary of reversion, in July 2002, it was announced that the central and prefectural governments agreed on a relocation plan for Futenma Airbase, involving mass land reclamation over a coral reef off the Henoko district of Nago in order to build

32 As pointed out by Stuart Hall in “When was ‘The Post-Colonial’? Thinking at the Limit,” p. 244.
33 OT (20 May 2002), p. 2.
a 2,500 meter airstrip for "joint military and civilian use."\textsuperscript{34} Opposition groups denounced it as the "worst possible scenario come true."\textsuperscript{35}

However perceived, the "Okinawa issue" persists, just as contests over the past and its futures continue in negotiations and struggles within Okinawa and between Okinawa and the US and Japanese governments. Neither history nor politics are at an end. For Ōta, the two have always been, and remain, intimately connected. Put another way, the question of how to conceive of history from "the margins" continues to be a question of how to perceive and combat the multiple hierarchical cultural, economic, and political structures by which Okinawa has been, and remains, marginalised within Japan and under US-Japan bilateral relations.

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{AS} (30 July 2002) (downloaded at http://www.asahi.com/english/op-ed/K2002073100391.html). The \textit{Asahi Shinbun} editorial reads: "The functions of Futenma Air Station, in the middle of a densely populated urban area, obviously need to be moved. But it is by no means clear why it has to be moved elsewhere in Okinawa.... In this 30\textsuperscript{th} anniversary year of Okinawa reversion to Japanese administration, a plan has been approved for construction of a new US military base. It could be sheer coincidence, but the timing demands a serious look at whether this is a natural consequence of three decades of our non-commitment to Okinawa's plight."

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{OT} (29 July 2002).
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