

## The Okinawan Diaspora in Japan at War 戦時中日本に於ける沖縄県民の離散

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When the Japanese government abolished the Ryukyu Kingdom, absorbing it into Japan as Okinawa Prefecture in 1879, most Okinawans on the mainland were merchants of locally grown and handcrafted goods. Large-scale migration began around 1900 with the development of Japan's modern textile industry, centered in Greater Osaka. Thousands came from the nation's poorest prefecture, mostly young women and teenage girls from farming villages, to work under contract in factories. Most stayed temporarily, typically for three years, often working and living in oppressive conditions, and sending a portion of their wages back to help support their families.

Okinawan migration to the mainland increased rapidly with the outbreak of World War I which boosted demand for Japanese products, enormously benefiting the economy. What was known as the "World War I boom" shook the nation's industries out of their recession doldrums. With Japan on their side in that war, the Allies deluged Japanese manufacturers with orders for munitions and supplies. Furthermore, with industries in America and Europe on wartime production regimens, Japanese manufacturers were able to displace them in large sectors of the consumer market in Japan and in other Asian countries.

Yet, while industrial areas of the mainland boomed during World War I, few benefits resonated in mostly rural Okinawa from where outward migration accelerated rapidly. Wartime demand for Okinawan sugar, the most important product in the local economy,

brought temporary improvement, and the market expanded all of a sudden in wartime for locally woven Panama hats, the prefecture's one "manufactured" export. But the United States and European countries imposed a ban on their importation in 1919 that sent the market tumbling. Two years later, the collapse of world sugar prices in 1921 devastated the poorest prefecture's economy, compelling more Okinawans to leave for South America, Hawaii, and the Philippines, but with the largest number, a recorded 10,300, going to mainland Japan, 7,419 of them to Greater Osaka. By 1925, approximately 20,000 lived there, about half in Greater Osaka. Responding to discrimination and the need for networks of mutual support, they had begun forming residential communities in the industrial sections of Osaka and other manufacturing cities.

The largest migration in history of Okinawans to the mainland occurred during another labor shortage after Japan's military incursions in China escalated to full-scale war in 1937. The war brought thousands to the mainland for military-related jobs. In its final years, however, it wrought death and devastation on their communities that were mostly located in urban industrial areas. By 1940, a recorded 88,319 Okinawans—about 15 percent of the total population of Okinawa Prefecture itself—lived on the mainland. The number of Okinawans residing in greater Osaka more than tripled between 1935 and 1940, from 18,774 to 56,828, after having declined by 4,565 over the previous five years.<sup>1</sup> During the second half of Japan's turbulent 1930s, more Okinawans than ever left home for work on the mainland, where

war-related production, planned and subsidized by the Japanese government, was fueling rapid industrial expansion. Meanwhile, the construction of new factories in Osaka's environs accelerated a "secondary migration" to other cities in Osaka, Hyōgo, and Shiga Prefectures.

As for the war, by mid-1942, after a decade of invasions and offensives, Japan controlled not only much of northeastern China, including the capital of Nanking (now Nanjing), but also the Philippines, Guam, Hong Kong, Singapore, French Indochina (now Vietnam), and the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia). But, in June, 1942, six months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese navy suffered a major defeat near Midway Island in the Central Pacific. Seizing the strategic advantage, the Allies pressed a broad counteroffensive, capturing territory in battles that often inflicted heavy casualties on both sides and local civilian populations. With the capture of Saipan in July, 1944, U.S. forces were closing in on Japan itself, now within range of American B-29 bombers.

As the prospect of air attacks loomed, evacuations began of civilians deemed unessential to the war effort. Individuals, families, and organized evacuee groups left industrial centers for suburban and rural areas, where large numbers, especially children, suffered from dislocation and severe food shortages. By this time, many Okinawans who had earlier moved to the mainland for jobs and hadn't been drafted into the military were conscripted for labor in local factories producing munitions and other war supplies.

They were among the recorded 10,388 killed and 29,807 injured in massive fire bombings that devastated greater Osaka in the spring and summer of 1945. From March to mid-August more than 2,200 Allied bombers flew eight major air raids, especially targeting the kind of factory districts where most Okinawan

residential communities were located, leaving them in ashes and rubble.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, the invasion of Okinawa, launched in late March, 1945, bogged down into a devastating war of attrition that dragged on for three months, taking a recorded total of 237,318 lives, more than half of them Okinawan civilians.<sup>3</sup> In the aftermath of massive human, material, and environmental destruction, entire families were missing, and whole villages destroyed. Many Okinawans in mainland cities who hoped to escape the burnt-out ruins and return to their homeland after the war had nothing left to go back to. Furthermore, the U.S. military that now occupied and governed Okinawa not only made travel to and from the Japanese mainland difficult, requiring documents that were often unobtainable, but also seized local farmlands, including some owned by mainland residents or their families, for a major expansion of military bases.

### **Wartime labor shortage opens more jobs at higher pay**

This tumultuous period began in 1937, after Japan had invaded and occupied Manchuria some six years earlier. The skirmish between Japanese and Chinese forces near Peking (now Beijing) on July 7, 1937, known as the "Marco Polo Bridge Incident," quickly escalated into full-scale war. Responding to the "emergency situation" (Japan never officially declared its war against China.), the Japanese government implemented laws regulating capital investment along with imports and exports, and mobilized industry with large government subsidies for military production. Two years later, in 1939, with indications that the war would be prolonged, the government passed the National Mobilization Act that tightened controls on labor, imposing strict requirements on workers to register that would later expedite mandatory job assignments. Civilian industries predictably declined, while those serving military needs expanded rapidly. In Osaka, once called "the Manchester of the

East” for its many cloth factories, the textile industry shrunk by half after 1937, along with chemical and heavy industries not related to the war effort. That meant layoffs for some Okinawans, especially those working in

textiles and lumber.<sup>4</sup> However, many more found jobs in factories switching to war-related production, which received lucrative government contracts.

Official policy to convert small and medium enterprises for military production stimulated their growth in greater Osaka, where they have long formed a key sector in the local economy, especially as subcontractors for larger firms. In 1939, Nakayama Steelworks added a new blast furnace with a 430-ton capacity at its main factory in Taishō Ward. Kubota Steelworks expanded its product line to include metals for making firearms and containers for storing gunpowder and explosives. Sumitomo Metalworks enlarged its plant in neighboring Konohana Ward during the same year, then purchased the Japan General Motors Plant in Taishō Ward in 1940 to build a subsidiary factory there.<sup>5</sup> Nakayama, Kubota, and other companies that enlarged their existing factories or built new ones during the war are still major employers in Osaka’s Okinawan community today.

Eighteen-year-old Uezu Seishō left Okinawa in 1940 at age 18 for Osaka where he stayed with his uncle. “I remember my excitement at seeing an industrial area on the mainland for the first time. In May, I started a job at Kubota Steelworks as an overhead crane operator. At first, the schedule of alternating twelve-hour shifts was hard on me, but I got used to it and to interacting with the people there. I was determined to succeed.”<sup>6</sup>



**Factories in Taishō Ward, Osaka**

The government’s wartime designation of an “Osaka-Kobe Industrial Zone” for building and enlarging factories beyond Osaka City into its surrounding municipalities had profound and lasting effects on the location and size of Okinawan communities. The newly created jobs attracted Okinawan workers mostly from Osaka City, but also from Okinawa itself. In 1937, a Tōyō Ball-Bearing plant opened in Takarazuka, Hyōgo Prefecture, where an Okinawa Prefectural Association is still active today, holding regular gatherings and publishing a newsletter. In 1939, Kubota Steelworks built a 468,000-square-foot factory in Sakai City, Osaka Prefecture, where another Okinawa association remains active today.<sup>7</sup> Sumitomo Metalworks enlarged its metal tube factory in Amagasaki City, Hyōgo Prefecture, to manufacture airplane parts. Other new and enlarged plants in Amagasaki made propellers, electrical equipment for military communications, rubber-covered wire, and torpedoes. Okinawans also worked at the Osaka Machinery plant that produced training models for the Imperial Army’s “dragon fly” reconnaissance airplanes. Construction of factories, workers’ dormitories, and other war-related facilities also created jobs for Okinawans.<sup>8</sup>

In the resulting “secondary migration” on the mainland, the largest population of Okinawans moved from Osaka to Amagasaki, just across the Kanzaki River, where their numbers increased nearly tenfold between 1935 and 1940, from 1,281 to 11,462.<sup>9</sup> As in Osaka a decade earlier, they began organizing, at first in friendship societies of people from the same Okinawan locality. These merged in 1940 into the Amagasaki League of Okinawa Prefectural Associations, which consolidated after the war to become the present Hyōgo Okinawa Association, with a membership of approximately 5,000, according to a recent survey.<sup>10</sup> During and after the war, it provided counseling free of charge to Okinawans seeking employment, negotiating with employers, applying for government permits or benefits, starting businesses, or trying to earn a living after their family breadwinner had died in the war.<sup>11</sup>



**Okinawan folk music performance at Osaka restaurant**

As the conflict widened in China and more men were drafted, not only were new jobs opening up, but accelerated production schedules brought overtime pay and higher incomes., Ōsaka Kyūyō Shimpō, the newspaper of the Kansai Okinawa Prefectural Association, began publishing barely two weeks after the 1937 Marco Polo Bridge Incident of July 7, 1937. It reported the following year that “under the present circumstances, businesses are competing as never before in unprecedented

efforts to hire workers, offering optimal opportunities to both the educated and to factory workers.”<sup>12</sup> A 1939 editorial expressed “our hope in this third year of the sacred war that we can take advantage of the present labor shortage to make gains in all areas of employment. Since in normal times we have encountered barriers to employment, we must not lose this opportunity for jobs that are stable and secure.”<sup>13</sup> Born on rural Ishigaki Island, Kuroshima Anto recalled his decision in 1939, at age twenty-six, to leave for Osaka.

I wanted to go because I had a yearning for the big city, but circumstances at home were also a factor. I got help resettling in Osaka from my older sister and a childhood friend living there. It was great meeting them again, and at first I traveled around sight-seeing to enjoy the thriving urban culture. My friend used his connections with someone he knew in Amagasaki to arrange a job for me at the city’s Ōtani Heavy Industries plant, and I moved there in October. It was wartime, so hiring procedures were simple, and the next day I got a license as a lathe operator trainee. My supervisors showed me around the factory. Seeing the eight-foot-long ingots at the lathe where I would be assigned, I looked forward to starting work. Thanks to my boss’s kind and careful training, I qualified quickly as a full-fledged lathe operator.<sup>14</sup>

**Escalating war brings heightened pressures to assimilate**

Yet Okinawans’ wartime movement into the mainland work force was hardly



problem-free. In a January, 1939 roundtable discussion in the Ōsaka Kyūyō Shimpō, a participant noted that “there is still the tendency to exclude Okinawans and Koreans.” “Yes,” responded Hokama Chōki of the newspaper’s industrial labor section, “but things have gotten much better.” While acknowledging that the war had created many more jobs, other roundtable participants were less certain that Okinawans’ status among workers had greatly improved. Goya Hirotsugu, counselor at the Osaka Employment Agency, reported that “Just the other day we had a complaint about an employer who refused to hire an Okinawan, claiming there would be language problems.” And Medoruma Kōshin, counselor at the agency’s Ichioka branch, noted that “Nissan Automobile refused to hire an Okinawan recently because the company claimed that, although Okinawans worked hard, they were slow to respond and tended to change jobs even for a small raise in wages.”<sup>15</sup>

Goya suggested, in the same roundtable discussion, that Okinawans were perceived as slow to respond because their nonverbal signals were sometimes misinterpreted. Hokama explained that “Okinawans tend to reply in the affirmative by nodding and smiling, rather than in words. This causes them to be seen by some on the mainland as somehow vacillating, or to raise doubts as to whether they understand what has been said to them.” The participants agreed that employers should be informed that Okinawans are good workers and that differences in interpersonal styles do not affect their job performances. Medoruma added that Okinawans faced discrimination more often in small, privately owned businesses than in large enterprises.<sup>16</sup> Hired for wartime work at Osaka Machinery, Shimabukuro Takehiko recalled in 1995 that “there were fewer exclusions of Okinawans and Koreans during the war when the factories needed our labor. It was a time when they would have hired a cat and put its paws to work.”<sup>17</sup>

Far from excluding them, some factory managers were so impressed with the work of Okinawans that they actively recruited them. Honjō Hiroo, President of Honjō Zinc Works in Osaka’s Konohana Ward, publicly praised the “diligence” of Okinawans Iha Mansei and Shimabukuro Keisuke, employed at his company for more than a decade since 1924. “They have changed our perception of people from Okinawa Prefecture,” he proclaimed. “Taking recommendations from these two men, I plan to hire many more of them.” True to his word, he increased the number of Okinawan employees to 150 when he opened two new factories in Osaka after 1937. He subsequently promoted two of them to foreman and manager at Honjō Factory Number Three, where virtually all the workers were from Okinawa, and recruited others to form the core of work forces at two affiliated factories in Amagasaki.<sup>18</sup>

Still, if hiring bans abated during the war, discrimination didn’t end. Kinjō Tomiko left Okinawa for the mainland a second time in 1943, at age nineteen. “I took a job at a munitions factory in Shiga Prefecture that made coil connectors for airplanes. . . . One of my coworkers was being harassed by someone in the accounting department who kept making disparaging remarks about Okinawans. When another woman came to us in tears, the supervisor of our dormitory floor, who was also from Okinawa, and I organized all the Okinawan workers for a strike. The next morning, we refused to go to work, causing a big uproar among the company managers. . . . After two hours they agreed to meet with us, and when we told them about the person in accounting, the harassment stopped immediately.”<sup>19</sup>

The problems often started with how Okinawans were referred to on the mainland. Many objected strongly to the term “Ryūkyū-jin” (Ryukyuan), which identified them with the former Ryukyu Kingdom and implied “foreign,” therefore inferior, status. “Ryūkyū-jin” (also

pronounced “Riki-jin”) was used derisively when factory supervisors scolded Okinawan workers, or when notices posted at employment offices and rooming houses announced “Chōsen-jin, Ryūkyū-jin o-kotowari” (Koreans and Ryukyans prohibited). In formal contexts, people from Okinawa preferred to call themselves “Okinawa-kenjin” (people of Okinawa Prefecture) or “Okinawa-ken shushin-sha” (people from Okinawa Prefecture), and to refer to mainlanders as “tafuken-jin” (people of other prefectures, municipalities, and districts). Informally, they have often referred to themselves as “Uchinaan-chu” (Okinawans), and to mainlanders as “Yamatun-chu” (people of Yamato) or “nai-chaa” (mainlanders), terms in Okinawa dialect that can carry ironic or derisive overtones depending on context. In a sense, calling mainlanders Yamatun-chu, which identifies them with an ancient clan predating formation of a Japanese state, is Okinawans’ response to being associated with the former Ryukyu Kingdom. In the August 1, 1939 edition of Ōsaka Kyūyō Shimpō, physician Tamaki Tetsuya explained why the term “Ryūkyū-jin” was problematic:

Unlike the old provincial names for prefectures on the mainland, like Shinshū for Nagano and Kōshū for Yamagata, Ryukyu refers to a place with much greater differences in language and customs that mainlanders find very strange. . . . Poets and even ordinary folks call Ryukyu “poetry country,” “dream country,” or “picturesque country.” . . . But, considering how mainlanders treat us, such praise hardly expresses love and respect for the people of our prefecture. In fact, it is nothing more than a romanticization with heavily disparaging overtones.<sup>20</sup>

Okinawans have been annoyed since the early decades of the twentieth century by popular depictions in the mainland media of Okinawa’s “rich” culture and “leisurely” lifestyle. For them, these two words carry stigmatizing double-meanings of exotic and indolent. “It’s easy,” Nakama Keiko notes, “to see through this ‘Okinawa’ created by mainlanders that reveals their superiority complex toward us.”<sup>21</sup>

To defend against exoticization and stereotyping, many Okinawans did what they could to assimilate, reaching out to their neighbors and co-workers. In his novel *Michi no shima* (Island Paths, 1976), Shimota Seiji tells of a young Okinawan who moved in 1940 to Osaka, where he found work as an apprentice cutting-machine operator.

Tokubei wasn’t dissatisfied with his job. . . . It was better than the hard labor in the cane fields he’d done in Okinawa. . . . But things weren’t going well with the family who owned the shop and his senior coworkers. . . . The first night after work he went back to the room where the workers stayed.

“What was your name?” asked the oldest among them. . . . They’d all been introduced by the shop owner that morning and Tokubei had made a special effort to remember their names, so he was disappointed that they’d forgotten his. . . .

“Yonamine Tokubei.” . . . He made sure to pronounce it clearly.

“Yo-na-mi-ne? Wow, that sure is a weird name.”<sup>22</sup>

Despite such experiences, Tokubei never changes his name, even though the official

procedures were relatively simple, usually requiring only one trip to the city, ward, or village office to rewrite it in a household register. Most of those who made changes revised only their surnames.<sup>23</sup>

The trend to “mainlandize” personal names accelerated during the war, when pressures heightened to demonstrate loyalty to the Japanese state. The government’s policy of encouraging people in Korea, under Japanese colonial annexation, to adopt Japanese names became mandatory there after 1939. Although Okinawans were under no such government order, they were subject to social pressures at home and on the mainland. The Okinawa Prefectural Board of Education’s wartime advice to “change the readings of our surnames” coincided with the Kansai Okinawa Prefectural Association’s campaign on the mainland for “lifestyle reform.”<sup>24</sup>

With the Japanese government exhorting people to use “standard” Japanese as a show of unity in wartime, mainland community leaders launched a campaign to “eliminate Okinawan accents.” Tamaki Tetsuya wrote that “Because our language and customs are somewhat different, there is a feeling that we don’t completely fit in. . . . As Japanese citizens, we are, of course, loyal subjects of the emperor. So, under the circumstances, we should vow to get rid of extraneous sounds in our speech.”<sup>25</sup>

This was also the time of the notorious (and today much-studied) “dialect controversy” (*hōgen ronsō*) in Okinawa, where a group of mainland folklorists visiting in 1940 criticized local policies to enforce the use of standard Japanese in the schools as endangering the survival of the Ryukyuan language. The indignant response of educators there was echoed by Okinawans on the mainland. They conceded that “promoting the use of standard Japanese and preserving Okinawa dialects are both important,” but insisted that, for economic survival, “emphasis must be put on mastering

standard Japanese.”<sup>26</sup> Okinawans both at home and on the mainland saw the folklore scholars as seeking to exploit Okinawa’s “rich” culture, as material for their research, at the expense of its far-from-rich people.

Wartime pressures to assimilate from within the greater Osaka community culminated in leaders’ calls for a thoroughgoing “nationalization” (*kokuminka*) to eliminate or minimize differences between resident Okinawans and mainland Japanese. Like Tamaki, an author writing under the name “Yoshitake” in the *Ōsaka Kyūyō Shimpō* advocated the use of unaccented standard Japanese as one way to eradicate prejudice. He described his own encounters on the mainland with discrimination in marriage and employment in an article published on New Year’s Day, 1941.

This is something incomprehensible for those of us who have never set foot outside Okinawa Prefecture, or even for those who have traveled to the mainland for a month or two. But people in other prefectures know Okinawa only as “Ryukyu.” When we apply for a job, they ask us if we understand Japanese, remark on how “odd” our names sound, and want to know if we are true Ryukyu natives. In short, they think of us as strange people from a second-rate place. Because of this, we experience many disappointments in job-hunting, promotions, marriage, and relations with our neighbors. During my years on the mainland, I have known two cases in which marriage plans had progressed to the point of wedding arrangements. Then, as soon as a prospective spouse was discovered

to be from “Ryukyu,” negotiations were immediately broken off. I realize that such prejudice arises for many reasons, not only language differences. But we must emphasize language since it is the first thing mainlanders notice about us that is different.<sup>27</sup>

Yoshitake went beyond advocating the use of “standard” Japanese, echoing calls for total conformity in Okinawan newspaper editorials during the “human pavilion incident” in 1903. He wrote, “If at the earliest possible date we could show we have become the same in all ways as the people of other prefectures, with no remaining differences, we would sweep away all their prejudices. This is the most advantageous path to our advancement.”<sup>28</sup> Okinawans today view campaigns for assimilation on the mainland as much as rejections of an Okinawan identity and its cultural manifestations as adoptions of mainland lifestyles.<sup>29</sup> “Rather than questioning the assumptions of the ‘majority,’” notes Nakama Keiko in retrospect, “they took mainland prejudice as a given and felt they had no choice but to ‘reform’ [i.e., assimilate] if they hoped to end discrimination.”<sup>30</sup>

Okinawans are hardly alone in turning to assimilation as a strategy for economic and psychological survival. “All known societies have been stratified,” notes Terrence Cook, “and as long as systematic inequities remain, one can expect some recourse to assimilation. . . . [G]iven the importance of the choice in question, it is quite plausible that an instrumental but boundedly rational reasoning may explain the choice . . . [I]ndividuals of an ethnic minority most likely [choose] assimilation [because] they perceive clear rewards in assimilating, whether for self-protection or for self-advancement in their careers. . . . [S]ome of them are enough alike in appearance or speech that they could ‘pass’ as

if members of the dominant ethnicity.”<sup>31</sup>

Yet, even when community leaders were vigorously advocating wholesale adoption of the majority culture and lifestyles, at least some Okinawans on the mainland questioned the desirability of becoming “the same in all ways” as mainlanders. A resident of Osaka wrote in the October, 17, 1940 edition of the Ryūkyū Shimpō that “it is difficult for Okinawans to become like people of other prefectures because, although we are honest, they are inconsiderate and hostile. . . . They complain that we lack assertiveness and tend to withdraw, but we have many virtues to be admired.”

We almost never see them line up to take their turn. Some bull their way through a waiting crowd like rugby fullbacks, crashing into others, stepping on feet, and kicking people in their thighs. That’s the outrageous way mainlanders behave. On crowded trains, they blithely take up two seats and cross their legs so that their muddy shoes rub against the clothing of people standing around them. Even when passengers are packed together shoulder to shoulder with no space between them, some mainlanders thrust out their elbows to hold open their newspapers, knocking aside the people next to them. The same kind of unconscionable behavior can be seen at the public bath. Many never bother to wash themselves first, jumping right into the tub as soon as they tear off their clothes. Then they wash their hair, rinse out their washcloths by squeezing them against the inside tile, and pour water over themselves with no regard for the



filth they're spreading among the other bathers.<sup>32</sup>

The author insisted that “No Okinawan is so lacking in a sense of public morality.” And he considered it “truly regrettable” that, “because of our difficulties with language, we are often misunderstood.”<sup>33</sup>

Although Okinawans may have questioned the extent to which they should assimilate, most maintained the emphasis on their Japanese nationality. This article's harsh criticism is directed at “naichaa” (mainlanders) and “tafuken-jin” (people of other prefectures, municipalities, and districts), not at “Nihon-jin” (Japanese). Okinawans often emphasized their Japanese nationality during this period when “language and custom reform” (to mainland norms) was a popular slogan, and “being Japanese” meant being a citizen of a modern nation that had already won two wars (the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5 and Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95), and been on the winning side in World War I. Despite continuing encounters with prejudice and reservations about abandoning their culture, many Okinawans on the mainland, especially association leaders, viewed this “time of emergency” as an opportunity to affirm their identity as “the same Japanese” (onaji Nihon-jin). Tomiyama Ichirō judges this effort in retrospect as futile and self-destructive because firmly entrenched popular attitudes and government policies in mainland Japan did not recognize Okinawans as members of the “imagined community” of nation.<sup>34</sup>

### Responses to “spritual mobilization”

A history textbook used in Japanese primary schools, which were renamed “national schools” in 1941, included an episode from Okinawa during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5. Osaka's newspapers had featured it in 1935 during the thirtieth anniversary celebration of Japan's victory in that war. The

widespread retelling of “The Five Brave Warriors of Hisamatsu” sparked admiration among mainland Japanese. It was even reported to have led to pay raises for some Okinawans working in small factories, where their wages had been 15% lower than those of mainlanders.<sup>35</sup> The purpose of its dissemination in schools and in the media was to promote dedication and sacrifice among all Japanese, adults and children alike, in the war effort.

“The Five Brave Warriors” was classified in Japan as one of several “honored tales of loyalty and bravery.” Perhaps the best-known was “Human Bombs: The Three Brave Warriors,” which told of a 1932 incident in which three Japanese soldiers carried fused explosives into a Chinese fortification near Shanghai. A premature detonation killed them, but opened the way for a successful assault.<sup>36</sup> The Hisamatsu episode occurred on Miyako Island in May, 1905, at a critical stage in the Russo-Japanese War. Islanders were said to have sighted a large formation of warships steaming north, which they recognized as a Russian fleet heading for the war zone. They immediately notified the Miyako local government office. But the nearest telegraph transmitter was on Ishigaki Island, about 100 miles away. Five sturdily-built fishermen from the Hisamatsu section of Hirara City were chosen to row their small fishing boat there. The information would be crucial because the Japanese Navy had been unable to locate Russia's Baltic Fleet.

They set out on May 25 and arrived at dawn the next day. Their message was transmitted to the Japanese fleet which, however, had received a similar report an hour earlier from one of its patrolling cruisers. The resulting victory was decisive to the war's outcome. And, although their message arrived later than the cruiser's, the heroic status of the five fishermen remained undiminished.<sup>37</sup> The Navy Ministry honored them in 1935, during the thirtieth anniversary victory celebration. Mainland

patriotic organizations and veterans groups sent commendations and trophies to Miyako.

Public commemoration in 1935 of the “Five Brave Warriors of Hisamatsu” came during the fourth year of fighting in China. With the outbreak of full-scale war in 1937, Okinawan journalists in Osaka joined their mainland counterparts in public expressions of patriotism. An editorial in the Osaka Kyūyō Shimpō marking the first anniversary of the newspaper’s founding noted that “its birth just after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident closely links our newspaper with the nation’s destiny . . . . To report the arduous battles of the Imperial Army is our patriotic mission. . . . The future of the struggle against the enemy in China is also our newspaper’s future.” True to its pledge, the newspaper published detailed accounts of sacrifices made by Osaka’s Okinawans on the battlefield and the home front.<sup>38</sup> It printed the names and brief biographies of men departing for and returning from the war, and listed the names of Okinawan dead. Headlines extolled “deaths with honor in battle” and “the silent return of heroes.”<sup>39</sup>

The Kyūyō Shimpō also printed exhortations for Okinawans to support the war. A lead article in 1939, for example, urged Okinawan men in Osaka to “be especially cognizant of their military obligation, ready to serve with honor as Imperial Army soldiers in this time of crisis, and to shoulder their rifles at a moment’s notice if summoned by his Majesty.” The article’s headline, however, suggested that not all those eligible for conscription were eager to serve. “Are there men among us who have neglected to notify the military of their change in address? . . . We call upon you to register.” The article included the names of men listed with their hometowns in Okinawa, where orders had arrived from the local regimental headquarters to report for duty but whose current addresses could not be determined. It urged “Anyone with information about these men to immediately notify Mr. Toyokawa,” an

Okinawan attorney whose address and telephone number were provided.<sup>40</sup> Failure to register their new addresses at the local ward office was one way Osaka’s Okinawans, and other Japanese men, sought to avoid, or at least delay, military conscription, indicating that not everyone was cooperating enthusiastically in the war effort.<sup>41</sup>

Along with journalists, Okinawan composers and playwrights began infusing their work with patriotic exhortations. Taihei Marufuku Records, founded by composer and sanshin performer Fukuhara Chōki, released wartime recordings of Okinawan songs with such titles as “Wives on the Home front,” “Women, Be Strong,” and “A Toast to the Departing Enlisted Man.”<sup>42</sup> Yet, even as he composed music supporting the war, Fukuhara came under official pressures that had the effect of devaluing Okinawan culture. Government censors ordered him to change the title of a song he had written with his wife Shizuko, originally issued in 1934 as “Ballad of the Warrior” (Gunjin-bushi). “It is entirely inappropriate,” the censors declared, “that the term honoring soldiers of the Greater Japanese Empire should be used as the title of a Ryukyuan folk song.”<sup>43</sup> The incident acutely demonstrated the paradoxical position of Okinawans, who drew criticism for expressing their distinctive (“Ryukyuan”) culture even in the context of supporting Japan’s war against China. Government censors might have deemed the title inappropriate because the text of the song was in a dialect thought by many to represent an inferior subculture in Japan. Or, perhaps they objected because giving a “Ryukyuan folk song” that title seemed inconsistent with contemporary ideals of unity and uniformity. In any case, it was renamed “Port of Embarkment” (Debune no Minato), although the original title has been restored in recently published collections of Okinawan songs.<sup>44</sup>

The authors of Okinawan plays that drew

overflow audiences in greater Osaka also turned to war themes. Since the 1920s, plays were performed daily at a small, converted Kabuki theater located in a section of Konohana Ward where many Okinawans lived. Theater groups from Okinawa also performed at other venues in Taishō Ward, and in the nearby cities of Sakai and Amagasaki. Touring greater Osaka in 1939, actors from Okinawa staged a dramatic sketch entitled “National Spiritual Mobilization.” The following year, another troupe from Okinawa performed a play entitled “A Drama Chronicling Troubled Times Between Japan and China.” An advertisement summarized the plot.

Chō Shitetsu is the son of Nakamoto Matsuru, an Okinawan woman, and Chō Rinkun, a Chinese man who is pro-Japanese. After his father is assassinated by the Nationalist (Kuomintang) government, Shitetsu, vowing revenge, forms an alliance for justice in China. He searches for his mother, who, appealing for peace in Asia, had disappeared twenty years before. In this quest, he fights bravely for the Japanese Army, falling heroically in battle to become a divine warrior spirit of Japanese-Chinese amity. This masterpiece of drama will bring tears to your eyes. (Admission charge: 40 sen. Discounts for soldiers in uniform returning from the front.)<sup>45</sup>

Like published songs, plays had to pass government censorship. Translations in standard Japanese were required for scripts in Okinawa dialect. Even after their approval, police in plain clothes came to theaters, synopses in hand, to check on performances. With stern wartime prohibitions against love scenes and what was considered “effeminate”

material, actors would improvise prolonged interludes of music and dance until the police got bored and left, then perform the proscribed scenes that were often the audience’s favorites.<sup>46</sup>

Such expedients suggest that Okinawans sought some temporary relief from what Okinawan poet and longtime mainland resident Yamanokuchi Baku called, in his 1943 poem “Ōshō” (Drafted), “this khaki colored world” of mobilized Japan.

In the middle of the night,

who could it be,

knocking at my door?

He had turned the color of this world,

khaki from head to toe.

“I must leave at once,” he said.

“At once.”

It is the way of this khaki-colored world.<sup>47</sup>

Okinawans living on the mainland today recall their efforts as children during the war to find some humor in the daily cacophony of militaristic propaganda and endless exhortation for greater toil and sacrifice. Yamashiro Kenkō, originally from Ie Island, Okinawa, remembers the changes in his elementary school during the war.

In April of 1941, I entered what had previously been called a higher elementary school, but was renamed a national school a few months earlier. The content of textbooks had changed too,

glorifying war and exalting national prestige. In those days, government leaders' strategy of brainwashing people and inculcating absolute obedience began in elementary school. We were taught that Japan had a single line of emperors that would continue forever and that, as the country of the gods, it would never lose a war. The emperor was an all-knowing, all-powerful living god who controlled everything, so we were told that when we died, we had to raise both arms and yell "Tennō Heika banzai!" (Long live the Emperor). Jokesters among us would practice dying on the way to and from school, falling down by the side of the road while yelling "Tennō Heika banzai!" Some students even said the emperor's shit must taste sweeter than sugar.<sup>48</sup>

Besides playful takes as children on stern wartime admonitions and ideology, other Okinawans on the mainland recall doubts they had about the campaign for "spiritual mobilization." In her account of the war years, Takada Hatsu writes

I first learned the meaning of war as a second-grader when I had to join a funeral procession to the shrine for a man who died at the front in China. Seeing his bereaved family made me feel hatred for war. Later, I found the increasingly militaristic curriculum at school unbearable and would read short stories during class. I didn't really want to go on to the next grade and didn't have to, since I was sick in the hospital the day of entrance exams. . . . I was sixteen when

Japan started the war against America. I knew there was no way Japan could win, and felt overcome with fear and helplessness.<sup>49</sup>

If Okinawans on the mainland had doubts about official claims that Japan was fighting a "sacred war" in which "victory was certain," they could hardly have expressed them openly. People suspected only of having "dangerous thoughts" (kiken na shisō) could be arrested and imprisoned. Nakamura Chijun, an Okinawan who joined the Yokohama police force in 1942, remembers how busy officers were from the Special Higher Police Unit (tokkō). "They brought people in every day for interrogations. Even those said to harbor thoughts inconsistent with national policy were jailed for more than a year."<sup>50</sup>

At least some of the war's survivors among Okinawans on the mainland still argue that the Pacific War was unavoidable, forced on Japan by other nations. Interviewed in November, 2000, six men in their 80's living in Taishō Ward agreed that the nation had decided to fight because it found itself surrounded by the "ABCD" powers. That wartime acronym, much publicized by the government shortly before the Pearl Harbor attack, identified the Americans, British, Chinese and Dutch as thwarting Japan's legitimate interests in Asia and threatening the country's very survival by imposing hostile measures such as embargoes on essential raw materials, especially oil.<sup>51</sup>

Other Okinawans recall the early war years as exciting and inspiring. When eighteen-year-old Fujioka Hiroshige heard about the start of the Pacific War, he wanted to become a soldier immediately, dissatisfied with his status as a "home front youth" (gunkoku shōnen).

My blood had been stirred by the string of victories in the Manchurian, Shanghai, and China



Incidents.<sup>52</sup> I firmly believed, as did most Japanese, that Japan, the eternal land of the gods, was sure to win the Pacific War. The factory where I worked put up recruiting posters for the army, air force, and the navy youth corps, but young men my age weren't being inducted because of the labor shortage. . . . Our plant produced rifle bullets, which made me want to be a soldier even more. . . . I vowed to die in battle, and might even have volunteered to be a human torpedo if I'd had the chance. . . . But today, when I remember proclamations like "victory is certain," they sound like slogans for some fanatical new religion or lines from a kyōgen comedy.<sup>53</sup>

Organizations were also expected to do their part for "spiritual mobilization." The Taishō Ward League of Okinawa Prefectural Associations, with its reported membership of 7,000, held rallies for soldiers departing for the front, received the remains of war dead, conducted public funerals for them, and made consolation visits to bereaved families. An article in the May 15, 1939 edition of the Osaka Kyūyō Shimpō praised the dedication of Washino Asako, who headed a local chapter of the Greater Japan Women's League for National Defense. "She is gallantly providing encouragement and comfort in devoted service on the home front not confined to her family. 'This has nothing to do with any special circumstances of people from Okinawa Prefecture,' she explains. 'I am only doing my part to fulfill my natural obligation as a citizen of the nation.'"<sup>54</sup>

To reinforce conformity and cooperation, Japan's leaders established the Imperial Rule Assistance League in 1940. It sought, not

always successfully, to reduce friction among competing institutions and organizations by concentrating even more authority in the national government. With the creation of what was called a "new order" (shin-taisei), many civilian organizations were abolished or absorbed into others hastily formed to support the war effort. Labor unions, for example, were merged into the "Patriotic Production Association." On the local level, Okinawa prefectural and village associations in greater Osaka, which had become increasingly active as the fighting escalated in China, declined abruptly after the outbreak of the Pacific War, to the extent that little record of their activities during this period remains today.<sup>55</sup>

### **Turning tide of war brings labor conscription and food shortages**

Although discrimination as companies' policy had abated, Okinawans, like others in Japan, faced much harsher working conditions as the "quagmire" in China widened into the Pacific War. Teruya Shūshin quickly found a job at the Kawanishi Aircraft Factory in Amagasaki City where he moved from Okinawa in November, 1940, at age 23. Thirteen months later, following the attack on Pearl Harbor, he began working long overtime hours on an accelerated schedule to produce transport planes for the Imperial Navy.<sup>56</sup> Iha Zen'yū, originally from Okinawa's Ishikawa City, had failed his draft physical due to a heart condition. He was running an awamori (Okinawan rice brandy) bar in Osaka until restrictions imposed on civilian enterprises in August, 1941, forced him out of business by limiting the operation of bars to two evening hours. After hearing that men not serving in the military whose jobs did not support the war effort were being conscripted for work in the mines, "I decided to close the bar and take a job making cannon parts at a munitions plant where I got hurt operating a lathe."<sup>57</sup>

Kinjō Tomiko left Okinawa for the second time

in 1943 because her mother said she'd be safer on the mainland if war came. "I'd worked a couple of years earlier at a spinning factory in Wakayama, and could see right away that the munitions plant I was assigned to in Shiga Prefecture had also been a spinning factory. The work I did two years earlier had also been grueling, but now, under the nation's stepped up production regimen, we had to work even when we got sick. Besides that, meal portions at the dormitory were tiny and the food was awful. At home in Okinawa at least I'd been able to eat my fill of decent food."<sup>58</sup>

Miyagi Masao also worked at a munitions plant in Shiga Prefecture. "We made the human torpedoes that men climbed inside and crashed into enemy warships, giving their lives for the emperor. In the company dormitory where we had to stay there was never enough food. They gave us meal tickets every ten days, but we'd use them up in five. After that, we only got breakfast in the mornings."<sup>59</sup>

Uehara Kiyō left Okinawa for Osaka in 1943, at age twenty-one. "I was so happy to land a job at the Osaka Artillery Arsenal that paid high wages. They hired only thirty out of the eighty people who took their entrance exam. But I'd expected to do office work. Instead, I was assigned to operate a lathe that spilled oil all over my arms and shoulders, giving me a bad rash." She wrote her mother in Okinawa who told her to return immediately. "I quit after working there six months."<sup>60</sup>

While Uehara was able to leave her job, many couldn't. Long hours and wretched food made Kinjō Tomiko want to quit her munitions factory job, but, this being prohibited, she was forced to adopt the tactics of Okinawan women confined to spinning mill dormitories before the war. "Finally, planning my escape, I sent a friend a letter telling her to meet me one Sunday. I got permission to go out for the day, then left for good."<sup>61</sup>

After Pearl Harbor, the navy took control of the Ōtani Heavy Industries plant in Amagasaki where Kuroshima Anto was working.

All employees were designated conscripted workers and, starting that day, we could no longer come and go freely, our movements restricted by a permit system. Until then, we'd thought the war was something happening in a foreign country. But now, with news that it wasn't going so well, people with no experience as soldiers were ordered to do military training after the work day was over. Privates first class, corporals, and sergeants just back from the front drilled us in stabbing straw dummies with bamboo bayonets. They made those of us who seemed to lack enthusiasm, or failed to yell loud enough for them, run around the factory grounds several times after bayonet drills. This daily training was much worse than anything we'd ever had to do on the job.<sup>62</sup>

In 1941, fifteen-year-old Akena Hiroshi had just graduated from higher elementary school in Okinawa and was working on his parents' farm.

We were shocked when I received a draft notice for conscripted labor at the Kōkura Army Arsenal [in Fukuoka Prefecture]. I'd never even visited the mainland before. They worked us like animals there, from early morning until late at night, with double shifts Mondays and Fridays, and always under the watchful eyes of an army captain or M.P. Like many others who couldn't stand it any longer and

just wanted to get the hell out of there, I volunteered for the army. I felt so relieved when, in January, 1944, I finally got my orders for a unit in Korea. Only later did I realize what a fool I'd been.<sup>63</sup>

Eighteen-year-old Machida Munetaka arrived in Osaka in 1935. His first job was at a company that made neon signs, but after full-scale war began in China, he left to work at almost double the wage for a company that manufactured cartridge belts and electric wire under military contract.

After turning twenty-one in 1938, I moved to Amagasaki. I'd already passed my draft physical and was assigned as a soldier to work in a local factory. The job itself was from eight to five, but I pulled guard duty and had to stay overnight there four or five times a month. I also had to go on nighttime marches after work. Although we were all dead tired after a hard day on the job, they made us march all the way from the factory at Nishi-Yodogawa Ward in Osaka to Minatogawa Shrine in Kobe [a distance of about twenty-five miles]. . . . Labor brigades were also mobilized. They were made up of students from Ichioka Middle School and local merchants from tempura and sushi restaurants, rice stores, and other small shops. None had ever operated dangerous factory machinery before, and I was always worried that the schoolchildren might get hurt.<sup>64</sup>

Job risks weren't limited to machine operators. Nishihira Tsuruko compared her factory to a

battlefield.

I'd come from Kumejima to Taishō Ward planning to study sewing for a while, then return to Okinawa. But after the Pacific War broke out, no boats were leaving for Okinawa. I felt I couldn't just keep living my comparatively leisurely life, so I took a job collecting meal tickets in the cafeteria at Nihon Steel, one of the main munitions factories in Taishō Ward. . . . The plant was on two twelve-hour shifts, and the workers had to be ready to go there immediately in emergencies, so they all lived in a nearby dormitory. Many came to pick up their meals in the cafeteria, but went right back to eat at their workplaces. . . . They poured smoldering clumps of red-hot metal slag through high-speed roller machines for flattening, then pushed it through huge scissor-like clamps for slicing into steel panels and rails. One slip meant serious injury or worse. And the heat was so bad they had to keep pouring water over themselves. Just watching them terrified me. Some soldiers who returned from the front after the war told me they'd been more afraid working there than on the battlefield.

With the war going badly, more men were drafted from the factory, leaving it short of workers, so about a hundred teen-age trainees were brought from Korea. I felt especially sorry for them during air raids because they couldn't understand the directions to bomb shelters, and would run through the halls sobbing. Caucasian

prisoners of war [probably captured in the Philippines] were also brought in by the military police (kempei) to work. There were several dozen of them, all with fine physiques and some with handsome faces like movie stars. They were all so polite when they came to the cafeteria, and some bowed to us. But the military police would beat them if they tried to talk to us, so even if they just said hello, we'd walk away fast. . . . The military police treated them so brutally I had to avert my eyes.<sup>65</sup>

By 1945, Allied P.O.W.'s included American pilots whose aircraft were raining death and devastation on Osaka and other cities where war-related industry was heavily concentrated.

### **The war's toll on city residents and evacuees**

In December, 1943, the government had begun evacuating civilians deemed unessential to the war effort, and relocating some factories that produced munitions and other military supplies. But since moving heavy equipment and machinery often proved impracticable, many workers remained in cities that came under air attacks. Meanwhile, other residents who, like most Okinawans, had no relatives they could stay with in the countryside, were sent to designated rural areas where they often suffered extreme hardships. Some, especially young children, did not survive. Large numbers of schoolchildren in greater Osaka were transported, along with their teachers, to rural Shikoku in Tokushima Prefecture.

In late 1944, Isagawa Hiroshi was an elementary school student in Taishō Ward. Many of his classmates were also from Okinawa with no relatives in the nearby countryside. "The newspapers hoisted their lanterns in

support of the war effort, printing stories daily about the joys of group evacuation. Our parents must have worried a lot about us leaving home without them, but we were in high spirits at first, as though we were taking off on a school excursion." The mood changed abruptly after they boarded a boat for Shikoku.

I vomited constantly during the trip. . . . We finally arrived at our destination, about fifteen miles south of Tokushima City, where the rice farms stretched out as far as the eye could see. We began life as evacuees billeted at a Buddhist temple. Seventy fifth-grade boys were far beyond the capacity for the temple's four guest rooms, so they packed us together like lunch-box sushi with two boys sleeping on each tatami mat. Our third day there I was hurrying across the veranda of the main pavillion when my foot plunged through the bamboo lattice floor, tearing the tendons in my left leg. I was carried to the nearest town in a rickshaw, where I got seven stitches with no anesthetic, it being unavailable due to wartime shortages. I endured the pain clenching my teeth because I was told that "men of Japan don't cry." Later, when my injury healed and the stitches had to be removed, two teachers took turns carrying me over the three-mile road to and from the clinic. Remembering it now, I realize how much trouble this must have been for them. . . . But in those days all I could think about was food. . . . And because I was hungry and homesick most of the time, my futon was often wet with tears. . . . I saw in the New Year of 1945 homesick, hungry,



cold, and covered with lice and itchy scabs.

The second evening after New Year's Day an [Okinawan] boy who was constantly bullied by the others apparently caught cold and was lying sick in his futon. I saw several boys drag him out, and although I felt sorry for him, I didn't have the courage to stop them. I heard later that they stuffed him into a closet. The next morning, there was a loud uproar when his cold body was discovered. The temple gave him a huge funeral attended by many high-ranking priests in gaudy robes. His father, who had rushed to be there for the ceremony, resembled his son, small and weak-looking. We wondered if he knew the truth about what had happened. After sundown, as the boy's classmates carried his coffin the mile or so up the mountain path to the crematory, all of us were afraid we might be punished in karmic retribution. . . . People often say children are "pure-hearted" and "innocent." But experiencing the hellish life of an evacuee for nearly a year, I learned they can be brutal, even sadistic.

Kinjō Yūji evacuated in the third grade with a group of school children from Osaka. He learned at the dormitory in Nara where they stayed that adults, too, could behave brutally. "We had a cruel house mother who badly mistreated children unless they paid her bribes. She served others heaping portions of rice, but I got only one tiny spoonful. After a few months, I suffered from malnutrition and my stomach was sticking out like the children you

see in photographs today of countries torn by war and famine."<sup>66</sup> Isagawa Hiroshi recalls, "I was ecstatic when my parents came to take me home in May, 1945. My classmates who had to stay there until the war ended looked like straggling soldiers when we finally saw them again three months later. Some of the sixth graders suffering from malnutrition weighed less than 20 kilograms (44 pounds)."<sup>67</sup>

Most people who left cities with their families fared better than those evacuated in groups. Even without relatives to stay with, many were able to cope more easily with the dislocation, overcrowding, and food shortages. They also escaped the harsh regimentation forced on group evacuees that led to conflict among adults, scapegoating among schoolchildren, and occasional violence. Konawa Anka recalls that the farm family he stayed with in Arima "was very kind to us. They were especially happy when my mother volunteered to baby-sit their children. We were never short of food." Shimabukuro Hisako was twenty-nine in the spring of 1945 when she and her two children evacuated to Ikeda in suburban Osaka Prefecture. Her husband had already moved there with the other employees from his company in Osaka City, now under heavy Allied bombardment.

We felt relieved, settling in at Honganji Temple. Some soldiers were staying at the main building there, but we never knew what unit they were from because it was a military secret. Our kids became friendly with them, going over for visits and happily getting snacks. I was grateful for that because snacks were something we couldn't provide, and my heart broke to think that, at any moment, those men could be sent to the battlefield.<sup>69</sup>

Looking back fifty years later, Shimabukuro was still troubled by the Japanese military's failure to defend Japan's cities. "There were no bombing raids on that quiet village, but B-29s massed in formations overhead, then roared off into the western sky. Even as the air attacks got worse and worse, we never saw any Japanese planes in pursuit."<sup>70</sup> However, Shimabukuro doesn't criticize merchants in suburban areas who were reluctant to sell food to evacuees. "With the Japanese people in the grips of uncertainty, it was only natural that shopkeepers should feel pressure to hold on to whatever food they had. I went to a nearby village not damaged by the bombing to buy rice and vegetables, and barter for other things. Somehow we managed to avoid starvation."<sup>71</sup> "Even when we had money," Shinjō Seiichi recalls, "farmers wouldn't sell us rice or potatoes. But they would barter, so we were able to survive, barely, by exchanging clothing and our sugar rations for food."<sup>72</sup>

With the shrinking availability of daily necessities after rationing began in 1938, the government sought to bolster resolve with slogans such as "Covet nothing until victory" and "Luxury is our enemy." Besides imposing severe shortages to supply the war, the government required war bond purchases, cash contributions, and metal ware donations. After 1941, rationing was extended to rice, fresh foods, clothing, soap, cookware, and utensils. People were constantly hungry, especially manual laborers. Many obtained foodstuffs on the black market. Nakamura Chijun remembers a story widely reported in the press about a judge who had starved to death rather than accept black-market goods.<sup>73</sup> Government censors probably assumed this news would inspire Japanese to stop dealing on the black market, although it might have had the opposite effect on people determined to avoid the judge's fate.

Kuroshima Anto felt acute hunger pangs when he returned from mandatory bayonet practice

after a long work day at an Amagasaki factory. "I can still remember the taste of watery stew sprinkled with a few carefully counted grains of rice. . . . I got married in 1941. . . . Two years later, when the war was closing in on Japan, rationing got even stricter. Sharply reduced limits on the daily staples of brown rice and tofu imposed extreme hardships on us."<sup>74</sup>

Distributing rations was one duty of the government-organized "neighborhood associations" (tonari-gumi), consisting of representatives from ten to fifteen households each. They also disseminated official directives, conducted air raid drills, and reported on anyone suspected of less than full cooperation in the war effort. Participation was compulsory. Okinawans who lived through the war still remember the words they sang to "The Neighborhood Association Briskly Knocking at Our Door" (Tonton karari to tonari-gumi).

Ton-ton karari to tonari-gumi

koshi o akereba

kao najimi

mawashite chodai

kairanban

shiraseraretari

shirasetari

Briskly knocking at our door

is the neighborhood association.

Opening the lattice,

we see those familiar faces.

Please pass around the notice board

that tells us what we need to know

so we can tell the others.<sup>75</sup>

Wives of men sent to the war were required to join the Association of Women Defending the Nation. Its members made thousand-stitch belts for soldiers who wore them to bring “good fortune in battle.”

Mandatory wartime wear were “mompe” work pantaloons for women and “geetoru” fatigue pants gathered at the knees for men. Women and schoolchildren had to undergo combat training with bamboo sticks as spears. Fifth grader Kinjō Seiki lined up with his classmates in the school yard every morning. “They had us attack two straw dummies, one of Roosevelt, the other of Churchill.”<sup>76</sup>

Wartime duties were hard to avoid, though some tried. Men who moved from Okinawa and other rural prefectures to the cities sometimes sought to evade or delay the draft by not registering their new addresses. They soon discovered, however, that, without registering, they could not receive ration passbooks. Then, when they showed up at the ward office, they were handed draft notices.<sup>77</sup>

Joining the drumbeat of exhortation, Osaka’s general circulation newspapers published several stories of “heroes on the home front” about mainlanders depicted as especially supportive of Okinawan soldiers. In August, 1938, the Ōsaka Mainichi Shimbun featured an article about Yoshikawa Yonesaburō, a stock broker from whom an Okinawan employee, Kinjō Eikichi, had stolen money. When Kinjō’s draft notice arrives, Yoshikawa vows to forgive everything and “send him off to the front with an unblemished record.” The piece concludes with Kinjō, who has no family, departing for war with his boss waving flags for encouragement.<sup>78</sup>

Aside from its patronizing overtones, the story perpetuates mainland stereotypes of Okinawans as unreliable employees.<sup>79</sup>

Nevertheless, an Okinawan community newspaper soon printed its own version, entitled “A Resolute Kinjō Leaves for the Front Vowing to Die for his Country.”<sup>80</sup> Other articles told of “warmhearted” (onjō) mainland employers who “take care of” (sewa suru) Okinawan workers and their families, bidding young draftees farewell at induction centers, attending the funerals of war dead, and helping bereaved relatives. Although those accounts, too, may seem patronizing in retrospect, many employers gave strong support to their Okinawan employees bound for the front and to their families. The October 15, 1938 Ōsaka Kyūyō Shimpō ran a story of a company president who traveled all the way to an army hospital in Kumamoto to bring a wounded soldier a record of Okinawan folk music. Other articles described local community leaders visiting the homes of the bereaved. At Shinto shrines, they also offered prayers to departing soldiers for good fortune in battle and for full recovery to those back from the front wounded or ill.<sup>81</sup>

Many of these stories did not have happy endings, depicting the hardships and sacrifices of local Okinawans in heart-rending detail. One tells of Yoza Tsuru, who, after her son is drafted, must go to work as a traveling vegetable vendor to support her son’s pregnant wife, as well as her own younger sister and her sister’s child.<sup>82</sup> “Model Home Front Wives” describes a woman from Okinawa who, after her husband is drafted, can’t support her family on subsidies provided by his company and a military aid association. She takes piecework at home to make ends meet. Another Okinawan woman states resolutely that “for us, the wives of soldiers, these circumstances are only natural when we live away from our hometowns. I accepted them long ago.” Another leaves her children with her husband’s mother after he is drafted and goes to work in a Taishō Ward metallurgy shop to support the family. Shortly after her husband returns from the front recuperating from wounds, she dies in

a workplace accident.<sup>83</sup>

Loaded with patriotic slogans, such accounts were apparently published at least in part to inspire people to ever-greater toil and sacrifice in the war effort. Accounts in retrospect of the war's survivors suggest that, at least for some, they might have had the opposite effect.

### **Prejudice and rampant abuse in the emperor's army**

A 77-year old army veteran, originally from Kochinda, Okinawa, was living in Taishō Ward when I interviewed him in November, 2000. Serving in China as an enlisted man in August, 1945, he recalled that his company commander had announced Japan's surrender as a "cease fire." Proud of his military service, he eagerly described the units he was assigned to, the places they were deployed, and what he and his buddies had experienced. He explained the Japanese army's organization, weapons, and equipment, drawing detailed charts on note paper. Also knowledgeable about the U.S. military, he praised its technology and "know-how," denouncing Japan's "military clique" (gunbatsu) for foolishly going to war with America.

Toward the end of our interview, I showed him an article from the April 4, 1945 New York Times reporting discrimination against Okinawan soldiers in the Imperial Japanese Army, and asked if he himself had ever been treated unfairly as a soldier.<sup>84</sup> Seeming uncomfortable with the question, he responded somewhat indignantly that "everyone in the army was treated the same." However, he also recalled that Okinawan soldiers had struggled with language, as had mainlanders from northeastern Honshu (Tōhoku) where the local dialects also differ significantly from "standard" Japanese. But while acknowledging that there had been discrimination against Okinawan civilians before 1945, he insisted it had ended after the war. Since then, he said, Okinawans themselves have been responsible

for problems in their relations with mainland Japanese. He particularly criticized those who "isolated themselves" on the mainland by joining organizations such as the Okinawa prefectural associations.

His response echoes opinions expressed by other Okinawans on the mainland who deny the existence of postwar discrimination. It conflicts, however, with published recollections of men who served in the Japanese armed forces, and with many accounts of discrimination on the mainland since 1945. Atrocities committed against Okinawans by mainland soldiers during the Battle of Okinawa are thoroughly documented, and Okinawans serving in the local defense corps faced harsh and demeaning treatment from their mainland comrades-in-arms who skimped on their rations and used children as shock troops.<sup>85</sup> Of course, individual experiences vary, and there were surely Okinawans in the Japanese military, particularly those fluent in "standard" Japanese, who were "treated the same" as everyone else. This interviewee had joined the army when the Japanese military offered young men a highly respected occupation and secure employment, especially during economic hard-times.

Military organizations in Japan and elsewhere enforce a paradoxical kind of "equal opportunity" with a structured system of ranks at set salaries and quantitative criteria for promotion based in large part on chronological seniority ("time in grade"). Ienaga Saburō notes that, for those who had no special privileges as civilians, an "attraction of army life was a perverse equality found nowhere else in Japanese society. No matter how prestigious or wealthy a man's family, all this was left behind when he entered the service. He was just another recruit. The NCOs [noncommissioned officers] were catered to by men who would not have deigned to speak to them in civilian life."<sup>86</sup>



Before Japan's victory in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95, conscription was widely resisted in the countryside as a kind of blood tax. After that, obligatory military service was more readily accepted, although many young men still did what they could to avoid it. Rising patriotic fervor after the “Manchurian Incident” of 1931 heightened pressures to serve. Moreover, in the 1930s, sons of poor farmers often found far better livelihoods, even as low-ranking enlisted men, than as “surplus population” in their home villages. Free room and board with prospects for a career and a pension were utterly unobtainable for most of their civilian compatriots, especially during the depression years. After they completed training, many found their military jobs far less arduous than the work they'd done on the farm.<sup>87</sup> Ienaga points to “an even greater inducement [in] the relative ease of military life, as strange as it may sound. Compared to the dawn to dark backbreaking toil of the impoverished farm households where they grew up, many NCOs found army life ‘far easier,’ and ‘not very hard work, a lot better than being a farmer.’ . . . It is not surprising that second and third sons with no expectation of getting any land of their own should find military life attractive.”<sup>88</sup>

The armed forces in many countries have also offered at least the prospect of escaping discrimination based on socioeconomic and/or minority civilian status. Neither the Japanese nor the U.S. militaries treated minority soldiers equally. Like Okinawans, Koreans encountered prejudice in the Imperial Japanese Army, and, along with Taiwanese soldiers, were assigned disproportionately as “shock troops.” Yet, unlike the American armed forces that practiced official segregation of all units until 1948, the Japanese military assigned Koreans—and of course Okinawans—to serve after training with mainland soldiers, and even, occasionally, as their commanding officers.<sup>89</sup>

Nevertheless, Okinawan soldiers faced special

hardships that were exacerbated by the relentless pressures for conformity, the exhausting regimen, and the pervasive authoritarianism of military life. Most countries' armed forces put new recruits through rigorous training that includes psychological and physical harassment thought to inculcate toughness, obedience, and a willingness to kill others and risk one's own life unquestioningly. But the Imperial Japanese Army's extreme form of “hard training” had the effect of desensitizing soldiers to human suffering—their own and others'. The violent abuse of trainees instilled callousness and anger that led to later atrocities against soldiers and civilians of other nations. Such “hard training” for desensitization is not required for American soldiers today who more often kill at a distance, using such high-tech weapons as “predator” drones and “tomahawk” cruise missiles.

Army veteran Shingaki Seiho recalls Okinawan soldiers' difficulties with language. “Even when we understood what noncommissioned officers were asking us, they would beat us because we couldn't immediately find the words to reply. Just among the Okinawan soldiers I knew, there were two who, unable to endure, became mentally ill.”<sup>90</sup> Interviewed in September, 2000, a man drafted for service in Taiwan said that Okinawan soldiers' struggles with language, especially their delayed responses to questions from NCOs, were used as an excuse for extra harsh treatment.

Sadistic abuse of new recruits from all prefectures was notoriously common. They were beaten for the slightest error or oversight, such as a speck of dust on a pair of boots.<sup>91</sup> The violent harassment meted out to men struggling with language was also imposed on soldiers from northeastern Honshu. After their cruelly enforced “assimilation” in training, however, many Okinawan soldiers found things easier. Learning how to talk and act more like mainlanders also served them well after their

discharges, especially if they lived on the mainland.

Nakama Keiko writes that, despite Okinawans' efforts to conform, mainlanders still tended to view them as "second class citizens" (*nijū kokumin*). Even as "citizen soldiers" (*kokumin heishi*), they were considered "inferior" (*ototte iru*). For their part, Okinawan soldiers held the view (called by Nakama an illusion) that they were proving themselves equal to other Japanese as citizens of a nation at war.<sup>92</sup> In fact, Okinawan draftees on the mainland felt the sting of prejudice even as their families and neighbors were bidding them farewell for the front. During one departure ceremony, described in the *Ōsaka Kyūyō Shimpō*, the departing soldier had just begun to speak in response to words of encouragement from the Okinawan Soldiers League when a passerby, seeing the League's flag, yelled out, "It's just some Ryukyuan."

The League's vice-president, who was standing beside the soldier, yelled back. "How dare you talk that way about this brave soldier on his way to the front. You traitor!" Then he ran over and punched the man in the jaw.<sup>93</sup>

Osaka resident Oyakawa Takayoshi, drafted in 1937 at the age of twenty-one, was first assigned to a company comprised entirely of Okinawans because all training units of new recruits were organized according to the prefectures listed in their families' household registers. "But the company commander made fun of us, saying it was really because Okinawa is thirty years behind the mainland."<sup>94</sup>

Okinawan recruits had to endure such extra insults on top of the the relentless, often violent, abuse visited on all privates.

Agema Hiroshi soon realized "what a fool I'd

been" to volunteer for the army in order to escape the long hours and harsh conditions of his conscripted labor at the Kyushu Army Arsenal. Assigned to train with a parachute squadron, he wore his uniform to bed at night to avoid severe punishment for arriving later than ranking squad members for morning formation. If any of them decided he hadn't greeted them loudly enough, they'd beat him. NCOs made trainees lick their own boots, after claiming to see a speck of dust on the leather. New recruits got the smallest portions of rice without even a pickle to go with it, and were always hungry after eating. Detailed to wash the dishes, they would gulp down leftover rice from the plates of ranking squad members, and many got diarrhea.<sup>95</sup>

Later assigned to an equestrian unit, Oyakawa Takayoshi seems to confirm another of Ienaga Saburo's observations: that the Imperial Japanese Army treated animals better than privates.<sup>96</sup>

They beat soldiers because we were said to lack "focus" or "concentration." They'd ask us how many steps there were in the barracks staircase or how many watts in the bulbs in the hall. If we didn't know, they said it was proof of our laxity. Or they'd call us one by one into the shed where equestrian gear was stored and beat us with leather harnesses, saying we hadn't been taking proper care of the equipment.

They told us that when one soldier had done something wrong, we were all responsible, then beat everyone with wooden swords until the bamboo blades sometimes broke. Medics had to carry soldiers with bleeding heads to the infirmary. It happened once to me. . . . Another time the squad leader

asked me the name of a piece of equestrian gear, which we'd never been taught. When I couldn't answer, he grabbed a glass paperweight from his desk and hurled it at my head. Luckily, I wasn't seriously hurt. . . .

We were told that "everything in the army belongs to the emperor," and that soldiers had committed suicide even for losing a shoe brush. If one slipper was missing, they'd beat us with the other and tell us to "go find it," which really meant "steal it from another squad." Honest soldiers who couldn't bring themselves to do such things were the ones most often beaten.<sup>97</sup>

## War crimes

Okinawan soldiers and civilian survivors of the war witnessed atrocities committed by Imperial Japanese forces, including rape, torture, "weapons training" using human targets, and mass killings of civilians and prisoners-of-war.<sup>98</sup> Oyakawa's account of his 1938-1940 service in China includes graphic descriptions of crimes committed by Japanese soldiers against Chinese civilians.<sup>99</sup>

Two days after his troopship steamed up the Yangtze River and arrived at Chiuchiang, he saw corpses being burned by the side of a road. "I couldn't get the stench out of my nose for several days."<sup>100</sup> After that, Oyakawa's battalion repeatedly came under fire. An ambush caught the troops resting after a long-distance march, killing and wounding many, and throwing the battalion into disarray. Pressed into service as a stretcher carrier, he saw soldiers dying of maggot-infested wounds.

All companies were supposed to

maintain a strict order of march whenever the battalion was on the move. But when company commanders came under fire, they'd argue with each other, insisting they be allowed to break ranks and withdraw their units so they could flee to safe ground. This was completely at odds with what we were taught about the duties of officers in the emperor's forces, and I was truly disgusted.<sup>101</sup>

The atrocities he saw also violated regulations he'd learned in training.

We were assigned guard duty at Chiuchang for about a month and a half. One day, five or six of us took our rifles and one of the horses to a village about eight miles away to "requisition" unhulled rice for horse feed. With no officer in charge, we felt at first like we were off on a pleasure trip. But searching for the village along unfamiliar roads, and not knowing where the enemy might be, we new recruits got scared. I later learned that soldiers who'd been in China for a while used these trips as an excuse to hunt for girls.

After we'd walked about eight miles, we came to a house in the woods. Inside were a woman about seventy and a girl about fourteen or fifteen. We searched the house and found unhulled rice. As we were loading it onto the horse and getting ready to leave, one of the soldiers grabbed the girl, obviously intending to rape her. The older woman yelled something we couldn't understand, and put herself in front of the soldier,

weeping as she pleaded. She must have been the grandmother because, even with a gun muzzle pointed at her, she kept tearfully shielding the girl. The other soldiers pulled the girl away and dragged her inside the house. I was afraid the enemy might hear the child's screams and attack us, so I climbed a nearby hill to keep a lookout.<sup>102</sup> . . .

I'd been at the front a little more than a year when about ten of us went out in An'i Province to commandeer rice again. When we arrived at a village, all hundred or so villagers were clustered together, probably as protection against Japanese soldiers. We looked around the village, then came back to where they'd gathered. One soldier scanned their frightened faces, picked out a man and woman at random, and ordered them to come with him. When we asked what he was going to do with them, he just grinned, so we figured it was something bad and reminded him that he was a Japanese soldier. Later he told us, laughing, that he'd forced them to copulate. Japanese military regulations forbid rape and the commandeering of goods, but even the officers would threaten farmers with their pistols and seize unhulled rice, sometimes handing out small amounts of money so they could say they'd bought it.<sup>103</sup>

When some salt was missing from storage in Oyakawa's unit, the company commander decapitated the Chinese civilians believed responsible in full view of the other villagers as a lesson to them. Another company commander

"tried out" his sword to kill a Chinese accused as a spy. That incident grimly foreshadowed the Battle of Okinawa, during which mainland soldiers killed Okinawan civilians wrongly accused as "spies" because they'd uttered a few words in their local dialect. Many more civilians than soldiers died in the battles and their aftermath in China described by Oyakawa. Among the hundreds of civilian corpses left in the wake of the fighting at Kaoan, Oyakawa saw "people with their heads cut off and naked women with cigarettes stuck in their vaginas." When a civilian didn't immediately hand over his rice to Japanese soldiers in Oyakawa's unit—probably because he couldn't understand what they were saying to him—the company commander ordered his troops to shoot him and his family. Oyakawa heard an infant crying among the tangle of corpses.<sup>104</sup>

Oyakawa does not claim to have done anything to prevent or protest these atrocities, or deny that, in remaining silent, he was involuntarily complicit. He writes only that joining workers' organizations in his late teens influenced his feelings toward people vulnerable and powerless.

I learned in the labor movement about socioeconomic class and capitalism. I understood why wars happen and who benefits from them. It awakened enough of a conscience in me so that I never demanded anything from Chinese people during the war. I helped several women, who were hiding from Japanese soldiers, to escape. But I was probably lucky that I wasn't assigned to a combat unit, and never had to fire a bullet.<sup>105</sup>

The prewar hardships of Okinawans living on the mainland might have made some especially sensitive to the treatment of Chinese civilians, and more willing to talk and write about it



later. Other China veterans among Osaka's Okinawans also recounted war crimes. Yasuzato Shōtarō described Japanese soldiers shooting Chinese prisoners-of-war captured after a battle in Su Province late in 1938.<sup>106</sup> Matayoshi Kōei told how, in 1940, his senior NCOs walked into a village in the mountains of central China and took three or four middle-aged men from a house at gunpoint. After forcing them to carry heavy equipment over mountains for the unit's redeployment, the NCOs "decided the men were no longer of any use, and shot them point blank with rifles."<sup>107</sup>

Although I have not located eye-witness accounts by Okinawans who lived on the mainland, it must be noted here that American soldiers and sailors also committed atrocities. In recorded incidents, they killed Japanese prisoners of war, destroyed hospitals, and gunned down survivors in lifeboats from Japanese transport ships sunk by U.S. Navy submarines.<sup>108</sup> George Feifer estimates that American soldiers committed thousands of rapes in Okinawa during and shortly after the battle there.<sup>109</sup>

### **Those who barely survived**

Several Okinawan war veterans in greater Osaka said they felt lucky to be alive. Yasuzato Shōtarō's company was "mopping up" in a dense forest after defeating a Chinese unit near the Soviet border in northern Manchuria when "straggling enemy soldiers surrounded us, and I barely escaped with my life."<sup>110</sup> Kaneshiro Kenji heard the "eerie sound of bullets whistling pyun-pyun" over his head, sometimes grazing his helmet, during fire fights in central China where he caught malaria.<sup>111</sup> Near Hunan in September, 1942, Matayoshi Shigeo was wounded in the arm and chest. Carried on a stretcher to a field hospital, he lost consciousness for two days. "I woke up itching unbearably from maggots that crawled all over me because the clean bandages had run out."<sup>112</sup>

Deployed from Shanghai to Hsiaoshan in 1938, Nakamura Chijun recalled that it was "extremely dangerous" to venture beyond the company perimeter. "If you were wounded, you could be captured. And, even if you later escaped and returned to your unit, you'd be executed according to the Japanese military code of conduct for having become a prisoner of the enemy [instead of committing mandatory suicide]."<sup>113</sup>

I had no idea why, with intelligence reports of the enemy massing nearby, Warrant Officer Sudō took about ten of us out on a search-and-destroy patrol. And, sure enough, we were totally unprepared when they started firing at us from across the river. P.F.C. Kiyonaga from Kagoshima was wounded in the head and P.F.C. Yamaguchi from Niigata in the chest. I took out the cravats that were wrapped inside our fatigue shirts, and applied compression bandages as a stopgap measure, but we were pinned down there and couldn't move.

We waited four hours until the sun went down. Luckily for the rest of us, the river was wide and deep, and the enemy apparently had no mortars. But those two soldiers died without ever uttering another word. Help never arrived because headquarters had decided that, if anyone were sent out to rescue us, they would only be killed. . . . We used to say we were all "soldiers of fortune." Some men with long combat records were never so much as grazed while others died in their first fire fight.<sup>114</sup>

The army assigned Ujihara Usei to a construction battalion building an airfield on a small island off Saipan. On one of his weekly off-duty trips to town, he happened to meet his cousin at the restaurant she managed. She was one of approximately 20,000 Japanese emigrants in Saipan, the vast majority from Okinawa. She warned him that work on the airfield was extremely dangerous, and that several local residents had already died. “You’ve got to get out of there,” she told him.

As an only son, I was worried about my family if something happened to me. So she contacted them in Okinawa and had them send me a telegram. “Father in critical condition. Return home at once.” We knew it had to look real because the military read all our mail. Later, I heard that this cousin, to whom I owe my life, was one of the many Japanese civilians in Saipan to die during the fighting there [in June and July of 1944].<sup>115</sup>

Along with some 10,000 noncombatants, the battle for Saipan took the lives of approximately 30,000 Japanese soldiers, virtually the entire defending garrison.<sup>116</sup> One year after its fall, Kina Seiso was “saved by the bell” at the end of the war in August, 1945, when Soviet forces surrounded his unit in Manchuria.

They had us overpowered with artillery and other heavy weapons when all we had were small arms and machine guns. But after three or four days of fighting, they ceased fire all of a sudden and put up a white flag. Our whole battalion was called into formation at 9:00 in the morning. At first we thought the report of Japan’s

surrender was probably a false rumor. But, a little while later, the official directive came down for us to follow the orders of Soviet forces. Right then and there, our battalion and brigade commanders both shot themselves dead with their pistols. The Soviet soldiers seized all our weapons and declared us demobilized.<sup>117</sup>

Kina’s ordeal was far from over. He barely survived a long forced march during which fellow soldiers died of exhaustion. Like tens of thousands of other captured Japanese soldiers, he was then sent to a Siberian labor camp. Many more of his comrades died during years of imprisonment under its slave-like conditions.

They put us on a freight train at Buragoe, and we all thought we’d soon be back in Japan. . . . Curtains covered the train windows, so we couldn’t tell which direction we were going, although some men said we seemed to be heading south. But after ten days of a bumping, lurching ride, the train stopped at a place called Simonoska, and about 300 of us were ordered off. They marched us for two days to an internment camp deep in the mountains. Except for those who had special skills, we were all assigned in two-man work teams to cut down trees for lumber. Our mandatory production quota was two truckloads of logs every day. It was hard labor at temperatures between minus five and minus twenty degrees Fahrenheit. If we failed to meet the quota, our 300-gram daily ration of black bread was cut to 200 grams. For meals they also gave us a few potatoes

and just enough soup with pieces of herring to fill half our canteen covers.

Several men died every day of cold and starvation. It took those of us on burial duty a whole day to dig their graves in the frozen earth. We survivors kept ourselves going by vowing to “eat rice once more in our lives,” and not to “die like dogs in this shitty place.” . . . I was one of the lucky ones, assigned later as an electrician and released from hard labor. . . . Finally, in late 1947, arrangements began for the repatriation of all soldiers in our camp ranked corporal or below. After six months at Nahotsuka making concrete blocks, I returned by ship to Maezuru in Kyoto Prefecture.<sup>118</sup>

The final irony of his excruciating ordeal was Kina’s discovery, after marrying and settling in Amagasaki, that his imprisonment in Siberia was preventing him from getting a job. During Japan’s large-scale “red purge,” ordered by MacArthur between 1948 and 1950, even returnees from Siberian labor camps were suspected as “Communist-sympathizers.” Finally, Kina’s wife took him to the Hyōgo Okinawa Prefectural Association, where he was hired by the Okinawan owner of a large food-processing plant in Osaka.<sup>119</sup>

The long internment of P.O.W.’s in Siberian labor camps was only one of the disastrous consequences for Japan of the Soviet Union’s late entry into the war. On August 8, 1945, the Red Army launched offensives in Manchuria, northern Korea (then a Japanese colony), and the southern half of Sakhalin (Japanese territory since Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5).<sup>120</sup> Soviet troops quickly overwhelmed outgunned Japanese defenders in Manchuria, of whom Kina Seiso

was one, and steamrolled through the countryside. Of the approximately 300,000 Japanese soldiers and civilians in the area, there were 80,000 confirmed deaths. Ienaga Saburō wrote, “The extensive plunder, rape, and acts of force by Red Army personnel were clear violations of international law and deserve severe condemnation.”<sup>121</sup> Fifty percent of the dead were civilians. Many, including children, were killed by Chinese taking indiscriminate reprisals for decades of Japanese occupation and colonial rule.

Becoming a prisoner-of-war with the rest of his unit, Ishikawa Kiyoshi managed to escape from a P.O.W. camp and eventually make his way to safety and repatriation, but not before witnessing the brutal final stage of the war in Manchuria. “Soviet soldiers would stop people on the street day or night, grabbing their watches, eye glasses, and other personal belongings. They’d break into homes, and steal whatever they could lay their hands on. . . . But I particularly remember what local residents did. . . . Chinese abducted and raped Japanese civilians, and led the Soviet troops to where they were hiding.”<sup>122</sup>

Thus did Okinawans in China witness not only atrocities against Chinese civilians perpetrated by Japanese soldiers on the losing side of the war, but also rapes and looting committed against Japanese civilians by the Soviet and Chinese “victors.” Okinawans on the Japanese mainland were among the hundreds of thousands of civilians killed or maimed in saturation bombings by the U.S. military during the last six months of the conflict.

### **Catastrophic finale: Air attacks on mainland cities**

A single atomic bomb destroyed the city of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, killing some 70,000 within the first few days.<sup>123</sup> With no response from the Japanese government to Allied conditions for surrender, President

Truman went on the radio. “If they do not accept our terms, they may expect a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this earth.”<sup>124</sup> On August 8, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan and its troops advanced into Manchuria. The following day, August 9, a second atomic bomb destroyed Nagasaki,<sup>125</sup> while massive “conventional” bombings of Japanese cities continued. On August 14, one day before Emperor Hirohito announced Japan’s surrender—also over the radio, 145 B-29s dropped 707 tons of ordnance on greater Osaka.

Truman’s words, brimming with Old Testament righteousness, were characteristic of a president celebrated for his “plain speaking.” But his threat of “a rain of ruin” on unspecified victims raises deeply troubling questions about Allied saturation bombings during World War II.<sup>126</sup> International outrage over the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki has deflected attention from “conventional” air attacks on Japanese cities which took a much higher toll in lives and homes between February and August of 1945. They caused the deaths of an estimated 800,000 men, women, and children in Japan, overwhelmingly civilians.<sup>127</sup> Tens of thousands more died of illness and starvation in the aftermath of devastation and chaos.<sup>128</sup> Vietnam War-era Defense Secretary Robert McNamara was an Air Force colonel during World War II with a key role in planning the attacks. He later recalled his commander, General Curtis LeMay, telling him at the time that they both would be prosecuted as war criminals if the Allies lost the war.<sup>129</sup>

American planes by the hundreds flew bombing and strafing raids on almost every major city in Japan. Air attacks killed people riding buses and trains crushed or set aflame, walking in urban business centers where walls of fire trapped and incinerated them, and at home in residential neighborhoods turned into deadly infernos by firebombs. An estimated 97,000

died in one firebombing of Tokyo alone.<sup>130</sup> The delayed effects of burns and radiation poisoning from the two nuclear attacks killed or debilitated tens of thousands in the years that followed, including Okinawans living on the mainland. Tokeshi Kōyū, classified as a “second-generation atomic bomb victim,” died in 1969 at the age of 19 from leukemia diagnosed as resulting from radiation to which his father was exposed in Hiroshima.<sup>131</sup>

Between dusk of March 13 and dawn of March 14, 1945, 270 B-29 bombers dropped approximately 2,000 tons of bombs in waves of attacks on Osaka City. They were followed by seven more major attacks and some thirty smaller-scale raids in June, July, and August. In total, they killed, injured, or left homeless a recorded 1,305,114 persons, including 10,388 dead. Air attacks destroyed virtually every standing structure in thirteen of Osaka’s twenty-five wards,<sup>132</sup> leaving landscapes that came to be called “plains of burnt ruins” (*yakenohara*).

While B-29s dropped bombs, Grumman P-51s strafed with their machine guns. They concentrated their attacks on greater Osaka’s industrial areas, where the largest Okinawan residential communities were located. Thousands of people migrating annually from Okinawa had found jobs or were sent to factories there as conscripted labor. The July 10, 1945 night raid on Sakai killed 1,860 people in wards where many Okinawans lived. Allied bombers raided Amagasaki ten times, particularly targeting its industrial zone along the Osaka City border, home to the largest Okinawan community in the city. Three hundred and four B-29s attacked Kobe, home to another large Okinawan community, on March 17, 1945, thirty-four more than had raided Osaka three days earlier. They left most of the city in rubble. (Residents of Kobe who survived this attack were reminded of it almost exactly fifty years later, when the Kobe-Awajishima Earthquake and resulting fires again



devastated the city on January 17, 1995.)<sup>133</sup>

Aside from evacuating civilians, the Japanese government's ineffectual efforts to defend cities against air attacks seem in retrospect more like "spiritual mobilization."<sup>134</sup> "Before the bombing started we saw more and more U.S. reconnaissance planes passing in the sky over Amagasaki," recalled Kuroshima Anto. "The city was on their return route from scouting Itami Airfield, and they flew so low we could even see the faces of the crew."<sup>135</sup> Antiaircraft artillery had virtually no effect and fighter-interceptor planes were nowhere in sight. Teruya Shūshin recalled that "thousands of shells were fired from antiaircraft guns lacking the range to come anywhere near planes that flew over ten thousand feet. It was pitiful."<sup>136</sup> Only the propaganda remained stalwart. Newspapers and posters gave upbeat instructions with manga-like illustrations urging city residents to cover their lamps with black cloth at night and to join volunteer firefighters in bucket relay drills. Neighborhood associations organized housewives to train with bamboo spears in case the enemy landed. Newspaper headlines and poster captions proclaimed, "Firebombs can't scare us," and "This is how we'll defend our cities."<sup>137</sup> More pointed criticism of the Japanese government came from Osaka resident Higa Hanako who, after hearing the emperor's surrender radio broadcast on August 8, 1945, reflected on "all the lives that could have been saved if he'd only made it earlier."<sup>138</sup>



### Aftermath of Osaka firebombing

Shimabukuro Masahiko, originally from the small Ryukyu island of Ishigaki, witnessed how events were belying such cheerful pronouncements.

Standing on Mosurin Bridge [in Osaka City], we saw several Grumman [U.S. fighters named for the company that manufactured them, now Northrup-Grumman] and Japanese planes come swooping in overhead. Stray bullets shot a couple of holes in the bridge's siding. Then a dog fight started and one plane crashed to the ground about five or six-hundred yards from the factory where we worked. We hurried to the site and saw the scattered wreckage of a Japanese plane. There were many homes nearby, but the fire from the crash was put out in time. The military police (kempei) showed up right away so no one else would see the downed plane. But now I knew for sure that Japan was losing the war.<sup>139</sup>

As in all wars, there were moments of

consolation, relief, and even inspiration. Okinawans on the mainland describe narrow escapes from “seas of fire,” adrenalin-fueled rescues of loved ones and neighbors, tearful reunions with family members and relatives they thought had died, and an incident that became famous as a symbol of resilience and hope amidst the devastation: Three men, their homes destroyed by fire and with only the clothes on their backs, gathered in the burnt-out ruins of Taishō Ward with a sanshin (Okinawan shamisen) they had managed to salvage from the ashes. As they began to play and sing the best-known Okinawan folk song “Asato-ya yunta” (Ballad of the Asato Family), others gathered to listen or join the singing. At that moment, it is said, postwar recovery began for Okinawans in Osaka.<sup>140</sup>

### The Battle of Okinawa

Although it raged hundreds of miles to the southwest, the Battle of Okinawa devastated the lives of Okinawans on the mainland who lost family members and homes in the prefecture. In 1944, Osaka’s newspapers began reporting the events leading up to this last and worst battle of the Pacific War. What came to be known as the “ten-ten air raid” of American planes on October 10 left much of Naha, Okinawa’s capital, a plain of burnt ruins. Japanese forces deployed earlier to form an “Okinawa Defense Army” now anticipated a “decisive battle” against invading American forces. In preparation, the military mobilized local civilians, including schoolchildren, to build fortifications and airfields. Evacuations to the mainland had already begun. Some of the transport ships carrying women, children, the infirm, and the elderly were sunk by Allied torpedoes, with a loss of more than 2,000 lives.<sup>141</sup> On April 2, 1945, Osaka’s newspapers reported that American forces had landed on Okinawa and that the Japanese navy had launched a “floating chrysanthemum offensive”<sup>142</sup> with “special attack [i.e., suicide] squadrons” of “kamikaze” pilots crashing their

planes into U.S. warships.<sup>143</sup>

Both sides’ enormous sacrifices in the Battle of Okinawa, the costliest of the Pacific War for both Japan and the United States, seem particularly outrageous in retrospect. Imperial Headquarters in Tokyo had already withdrawn the crack 9th Division from the “Okinawa Defense Army” in December, 1944, and redeployed it to Taiwan, mistakenly anticipating that Taiwan would become the site of a major battle. When invasion of Okinawa was imminent, the high command canceled anticipated force replacements there, having abandoned its planned defense on the beaches. Revised directives from headquarters ordered soldiers and civilians alike to wage a protracted war of attrition that would inflict high American casualties, slowing the Allied advance and buying time to prepare for an anticipated invasion of the mainland.<sup>144</sup>

Okinawans on the mainland followed newspaper accounts of how the towns and villages where they had grown up were becoming battlegrounds, one after another. Newspapers continued to publish officially approved reports of the fighting, but the Japanese military had suspended all private correspondence between Okinawa and the mainland after U.S. forces captured Iwo Jima in February, 1945, so mainland residents could only worry about the fate of their families, relatives, and neighbors. The headlines on June 26 announcing Japan’s defeat in Okinawa as another “shattering of jewels” (deaths with honor) must have reminded them of similar headlines a year earlier, when a recorded 6,217 Okinawan civilians in Saipan died with the U.S. capture of the island.<sup>145</sup>

Much later they would learn that twenty times as many local residents lost their lives in the Battle of Okinawa. Imperial Headquarters’ strategy of sacrificing Okinawa as a “throwaway pawn” imposed devastating losses on both armies.<sup>146</sup> It also resulted in massive

civilian casualties, mostly women and children killed or wounded by U.S. bombings and shellings, and in the crossfire of ground combat. Many also died because Japanese soldiers, seeking cover for themselves, forced them from caves and shelters at gunpoint. Others starved to death after the Japanese military seized dwindling food supplies from farms and homes.<sup>147</sup> The term “typhoon of steel,” initially referring to cannon barrages from U.S. warships, came to denote the Battle of Okinawa as a whole. Eighty-two days of what Okinawans also call “hell on earth” took the lives of a recorded 122, 228 local residents, 65,908 mainland Japanese, and 12,500 Americans before organized resistance ended in late June of 1945.<sup>148</sup> As in Saipan, hundreds of Okinawan civilians plunged to their deaths off ocean cliffs when U.S. forces closed in. Others died at their own or family members’ hands on orders from Japanese soldiers who distributed grenades, telling them that, if they were captured, the American “devil-beasts” would torture them for information, rape the women, then slaughter them all. When the grenades ran out, people resorted to razors, knives, rope, rocks, and other household or farm implements. Their deaths, misleadingly referred to as “group suicides” (shūdan jiketsu), must also be understood in the context of heavy indoctrination starting in elementary school, where children were exhorted to make unquestioning sacrifices, including the giving of their lives without hesitation, for the sake of nation and emperor.”

Ōshiro Kiichi, born in Nago, returned to Okinawa from his home on the mainland the year before the battle. His chronological account of the fighting provides an overview of events.

My wife and I went back to Okinawa from Amagasaki in August of 1944 because our children were there and we didn’t

want the family to get separated during the war. Our boat left on schedule from Kobe, but couldn’t dock in Okinawa for several days because enemy battleships and submarines were lurking in the surrounding waters. Several times we approached the harbor only to stop and withdraw for safer bays off Kagoshima and Miyazaki in Kyushu. The trip took two weeks.

Not long after arriving in Nago, we saw the ten-ten [October 10, 1944] air raid. Enemy planes flew in from the east, targeting the airfield on Ie Island [just off Okinawa’s northwestern coastline near Nago]. Fortunately, the pilots apparently didn’t know that a brigade of Japanese soldiers was billeted in our village elementary school.

We’d already planned to go to Naha before the air raid, but now the bombing cut off the roads and we couldn’t travel by land. Luckily, the army brigade was sailing down there in landing craft, and they let us ride with them. We left Nago at ten p.m., arriving in Naha at five the next morning. Except for a few houses near the wharf, the city was a plain of burnt ruins as far as the eye could see.

In Naha, I signed on as a civilian worker at the Navy Supply Depot. To be honest, I did this because there’d been a rumor before the ten-ten air raid that the brigade in Nago was conscripting a “hometown defense corps.” Rather than being drafted into the army, I thought it would be better to join the navy as a civilian employee.

The Navy Supply Depot, located

right next to Naha Port, was divided into sections for fuel transport, wharf maintenance, and food storage, where I was assigned, mostly to inspect beef cattle coming in from the outer islands. . . . Enemy planes flew over constantly, but didn't attack, and just hovered overhead. Most were the buzzing reconnaissance planes we called "dragon flies." Later we learned they were measuring distances and taking detailed aerial photographs that the Americans would use for their invasion. The Japanese military foolishly destroyed our own steel towers and bridges, claiming they would be enemy targets. . . .

One morning around four a.m., when two of us were bringing cattle in for inspection, the earth began to rumble and roar like a huge ocean wave in a typhoon. Although we had no idea at the time, this was the start of cannon barrages from battleships that also strafed the coast with their machine guns. We fled into a bomb shelter, and finally managed to make it back to our building at dusk, after the shelling had stopped. That night around ten, the depot manager called us all together. Explaining that emergency wartime evacuation measures were now in effect, he handed us each three month's salary.

I went to Ōzato Village, where my wife and children were staying, and explained that American forces were landing and they would have to evacuate to northern Okinawa. I hired a horse-drawn wagon and

sent them on ahead, promising to follow later and meet up with them at the cave shelters in Kin Village. But an Okinawan noncommissioned officer at the depot told the civilian workers that, since the Japanese army's machine-gun units were in Port Arthur and Taiwan, we'd have to "trap the American soldiers like rats in a sack." If we deserted our posts, he warned, we'd be "sentenced to death by a court martial." Now I'd lost my chance to leave, and it would be several years before I saw my family again.

Two or three days later, we were told, first, that the Americans had landed in the Kerama Islands, then that they'd come ashore on Okinawa at Yomitan. From the depot, we could hear the enemy's loudspeakers blasting at Kadena,<sup>150</sup> and see the huge mass of their invading forces. "This is sure to be a losing battle," said Shiraishi, my supervising officer from Kagoshima. "No matter what happens, Ōshiro, you mustn't die." His kind words helped sustain me many times after that.

Heavy fighting around Japanese military headquarters at Shuri went back and forth. U.S. forces captured territory during the day, Japanese forces recaptured it at night, and both suffered huge casualties. At that time, our military supply unit was transporting ammunition to the fortification at Kohagura. We'd arrive there in the middle of the night and return to the depot about five in the morning. Hunted from the air by Grumman planes [which



strafed with their mounted machine guns], we often felt more dead than alive.

Later, an order came to withdraw. We packed supplies of food and headed south. We could hear wounded Japanese soldiers in cave shelters begging for water, but it was pitch dark inside and there was no way we could get it to them. This made us feel keenly the anguish of fighting a lost war.

Southern Okinawa, thickly overgrown with trees and flowering plants, was now crowded with refugees from the fighting. We made camp under a big banyan tree. One day, five of us were sitting together eating lunch when a sudden burst of machine gun fire killed the three men on my right. A few days later, I was wounded in the arm by shrapnel from a battleship barrage. I asked for someone to pull out the fragments, but, exhausted from many days outside in the oppressive heat, no one had the strength. Knowing if I waited, maggots would cluster and the flesh would rot, I steeled myself, yanked those metal fragments out with my teeth, and disinfected the wound with my urine.

Now the fighting closed in on us, with flame throwers incinerating the nearby trees and plants. We moved into a cave at Miyagi, but before long someone poured gasoline inside, starting a fire. An American pacification team called for us to come out. Barely conscious, I climbed out of the cave. It was probably sometime in

May when I became a prisoner of war, but I can't remember for sure.

Among P.O.W.'s, the Americans separated civilian military employees from soldiers. I was taken via Saipan to Hawaii, where at first I stayed in a relocation center. They treated me extremely well for two weeks there, questioning me about my job with the military. I spent about two years in Hawaii as a P.O.W., and worked on the big island cleaning a sanitarium and weaving carpets out of pandanus leaves. They treated us well there, too. Our work clothes and shirts were cleaned once a month, with the cost deducted from our wages.

While I was in Hawaii, a tidal wave hit. Everyone else fled in a panic, but, familiar with tidal waves, I remained calm and was allowed to help with the rescue efforts. After that, the Americans trusted me. I found out that, once they trust you, Americans become very open.

This openness was what surprised me most. They put me in charge of guarding the armory, and actually gave me the keys. They even offered to let me try shooting a pistol. In Japan, P.O.W.'s would never be allowed to handle weapons.

Getting to know Americans, I came to realize that, with their efficiency and enormous material resources, there was no way Japan could have won the war.

I returned to Japan on the last repatriation ship from Hawaii.<sup>151</sup>

Ōshiro's description of his supervising officer from the mainland, who kindly urged him not to sacrifice his life in a losing cause, is a notable exception to the many accounts by battle survivors of mainland soldiers who brutalized Okinawans before and during the fighting.<sup>152</sup> "The navy men acted more like gentlemen than the soldiers," recalled a woman living in Osaka who had been drafted in Okinawa during the war to work in a Japanese military mess hall. "The soldiers handed me a grenade and told me to kill myself if I encountered an American. Luckily, I never did. Later, I threw it away in a field."<sup>153</sup>

Ōshiro's enthusiastic praise of Americans after his capture no doubt reflected, in part, the relief he shared with other Okinawan and mainland prisoners of war who had heard about the Imperial Japanese Army's treatment of soldiers and civilians they captured in China. His experience also clashed conspicuously with the ordeals of Japanese soldiers captured by Soviet forces in Manchuria. Ōshiro's praise for the American military is not shared by many P.O.W.'s who remained in Okinawa, where some were interned for as long as a year in refugee camps.<sup>154</sup>

Miyagi Masako also became a P.O.W. at the end of the battle. She was eight years old when, after weeks of "playing war" with her childhood friends, the real fighting drove her family from their home. For the next several weeks they were constantly on the move, threatened by air attacks, illness, starvation, and death all around them.

I'd been living with my grandmother in Misato Village when construction began on the Yomitan and Central Airfields. Men and women were conscripted for work on the airfields, and also to dig underground battle shelters in preparation for the American invasion. Young people from our

village, including my aunt, also volunteered for the local "Patriots Brigade" (giyū-tai). They dug camouflaged pits called "tank traps," where they buried land mines for blowing up enemy armor.

Around that time, my family dug an air raid shelter under our house. For us kids, it was a great place to play and we enjoyed going there. But when enemy airplanes flew over, we looked up to watch them and forgot to get into the shelter. The adults scolded us severely for that.

Later, after the Americans landed, it got too dangerous even to stay in the shelter, so we moved with four other families to the vault in our big ancestral tomb. . . . We kids felt much too penned up inside the tomb, and went out often to climb trees and run around in the grass. One day, we heard strange voices. In the small stream just below us some American soldiers were playing in the water. We stared at them, fascinated. To us, the scene looked so peaceful. . . .

It was a long way from the tomb to the nearest village where we had to go for food, and the only men among us who hadn't been drafted were elderly, including my grandfather. One day they left for the village, but none returned. We heard later that one died in a bombing raid, and the others were captured and taken to a refugee camp. After that, our supply of food ran out, and one of my cousins, weak from malnutrition, got sick and died.

Now it was too dangerous to stay in the tomb any longer and, with no more food, we decided to leave for northern Okinawa. On the way, my grandmother and I got separated from the others, and ran into some American soldiers. Luckily, they didn't stop us, and we were able to meet up with our group again later, as we all headed north. What I remember most after that is stepping over dead bodies and drinking water full of mosquito larvae. I tried not to look at the bodies, but they lay everywhere, swelling up grotesquely. I got so thirsty that I scooped up rain water with my hands from washtubs where baby mosquitoes were swimming. Finally, with no food or water and exhausted from walking, we became prisoners-of-war and were taken to the refugee camp at Koza.



### **Civilian P.O.W.'s, Battle of Okinawa**

It turned out that my grandfather was in the camp at Ishikawa. After he pleaded to join us, they transferred him to Koza. As I recall, we stayed about a year. It was so crowded there wasn't even room to stretch out our arms and legs when we slept. But even under these conditions, a makeshift school was set up

outside. It was what we called a "blue sky classroom," where the teachers propped up pieces of plywood on tree stumps for blackboards and students practiced writing characters with twigs on the ground. This was truly "education in natural surroundings," without textbooks, pencils, or note paper.

I think I was in second grade at the time, but can't remember anything they taught us. . . . However, something happened at the refugee camp that I'll never forget. One day, some American soldiers told us a tidal wave was coming, and we'd all have to leave immediately for a mass evacuation to the nearby hills. We followed them, fearing the worst, then waited and waited, but there was no sign of a tidal wave. The date was April 1st [1946]. We had no way of knowing about April Fool's Day in America. Much relieved, we walked back down from the hills.

After living in the Koza refugee camp for about a year, we finally returned to Misato Village, moving into what was called "standardized housing" [prefabricated wooden huts with thatched roofs]. Food was still hard to come by. Although we received some rations—mostly canned goods—and clothing from the U.S. military, we were always hungry. The term "postwar palm fern hell"<sup>155</sup> best describes conditions at a time when we ate anything, including wild plants, thought to be edible. One day, we fried potato tempura in motor oil. My uncle insisted on eating some first to be sure it wasn't

poisonous.<sup>156</sup> He always did that because, he said, he was old and weak, and didn't expect to live much longer anyway. Three years later, he died. I lost many in our family, including my father, who died in the navy at sea near Palau Island. The war left our home in charred ruins. It's hard to find words to describe what our lives were like just after the battle.<sup>157</sup>

Miyagi's mixed evaluation of her treatment by the U.S. military was common. Okinawan civilians who survived the Pacific War recall with gratitude the relief efforts of American forces that saved their lives, but they also remember crimes committed by individual soldiers and tactics that caused heavy civilian casualties. Evacuating with other Okinawan schoolchildren to the mainland in August, 1944, Tamaki Kiyoko describes her terror at seeing an enemy submarine fire at the transport ship that carried them.

Our tickets were for the second boat, but we arrived late and it was full. So the Japanese military police put us on the lead boat, which worried us at the time. On the third night after we left Naha, the warning siren began screeching loudly. We all ran out on deck and could see the periscope of an enemy submarine sliding up and down in the water. Suddenly, my blood froze as I watched a torpedo streaking right for our ship. The crew did a zigzag maneuver and the torpedo missed us, but made a direct hit on the second boat behind us. It burst into flames with a deafening roar and sank in a matter of minutes. Realizing we'd now be dead if we'd boarded the second boat as scheduled, we felt

terrible about the people who had taken our place.<sup>158</sup>

In anticipation of the Allied invasion, evacuations of Okinawa began after the fall of Saipan in June, 1944. By late March, 1945, besides the 60,000 Okinawans moved to the mainland, another 20,000 were taken to Taiwan, Miyako, and Yaeyama. Gushi Kiyoko of Amagasaki criticized the U.S. Navy for the deaths of more than 2,000 civilian evacuees, including hundreds of schoolchildren, aboard passenger ships sunk by American torpedoes. "There might have been strategic value in targeting cargo ships sailing north from Okinawa. But the Americans with their advanced intelligence-gathering techniques must have known that evacuation boats were carrying non-combatant civilians."<sup>159</sup> Other Okinawans on the mainland blamed the Japanese government for evacuation plans that were drawn up "belatedly, hastily, and carelessly," allocating too few ships, which were therefore overcrowded, and choosing sea routes that were heavily patrolled by American submarines.



**American forces occupied the Japanese military's Central Airfield during the Battle of Okinawa. After the war, the U.S. government seized large tracts of adjacent land in two towns and expanded it into today's Kadena Air Base, the largest American airfield in Asia.**



Okinawans living on the mainland today also recall atrocities committed by American soldiers. Battle-survivor Yamashiro Kenkō recounted one of the all-too-frequent incidents of what Okinawans called “girl-hunts” (musume-gari). “After I was captured and brought to a shed with other refugees, one of the American soldiers picked out a young woman. Ignoring the screams of her children, he led her away at gunpoint and raped her.”<sup>161</sup> Interviewed in July, 1999, another woman recalled, “I made sure to muss my hair and blacken my face with charcoal before the Americans took me to a refugee camp.”

During the battle, American forces killed not only Japanese forces but also Okinawan civilians taking shelter with Japanese soldiers in caves. They also sprayed areas with phosphorous and CS (military-issue tear gas), which are sometimes classified as chemical weapons. Moreover, the U.S. government seized large tracts of privately owned farm land for its military bases, claiming that this was permitted by the “Rules of Land Warfare” under the 1914 Hague Convention. Yet these seizures continued long after the war ended, and the U.S. military still occupies these lands to this day. However, U.S. policy toward military and civilian prisoners of war in Okinawa is said to have accorded generally with Geneva Convention standards. American forces provided food rations, clothing, shelter, and medical care for hundreds of thousands of demobilized soldiers and refugees, assigning them to comparatively light work details. American soldiers worked devotedly in this effort, also volunteering their time off, to distribute canned foods, powdered milk, medicine, and military fatigues. However, many also victimized Okinawans. Sexual assaults on young women and teenage girls during and shortly after the battle are estimated to be in the thousands.<sup>162</sup>

Imperial Army atrocities against civilians during the Battle of Okinawa were often committed in the course of carrying out military directives. To prevent civilians from being captured, Japanese soldiers distributed hand grenades to local residents with orders to kill themselves and their families.<sup>163</sup> Inside crowded cave shelters, mothers strangled infants at gunpoint because soldiers wanted to prevent a baby’s crying from revealing their location. Japanese soldiers killed hundreds of Okinawans civilians accused as spies simply for speaking in their local dialect.<sup>164</sup> Long-standing prejudices surfaced in the decisions of military commanders and the acts of individual soldiers who viewed Okinawans as inferior, and therefore expendable.

Okinawans living on the mainland today also remember soldiers in Okinawa forcibly seizing food from civilians who were close to starvation, and withholding it even from those who served as their comrades building military airfields and fortifications. “The Imperial Army troops had plenty to eat, but they gave us Okinawan workers only one brown-rice ball (nigiri) apiece,” recalled Kinjō Eikō, an Amagasaki resident today who, at age sixteen, had served in a construction battalion on the Central Airfield. “Later, our rations dwindled to almost nothing. We had to chew sugar cane leaves and fill our stomachs with river water.”<sup>165</sup> The food shortage was particularly hard on Okinawan schoolchildren, conscripted for the unaccustomed heavy labor of digging fortifications and hauling equipment. Labor mobilizations also took people away from their income-earning jobs, depriving their families of daily necessities.<sup>166</sup>

The Battle of Okinawa was fought because the Japanese government decided to sacrifice the prefecture even after Konoe Fumimaro, a former Prime Minister, influential senior statesman, and advisor to the emperor, had urged two months earlier that the war be ended.<sup>167</sup> The battle took more than a quarter of

a million lives. Most Okinawans who survived were left destitute, homeless, or both.<sup>168</sup> Many now consider the imposition of such disproportionate losses to be the ultimate form of discrimination.

This article is adapted from “Chapter Four: Wartime” in Steve Rabson, *The Okinawan Diaspora in Japan: Crossing the Borders Within*, University of Hawaii Press (2012). The book is based on the author’s two-year study in residence (1999-2001) in Taishô Ward of Osaka City, location of the largest Okinawan community (approximately 20,000) on the Japanese mainland, where he conducted interviews, collected writings, and administered a questionnaire survey.

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Kaneshiro Munekazu, “Esunikku gurupu to shite no Okinawa-jin” (“Okinawans” as an ethnic group), *Ningen kagaku* 37 (1992), 40.

<sup>2</sup>According to municipal government records, more than 13,000 tons of bombs were dropped on the city and its environs. Yūhi: Ōsaka no Okinawa (Launching Forth: The Okinawans of Osaka), Ōsaka Okinawa Kenjin Rengō-kai (1997), 84. .

<sup>3</sup>This total figure comes from the Cornerstone of Peace monument opened in Okinawa’s Peace Memorial Park in 1995 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the war’s end. Among the dead, this source lists 74,796 Japanese from other prefectures and 14,005 Americans.

<sup>4</sup>Yūhi, 79.

<sup>5</sup>Nakama Keiko, “Nitchū sensō-ki no zai-Han Okinawa-jin” (Okinawans in

Osaka during the Sino-Japanese War [of 1937-45]), Ōsaka Jinken

*Hakubutsu-kan kiyo* (Bulletin of the Osaka Human Rights Museum) 4 (2000), 70, n. 44.

<sup>6</sup>Okinawa Kenjin-kai Hyōgo-ken Honbu, ed., *Shima o deta tami no sensō*

*taiken-shū* (Collected War Experiences of

People Who Left the Islands),

Okinawa Kenjin-kai Hyōgo-ken Honbu (1995), 160.

<sup>7</sup>Nakama, “Nitchū,” 70, n. 44 and Maeda Yoshihiro, et al., ed., Deigo: 21-seiki o hiraku

kinen-shi (Deigo flowers: volume commemorating the start of the 21st century), Sakai

Okinawa Ken-jin Kurabu (2001). Deigo, translated as “Indian coral bean,” is the official flower of Okinawa Prefecture.

<sup>8</sup>Takarazuka iryō seikyō nyūsu (Newspaper of the Takarazuka Medical Services Cooperative) 52 (January 1, 1986), 10.

<sup>9</sup>Kaneshiro, “Esunikku gurupu to shite no Okinawa-jin,” 40.

<sup>10</sup>Estimated figures in Okinawa Ken-jin Kai Hyōgo-ken Honbu, comp., “Anketo shūkei

ichi-ran hyō” (Chart of aggregate survey totals) (2000).

<sup>11</sup> Nakama, “Nitchū,” 44-47.

<sup>12</sup>October 15, 1938 edition, quoted in Nakama, “Nitchū,” 48.

<sup>13</sup>January 15, 1939 edition, quoted in Ibid., 48.

<sup>14</sup>Hyōgo-ken Honbu, Sensō taiken-shū, 45.

<sup>15</sup>January 15, 1939 issue, quoted in Nakama, “Nitchū,” 48-49. If Okinawans were more

likely to change jobs than mainland workers, it might have been, as previously noted, a

result of management policies that sought to maximize profits by discriminating against

them in wages, benefits, and working conditions.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Hyōgo-ken Honbu, Sensō taiken-shū, 57.

<sup>18</sup>Nakama, “Nitchū,” 50-51.

<sup>19</sup>Hyōgo-ken Honbu, Sensō taiken-shū, 187-188.

<sup>20</sup>Quoted in Nakama, “Nitchū,” 59-60. The term “Ryūkyū” has acquired a more positive

resonance recently amidst the continuing “Okinawa boom.” It appears in the lyrics of

popular songs by Okinawan rock bands and was the title of the 1995 c.d. Ryukyu Magic

(Air-4001, Tokyo).

<sup>22</sup> Shimota Seiji, Michi no shima (Island paths), Shin-Nippon Shuppan-sha (1978), 302-

303.

<sup>23</sup>Ryūkyū shimpō, 240-241.

<sup>24</sup>See Alan Christy, “The Making of Imperial Subjects in Okinawa,” positions

east asia cultures critique 1.3 (Winter, 1993), pp. 607-639.

607-639.

<sup>25</sup>Quoted in Nakama, “Nitchū,” 61.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 60-62.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>See interviews with Okinawan residents of Osaka in the series “Ōsaka to

Okinawa,” Mainichi shimbun (March 9 to April 9, 1987).

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Terrence E. Cook, *Separation, Assimilation, or Accommodation: Contrasting Ethnic*

*Minority Policies*, Praeger (2003). 100.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Nakama, “Nitchū,” 63. The author is identified by the Okinawan surame

Aka.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 62-3.

<sup>34</sup> Tomiyama Ichirō, “[On Becoming ‘a Japanese:’ The Community of Oblivion and Memories of the Battlefield](#),” Yoseba (March, 1993). Adapted and expanded in *Senjō no kioku* (Memories of the Battlefield), Nihon Keizai Hyōronsha, 1995. Trans. Noah McCormack and posted at Japan Focus, October 26, 2005.

<sup>35</sup> Yūhi, 77-78.

<sup>36</sup> Although celebrated at the time as a suicide attack, it was later learned that the soldiers had been told they would have time to run clear of the explosions. The fuses, ignited before their advance, burned more rapidly than expected, making escape impossible and their bodies were blown to bits. The three soldiers from Kyushu were members of Japan’s long-oppressed Buraku minority. See Ueno Hidenobu, *Tennō heika banzai: bakudan san-yūshi josetsu* (Long live the emperor: an explanation of human bombs: the three brave warriors; Chikuma Shobō (1989).

<sup>37</sup> Maeda, Deigo, 44-46.

<sup>38</sup> Nakama, “Nitchū,” 41-42.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>41</sup> Maeda, Deigo, 50 and Yūhi, 80.

<sup>42</sup> Okinawan folk music has become enormously popular throughout Japan in recent years. These songs are rarely performed, but

occasionally as satire of militarism.

<sup>43</sup> Nakama, “Nitchū,” 57.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* “Ballad of the Warrior” is included the collection “Okinawa no min’yō” (Okinawan folk songs) in Toma Ichirō, ed., *Ryūkyū geinō jiten* (Dictionary of the Ryukyuan performing arts), Naha Shuppan-sha (1992), 597.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Nakama, “Nitchū,” 57-59.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>47</sup> Reprinted in Yamanokuchi Baku shishū, 61 and translated in Steve Rabson, *Righteous Cause or Tragic Folly: Changing Views of War in Modern Japanese Poetry*, Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1998), 10.

<sup>48</sup> Hyōgo-ken Honbu, *Sensō taiken-shū*, 263-264.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 198-199.

<sup>50</sup> Hyōgo-ken Honbu, *Sensō taiken-shū*, 83-84.

<sup>51</sup> Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, HarperCollins (2000), 407.

<sup>52</sup> Japanese press reports often exaggerated the military’s successes in China.

<sup>53</sup> Hyōgo-ken Honbu, *Sensō taiken-shū*, 178.

<sup>54</sup> Nakama, “Nitchū,” 46-47. Washino emphasizes her identity as a “citizen of Japan,”

downplaying “any special circumstances of people from Okinawa Prefecture.”

<sup>55</sup> Yūhi, 81-83.

<sup>56</sup> Hyōgo-ken Honbu, *Sensō taiken-shū*, 76.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-92.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 187-189.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 208.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 148.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 188.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 45-48.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 205.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 73.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 129-130.

<sup>66</sup>Interviewed by Miyagi Kimiko in “Osaka kara Henoko e: Kinjō Yuūi-san ni kiku,”

Keeshi kaji 51 (June, 2006), 58-65.

<sup>67</sup>Isagawa Hiroshi, “‘Jigoku’ datta sokai seikatsu,” (Life in “hell” as an

evacuee), in *Senka to ue: Ginowan shimin ga tsuzuru sensō taiken* (War ravages and starvation: The collected writings of Ginowan City residents on their war experiences), ed. Ginowan-shi Gajimaru no Kai, *Kōbundō Insatsu* (1979), 305-315.

<sup>68</sup>Hyōgo-ken Honbu, *Sensō taiken-shū*, 29.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 51-53.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 32-33.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 83-84.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 46-7.

<sup>75</sup>Maeda, Deigo, 45. There was also a version of this song in Okinawa dialect.

<sup>76</sup>Kinjō Seikō, “Okinawa no Kokumin-gakkō

jidai” (The age of “national schools”), *Keizai shicho* (January, 1972) 102.

<sup>77</sup>Records of the Japanese Army Ministry show that, besides failing to register their new addresses, thousands of Japanese men avoided the draft by lying about their ages or family circumstances, forging names, faking adoptions, feigning illnesses, physically mutilating themselves, or fleeing as far away as America. Such statistics belie the stereotype, widely purveyed during and after the war, of the Japanese people as monolithically fanatical militarists. See Rabson, *Righteous Cause*, 158 and Takashi Fujitani, “Kindai Nihon ni okeru kenryoku no tekunorojii: guntai, ‘chihō,’shintai,” translated by Umemori Naoyuki, *Shisō* 845 (November 1994).

<sup>78</sup>In the August 27, 1938 edition of *Ōsaka Mainichi shimbun*, quoted in Nakama, “Nitchū,” 55.

<sup>79</sup>Nakama, “Nitchū,” 55.

<sup>80</sup>In the September 1, 1938 edition of *Ōsaka Kyūyō shimpō*, quoted in *Ibid.*, 56-57.

<sup>81</sup>In the October 15, 1938 edition, quoted in *Ibid.*, 43-44.

<sup>82</sup>In the June 15, 1939 edition, quoted in *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>84</sup>The article summarized the history of discrimination against Okinawans in Japan, but asserted erroneously that Okinawans were assigned in the Japanese military mainly in labor battalions and as servants to mainland officers. Such misinformation might well have been publicized by the U.S. military for propaganda purposes at the start of the Battle of Okinawa. American officers repeatedly asserted, during and after the battle, that Okinawans’ social status in Japan proved that they were not really Japanese. This claim was



disseminated among both Americans and Okinawans during the fighting to separate Okinawans from the “enemy Japanese military,” though it included Okinawan soldiers. After the war it became an excuse for prolonging the postwar U.S. military occupation. General Douglas MacArthur, supreme commander of occupation forces in mainland Japan and Okinawa, strongly advocated that the U.S. retain control of Okinawa because of its strategic location. He told George F. Kennan in March of 1948 that “the people [of Okinawa] are not Japanese, and had never been assimilated when they had come to the Japanese main islands.” Quoted in Yoshida Kensei, *Democracy Betrayed: Okinawa Under U.S. Occupations*, Center for East Asian Studies, Western Washington University (2001), 39.

<sup>85</sup>See Oyakawa Takayoshi, *Ashiato (Footprints)*, Matsuei Insatsu, 26 on Okinawans singled out for harassment in the Imperial Army. See also Hyōgo-ken Honbu, *Sensō taiken-shū*, 184, Ishihara Masaie, *Gyakusatsu no shima: Kōgun to*

*shinmin no matsuro* (Island of massacres: The last days of the emperor’s army and subjects), Baneisha (1978) and Ishihara, *Shōgen, Okinawa-sen: Senjō no kōkei Dai 1-kan* (Testimony: Witnesses to the Battle of Okinawa, Volume 1), Aoki Shoten (1984). Also see Tsuha, *Heiwa Shiryōkan*, 68-75; Norma Field, *In the Realm of a Dying Emperor: Japan at Century’s End* (Vintage (1993), 56-69; and Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson, ed., *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, University of Hawaii Press (2000), 22.

Many Okinawans have described prejudice and discrimination they encountered on the mainland after 1945. See, for example, Uda Shigeki, *Uwa nu ukami-sama* (Sacred Pigs: The life of Tokeshi Kōtoku), Uda Shuppan Kikaku (1999), 173-96, and Ōta, *Ōsaka no Uchinanchu*.

<sup>86</sup>Ienaga Saburō, *Taiheiyō sensō*, Iwanami

Shoten (1968). Translated by Frank Baldwin as *The Pacific War*, Pantheon (1978), 53-54.

<sup>87</sup>This was a period of extreme rural poverty in Japan when farm families, especially in the country’s northeastern region, sold their daughters into prostitution for brothels in Japan’s cities and abroad.

<sup>88</sup>Ienaga, *The Pacific War*, 54.

<sup>89</sup>Takashi Fujitani, “Racism under Fire: Korean Imperial Soldiers in Japanese World War II Discourses on Nation, Empire and Ethnos,” invited lecture to the Reischauer Institute for Japanese Studies at Harvard University, May 2, 2003.

<sup>90</sup>Hyōgo-ken Honbu, *Sensō taiken-shū*, 184.

<sup>91</sup>For a thorough account of young recruits’ experiences in the Imperial Japanese Army, see Edward J. Drea, “In the Army Barracks of Imperial Japan,” *Armed Forces and Society* 15.3 (Spring, 1989), 329-348..

<sup>92</sup>Nakama, “Nitchū,” 52-53.

<sup>93</sup>From the December 1, 1939 edition of the *Ōsaka Kyūyō shimpō*, quoted in Nakama, “Nitchū,” 52.

<sup>94</sup>Oyakawa, *Ashiato*, 26.

<sup>95</sup>Hyōgo-ken Honbu, *Sensō taiken-shū*, 205-207.

<sup>96</sup>Ienaga, *The Pacific War*, 52.

<sup>97</sup>Oyakawa, *Ashiato*, 28-29.

<sup>98</sup>Four of the most notorious incidents are: (1) The Nanjing Massacre, previously known as the Rape of Nanking. Japanese troops went on a rampage after occupying the city in December of 1937, raping women and girls, and killing large numbers of Chinese civilians and prisoners-of-war . (2) After Japanese forces captured them in the Philippines, thousands of

Filipino and American prisoners-of-war died of starvation or exhaustion, or were executed, during the Bataan Death March of April, 1942. They were among hundreds of thousands of P.O.W.'s the Japanese military captured in the Philippines, China, and Southeast Asia who became forced laborers under abominable conditions, resulting in many deaths. (3) The Japanese military maintained "comfort stations" in or near areas of conflict where hundreds of thousands of women and girls, many of them captured or transported by the Japanese military, were forced to have sex daily with large numbers of Japanese soldiers. The largest number were from Korea and China. (4) The Japanese military carried out chemical and biological warfare experiments on imprisoned Chinese, including the removal of vital organs and deliberate infection with fatal diseases; and conducted vivisection experiments on American air crews captured in Japan. [See John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy* Dower: Race and Power in the Pacific War, Pantheon (1986 ) in which the author also describes atrocities committed by Allied forces during in the Pacific War.

<sup>99</sup>Oyakawa, Ashiato, 31-45

<sup>100</sup>Ibid. 31-33

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 41-42

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 33-4. Ishikawa Tatsuzō's 1938 novel *Ikite iru heitai*, based on the author's observations of the war in China, includes passages describing atrocities by Japanese soldiers against Chinese civilians. The Japanese government banned this work and prosecuted Ishikawa who received a suspended sentence. It is translated as *Soldiers Alive* by Zeljko Cipris (University of Hawai'i Press (2003).

<sup>103</sup>Oyakawa, Ashiato, 34. These seizures observed by Oyakawa were part of a military allocation policy that required Japanese forces in China outside Manchuria to "live off the land" so that Japan's Kwantung Army in

Manchuria could maintain full strength and readiness in case of a conflict with the Soviet Union.

<sup>104</sup>Oyakawa, Ashiato, 37-40.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., 34-35.

<sup>106</sup>Hyōgo-ken Honbu, *Sensō taiken-shū*, 35.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., 104.

<sup>108</sup> Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 61-71.

<sup>109</sup> George Feifer, *The Battle of Okinawa: The Blood and the Bomb*, The Lyons Press (2001), 372-374.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., 35.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., 78-79.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., 82-83.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., 82-83.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid., 49-50. For an account of the fighting in Saipan and the subsequent

controversy about how civilians died there, see Haruko Taya Cook, "The Myth of the

Saipan Suicides," *The Quarterly of Military History* 7.3 (Spring, 1995), 12-19.

<sup>116</sup>Figures in Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 298-289. Also see Bix, Hirohito, 475.

<sup>117</sup> Hyōgo-ken Honbu, *Sensō taiken-shū*, 140-142.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid. This was one of the bizarre consequences of Japan's "red purge" that was a byproduct of McCarthy era witch-hunts in the United States. In total, more than 27,000 were

purged from government, universities, public schools, and private companies. See Hirata Tetsuo and John Dower, [“Japan’s Red Purge: Lessons from a Saga of Suppression of Free Speech and Thought,”](#) Japan Focus website, July 9, 2007,

<sup>120</sup>Ienaga, *The Pacific War*, 150.

<sup>121</sup>*Ibid.*, 233-234.

<sup>122</sup>Hyōgo-ken Honbu, *Sensō taiken-shū*, 147.

<sup>123</sup>The estimated total doubles to approximately 140,000 when subsequent deaths from burns and radiation are included. See George Feifer, *The Battle of Okinawa*, 12 and 408.

<sup>124</sup>Quoted in David McCullough, *Truman*, Simon and Schuster (1992),

455.

<sup>125</sup>Deaths from the attack and its aftereffects of burns and radiation are estimated at

70,000. See Feifer, *The Battle of Okinawa*, 408.

<sup>126</sup> See Merle Miller, *Plain Speaking: An Oral Biography of Harry S. Truman*, Berkley Publishing Corporation (1974) Truman’s popular nickname “give ‘em hell

Harry” carries grimly ironic overtones, considering that, as commander-in-chief, he gave

the orders to turn Japanese cities into infernos of death.

<sup>127</sup> Figure cited in Andrew Gordon, ed., *Postwar Japan as History*, University of California Press (1993), 225.

<sup>128</sup>When it came to the saturation bombing of cities, Japanese were perpetrators as well as victims. Bix describes the Imperial Navy’s bombing of Chungking and other large

Chinese cities as “indiscriminate” and “using many types of antipersonnel explosives. . . .

In the first two days of raids, they reportedly killed more than five thousand Chinese

noncombatants and caused enormous damage” (Bix, *Hirohito*, 364). In February of 1945, three months before the end of the war in Europe, Allied aircraft firebombed Dresden, Germany, killing an estimated 135,000 in a city with no facilities of significant military value. This was one month before the firebombings of Tokyo and Osaka in March.

<sup>129</sup>Interviewed in Errol Morris’s 2003 documentary film “*The Fog of War.*”

[130] Figure of 97,032 for the firebombing of Tokyo is cited in Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 298. Also see Peter J. Kuznick, [“The Decision to Risk the Future: The Atomic Bomb and the Apocalyptic Narrative,”](#) Japan Focus, July 23, 2007; and Mark Selden, [“A Forgotten Holocaust: U.S. Bombing Strategy, the Destruction of Japanese Cities and the American Way of War from World War II to Iraq,”](#) Japan Focus, May 2, 2007.

<sup>131</sup>Uda, *Uwa*, 163-164.

<sup>132</sup>Figures cited in *Yūhi* 50, 84.

<sup>133</sup>Hyōgo-ken Honbu, *Sensō taiken-shū*, 92 and 263. Measured at 7.2 magnitude, it destroyed 512,846 homes and buildings, and caused 6,433 deaths in southern Hyōgo Prefecture. Here and note 85, 135, and 161 problems of spacing. Also, please replace all circumflexes e.g. here notes 14, 17, 19 and many others such as 138, 159, 161, 163 with the standard macron: Hyōgo.

<sup>134</sup>The inadequacy of Japan’s air defenses is described in Gordon Daniels, “The Great Tokyo Air Raid, 9-10 March, 1945,” in ed. W.G. Beasley, ed., *Modern Japan: Aspects of History, Literature, and Society*, University of California

Press (1975), 119.

<sup>135</sup>Hyōgo-ken Honbu, Sensō taiken-shū, 47-48.

<sup>136</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>137</sup>Ienaga, *The Pacific War*, 141, Maeda, Deigo, 44-51, and Hyogo-ken Honbu, Sensō taiken-shū, 46.

<sup>138</sup>Hyogo-ken Honbu, Sensō taiken-shū, 88.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid., 58.

<sup>140</sup>Yūhi, pp. 83-86.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid., 87 and Tsuha, *Heiwa Shiryōkan*, 54.

<sup>142</sup>The chrysanthemum is the flower forming the official crest of the Japanese imperial family.

<sup>143</sup>Figures cited in Bix, *Hirohito*, 485.

<sup>144</sup>Feifer, *The Battle of Okinawa*, 90-96.

<sup>145</sup>Tsuha, *Heiwa Shiryōkan*, 40.

<sup>146</sup>“Sute-ishi,” literally “throwaway stone,” referring to the game of go.

<sup>147</sup>Tsuha, *Heiwa Shiryōkan*, 56-90.

<sup>148</sup>Ibid, p. 90.

<sup>149</sup>Feifer, *The Battle of Okinawa*, 341 and Tonaki Morita, “Okinawa shinwa no saikō” (Reconsidering some myths about Okinawa), *Keeshi kaji* 47 (June, 2005), 60-65.

<sup>150</sup>Kadena Town in central Okinawa was the location of the Japanese military’s “Central Airfield,” captured by American forces during the first days of the Battle of Okinawa. After the war, the American military seized surrounding farmlands for a vastly expanded “Kadena Air Base” which is now the largest American air installation outside the U.S., occupying more than 60% of Kadena Town. [Anywhere! That deserves to be highlighted in

the text perhaps.

<sup>151</sup>Hyōgo-ken Honbu, Sensō taiken-shū, 25.

<sup>152</sup>Eyewitness accounts of the battle also describe close camaraderie between Okinawans and mainland soldiers. See Jo Nobuko Martin, *A Princess Lily of the Ryukyus*, Shin Nippon Kyōiku Tosho (1984). Martin writes from firsthand experience as a member of the Himeyuri gakutō-tai (Princess lily student brigade) comprised of high school girls and their teachers conscripted to serve as battlefield medics. Many were killed in the fighting or committed suicide to avoid capture.

<sup>153</sup>Interviewed in July, 1999.

<sup>154</sup>Hyōgo-ken Honbu, Sensō taiken-shū, 262, and 270.

<sup>155</sup>The term “palm fern hell” refers to times of famine in the Ryukyu Kingdom when people ate the palm fern (sotetsu) plant to avoid starvation. The poisonous portions had to be carefully removed.

<sup>156</sup>This dish came to be known as “Mobil tempura,” and often caused diarrhia.

<sup>157</sup>Hyōgo-ken Honbu, Sensō taiken-shū, 276-279.

<sup>158</sup>Ibid., 244.

<sup>159</sup>Hyōgo-ken Honbu, Sensō taiken-shū, 222. Although Gushi’s outrage is understandable, she overestimates U.S. reconnaissance capabilities. The Navy learned the positions of ships from decrypted Japanese messages, and was able to track them with submarines. But these messages did not necessarily specify the cargo, so U.S. submarines attacked merchant ships which they thought might be transporting weapons. Some they torpedoed not only carried Japanese civilian evacuees, but also American and other Allied prisoners of war who died by the hundreds in the explosions or from

drowning.

<sup>160</sup>Yōju 35, 74–75.

<sup>161</sup>Hyōgo-ken Honbu, *Sensō taiken-shū*, 266. Also see Shinzato Keiji, et al., *Okinawa-ken no rekishi* (The history of Okinawa Prefecture), Yamakawa, (1980), p. 223; and, in English, M.D. Morris, *Okinawa: A Tiger by the Tail*, Hawthorn (1968), 102. Violent crimes committed by U.S. forces reached a recorded peak of more than 400 per year during the Vietnam War. See “Introduction” in Steve Rabson, trans., *Okinawa: Two Postwar Novellas*, Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley (1989, reprinted 1996), 28–31

<sup>162</sup>Rabson, *Two Postwar Novellas*, 2 and 29 and George Feifer, *Tennozan: The Battle of*

*Okinawa and the Atomic Bomb*, Ticknor and Fields, (1992). 372–374. Rapes

and other serious crimes are still committed by individuals among the approximately

30,000 U.S. forces and 20,000 military dependents stationed in Okinawa today. Sexual

assaults by individuals among the 6,000 Japan Self Defense Force personnel have also

been reported in recent years.

<sup>163</sup>The 32<sup>nd</sup> Army in Okinawa applied the Japanese military’s 1944 guideline entitled “Soldiers and Civilians Live Together and Die Together.” See Ôe Kenzaburô, “[Misreading, Espionage and ‘Beautiful Martyrdom for the Country’: On Hearing the District Court Verdict in the Okinawa ‘Mass Suicides’ Case](#),” article in *Sekai* (June, 2008) translated by Scott Burba in *Japan Focus* (October 5, 2008) at .

<sup>164</sup> Molasky and Rabson, *Southern Exposure*, 22. Ôe writes, “The 32<sup>nd</sup> Army issued an order stating, ‘Effective immediately: The use of any language other than standard Japanese is prohibited, regardless of military or army civilian employment. Anyone caught conversing in the Okinawan language will be punished as a spy.’”

<sup>165</sup> Hyōgo-ken Honbu, *Sensō taiken-shū*, 250.

<sup>166</sup>Tsuha, *Heiwa Shiryōkan*, 47.

<sup>167</sup> Bix, *Hirohito*, 487–490.

<sup>168</sup>Tsuha, *Heiwa Shiryōkan*, 90.