

The Hawai'i Connection: Okinawa's Postwar Reconstruction and Uchinanchu Identity

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Abstract: *The historical experiences of Hawai'i's Okinawan American (Uchinanchu) community in connection with Okinawa after World War II helped to shape an understanding of their own cultural and ethnic distinctiveness, which was influenced by U.S. policies in Okinawa. In the aftermath of the war, Hawai'i's Uchinanchu community worked to provide relief for their brethren in the devastated islands of their homeland. Their efforts were supported and indeed encouraged by the U.S. military. As the U.S. military transformed and rebuilt Okinawa, the U.S. sought to justify the occupation of Okinawa and its concentration of military bases on the islands. One means of doing this was referring to the Uchinanchu contributions to the rebuilding of their homeland as part of the expansion of US soft power. It can be argued that the emergence of a unique Okinawa American identity in Hawai'i in the post-World War II period reflected America's Cold War "public diplomacy" within a liberal multicultural discourse.*

Keywords: *Okinawan Americans, Okinawa, Hawai'i, Cold War, Relief Efforts, Community Organizations, Indigenous Minorities, U.S. Militarization, USCAR, Uchinanchu*

Introduction

思い故郷に通わさみりば
I let my thoughts wander back to
my hometown

[Omoi furusato ni kayowasamiriba]

戦争場の哀り思いまさて
I think of the sorrow of the
battlefield

[Sensōjō no awari omoimasate]

無情に渡りみ人ならわし
[Mujō ni watararimi hito no narawashi]
The ways of this world unrelentingly spread

まさて親兄弟の哀り知らば
Sadder, when I think of the grief of my
parents and

[Masate oya kyōdai no awari shiraba]
siblings

ハワイめる人の志情の衣
Clothing from the beneficent people

of Hawai'i

[Hawai meru hito no shijō no koromo]

やがて親兄弟ぬうれしなみだ

Parents and siblings will soon shed tears
of joy

[Yagate oya kyōdai nu ureshi namida]

ウチナ万民に地獄みして

[War created] hell for all
Okinawans

[Uchina banmin ni jigoku mishite]

This poem by Maui poet Saburō Agena was published in major Japanese newspapers as part of efforts to mobilize community support in Hawai'i for relief efforts in Okinawa (Higa, 1974, p. 171).¹ These efforts were not just a reflection of the personal connections that existed between the Okinawan American residents of Hawai'i and Okinawa but also were sanctioned and supported by the U.S. military. The U.S. postwar occupying forces in Okinawa created a neoliberal security state through relief efforts aimed at rebuilding the war-torn infrastructure and promoting American rule in the territory.² Similarly, World War II has had lasting impacts on the State of Hawai'i with the U.S. military maintaining an active presence down to the present.

The historical experiences of Hawai'i's Okinawan Americans (self-referenced as Uchinanchu below) helped to shape an understanding of their cultural distinctiveness that was sanctioned by the U.S. However, the recognition of Okinawan Americans in Hawai'i as a "minority within a minority" originates from immigration during the early 1900s when

the legal status of Okinawans in Japan as "shin-nihonjin" (新日本), new Japanese, underpinned the separation of Okinawan immigrants from "wajin" (和人) who came from other parts of Japan (Ziomek, 2019, pp. 30-31).³ To trace the origins of a distinctive Okinawan American identity in Hawai'i, it is essential to examine their experiences on the plantations where mainland Japanese immigrants discriminated against Okinawan arrivals who followed them three decades later in the early 1900s (*Uchinanchu*, 1981, p. 224).⁴ Additionally, the wartime and postwar experiences of Okinawans need to be considered as the events of World War II and the Cold War would dramatically impact the formation of this diasporic community's identity that complicate historical and contemporary issues of indigeneity, militarism, and self-determination in both Okinawa and Hawai'i.

The Battle of Okinawa

On April 1, 1945, the United States Tenth Army invaded Okinawa as part of Operation Iceberg, a plan to occupy the Ryūkyū Islands. After eighty-two days of intense combat, about 17,000 Japanese troops surrendered, ending the final and bloodiest battle in the Pacific War. More than 12,000 Americans were killed and 37,000 were wounded, while nearly half of the estimated 250,000 Japanese killed were Ryūkyūans, including those serving with the Japanese forces in various capacities. Moreover, approximately one-third of the civilian population—possibly as many as 150,000 men, women, and children—were killed during the fighting and thousands became refugees (Dower, 2001, p. 54).⁵ Additionally, much of Okinawa's infrastructure was destroyed in the year-long bombardment by the U.S. military before the invasion.

When American forces finally gained control over Okinawa, the monumental task of

rebuilding and transforming Okinawa commenced. Approximately 42,000 acres of land were confiscated by the US military, dispossessing Okinawan landowners of their property as U.S. military installations were constructed throughout Okinawa Prefecture without compensation.⁶ As a result of the destruction caused by the fighting, the military established refugee camps in the area for the first eighteen months after the battle. The local population subsisted primarily on food, clothing, medical supplies, and other items provided by the military as free rations or as compensation for labor. Despite many challenges, widespread starvation and the spread of disease were prevented as Okinawans and American military officials began wrestling with the fate of this island nation as Cold War tensions increased in the Asia-Pacific region. These events were closely monitored by Okinawans who had immigrated to both the United States and Hawai'i who maintained connections to their ancestral homeland. Hawaii Uchinanchu, in particular, experienced a dramatic transformation in their social, economic, and political status within Hawai'i due in part to their contributions to postwar relief programs fostering relationships between the U.S. occupying forces and host communities to facilitate the U.S. military occupation as new installations were built and troops were deployed to engage in the subsequent U.S.-Korean War (Allen, 2009, p. 188).⁷ Hawai'i's diasporic Okinawan community that had immigrated nearly five decades earlier would ultimately play a critical role in the relief and rebuilding efforts spearheaded by the U.S. military to stabilize Okinawa and promote a narrative of military benevolence.

Okinawan Immigration to Hawai'i and the Experiences of the Prewar Okinawan Community

In 1900, the first group of Okinawan

immigrants arrived in Hawai'i seeking employment for ambitious young men (*Uchinanchu*, 53).⁸ Approximately 20,000 Okinawans immigrated from 1900-1924, about half of whom either returned to Okinawa or moved to the continental United States. In addition to discovering the difficulties of plantation labor, many encountered prejudices from mainland Japanese (Naichi), who considered them "foreigners" or "outcasts."

Naichi's discriminatory views toward Okinawan immigrants reflected a government-sanctioned caste system in Japan whereby ethnic minorities, including Okinawans and Ainu, were distinguished as lower-class citizens. At the time of immigration in the early 1900s, Okinawan immigrants were classified as "shin-Nihonjin," new Japanese citizens, following the annexation of the Ryūkyū Islands as Okinawa Prefecture in 1879. Additionally, officials forced Ryūkyūans to comply with linguistic and cultural assimilation policies by adhering to behavioral norms set by the central Japanese government to avoid punishment for using the Ryūkyūan language or practicing Okinawan religious customs (*Uchinanchu*, 55).⁹ In Hawai'i, Naichi discouraged "intermarriage" with Okinawans, and some referred to Nisei Okinawans (2nd generation Okinawan settlers) with the phrase, "*Okinawa ken, buta kau kau*" (pidgin Japanese, [people from] *Okinawan Prefecture, eat pigs*) in reference to pork as a staple of the Okinawan diet, something viewed as unclean by Naichi (*Uchinanchu*, 41).¹⁰

According to researcher Arakaki Makoto, four factors emerged that would diminish the divide between these two groups in Hawai'i. First, the "Naichi discrimination pressured Okinawan Issei (1st generation settlers) to reject their language and culture and to encourage their Nisei children to assimilate into Japanese and American communities (Nakasone, 2002, p. 200)."¹¹ Additionally, the second generation of both groups primarily spoke English as their first language and shared similar experiences,

resulting in the language divide diminishing. Further, the discrimination faced by both Japanese and Okinawans during World War II helped to erode the gulf between the two communities as people in mainstream America and in Hawai'i referred to both as "Japs". Finally, as many Naichi were not in positions of socio-economic power, their attitudes had little effect on the advancement of Okinawan Nisei who became vital members of Hawai'i's postwar community, in part because pork became an important source of protein for Hawaiians during the war (Uchinanchu, 217).¹²

Historian Mitsugu Sakihara highlights the war as critical in "destroy[ing] many of the old social barriers and discrimination" as wartime work shortages opened new economic opportunities for many, including Okinawans and Japanese Americans who also served in the armed forces (Sakihara, 1980, p. 15).¹³ As discrimination decreased in the postwar period, Uchinanchu and other Okinawan American identities became celebrated and embraced in part due to their wartime experiences, particularly after the Battle of Okinawa in 1945 and the resulting relief efforts in the immediate postwar period. These efforts helped to (re)create connections between Okinawa and its diasporic communities, particularly in Hawai'i, that were in part facilitated by the U.S. Cold War policies in the Asia-Pacific region (Tozzer, 1944, p. 46).¹⁴

World War II Relief Efforts of Hawai'i Uchinanchu

Even before the conclusion of the war, Okinawans in Hawai'i had made informal efforts to seek out and assist their relatives. During World War II, Okinawans in the Hawaiian Islands provided Okinawan Prisoners of War (POWs) incarcerated in Hawai'i food, cigarettes, and other sundries to make their stay less onerous (Stephan, 1984, pp. 30-33).¹⁵

K. Howell, commanding officer of the POW base camp, noted that one of the biggest problems confronting officials in charge of the 10,619 POWs in Hawai'i was locals fraternizing with Okinawan POWs, who comprised roughly one-fourth of the total number of prisoners in the Islands (*Hawaii Times*, 1945, 2).¹⁶ Local Okinawans often visited Okinawan POWs out on work detail in the community and gifted them cigarettes, fruit, candy, and even money in spontaneous gestures of friendship as fellow Okinawans (Allen, 1950, p. 196).¹⁷

"Many residents of Hawai'i, however, wanted to do much more to support the people of Okinawa particularly after "official and unofficial reports reaching Honolulu that Okinawans [were] in urgent need of clothing and [would] suffer severely this winter unless relief [was] provided" (*Honolulu Advertiser*, 1945, p. 3; *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 1945, p. 7).¹⁸ Some of this information likely came from Nisei soldiers with Hawai'i connections who were in Okinawa as part of the occupying forces (Harrington, 1979, pp. 317-318; Higa, 1988, pp. 160-161).¹⁹ However, according to Tarō Higa, a Nisei veteran who helped to mobilize early relief efforts, some within the Japanese community in Hawai'i criticized these efforts even in the postwar period as unnecessary:

[H]owever, in an unfortunate incident from the group of victory believers, that is "Hisshōkai", I was threatened several times as these self-advertisers from the same town opposed the rescue movement. The reason for the opposition from these people was that as Japan was winning the war, it was not necessary to send relief supplies. It was because they believed that in the near future, the Imperial Japanese Navy will proudly arrive at Pearl Harbor and rule over Hawaii (Higa, 66).²⁰

Although Higa did not identify these individuals as Japanese or Okinawans, victory groups did exist in Hawai'i due to the upheaval of the postwar period and the censorship of news that made individuals susceptible to rumors (Stephan, 1984, p. 172; Lind, 1943, p. 21; Kimura, 1947, pp 84-85; RASRL, 1948, p. 1).²¹

Organizers also were immediately confronted by two important questions about the appropriateness of “aliens” and other Japanese Americans undertaking relief efforts in light of existing anti-Japanese sentiment in the United States, and the U.S. Navy’s need to receive permission to send goods collected in Hawai'i to Okinawa (HUOA archives).²² They soon arrived at a solution: “Appeal to the religious organizations in Hawaii, whose principles of humanity do not discriminate between enemies and friends, and solicit their guidance and advice (HUOA archives).”²³ Numerous American Christian organizations that operated through the Licensed Agencies for Relief in Asia (LARA) were active in postwar Japan in sending aid. (Headquarters; Rogers, 1994).²⁴

Thus, as early as December 14, 1945, Okinawan residents in Hawai'i began participating in relief efforts organized by the Council of Churches on Hawai'i Island to ship 500 boxes of clothing aboard a U.S. military vessel to Okinawa as part of the Okinawa Relief Association (*Hawaii Tribune-Herald*, 1985, p. 44).²⁵



Figure 1. The clothing drive relief committee sits behind boxes packed with clothes in Maui, Hawai'i, on Dec. 15, 1945. The postwar humanitarian effort was initiated by a second-generation Uchinanchu who enlisted as a U.S. service member from Hawai'i. (Photo provided by Dan Nakasone)²⁶



Figure 2. The Okinawan community in Hawai'i gathers to support a postwar relief effort initiated by a second-generation Uchinanchu and U.S. service member from Hawai'i. (Photo provided by Dan Nakasone)²⁷

Other relief efforts included providing medical supplies and goods, even sewing machines, used eyeglasses, school supplies, and equipment that an Okinawan American women’s group known as Lepta Kai (The Penny Club) provided to the residents of Okinawa (*Honolulu Advertiser*, 1951, p. 13; *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 1950, p. 23; Adaniya, 1981, p. 327; Kobashigawa, 1985, 38).²⁸ Thus, women also took an active role in relief efforts, reflecting community-wide support for these endeavors. Subsequent shipments followed in 1949 of over 2,750 goats, 500 of which were purchased by residents of Hawai’i, in a collaboration with the National Heifer Project committee of New Windsor, Maryland (*Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 1948, p. 6; *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 1949, p. 2; *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 1949, p. 18; *Honolulu Advertiser*, 1949, p. 7).²⁹



Figure 3. The USS Owen transportation of pigs to Okinawa during postwar relief efforts. (Photo courtesy of Shinyei Shimabukuro, provided by Jon Itomura,

grandson of one of the seven Okinawan voyagers)³⁰

Okinawan Americans’ collective relief efforts were a sign of goodwill toward their relatives still living in Okinawa, which further reinforced the U.S. military’s efforts to feed Okinawans in the war-torn occupied territory. While Uchinanchu efforts were not unique and were limited in scale—Okinawan residents in the American mainland also contributed to relief initiatives—it is important to note how these actions, supported by the U.S. military who provided the necessary transport vessels and facilitated the distribution of these donations, created a unique bond between Okinawa and Hawai’i (*History*, 1988, p. 133).³¹ They also highlight the agency of local Okinawans in supporting humanitarian efforts and defining their role, and subsequently their identity, in the postwar period.



Figure 4. An elementary school in Shuri, Naha City, receives books from Hawai’i during the post-World War II relief effort. The postwar humanitarian effort was initiated by a U.S. service member from Hawai’i who was a second-generation Okinawan. (Photo provided by Dan Nakasone)³²

The Okinawan Americans' collective relief efforts remain a significant event within Hawai'i's Okinawan community as they fostered a distinct local identity among the estimated 28,000 Okinawans in the Hawaiian Islands in the postwar period that celebrated Okinawan culture within a shared experience of hardship and the overcoming of prejudice and discrimination (*Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 1950, 3; Tozzer, 58).³³

One of the best-known relief efforts benefitting Okinawa's recovery following World War II was organized by the Hawai'i United Okinawa Relief Association, a civic organization that sent 550 pigs from Omaha, Nebraska across the Pacific to replenish Okinawa's hog industry crippled during the Battle of Okinawa. Before the war, there were 140,000 pigs in Okinawa but by the war's end, only 2,000 remained. In an event celebrated as "Pigs from the Sea," organizers raised \$47,000³⁴ and sent seven men to accompany the pigs from Portland, Oregon to Okinawa in a voyage that took nearly a month and is credited with rejuvenating the hog industry in Okinawa (Chinen, 2004, p. 1).³⁵ Even today, this story is celebrated as one of the seminal events that created a bond between Okinawa and Hawai'i (Higa, 1978; Higa, 1974).³⁶ However, an often overlooked part of the story is the assistance of the U.S. military in this and other relief efforts as they provided the necessary transport vessels and assisted in the distribution of donations to the Okinawan population (Kudaka, 2019).³⁷ Not only did American military forces support civilians in Okinawa displaced by war after the Battle of Okinawa, but also Okinawan American service members, who as part of the occupying forces, shared the news of the devastation of Okinawa with family members in Hawai'i.

U.S. Occupation and the Promotion of Okinawan Culture

Following the enactment of the 1951 U.S.-Japan Security Treaty that severed Okinawa from the rest of Japan, the U.S. military promoted goodwill efforts between American personnel and Okinawans to facilitate their continued presence in Okinawa as a critical component of the U.S.-Japan Security Alliance and other U.S. military policies in the region during the Cold War era (Ferguson and Turnbull, 1999, pp. 2, xiii).³⁸ This approach is consistent with a strategy that political scientist Joseph S. Nye Jr. later termed "soft power" that "rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others" through the promotion of culture, political values, and foreign policies while pursuing military objectives (Nye, 2004, pp. 5, 11).³⁹ Similarly, Japanese Americans in Hawai'i are presented as successful and assimilated Americans in various publications as part of the promotion of a positive view of the United States in the postwar period (Yaguchi, 2014).⁴⁰ Hideko Yoshimoto refers to U.S. activities in Okinawa throughout the Cold War as "public diplomacy" to support its military and national security objectives, as many Okinawa continued to play an essential role in U.S. military strategy in Asia and the Pacific (Yoshimoto, 2019, p. 2).⁴¹ The military bases in Okinawa provided one of the most important permanent U.S. footholds in Asia, continuing after Reversion to the present.

Yet even before a formalized relationship existed between Japan and the United States that sanctioned the presence of the American military in Okinawa, American military officials were already emphasizing the difference between Okinawa and Japan to legitimize the continued occupation of Okinawa Prefecture while re-legitimizing the rest of Japan's sovereignty. On June 1, 1944, the Office of Strategic Services Research and Analysis Branch (in Hawai'i) released a report entitled "The Okinawans of the Loo Choo Islands: A

Japanese Minority Group.” The report detailed the historical difference between the two groups in Hawai‘i in a section entitled “Cleavages” noting, “In these islands it is the prejudice of the Japanese toward the Okinawans about which we hear most (Tozzer, 74).”⁴² Extrapolating from its observations on Hawai‘i, the report foresaw the possibility of using the cleavage between mainland Japan and Ryūkyū along with previously Japanese-occupied territories such as the Marshall Islands and Davao in the Philippines. Highlighting this “natural” cleavage “founded on racial differences together with those of language and culture,” the report encouraged the cultivation of differences between Japanese and Okinawans during World War II (Tozzer, 84).⁴³

As military interest shifted to the occupation of Okinawa by October of 1944, when it became evident that Taiwan would not have to be occupied by the U.S., the Murdock group, which had been researching Okinawa, produced a report that was published by the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations on December 15, 1944. This report was entitled “Civil Affairs Handbook, Ryukyu [Loochoo] Islands” and, like the June report, emphasized the cleavage between Okinawans and Japanese (Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, 1944, p. 43).⁴⁴ Masanao Kano has extensively detailed efforts by the American military administration to emphasize the differences between Okinawans and Japanese and highlight the liberation of Okinawans from Japanese forces (Kano, n.d., pp. 54-56).⁴⁵ These efforts to identify Okinawans as different from Japanese were also consistent with subsequent efforts by the Japanese government to justify the presence of American military bases on Okinawa rather than on the main four islands of Japan (Allen, 2002, 7).⁴⁶

The Okinawan people faced a period of statelessness under the U.S. military occupation where their legal status was neither

that of a Japanese citizen, formerly as “Shin-Nihonjin” residents of Okinawa Prefecture nor a U.S. citizen by residing in a U.S.-occupied territory. However, unlike Japan’s government in the earlier twentieth century, the U.S. occupation took an active role in promoting Okinawan music and dance as part of its efforts to separate Okinawa from Japan and referred to its duties to control the local population as “civilian affairs activities” (Yoshimoto, 3).⁴⁷ Yoshimoto notes that when USCAR succeeded the Military Government (MG), officials were well aware that polls had indicated that many Okinawans wanted to return to Japanese sovereignty. While reserving veto rights over local legislation, “USCAR deployed public relations campaigns to positively spin the U.S. authority over Okinawa, while promoting a favorable image of the U.S. presence” (Yoshimoto, 5).⁴⁸ Thus, U.S. officials referred to Okinawans as “people” or “inhabitants” rather than “citizens” and avoided the use of the term “Okinawa,” its former name as a Japanese prefecture. U.S. administrators instead embraced the term “Ryukyus” to stress the differences between Okinawa and Japan and emphasize the region’s local and historical identity. However, since most Americans were unfamiliar with the name Ryūkyū, the term “Okinawa” was used in Congress in governance, finance issues, and within the media.

Critical to this endeavor to cultivate a positive image of the U.S. military and foster a separate Okinawan identity were community-based organizations both in Okinawa and Hawai‘i which had experienced military rule and occupation under martial law during World War II (Scheiber and Scheiber, 1990, pp. 341-378; Anthony, 1955).⁴⁹ While scholars like Yoshimoto focused on domestic events and organizations in Okinawa that helped to propagate a positive view of the U.S. military, this study focuses on the “public diplomacy” that military officials engaged in with diasporic Okinawan communities, particularly in the

Pacific, as Okinawa provided important bases for U.S. forces during the Korean and Vietnam Wars. Yoshimoto notes that after World War II and throughout the Cold War, the U.S. “expanded its overseas public diplomacy and public affairs efforts” to minimize the inherent contradiction between promoting democracy abroad against “communism” while maintaining a militarized presence in another sovereign state (Yoshimoto, 153).⁵⁰

Reconstituting Hawaiian Okinawan Identity

Located literally between East and West in the Pacific Ocean, the expansion of the University of Hawai‘i had a role to play in Hawai‘i’s public diplomacy. The founding of the East-West Center, an international training and education center that Congress established in 1960, one year after the granting of statehood, was significant. At the East-West Center, students, educators, and foreign leaders would be imbued with “the American way of life” and receive technical training and education under the supervision of Baron Goto, a Japanese American educator, and head of East-West Center’s Institute for Technical Interchange (Kamins and Potter, 1998, p. 77).⁵¹ While Mire Koikari focuses on the importance of the University of Hawai‘i and the East-West Center in Cold War domestic training and technical interchange, she also notes the centrality of Hawai‘i Okinawans in the relief efforts that highlighted their postwar integration in America’s Cold War narrative of inclusiveness and multiculturalism:

As Japanese and Okinawan Americans in Hawaii began to participate in the occupation as educators, instructors, advisors, and technicians, their involvement not only reinforced the American claim of multiculturalism and racial equality, but also gave Hawaii’s immigrant communities invaluable opportunities to assert their

worthiness as American citizens-subjects despite their minority “alien” status (Koikari, 2015, p. 12).⁵²

Although Hawai‘i was granted statehood in 1959, it had been a hard-fought battle due to the large number of non-whites in the Islands that for many years had made Hawai‘i and its residents seem “unfit”, indeed, an “impediment” to statehood (*Hawaii Hochi*, 1932, p. 1; Bell, 1984).⁵³ However, scholar Christina Klein shows that during the Cold War, this same multiethnic, multicultural, multilinguistic population was recast as an asset as it was Hawai‘i’s “Asian population that held out the promise of securing access to the markets and resources of Asia”, particularly during the Cold War (Klein, 2004, p. 251).⁵⁴ Dean Itsuji Saranillio notes how the efforts of Japanese Americans in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and 100th Infantry Battalion to promote their loyalty and assimilability also helped statehood proponents to “further argue for statehood by working through racial difference, not extinguishing it” (Saranillio, 2018, p. 140).⁵⁵ This revisioning of Asian Americans in the Islands coincided with local Okinawan efforts in Hawai‘i to recast their “minority within a minority status,” to challenge perceptions of racial inferiority, and to highlight their socio-economic ascendancy in the postwar period. Koikari notes the involvement of Japanese Americans and Okinawan Americans in Hawai‘i who were strongly pro-American, as an “indispensable part” of the U.S. occupation of Okinawa (Koikari, 105).⁵⁶ It is important to note that these displays of loyalty and patriotism to America within Okinawan American communities in Hawai‘i, were not unique as other groups such as Chinese Americans were also intent on highlighting their anti-communist stance during the Cold War period, particularly during the Korean War (Wu, 2014, p. 112).⁵⁷ However, their role in the relief and rebuilding efforts spearheaded by the U.S. military to stabilize Okinawa helped to advance a

narrative of military benevolence that promoted statehood in Hawai'i and the maintenance of military bases throughout Asia and the Pacific (Saranillio, 2018, p. 14).⁵⁸

Okinawan Americans in Hawai'i were uniquely positioned in the postwar period due to their differentiation from Japanese Americans from mainland Japan and their descendants. This separation from the wider Japanese American community and their rising economic status became the cornerstone of their unique identity in the Islands (Atta and Atta, 1981, pp. 188-203; Nakasato and Taniguchi, 1981, pp. 204-216; Kimura, 1981, pp. 217-222; Hiura and Terada, 1981, pp. 223-232; Hokama, 1981, pp. 243-259).⁵⁹ Noriko Shimada notes the ascendancy of the local Okinawan population in Hawai'i was due to the wealth they accumulated both during and after the war that in turn allowed Hawai'i's Okinawans to contribute to postwar relief efforts in Okinawa. Shimada argues, "the U.S. Occupation of Japan and U.S. military rule in Okinawa had a positive influence on Okinawans in Hawai'i, by helping them alleviate feelings of social and racial inferiority (Shimada, 2012, p. 118)."⁶⁰ In the postwar years, the Okinawan community in Hawai'i for the first time attained a largely positive self-image sharing in the benefits of Americanization (Koikari, 136-144; Asato, 2006; Tamura, 1994).⁶¹ Spearheading this effort were community-based organizations in Hawai'i that eventually coalesced into one unifying entity known as the Hawaii Okinawa Rengo Kai, or United Okinawa Association (UOA), and was later renamed the Hawaii United Okinawa Association (HUOA) in 1995. The HUOA ultimately became the representative body for the local Okinawan community in Hawaii that united the various *azasonjinkai* (字村人会, villagers' associations) that for years had remained separate due to different dialects and regional identities.

The Role of Community-Based Organizations in Promoting Cold War Connections

From the end of World War II until 1972, when Okinawa was returned to Japan with U.S. bases and military forces intact, USCAR acknowledged the UOA as the official representative of Okinawan Americans in Hawai'i. In this capacity, the UOA hosted official visitors from Okinawa and participated in various government-sponsored programs. On September 21, 1951, when the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty was announced that separated Okinawa from the rest of Japan, the various member clubs united their relief efforts in a ceremony held at the Nu'uuanu YMCA auditorium and attended by over 300 people (Otani, 1951, p. 1).⁶² The UOA resolved that members unite to effectively help in the rebuilding of Okinawa, to contribute to the "prosperity and welfare of Hawai'i," and "in accordance with the American principles of liberty and equality by denouncing all alien, destructive, and unpatriotic ideas."⁶³

The emphasis on upholding American principles of liberty and equality and the denunciation of "alien, destructive, and unpatriotic ideas" also reflected Cold War fears in the Islands. On October 7, 1949, the territorial legislature passed a concurrent resolution requesting the United States House Committee on Un-American Activities to come to Hawai'i to investigate what it claimed were potential "communist" threats that existed in the territory. As a culmination of the investigations, one month before the inauguration of the UOA, authorities arrested the "Hawaii Seven" who were tried under the Smith Act for: "(1) unlawfully, willfully, and knowingly to advocate and teach the duty and necessity of overthrowing the Government of the United States by force and violence, and (2) unlawfully, willfully, and knowingly to organize and help organize as the Communist Party of the United States of America a society, group

and assembly of persons who teach and advocate the overthrow and destruction of the Government of the United States by force and violence” (Holmes, 1994, p. 190).⁶⁴

Accusations of disloyalty were particularly acute for Okinawans in Hawai‘i who were still considered aliens until the McCarran-Walter Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952. During World War II the Office of Strategic Services estimated that officials incarcerated approximately 200 Okinawans (Tozzer, 60).⁶⁵ Initial organizing efforts by the UOA were also hindered by the questioning of several Association leaders by officials from the Immigration and Naturalization Service for alleged communist sympathies. Although nothing resulted from these inquiries, Ruth Adaniya notes, “Rumors of communist influences spread (Adaniya, 1981, p. 328).”⁶⁶ Officials accused International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) leaders with Okinawan ties, such as Tom Yagi, of communist sympathies, and although he recalled the “hardship and embarrassment” placed upon him and his family, he and 38 others who became known as the “Reluctant 39” took the Fifth Amendment as a matter of principle (*Uchinanchu*, 229).⁶⁷ Thus, official declarations of loyalty to the United States stated in the founding resolutions of the UOA were designed not only to deflect communist accusations against the leaders but also to reflect the role of the UOA in Okinawan American relations during the Cold War.

In its capacity as the representative of Okinawans in Hawai‘i, the UOA was important in such programs as the Hawai‘i-Okinawa Farm Youth Training Program started in 1953 that brought trainees from Okinawa to work and live for six months with farmers in Hawai‘i (*Hawaii Tribune-Herald*, 1965, p. 5).⁶⁸ Of particular significance is the Hawai‘i-Okinawa Friendship Mission, which was started in 1959 as a way to foster better relations between Americans and the people of Okinawa. The Civil

Affairs Section (G-5) of the US Army Pacific, Fort Shafter, in Hawai‘i recognized that Okinawans in Hawai‘i would be suitable goodwill intermediaries since “they were American citizens who knew the language of Okinawan people and shared with them the same ethnic background” (Adaniya, 1981, p. 330).⁶⁹ The program proved successful as evidenced by the U.S. Army’s expansion of the Friendship Mission to include Japan, Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, and other countries with an American presence. Thus, the relationship established among the U.S. military, the UOA, and occupation authorities helped to formalize transnational ties between the Okinawan community in Hawai‘i and their ancestral homeland of Okinawa through a common history of war and occupation (Ueunten, 2007, p. 57).⁷⁰

The Question of Reversion within the Okinawan Community in Hawai‘i

While UOA representatives welcomed officials, students, and dignitaries from Okinawa, the question of the status of Okinawa and its reversion to Japan was one of great debate within the Okinawan community in Hawai‘i in the postwar period. According to Mitsugu Sakihara, many believed that “it would be in the best interest of Okinawa to become a U.S. territory” due to many Issei recalling their early life in poverty in Okinawa, stories of the benefits of U.S. occupation, and the Nisei’s embrace of Americanization (Sakihara, 1981, p. 117).⁷¹ Casting doubts about American control over Okinawa were individuals such as the Reverend Jikai Yamasato of the Jikoen Hongwanji where donations for relief efforts were collected as well as Dr. Minoru Shinoda, Assistant Professor of History at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa.⁷²

On August 27, 1960, Tom Yagi, International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU)

director on Maui returned from a trip to Okinawa and addressed similar concerns about continued U.S. control over Okinawans. He reported, “Okinawans find their natural desire for dignity and self-respect, frustrated by the U.S. occupation. The majority want to become part of the Japanese state.” He described how members of the American occupation team were living in “plush conditions,” while the majority of Okinawans were “poverty stricken.” Yagi also questioned the humanitarian necessity of the U.S. presence in Okinawa, alluding to the military importance of Okinawa in the Cold War: “Many whom I talked to said the US-Japanese treaty was not a document for peace, but a stepping stone for another world conflict between the so-called Free World and the socialist countries of Red China and Russia.” While the Army had “no immediate comment” after Yagi’s article was published, Yagi’s claims were met with rebuttals from other members in the Okinawan American community, such as businessman Yets Higa, who sponsored an “unofficial fact-finding tour” to counter Yagi’s claims (*Honolulu Advertiser*, 1960, A-5).⁷³ According to Higa, “Nobody is starving in Okinawa,” adding that “[s]entimentally, perhaps, the Okinawan people lean toward Japan. But they know that economically and socially they are much better off under the U.S. I don’t think they’ll want to change any time soon (*Honolulu Advertiser*, 1960, A-4).”⁷⁴

This debate, centered on Japanese and American control over Okinawa, also reflected the ambivalence within the community regarding the relationship between Okinawans and Naichi due to experiences of prejudice and discrimination against Okinawans in Hawai’i as well as Japan. Previous efforts to unify the various local clubs had failed for several reasons, including “considerable opposition to forming such an exclusively ‘all Okinawan’ group on the grounds that special recognition of Okinawans represented a reversal of their past collective efforts to eliminate prejudicial

treatment of Okinawans as a separate group regarded as inferior by other Japanese in Hawai’i” (Kimura, 1968, p. 337).⁷⁵ Additionally, many held distinct cultural perspectives and spoke different dialects of Uchināguchi (沖縄口; ウチナーグチ) that separated various groups. Thus, many hesitated to join an organization that highlighted the distinct Okinawan identity that had made them the target of prejudice by Naichi. Compounding these issues of identity, prejudice and acculturation was likely the complicated status of Okinawa itself to both the United States and Japan. Mitsugu Sakihara highlights this complexity in the various name changes of the UOA that reflected the changing status of Okinawa during the Cold War from *Hawaii Okinawa-jin rengōkai* (Hawaii United Association of Okinawan people) to *Okinawa kenjin rengokai* following the reversion of Okinawa in 1972 (Sakihara, 118).⁷⁶

Contemporary Understandings and Challenges to the American Military in Indigenous Politics and Identity

Until the 1972 Reversion to Japan the UOA’s involvement in relief efforts and cultural exchange as a liaison between Okinawa and the United States reinforced Okinawans’ sense of distinctiveness from other Japanese in Hawai’i. Moreover, these roles enhanced their connections to Okinawa, and their embrace of Okinawan culture. Thus, much of the focus of the UOA in the postwar period was centered on cultural promotion that began as early as 1971 and coalesced in 1982 in the annual Okinawan festival that celebrates Okinawan dance, music, language, food, and history (McDermott, Tseng, and Maratzki, 1980, p. 124; Shimada, 2012, p. 131).⁷⁷ Revealingly, this celebration of Okinawan culture through various activities led by locality clubs (*azasonjinkai*) coincided with the second Hawaiian Renaissance in the 1970s that witnessed the embrace of Hawaiian music,

language, dance, and other cultural practices. The Hawaiian Renaissance also renewed calls for activism against militarism and development in rural areas and on other islands besides O'ahu (Goodyear- Ka'ōpua, Hussey, and Wright, 2014).⁷⁸ However, perceptions of the need for this kind of political activism against the military in both Hawai'i and Okinawa are uncommon among most Okinawans in Hawai'i, with a few notable exceptions. While many Okinawans in Hawai'i embraced the cultural awakening of the 1960s Civil Rights and Asian American movements, there was community silence concerning the anti-war and anti-draft movement that inspired and mobilized other ethnic communities at this time to engage in radical political protest (Fong, 2008, pp. 299-300).⁷⁹ Many also did not critically comment of the reversion of Okinawa to Japan and the important corollary issues related to civil rights and militarism. This absence and the conservative pro-American nature of Okinawan identity in Hawai'i should be understood within Hawai'i's complicated history of colonialism and imperialism with Asian immigrants, who are often accused of complicity in the subjugation of indigenous peoples (Okamura and Fujikane, 2008).⁸⁰ Still today there is relative silence from the HUOA regarding the growing anti-war movement in Okinawa based in part on the recognition of indigenous rights.

Many Asian American communities in Hawai'i, while embracing cultural elements of their distinctiveness, also feel part of a "local" culture that is both a unifying and homogenizing influence, to the extent that activist Chris K. Iijima notes that "only Hawaiians' indigenous culture—now resurgent after centuries of assault—can lay claim to being the authentic 'local' one" (Louie and Omatsu, 2006, p. 9; Darrah-Okike, 2020, p. 5).⁸¹ Thus, in promoting their assimilability in the postwar period, which was highlighted in their participation in relief efforts that were supported by the U.S. military, many Okinawan

Americans in Hawai'i implicitly rejected commonalities with other colonized and indigenous peoples, despite their own experiences with imperial Japan and later America. However, the very complexity of this issue and the variety of responses to the narrative of American military benevolence—that IWLU leader Tom Yagi challenged—demonstrate differences and complexity even among settlers who must navigate between different colonizing forces and interests (Elkins and Pederson, 2005, p. 4; Saranillio, 2018, p. 74).⁸²

Additionally, the promotion of a conservative diasporic Okinawan American identity is consistent with Japan's complicated relationship with Okinawa and its celebration of American ideals of freedom and liberty at the expense of Okinawans.⁸³ The Japanese government has actively suppressed Okinawan free speech and expression, particularly concerning the expansion of American military bases.⁸⁴ In response, local organizers have convened large anti-base demonstrations and Okinawan residents have elected anti-base governors who have refused to sign leases to maintain the bases (Ota, 1999, p. 205; McCormack and Norimatsu, 2012; Johnson, 1997, pp. 389-397; Smith, 2014).⁸⁵ Base opponents call for the removal of the bases because of their negative impacts on the environment, multiple, high profile rapes and sexual assaults by US servicemen and civilian workers of local Okinawan women and men, and the economic dependency of some on the U.S. military presence for employment on the bases and by mainland Japanese contractors servicing them (Suzuyo, 2016; Johnson, 1999).⁸⁶ Despite this opposition, from a macropolitical perspective the Japanese and American governments rely upon the continued U.S. military base presence in Okinawa Prefecture to fulfill the terms of the U.S.-Japan Security Alliance and Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA).⁸⁷

Conclusion

As Asian settlers in Hawai'i, Okinawan Americans embody a unique paradox highlighting their indigeneity within a colonized land. The postwar period represents the renaissance of Hawai'i Okinawan identity and the embrace of the traditional elements of a once derided culture by Okinawan Americans that was consistent with the U.S.'s liberal multicultural narrative during the Cold War. While Okinawan Americans celebrated their success and ascension in the postwar period through their participation in relief efforts and celebration of Okinawan culture, the detrimental effects of U.S. imperialism and militarism were overshadowed in the liberal multicultural environment of the Cold War that sanctioned militarism, expansion, and conquest.⁸⁸

By promoting goodwill relief efforts among Okinawan community organizations in Hawai'i and through the rebuilding of Okinawa, the U.S. attempted to justify the military occupation of Okinawa and its base-centered economy. Thus, the emergence of Okinawan and Okinawan American identities in the post-World War II period reflected America's Cold War "public diplomacy". The Cold War played an important role in Asian Americans' transition from a "yellow peril" to a "model minority" in which Okinawan Americans experienced the economic and educational achievements of Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans (Odo, n.d., p. 229).⁸⁹ Indeed, both

Okinawa and Hawai'i would be sites of America's soft diplomacy efforts that witnessed the emergence of an Okinawan American identity in Hawai'i focused on culture, arts, and cuisine, thus overlooking the militarized, gendered, and inherently unequal position of Okinawa in the U.S.-Japan bilateral security alliance.⁹⁰ In this context, legacies of imperialism and militarism still impact and complicate Okinawan American identity today, particularly concerning recent campaigns to reclaim indigenous rights in both Okinawa and Hawai'i and growing opposition to the American military presence in Okinawa.⁹¹

The experiences of Hawai'i's Okinawan Americans in the postwar period and the present highlight an important recognition of settler colonialism by Uchinanchu and the legacies of war and imperialism in both Hawai'i and Okinawa. Their experience also reveals how Uchinanchu identity is an ongoing process of negotiation and recalibration among various groups and interests struggling to define their relationship with each other, the land, economics, militarism, and politics (Roher, 2016, pp. 55-64).⁹² The Hawai'i United Okinawa Association and other cultural organizations emerging from the Cold War era continue to maintain a visible presence in Hawai'i today, even as both Okinawan and Japanese Americans are largely recognized as assimilated into the mainstream society in the communities throughout the Hawaiian Islands.

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Notes

¹ Tarō Higa, *移民は生きる / 比嘉太郎編著: Imin wa ikiru* (Tōkyō: Nichibei Jihōsha, 1974), 171. While the name 安慶名三郎 could be read Akena Saburō, Agena is the more common reading and the 1940 United States Federal Census lists a “Saburo Agena” living in Makawao, Maui, Hawai‘i. Year: 1940; Census Place: *Makawao, Maui, Hawaii*; Roll: *m-t0627-04591*; Page: *3B*; Enumeration District: *5-15*.

² Postwar development efforts implemented by the United States Civil Administration of the Ryūkyū Islands (USCAR) were critical, for example, in the establishment of the University of the Ryūkyūs (琉球大学, Ryūkyū Daigaku), abbreviated to Ryūdai (琉大) as the first institution of higher education in the Ryūkyū Islands on May 22, 1950. The university was an essential component of the redevelopment of the postwar occupied territory. See: [University of Hawaii and Okinawa’s University of the Ryukyus Celebrate 20th Anniversary of their Sister-University Relationship](#),” University of Hawai‘i News (Oct. 14, 2008). However, Okinawa remains the poorest of Japan’s 47 prefectures with comparatively higher poverty rates (37.5% of Okinawan households; nearly triple that of the other 46 prefectures) and an average annual income of roughly 70% of similar jobs on mainland Japan. See: Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare Bureau of Family Affairs Division of Home Welfare, *ひとり親家庭の現状と支援施策について* [*Hitori Oya Kamei no Genjō to Shien Shisaku ni Tsuite/ Report: Status of Single-Parent Families and Support Measures*] (Nov. 2, 2021); see also Steve Rabson, “[Henoko and the U.S. Military: A History of Dependence and Resistance](#),” 10:4:2 *The Asia-Pacific Journal* (January 16, 2012).

³ Kirsten L. Ziomek, *Lost Histories: Recovering the Lives of Japan’s Colonial People* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2019).

⁴ *Uchinanchu, a History of Okinawans in Hawaii* (Honolulu: Ethnic Studies Program, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa, 1981), 224. Japanese in Hawai‘i recognized Okinawan immigrants as distinct from them and were critical of particular cultural practices such as tattooing women’s hands as tattoos were associated with criminals and outcasts.

⁵ John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 2001), 54.

⁶ The dispossession of Okinawan landowners through the U.S. military’s confiscation of land during the postwar occupation remains a source of resentment among Okinawans, as well as a hotly contested legal and political issue. Although the U.S. government subsequently implemented a land leasing system to provide compensation to Okinawan landowners, some former landowners were entirely dispossessed due to the loss of records of land ownership

predating the war and the massive casualties during the Battle of Okinawa. Surviving landowners were either able to reclaim their land or were awarded parcels of land by the U.S. occupying forces. These landowners eventually received compensation through leasing agreements authorizing the continued use of Okinawan land parcels for use by the U.S. military following the 1972 reversion. Notably, Governor Masahide Ota refused to sign the land leases, alleging that he had an obligation under the Local Autonomy Law not to authorize uses for Okinawa's lands in a manner that threatens the human security of Okinawan citizens. Saikō Saibansho [Supreme Court of Japan/SCOJ] Aug. 28, 1996, [Gyo-tsu no. 90, Saikō Saibansho Hanreishū](#) [Saikō Saibansho web] (Japan) (SCOJ's Grand Bench denying Governor Ota's appeal challenging the constitutionality of the Japanese National Government enforcing the governor's duty under Article 36(5) of the Land Expropriation Law to re-authorize the use of lands for U.S. military under the SOFA); Masahide Ota, "Governor Ota at the Supreme Court of Japan," in Chalmers A. Johnson, *Okinawa: Cold War Island*. Edited by Chalmers Johnson. (Cardiff, CA: Japan Policy Research Institute, 1999). The Okinawa Prefectural Government has renewed its stance against the renewal of land leases under current Governor Denny Tamaki and has launched legal challenges opposing the construction of a new military installation in Henoko. See Gavan McCormack, "[The Henoko Base Project: Okinawa's Tamaki Government at the Brink](#)," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 16:24:2 (2018); Andrew Daisuke Stewart, "[Kayano v. Hokkaidō Expropriation Committee Revisited: Recognition of Ryūkyūans as a Cultural Minority Under the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights, an Alternative Paradigm for Okinawan Demilitarization](#)," *Asian-Pacific Law and Policy Journal* 4:2 at 418-26 (2003).

⁷ "Okinawa, Ambivalence, Identity, and Japan." In *Japan's Minorities* (USA: Routledge: 2009), 210-227

⁸ *Uchinanchu, a History of Okinawans in Hawaii*, 53.

⁹ *Uchinanchu, a History of Okinawans in Hawaii*, 55.

¹⁰ *Uchinanchu, a History of Okinawans in Hawaii*, 41.

¹¹ Ronald Y. Nakasone, *Okinawan Diaspora* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 200.

¹² *Uchinanchu, a History of Okinawans in Hawaii*, 41. Due to the prominence of Okinawans in the hog raising industry prior to the war, Okinawans were uniquely positioned to capitalize on the demand for pork during World War II. *Uchinanchu, a History of Okinawans in Hawaii*, 217.

¹³ Mitsugu Sakihara, "Discrimination overcome: Okinawan immigrant gains seen at 80th," *Honolulu Advertiser*, 13 January 1980, 15.

¹⁴ The Office of Strategic Services estimated that officials incarcerated approximately 200 Okinawans during the war although specific individuals were not identified. Alfred M. Tozzer, *United States Office of Strategic Services, Okinawan Studies, Volume 3: The Okinawans of the Loo Choo Islands: Japanese Minority Group* (Honolulu: Office of Strategic Services, 1944), 86.

¹⁵ These actions by the Okinawan population in Hawai'i seem separate from efforts by the Japanese population in the Islands to support the Japanese military. John J. Stephan, *Hawaii Under the Rising Sun: Japan's Plan for Conquest After Pearl Harbor* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984), 30-33.

¹⁶ "Fraternization With POWs Held Problem Here," *Hawaii Times*, 26 September 1945, 2.

¹⁷ Gwenfread Allen, *Hawaii's War Years: 1941-1945* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1950), 196.

¹⁸ "Okinawans Need Clothes Group Says, Announcing Drive," *Honolulu Advertiser*, 30 November 1945, 3; "Clothing Drive to Aid Okinawans Will Open Here Monday," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 1 December 1945, 7.

¹⁹ Many knew of family members still in Okinawa or had attended school in Okinawa and tried to coax civilians out of the hundreds of caves in Okinawa before American forces blasted them shut in an effort to secure the island. The Nisei of the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) have been particularly credited with saving thousands of Okinawan and Japanese due to their fluency in the Okinawan *hōgen* [dialect] that allowed them to reassure the people hiding in caves and burial chambers that it was safe to come out. This was a particularly challenging assignment as Japanese soldiers were often mixed with the civilians who discouraged and even prevented civilians from surrendering upon the threat of being shot. Joseph Daniel Harrington, *Yankee Samurai: The Secret Role of Nisei in America's Pacific Victory* (Detroit: Pettigrew Enterprises, 1979), 317-318; Tarō Higa, *Memoirs of a Certain Nisei, 1916-1985=Aru Nisei No Wadachi* (Kāne'ohe, Hawai'i: Higa Publications, 1988), 160-161.

²⁰ Tarō Higa, *移民は生きる / 比嘉太郎編著.; Imin wa ikiru* (Tōkyō: Nichibei Jihōsha, 1974), 166.

²¹ The persistent rumors of Japan's victory even in the postwar period, which has been documented in primary sources, is of great interest to scholars as it shows that even within diasporic communities, pro-Japanese sentiment prevailed among some members. John J. Stephan, *Hawaii Under the Rising Sun: Japan's Plans for Conquest After Pearl Harbor* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984), 172; Andrew W. Lind, *The Japanese in Hawaii Under Wartime Conditions* (Honolulu, New York: American Council, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1943), 21; Yukiko Kimura, "Rumor Among the Japanese," *Social Process in Hawaii* Vol. XI (May 1947): 84-85; The Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory (RASRL), A-1989: 006, Box 10-11, "A Former Hissho-Kai Leader Aiding Relief Projects for Japan: Exposes Inner Activities of 'Katta-To,'" 22 July 1948, 1; The Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory (RASRL), A-1989: 006, Box 10-11, "Interview with Mr. Tokuzo Shibayama—advisor of Hissho Kai," 9 July 1948, 1.

²² "THE ORIGIN OF THE OKINAWA CLOTHING RELIEF DRIVE IN HAWAII," Collection of Chizu Inoue, Hiroaki Hara, Dan Nakasone, Hawai'i United Okinawa Association archives.

²³ "THE ORIGIN OF THE OKINAWA CLOTHING RELIEF DRIVE IN HAWAII," Collection of Chizu Inoue, Hiroaki Hara, Dan Nakasone, Hawai'i United Okinawa Association archives.

²⁴ Headquarters Ryukyus Command Military Government, Labor & Welfare department, "Ryukyus", Hawai'i United Okinawa Association archives; Thomas. S. Rogers, "The Licensed Agencies for Relief in Asia: Esther B. Rhoads and Humanitarian Efforts in Postwar Japan, 1946-1952," *Quaker History* 83: 1 (Spring 1994): 18-33.

²⁵ "Chronology highlights Okinawan years," *Hawaii Tribune-Herald*, 22 September 1985, 44.

²⁶ Photo Album: Marine Corps Installations Pacific by Nika Nashiro, "[Okinawa, Hawai'i Reflect of Postwar Relief Efforts, Reaffirming Spirit of Yuimaaru](#)," *Defense Visual Information Distribution Service*, 18 January, 2019.

²⁷ Photo Album: Marine Corps Installations Pacific by Nika Nashiro, "[Okinawa, Hawai'i Reflect of Postwar Relief Efforts, Reaffirming Spirit of Yuimaaru](#)," *Defense Visual Information*

Distribution Service, 18 January, 2019.

²⁸ Okinawans in North America also contributed to relief efforts directly to Okinawa as the separation of Okinawa from Japan during the American occupation resulted in most aid to Japan failing to reach Okinawa. “Okinawa Medical Group to Hold Meeting Oct. 28,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 17 October 1951, 13; “Okinawa Medical Relief Association Soliciting Funds to Buy Supplies,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 31 January 1950, 23; Ruth Adaniya, “United Okinawan Association of Hawaii,” in *Uchinanchu: A History of Okinawans in Hawaii*, ed. Ethnic Studies Oral History Project (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1981), 327. Ben Kobashigawa, “On the History of the Okinawans in North America,” *Amerasia*, 12:2 (1985), 29-42.

²⁹ Okinawa Relief Group Launches \$30,000 Drive,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 12 November 1948, 6; “Drive to Aid Okinawa With Goats at Half Way Point With \$15,000,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 4 January 1949, 2; “Local Men Arrive in Okinawa With Goats,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 23 June 1949, 18; “Local Men Back from Okinawa Urge Aid for Isle,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 16 August 1949, 7.

³⁰ Photo Album: Marine Corps Installations Pacific by Nika Nashiro, “[Okinawa, Hawai‘i Reflect of Postwar Relief Efforts, Reaffirming Spirit of Yuimaaru](#),” *Defense Visual Information Distribution Service*, 18 January, 2019.

³¹ By 1949, there were 1,294 Okinawans in America who also supported various relief efforts, spurred by efforts led by Shingi Nakamura and Shinsei Kōchi who were sent to Japan as part of the American government’s Atomic Bomb Casualties Commission. *History of the Okinawans in North America* (Los Angeles, California: Okinawan Club of America and the Asian American Studies Center, University of California, Los Angeles, 1988), 113.

³² Photo Album: Marine Corps Installations Pacific by Nika Nashiro, “[Okinawa, Hawai‘i Reflect of Postwar Relief Efforts, Reaffirming Spirit of Yuimaaru](#),” *Defense Visual Information Distribution Service*, 18 January, 2019.

³³ “Okinawans Stop Factional Rifts and Pledge Hearty Teamwork,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 27 March 1950, 3. By 1968, Yukiko Kimura estimated that there were approximately 35,000 Okinawans out of a total of about 225,000 Japanese, two-thirds of whom were Hawai‘i-born. In 1932, the Japanese Consulate of Honolulu published a population report that revealed that most Okinawans in Hawai‘i were concentrated in rural areas on O‘ahu and on Hawai‘i Island. United States Office of Strategic Services, and Alfred M. Tozzer, *Okinawan Studies Volume 3, The Okinawas of the Loo Choo Islands: a Japanese Minority Group* (Honolulu, Hawaii: Office of Strategic Services, 1944), 58.

³⁴ The equivalent of more than \$570,000 in current U.S. dollars based on an inflation rate of 1,112.8% from 1948 to 2022. [CPI Inflation Calculator](#), U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (accessed Jun. 27, 2022).

³⁵ Karleen C. Chinen, “‘Pigs from the Sea,’ 1948 Aloha Mission to Okinawa Comes to the Blaisdell Concert Hall,” *Hawaii Herald* 25:8 (April 23, 2004): 1.

³⁶ Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) made a documentary of this event and in 2004, a performance was held at the Blaisdell Concert Hall in Honolulu. Numerous books in Japanese have also detailed this and other relief efforts in the postwar period. Takenobu Higa, *Hawai Ryūkyū geinō shi = History of Ryukyuan accomplishment in Hawaii* (Honolulu: Higa Takenobu, 1978); Tarō Higa, 移民は生きる [*Imin wa ikiru=The Immigrant Lives*] Tōkyō: Nichibei Jihōsha, 1974.

³⁷ Shoji Kudaka, “A little tale about Okinawa’s pigs from the sea,” *Stars and Stripes Okinawa*, February 10, 2019, accessed August 25, 2020. U.S. public diplomacy efforts include activities promoting community engagement between the U.S. forces in Okinawa and host communities. These narratives, however, make little or no mention of U.S. destruction of Okinawa during the Battle for the Islands which took so heavy a toll on Okinawan and Japanese lives.

³⁸ Goodwill efforts also exist in Hawai‘i, another highly militarized island, where scholars Kathy E. Ferguson and Phyllis Turnbull note that “The local newspapers are saturated with military coverage, ranging from reports on changes in personnel to coverage of military ‘Good Samaritan’ activities, to local protests against stray bombs and hazardous materials stored near schools.” These goodwill efforts help to naturalize the military whose presence is “desirable, and constructive, therefore welcome.” Kathy E. Ferguson and Phyllis Turnbull, *Oh, Say, Can You See?: The Semiotics of the Military in Hawai‘i* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 2, xiii.

³⁹ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 5, 11. The U.S. military and USCAR’s postwar relief efforts in Okinawa promoted the American way of life notably including the use of the U.S. dollar and English language.

⁴⁰ Yujin Yaguchi, “Japanese Reinvention of Self through Hawai‘i’s Japanese Americans” *Pacific Historical Review* 83:2 (May 2014): 333-349.

⁴¹ Hideko Yoshimoto, *U.S. Occupation of Okinawa: A Soft Power Theory Approach* (Victoria, Australia: Trans Pacific Press, 2019), 2.

⁴² United States Office of Strategic Services, and Alfred M. Tozzer, *Okinawan Studies Volume 3, The Okinawans of the Loo Choo Islands: a Japanese Minority Group* (Honolulu, Hawaii: Office of Strategic Services, 1944), 74.

⁴³ *Okinawan Studies Volume 3, The Okinawans of the Loo Choo Islands*, 84.

⁴⁴ United States. Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. *Ryukyu (Loochoo) Islands* ([Washington]: Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Dept., 1944), 43.

⁴⁵ Masanao Kano, 戦後 沖縄 の 思想像 [*Sengo Okinawa no shisōzō*] (Tōkyō: Asahi Shinbunsha, n.d.), 54-56.

⁴⁶ Matthew Allen, *Identity and Resistance in Okinawa* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002), 7.

⁴⁷ Yoshimoto, 3.

⁴⁸ Yoshimoto, 5.

⁴⁹ Martial law involved the outright suspension of constitutional liberties as civilian courts were declared closed, all government functions—federal, territorial, and municipal—were placed under Army control, and a military regime was established. The commanding general declared himself the “military governor” of Hawai‘i and he controlled the entire civilian population with absolute discretionary powers. Harry N. Scheiber and Jane L. Scheiber, “Constitutional Liberty in World War II: Army Rule and Martial Law in Hawaii: 1941-1946,” *Western Legal History* 3:2 (1990): 341-378; J. Garner Anthony, *Hawaii Under Army Rule* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1955).

⁵⁰ Yoshimoto, 153.

⁵¹ Robert Kamins and Robert Potter, *Mālamalama: A History of the University of Hawaii*

(Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), 77.

⁵² Mire Koikari, *Cold War Encounters in US-Occupied Okinawa: Women, Militarized Domesticity, and Transnationalism in East Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 12.

⁵³ “The Finger Points,” *Hawaii Hochi*, 14 January 1932, 1; Roger Bell, *Last Among Equals: Hawaiian Statehood and American Politics* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1984).

⁵⁴ Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 251.

⁵⁵ Saranillio, 140.

⁵⁶ Koikari, 105.

⁵⁷ Ellen D. Wu, *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 112.

⁵⁸ Dean Itsuji Saranillio, *Unsustainable Empire: Alternative Histories of Hawai‘i Statehood* (Duke University Press, 2018), 14.

⁵⁹ George Atta and Claudia M. Atta, “Okinawans and Business,” in *Uchinanchu: A History of Okinawans in Hawaii*, ed. Ethnic Studies Oral History Project (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1981), 188-203; George M. Nakasato and Chad Taniguchi, “Okinawans in Hawaiian Agriculture: Poultry and Vegetable Crops,” in *Uchinanchu: A History of Okinawans in Hawaii*, ed. Ethnic Studies Oral History Project (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1981), 204-216; Yukiko Kimura, “Okinawans and Hog Industry in Hawaii,” in *Uchinanchu: A History of Okinawans in Hawaii*, ed. Ethnic Studies Oral History Project (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1981), 217-222; Arnold T. Hiura and Vinnie K. Terada, “Okinawan Involvement in Hawaii’s Labor Movement,” in *Uchinanchu: A History of Okinawans in Hawaii*, ed. Ethnic Studies Oral History Project (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1981), 223-232; Lillian Y. Hokama, “Okinawan Participation in the Legislature,” in *Uchinanchu: A History of Okinawans in Hawaii*, ed. Ethnic Studies Oral History Project (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1981), 243-259.

⁶⁰ Noriko Shimada, “The Emergence of Okinawan Ethnic Identity in Hawai‘i: Wartime and Postwar Experiences,” *The Japanese Journal of American Studies* 23 (2012): 118.

⁶¹ Koikari, 136-144. The pro-American stance of the Okinawan community in the postwar period was much different from the Americanization efforts experienced in the Japanese community during the 1930s (and by the Nisei during World War II) as traditional Okinawan values were celebrated as part of Cold War multiculturalism. This difference highlighted the incompatibility of the alleged un-American values of Japanese culture in an effort to close Japanese language schools that were thought to promote “Mikado worship” due to the growing military threat of Japan. In both instances, however, military considerations would promote a positive or negative view of Japanese and Okinawan culture. Noriko Asato, *Teaching Mikadoism: The Attack on Japanese Language Schools in Hawaii, California, and Washington, 1919-1927* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2006); Eileen Tamura, *Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity: the Nisei Generation in Hawaii* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

⁶² Curtis Otani, “14 Okinawa Clubs in Unity Ceremony,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 22 September 1951, 1.

⁶³ Adaniya, 328.

⁶⁴ Michael T. Holmes, *The Specter of Communism in Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 190. Those arrested were Jack Hall, regional director of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) ; John Reinecke, former teacher; Jack Kimoto, an employee of the *Honolulu Record*; Koji Ariyoshi, editor of the *Honolulu Record*; Jim Freeman, mechanic; Charles Fujimoto announced chair of the Communist Party of Hawai'i; and Eileen Fujimoto, wife of Charles Fujimoto and secretary at the ILWU Longshore Local 136.

⁶⁵ *Okinawan Studies Volume 3, The Okinawans of the Loo Choo Islands*, 60. One year later, in 1952, the United States Senate and House of Representatives voted on the McCarran-Walter Act that allowed Japanese immigrants to become naturalized U.S. citizens.

⁶⁶ Adaniya, 328.

⁶⁷ *Uchinanchu, a History of Okinawans in Hawaii*, 229.

⁶⁸ "Isle YF's Travel to Okinawa, California," *Hawaii Tribune-Herald*, 17 January 1965, 5.

⁶⁹ Adaniya, 330.

⁷⁰ Wesley Ueunten highlights "the conservative pro-American nature of the U.O.A. that developed as a result of its close association with the U.S. military and its formation during the Cold War" that helped to build a unique transnationalism between Hawai'i and Okinawa that still exists today. Wesley Iwao Ueunten, "The Okinawan Revival in Hawai'i: Contextualizing Culture and Identity over Diasporic Time and Space" PhD Dissertation University of California, Berkeley, 2007, 57.

⁷¹ Mitsugu Sakihara, "Okinawans in Hawaii: An Overview of the Past 80 Years," in *Uchinanchu: A History of Okinawans in Hawaii*, ed. Ethnic Studies Oral History Project (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1981), 117.

⁷² Minoru Shinoda, "Okinawa's Status Is Challenge to U.S. In Asia," *Honolulu Advertiser*, 27 December 1959, E-18.

⁷³ "Okinawa is Fine Shape Says Higa," *Honolulu Advertiser*, 22 September 1960, A-5.

⁷⁴ "Army Spokesperson Has No Comment," *Honolulu Advertiser*, 27 August 1960, A-4.

⁷⁵ Yukiko Kimura, "Locality Clubs as Basic Units of the Social Organization of the Okinawans in Hawaii," *Phylon* 29 (December 1968): 337.

⁷⁶ Mitsugu Sakihara, "Okinawans in Hawaii: An Overview of the Past 80 Years," in *Uchinanchu: A History of Okinawans in Hawaii*, ed. Ethnic Studies Oral History Project (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1981), 118. Although descendants of Okinawan immigrants to Hawaii share unity in the local "Uchinanchu" identity perpetuated by the HUOA, this consolidation of the multitude of Okinawan identities overlooks the plurality of dialects, cultural histories, religious beliefs and practices, and geographical context of distinct communities across the Okinawan Islands. The *azasonjinkai* were more representative of the diversity of indigenous groups of Okinawan people but were assimilated into a consolidated representative body after 1972. [Alternative Report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination \(CERD\)\(Jul. 2018\)](#), Association of the Indigenous Peoples in the Ryukyus (AIPR).

⁷⁷ Anthropologist William P. Lebra describes the 1950s to 1970s as a period of Okinawan "cultural florescence" while scholar Noriko Shimada states that the development of Uchinanchu cultural realization began a few years earlier. John F. McDermott, Wen-Shing Tseng, and Thomas W. Maretzki. *People and Cultures of Hawaii: a Psychocultural Profile* (Honolulu: John A. Burns School of Medicine: University Press of Hawai'i, 1980), 124;

Shimada, 131. See generally [The Okinawan Festival](#), Hawai'i United Okinawa Association.

⁷⁸ High profile protests against development and militarism occurred in places such as Kaho'olawe, Kalama Valley, and Waiāhole/Waikāne. Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, Ikaika Hussey, and Erin Kahunawaika'ala Wright. *A Nation Rising: Hawaiian Movements for Life, Land, and Sovereignty* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

⁷⁹ Timothy P. Fong, *The Contemporary Asian American Experience: Beyond the Model Minority* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2008), 299-300.

⁸⁰ Jonathan Okamura and Candace Fujikane, eds., *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008).

⁸¹ Steve Louie, and Glenn Omatsu, *Asian Americans: The Movement and the Moment* (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press, 2006), 9; Jennifer Darrach-Okike, "Theorizing Race in Hawai'i: Centering Place, Indigeneity, and Settler Colonialism" *Sociology Compass* 14: 7 (2020), 5.

⁸² Historians Caroline Elkins and Susan Pederson note that "Settler colonialism in the twentieth century is thus marked by ongoing negotiation and struggle among four key groups: an imperial metropole where sovereignty formally resides, a local administration charged with maintaining order and authority, an indigenous population significant enough in size and tenacity to make its presence felt, and an often demanding and well-connected settler community." Thus, settler colonialism is never a uniform experience, identity, or understanding as there have always been a dynamic relationship between federal, state, military, native, and settler interests. Caroline Elkins and Susan Pederson, eds., *Settler Colonialism in the Twentieth Century: Projects, Practices, Legacies* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 4; Saranillio, 74.

⁸³ American democratic principles were well-established in other western nations when Japan adopted its postwar Constitution under the U.S. occupation in 1947, replacing the Meiji Constitution of 1889. Japan's postwar constitution reflects a liberal democracy with legal traditions of the United States, guaranteeing certain fundamental rights of its citizens. The overhaul of the previous Meiji Constitution was primarily intended to totally transform Japan into a democratic, demilitarized, and capitalist state that respected individual rights of its citizens. Whereas the Emperor was previously regarded as the official head of state, the postwar Constitution limited the Emperor's powers to primarily serve a symbolic role. Notably, Japanese citizens gained substantive rights through Chapter 3 pertaining to the Rights and Duties of the People (Articles 10-40). Whereas Japanese citizens were previously referred to as subjects of the Emperor under the Meiji Constitution, the postwar Constitution added a spectrum of individual rights in alignment with Western democratic norms and fundamental human rights. It is important to note that the postwar Constitution was not in force in Okinawa a U.S.-military colony that was separated from Japan until the 1972 reversion.

⁸⁴ *Nihonkoku kenpō* [Constitution], art. 21 (Japan) ("Article 21. Freedom of assembly and association as well as speech, press and all other forms of expression are guaranteed. No censorship shall be maintained, nor shall the secrecy of any means of communication be violated").

⁸⁵ Former Okinawa Prefecture Governor Masahide Ota refused to sign leases on behalf of landowners, under Japan's Land Acquisition Law, who were unwilling to renew leases for

exclusive use by U.S. military bases. The Japanese central government attempted to intimidate Governor Ota into signing the leases. The Prime Minister of Japan sued Ota under the Local Autonomy Law seeking “a court order for the governor to execute the duties delegated to him [to sign the leases].” The Fukuoka High Court, Naha Branch ruled in favor of the Prime Minister. Ota appealed to the Supreme Court of Japan and lost in a verdict announced on August 28, 1996. See Masahide Ota, Governor Ota at the Supreme Court of Japan, in Chalmers A. Johnson, *Okinawa: Cold War Island*. Edited by Chalmers Johnson. (Cardiff, CA: Japan Policy Research Institute, 1999), 205; Gavan McCormack and Satoko Oka Norimatsu. *Resistant Islands: Okinawa Confronts Japan and the United States* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012); Chalmers Johnson, “[ESSAY—The Okinawan Rape Incident and the End of the Cold War in East Asia](#),” *California Western International Law Journal* 27: 2, Article 6 (1997): 389-397; Sheila A. Smith, “[The Constancy of Contest with Okinawa](#),” *Forbes Asia* (Jan. 27, 2014).

⁸⁶ Takazato Suzuyo, “[Okinawan Women Demand U.S. Forces Out After Another Rape and Murder: Suspect an ex-Marine and U.S. Military Employee](#),” *Asia-Pacific Journal* 14:11:4 (2016); Chalmers Johnson, *Okinawa: Cold War Island* (Cardiff, CA: Japan Policy Research Institute, 1999).

⁸⁷ Agreement Regarding the Status of United States Armed Forces in Japan, Agreement Under Article VI of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security Between Japan and the United States of America, Regarding Facilities and Areas and the Status of United States Armed Forces in Japan, Japan-U.S., Jan. 19, 1960, 11 U.S.T. 1652.

⁸⁸ Saranillio explains that “U.S. ambitions for global hegemony during the Cold War found discursive alliance with portrayals of Hawai‘i as a racially harmonious U.S. state and selected narrations of Japanese American loyal service, setting state-led antiracist narratives to public memory through global circulation, entertainment, and publicity, while colonial narratives of Hawaii’s occupation by the United States were designed for historical deletion” (Saranillio, 14).

⁸⁹ Franklin Odo, ed., *Finding a Path Forward: Asian American Pacific Islander National Historic Landmarks Theme Study* (Washington D.C.: National Historic Landmarks Program, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, n.d.), 229.

⁹⁰ Laura Hein and Mark Selden note that “What it means to be Okinawan is being contested, redefined, and inscribed in the consciousness and praxis of Okinawans today” highlighting the difficulty of defining a very fluid identity. Laura Hein and Mark Selden, eds., *Islands of Discontent: Okinawan Responses to Japanese and American Power* (USA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 1.

⁹¹ The authors acknowledge the conflicting viewpoints among Okinawans in Japan regarding defining Okinawans as an indigenous people. Okinawans are recognized as indigenous peoples by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), legitimized as unique indigenous peoples in Japan who have endured a history of colonialism and imperialism. However, the Japanese government does not formally recognize Okinawans as an indigenous people and there is reluctance among Okinawan citizens and government officials in being referred to as indigenous peoples. Patrick Heinrich and Fija Bairon, “[Wanne Uchinanchu-I am Okinawan. Japan, the U.S. and Okinawa’s Endangered Languages](#),” *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 5:11 (2007): 1-19. See generally Brandon Marc Higa, “[Okinawa and Human Rights Scholarship in the Law and Japan Field: A Bibliographic Compilation](#),” *Asia-*

Pacific Law and Policy Journal 22:1 (2021).

⁹² Scholar Judy Roher applies Patrick Wolfe's five elements of settler colonialism to Hawaii and notes that it is 1.) Structure, Not an Event; 2.) The Central Focus Is Land; 3.) Logic of Elimination; 4.) Reliance on Imported Labor; 5.) Nonnatives Replace Natives. Judy Roher, *Staking Claim: Settler Colonialism and Racialization in Hawaii* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2016), 55-64. With increasing intermarriage to Japanese Americans and other groups, joint membership and leadership in various community organizations, as well as a growing trend of assimilating Okinawan American into the broader identity of Japanese Americans, Okinawan American identity in Hawai'i is often posited as distinct from Japanese culture. However, how this distinction is internalized or understood by individuals varies.