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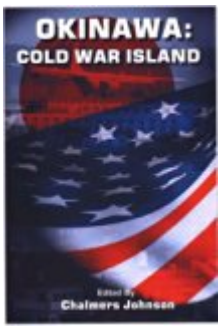

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Years of Betrayal

Despite their corrosive effects on Japanese conscience and the US-Japanese alliance, the experiences of the people who inhabit Okinawa have been, until recently, consigned to a dark corner in the historiography of modern Japan and American policies in East Asia. Okinawa's location on the geographic periphery of the modern Japanese nation almost ensured that the island's harrowing past remains a little told story among both mainland Japanese and Americans. In 1999, eleven scholars coming from diverse academic disciplines and professional fields combined their research and insights under the auspices of the Japan Policy Research Institute to remedy this longtime neglect. The result is a collection of sixteen essays that variously support the central point stated trenchantly in editor Charlmers Johnson's foreword: "There is absolutely nothing the Americans and the Japanese can do today to mitigate their records in over the past fifty years. Their only ethical course is to acknowledge that they forced the unlucky Okinawans to pay a disproportionate part of Japan's costs for whatever benefits flowed from the Cold War in East Asia." (p. 6) The authors are highly successful in achieving their stated goal of elucidating the history of an island and a people who have long endured the legacies of Japan's imperial ambitions and still bear the burden of the long-past Cold War.

Johnson opens the salvo by outlining four "great betrayals" of the Okinawans perpetrated by both the Japanese and the Americans. First, he points to Emperor Hirohito who knew by early 1945 that the war was lost but still went ahead with one last great battle away from the Japanese main islands. The government ensconced in Tokyo pursued this calculated recklessness largely to buy time to negotiate better terms for surrender. This betrayal resulted in the loss of more than 200,000 Okinawan lives in one of the bloodiest encounters of World War II. Only seven years later, the Okinawans were again sacrificed. Japan regained national sovereignty in 1952 but agreed to leave Okinawa under direct U.S. military government. As the rest of Japan barreled along the road to national reconstruction, the Okinawans remained essentially a stateless people, neither Ja-

panese nor U.S. citizens. In the meantime, their island morphed into one gigantic military base. In the late 1960s, Okinawa became the chief launching pad for America's ill-conceived war in Vietnam. The outraged Okinawans protested and agitated for reversion to Japan, but again their wishes were frustrated. In 1972 Tokyo and Washington struck a deal whereby Okinawa was finally returned to Japanese rule, but it was agreed that American bases would remain intact and beyond the administrative reach of either Japanese or Okinawans. In 1995, a U.S. strategic assessment bearing the name of Harvard professor Joseph Nye precipitated debate on both sides of the Pacific. The controversial Pentagon report declared that U.S. troops levels in East Asia would remain at around 100,000 for the foreseeable future; the status quo in East Asia should be maintained, including the U.S. bases in Okinawa. As Okinawans were shaken by the prospect of a continued American military presence in their midst in the post-Cold War era, the rape of a twelve-year-old girl by U. S. military personnel in September 1995 pushed their indignation to a new height. Then came what Johnson calls the fourth and most unjustifiable betrayal: agreements coming out of the Clinton-Hashimoto Summit of April 1996 in which both governments pretended to provide relief but in essence tried to divide and distract the Okinawan people.

The note struck by Johnson echoes in the essays that follow. Masahide Ota, former governor of Okinawa Prefecture, unflinchingly portrays Okinawa's modern history as that of a marginalized outpost in the Japanese empire, which consolidated and expanded rapidly but became totally dysfunctional by the final phase of World War II. An accomplished academician and professor emeritus of humanities at the University of Ryukyus, Ota takes issues with the timeframe of the Battle of Okinawa delineated in most history textbooks. In his view, the battle began in late March, not April as commonly understood, and lasted well into September when localized fighting finally ended. This first ground battle fought on Japanese territory inhabited by a massive number of civilians, the callous and lopsided relationship between the empire's center and periphery came into full play. Not only were the Japanese government and military appallingly unprepared for the showdown with the Americans, they had essentially no plans for meeting the most basic needs of the civilians they expected to mobilize for frontline defense. Precisely because the military did not trust them, many Okinawans were not allowed to surrender to the Americans and, instead, were killed at the hands of the army that was supposed to protect them. It was symptomatic of the empire's implosion that Okinawa's governor, a mainlander appointed by the Home Ministry, abandoned the islands several months before the battle began.

Why does Ota insist on correcting the underrepresentation of the duration and magnitude of the Battle of Okinawa in textbooks? Largely because textbooks, as a major venue for authenticating and disseminating historical information, have been the focus of a decades long political battle over renditions of Japan's wartime atrocities. Koji Taira's essay elaborates on the textbook controversy that has inspired so much anger on the part of Japan's Asian neighbors. In the summer of 1982, what critics saw as the Japanese government's attempt to distort the history of Japan's aggression in Asia by means of textbook screening set off international outrage. The Okinawans had plenty of company in seeing in the court battle between historian Iyenaga Saburo and the Ministry of Education an official determination to gloss over the horrific army atrocities during WW II. Of the terminology preferred by the ministry's textbook inspectors, the Okinawans were particularly offended by the phrase 'mass suicide' (shudan jiketsu) because it connoted that they were willing to give up their lives for their government and the cause it upheld. In the end, Ienaga lost on all but one count (Unit 731's medical atrocities in Manchuria during WW II), and the Ministry of Ed-

ucation's request to include a reference to shudan jiketsu in textbooks stood. Through this unwanted glorification, the Okinawans found themselves conveniently turned into a model of loyal yet participatory citizenship.

The book examines other instances in which the Okinawans were used like pawns as the convenience of the governments in Tokyo and Washington dictated. Kozy Amemiya's article talks of the displacement of the Okinawan farmers who were forced to make way for the construction of U. S. bases in the 1950s. Because of land confiscation by the U. S. military, about 3,200 Okinawans ended up emigrating to Bolivia between 1954 and 1964. They left with a promise of fifty acres of land in area of rich soil and the prospect of railroad access. What actually awaited them in the thick jungles on the Rio Grande was life infested with disease-carrying rats and frequent crop-destroying floods. In 1967, the Japanese government assumed responsibility for these settlements and began to provide assistance through its oversea aid agency. The settlers' fortunes turned in the 1980s with the cultivation of soy beans, but many re-migrated to other locations in South America or drifted back to Okinawa. And yet, grateful for the belated assistance from the Japanese government, many in the Okinawan diaspora communities in Bolivia remained attached to their "government at home" and the Rising Sun flag as a symbol of their national pride.

Amemiya further explores the complex alchemy of Okinawan identity elsewhere in the book. Okinawans who emigrated to Brazil were earnest participants in the Life Reform Movement of the 1930s, believing they were transforming themselves from peripheral Japanese into "real" ones. The government in Tokyo found such insecurities among the Japanese living overseas useful, and various organizations serving the diaspora communities became extended arms of the state propaganda machine. Once official Japanese government representation left, the vacuum was quickly filled by such civic groups, many of them staffed by former officers of the Japanese army. Distorted reality or not, the wartime propaganda gave the beleaguered immigrant community a sense of unity and self-affirmation. Many Okinawans in Brazil were unable to accept Japan's defeat and cocooned themselves in denial for a long time.

Manipulation of a different sort forms a recurrent theme of the book. The governments of Japan and the United States have maneuvered together to build an elaborate legal structure to legitimate and perpetuate the abridgement of Okinawans' civil and property rights. Some violations were more egregious than others. For example, Johnson criticizes the Americans neglecting even the pretense of due process when they forcibly seized land for base construction in the early postwar years. After the island's reversion to Japanese administrative rule in 1972, American bases continued to be shielded from claims by Okinawan landowners under the terms of the Japan-US Security Treaty. The Japanese government, for its part, claimed to have duly taken over these lands under the Land Acquisition Law, the domestic legal basis for forced lease or sale of privately-owned land for public purposes, and then transferred the lands free of charge to the Americans in accordance with legislation governing land use for U. S. bases. Since the law required that such leases be renewed every five years, a number of Okinawans have registered their protest by refusing to sign the documents. Between 1972 and 1995, this act of civil disobedience had necessitated the governor of Okinawa to sign unconsented leases in his executive capacity. After the rape incident of September 1995, however, the then Governor Ota refused to perform this long-standing administrative ritual. Prime Minister Hashimoto sued the rebellious prefectural governor under the terms of the Local Autonomy Law to make him cooperate. The ensuing legal battle, which ultimately reached the Supreme Court, ended in victory for the central government. The Hashimoto government proceeded to place the power to sign

forced land leases in the hands of the central government. The new law passed the Diet in April 1997 with 90 percent of the national legislative body in support. The text of Governor Ota's moving testimony before the Supreme Court in July 1996 is included in this volume.

Ota's defiance to the central government was, in fact, deeply rooted in Okinawa's indigenous politics. Land seizures and forced leases in the early postwar years turned Okinawa into fertile ground for protest movements. In the late 1960s, many Okinawans opposed the basing of atomic weapons and nerve gas in the island and the use of Kadena Air Force Base as a launching pad for the B52s that daily pounded Vietnam. The mass protest precipitated by the 1995 rape was a third wave in this rich tradition of grassroots political activism. Vanguard groups in this phase of the local protest movement, such as Okinawa Women Act Against Military Violence, have extended their sphere of action and enhanced their visibility by building a coalition with the international women's movement and NGOs advocating other causes. The essay by Carolyn Bowen Francis, a central figure in this new generation of Okinawan oppositional politics, examines issues of women and military violence. Among the questions raised by Francis and her fellow activists is the military base culture premised on a system of values and practices that drive young men and women into acts of brutality and aggression. This culture thrives on social arrangements and institutions that engender transiency and exploitation. In this regard, a former Marine Corps captain's remark quoted in Mike Millard's essay is equally instructive: "Currently on Okinawa, serious and committed young Americans who have volunteered to serve in their nation's armed forces are increasingly being viewed as mercenaries to be isolated and caged away from the local populace in peacetime, and only to be let loose in times of military emergency." (p. 102). The abuse engendered by base town culture cuts---and corrodes---both ways.

Efforts to detoxify this system can be effective only if they are supported by workable programs to reconstitute the base town economy. The garrisoning of Okinawa in the past half century has disfigured the island's economic structure and, as Taira Koji's essay argues, the Japanese government's misguided economic paternalism is partially responsible for the island economy's unhealthy dependence on three K's (kichi-base, kokyo jigyo-public works, kanko-tourism). Over the past 25 years, the national government has poured a total of 5 trillion yen into the prefecture's infrastructure development, yet Okinawa is still the poorest prefecture in the nation and even lacks a commuter railway, which would improve the quality of local civilian life. Aside from the intrinsic untenability of the base-and-pork formula, Okinawa's deformed development is simply a magnified version of Japan's unsustainable developmental pattern. Gavan McCormack persuasively makes this point in his essay on Okinawa's environmental degradation. In many respects, Okinawa was sacrificed at the alter of the so-called mainland style "affluence" that requires the constant invention and gratification of new and artificial needs and wants. The predatory nature of Japanese-style developmental practices manifests itself in the tourism that severely taxes Okinawa's local eco-systems. The controversial government proposal to construct an offshore heliport to replace the Futenma Marine Corps air station is another case in point. One of the undertaking's ostensible benefits is to remove the military installation from its urban setting, but scarcely any attention was paid to the environmental impact of the project as it was conceived---the proposed construction site is home to rare marine life. While the legal problems involved in achieving Okinawan independence appear insurmountable, Taira and others ponder various visions of Okinawa's alternative future where the island prefecture might grow into a Hong Kong or Singapore-type regional commercial hub.

Okinawa's difficult task of converting to a less base dependent economy is part of the general challenge of post-Cold War adjustments in East Asia. Whatever sense it might have made to keep a sizable Marine unit close to Korea during the heyday of the global confrontation no longer exists, argues Shunji Taoka, the military correspondent for the Asahi Shimbun. But this Cold War strategic mindset persists in influential circles in Washington and Tokyo. Given the region's logistical reality and the nature of threats, even the vaunted need to check the emerging Chinese superpower and the North Korean rogue state does not fully justify maintaining the Cold War status quo in Okinawa and elsewhere in East Asia. Nor should the imperative to keep in place the cork in the bottle of a remilitarized Japan deflect attention from the volatility that the unwelcome American intrusion in Okinawa brings to the relationship so essential to regional stability. In unison, the authors of the essays on security questions reject the Nye Report's underlying assumptions and specific recommendations. Why then perpetuate this chimerical structure? The reader is instructed that there are plenty of interest groups invested in keeping existing arrangements intact. On the Japanese side, there is an entrenched system for which the American military presence has become indispensable. Tokyo contributes over $4 billion each year to a total cost of $6.2 billion needed for the upkeep of American forces in Japan. It is a not-so-well kept secret that these funds, dubbed "omoiyari Yosan" (the sympathy budget), actually stay in Japanese hands, in salaries for some 23,000 Japanese employees of the Americans, including those who translate magazines and newspapers for the CIA, construction costs, rents and utilities. On the other side of the equation are Americans who have ample incentive, both political and economic, to keep the U. S.-Japanese security arrangements intact and perpetuate the myth of security perils in East Asia.

Johnson states at the outset that the contributors to this volume are united in their wish to mobilize inattentive citizens to the problems of Okinawa by providing information about the injustices the U. S. and Japanese governments continue to inflict on the people of Okinawa. That this book is available in paperback is likely to help further that objective. The essays will collectively help the reader gain a greater depth of understanding of the complex historical forces that have brought about the current Okinawa quandary. This book with a mission will stimulate welcome debate among policy practitioners, academics, and general readers.

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