Imperial Periphery and National Politics: Trajectory of Opposition Movements in Okinawa

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ABSTRACT

The mainstream study of “national politics” figures out weak and minor nations incline to move either radically or ethnicity-center as repressed by immigrant powers. Nevertheless, sub-national politics in Okinawa, also experienced long-term colonization by metropolitan Japan, delivers alternative path toward progressive movements. By comparative historical research, Okinawa sub-national politics evolves through reproduction mechanisms, eventually leads to the progressive turn to connect with international advocacy community. Since World War II, nationalist rivalry in East Asia continues to make security dilemma entrenched. Under American imperium, conservative perspective of Japanese national politics is consolidated. Okinawa’s unanticipated progressive turn of national politics implicates new light for East Asian nations to reconcile by progressive dialogue.

Keywords: Okinawa, U.S.-Japan, national politics, anti-colonial movements.
Historically, peripheries have little impact on metropolitans, lest to say international relations. There is no exception for Okinawa. Before the eve of the Second World War, Okinawa was ordered to sacrifice for the Japanese mainland (Oguma 1995). Yet, in 1995, a large scale protect surrounding the U.S. Katena bases in Okinawa challenged this view. Provoked by a brutal rape case that three U.S. soldiers assailed a junior high school girl, the Okinawan people demonstrated long time anger against U.S. bases and first time forced U.S. to negotiate with Okinawa directly. The prestigious Okinawan historian Arazaki labeled this protest “Third Whole Island Struggle” (Arasaki 1996). Inexplicitly Arazaki interpreted the Okinawan struggles against the U.S. as nationalist movements. But, observed by Tanji, what makes the 1995 protest different is participation of environmental and feminist activists, which draw new horizon of protest movements (Tanji 2006).

In 1995, there was a large scale protection surrounding the U.S. Katena bases in Okinawa. This protection mustered around one tenth population of the Okinawa prefecture. The incident which provoked this protest was caused by a brutal rape case that three United States (U.S.) soldiers assailed a junior high school girl. In the history of Okinawa, protests against U.S. bases were mainly pertaining to nationalistic reasons. The 1995 incident was rather different. The so-called “Third Whole Island Struggle,” by prestigious Okinawan historian Arazaki, demanded more than legal justice (Arasaki 1996).

Environmental and feminist activists were key organized groups and successfully forced U.S. military to communicate with Okinawan residents directly and to establish the Special Advisory Council on Okinawa (shortened as SACO hereafter) to appease the outrageous mass. U.S. military were immune from legal jurisdiction of Japan. Despite Okinawan residents shout out to relocate the Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, U.S. military always acted slowly to respond. The key reason for U.S. military to institutionalize communication channel with local people was obviously new experience to Okinawan people. Obviously, transformation of opposition movements in Okinawa made this change possible.

There was long history of subnational politics in Okinawa since the Ryukyu disposal, which made the Ryukyu Kingdom annexed to the Meiji Japan in 1872 (Oguma 1998). In order to survive imperial repression from Japan, “subnational politics” had to engage with the immigrant rule in ambiguous and subtle way by opposition movements. After decades of development, opposition movements in Okinawa had
transformed from polity-seeking nationalism to policy-seeking human rights and environmental movements. By connected to international progressive advocacy networks, opposition movements were empowered by foreign resources to be part of global anti-war forces against U.S. overseas military presence.

There were two reasons leading to the strategic change of Okinawan opposition movements. Firstly, the “chained repression structure,” named by Mori, of consecutive immigrant rulers of Japan and U.S. structured prerequisite condition for Okinawan opposition movements. Before indigenous political identity fully developed to seek the independent state, Okinawan national politics had to “disguise” or act as opposition movements to seek policy change. Varied by levels and agendas, the protest community incrementally expanded and reorganized.

Secondly, following periodical development, Okinawan opposition movements strategically expanded the scope and scale of protest agendas. From anti-colonial movements to feminist advocacy, external links and internal organization of Okinawan protest community gradually evolved beyond national borders to ally with global advocacy community. Consequently, Okinawan opposition movements unintentionally consciously moved from ethnicity-centered anti-colonial movements toward international connection and progressive networks.

As the periphery, Okinawa may make significant contributions to current studies of state-centered national politics. Firstly, for political science, national politics is generally confined at critical junctures of state-building or polity-seeking moments. However, as national politics drew more attention as it became the central factor for area conflicts and civil war post the Cold War, political science soon recognized the influence of national politics and, even, categorized varieties of national politics as plural “nationalisms.” Of the spectrum of national politics, there exist multiple levels on respective sectors. Okinawan national politics is a model case to demonstrate how transnational motivation and multi-level interaction co-habitats in the same territorial premise for national politics.

Secondly, traditional analysis of national politics prefers to centralize on specific time frames of critical junctures of state-building. But national politics continue to develop and transform in political life. It is hazardous to limit analysis to some specific time frames without recognizing trajectory of historical movements and unanticipated consequence (Pierson 2004; Pierson & Skocpol 2002). Okinawan national politics not only presents unique historical trajectory through various periods. In the meantime, from ethnic nationalism to civic
nationalism, the genesis, development and transformation of Okinawan national politics suggests great theoretical potential to reconstruct national politics through periphery and progressive movements.¹

This article delivers an institutional model to explain Okinawan national politics through comparative historical analysis. By “within case analysis,” Okinawan national politics presents a specific historical trajectory to demonstrate progressive turn of peripheral nationalism (Mahoney & Rueschemeyer 2003, 6). Under American imperium, named by Katzenstein, framed by U.S.-Japan security alliance, Okinawa experienced “linked colonization” of U.S. and metropolitan Japan. For Okinawan inhabitants, imposed military rule which never reached agreement from Okinawa inhabitants is institutionally illegitimate and victimizes Okinawa to sacrifice for Asian security. They are not only eligible to enjoy universal rights as other nations suffered from WW II, but also privileged to have legal protection written in the SCAP-drafted Japanese constitution.² The furious Okinawan inhabitants therefore devoted to opposition movements with “Okinawan characters” against the imperial American military rule (Katzenstein 2005). The imposed immigrant rule also had great impacts for transitional trajectory of Okinawan national politics.

After Ryukyu was annexed with the Meiji Japan, Okinawa was deprived from statehood. The stateless situation continued after WW II as the U.S. kept to station in Okinawa out of strategic reason. Okinawan inhabitants were forced to develop alternatives, mostly in indirect way and ambiguous forms, to claim national rights under the disguise of opposition movements. Were polity-seeking seemed impossible in the near future, Okinawan national politics was adapted to ally with external resources strategically both in domestic and international levels. Consequently the development of Okinawan national politics is incremental, rather than drastic, and policy-seeking (Brubaker 1996, 63). Through periodical advance of opposition movements, institutional arrangements of Okinawan national politics become complicated both in terms of scope and scale. Eventually Okinawan opposition politics establishes unique historical trajectory and its institutional legacy.

¹ In most case, national politics was considered “backward, oriental, and ethnic.” Detailed discussion please refer to Michael Billig (1995) in Banal Nationalism.
² SCAP refers to the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers. U.S. led SCAP official to occupy and demilitarize Japan after the end WW II. Before the San Francisco Peace Treaty signed in 1951, the SCAP drafted a new Japan Constitution and returned civil rights to the Japanese people. The SCAP’s efforts to democratize Japan were considered successful. But Okinawa inhabitants felt themselves sacrificed to for Japan’s security purpose.
This article expounds the development of Okinawa national politics with special attention to opposition movements. The second section sketches the development of Okinawa national politics during U.S. military rule after WW II. The third section expounds the critical juncture of institutional turn toward progressive movements of Okinawan national politics since reversion to Japan. The forth section concludes this article.

The U.S. Military Occupation and Anti-Colonial Movements

Okinawa was the cornerstone of U.S.-Japan alliance. Institutionally, the U.S. occupation of Okinawa on 23 June 1945 was the starting point to liberate Japan from WW II. Ironically, despite Okinawa was sacrificed to experience brutal battle to delay U.S. military to land on the mainland soils, its military rule kept lingering in order to secure the U.S.-Japan alliance. Okinawa’s destiny to be ruled under U.S. military as the main strategic outpost under SCAPIN-677 became the institutional structure of Okinawan national politics (Dower 1999, 51). Under the U.S. rule, Okinawan inhabitants were categorized as another “nation” different from Japanese. The U.S. established the Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands (USCAR) as the subordinate organization to supervise the Ryukyu Government. Re-lections of the Okinawa Advisory Council were held regularly under USCAR auspice. The Government of the Ryukyu Islands (GRI) was established for the Okinawan inhabitant to enjoy limited home rule. The history of Ryukyu Kingdom and the traditional Ryukyu culture was instilled to pupils. At the same time, links between Okinawa and Japan were highly limited under USCAR supervision. By and large, all institutional arrangements U.S. planed on Okinawa intentionally pointed to one direction to make Okinawa a de facto state. It was clear that the initial motive to establish Okinawa as the fortress on the frontline served the U.S. military interests. However, under the U.S. military suppression, Okinawan people started to deliberate on the future on their own terms. By series of struggles, consciousness of (sub)national community developed.

The U.S. military rule in Okinawa was an awkward question for Japanese national politics. Strategically Japan’s Peace Constitution was established with close security cooperation with U.S. But U.S. occupation in Okinawa was humiliation to Japanese nationalism which was deprived of border territory. Japanese politicians in Tokyo need to adjust the Okinawan policy in order to strike balance between U.S. pressure and domestic politics. In the 1960s, U.S. military launched bombers from Okinawa bases to carry missions in Vietnam. The U.S. military operation not only directly dragged Japan into the Vietnam War and provoked strong anti-war movements in Japan, and also gave Tokyo a hard time to defend its Peace Constitution. In 8 May 1965, Prime
Minister Sato Eisaku visited Okinawa which was the first time Japanese Prime Minister permitted to do so after WW II. Before boarding the flight, Sato delivered an emotional speech to claim Japan would never give up Okinawa (Oguma 1998).

Despite the Government of Ryukyu Islands enjoyed only limited jurisdiction, the legislative branch of the government still became the key reproduction mechanism for Okinawan national politics. From anti-military movements to reversion movements, local elections were utilized as political occasions for local inhabitants to vent resentments. In the first wave of Okinawan opposition movements, political parties, teachers groups, trade unions, and landowners emerged as key institutional actors. These groups cooperated and reorganized strategically to seek best opportunities to change USCAR rule.

The Yaeyama Labour Party, the Okinawa Democratic League, and Okinawa People’s Party (OPP) were the first few political parties in Okinawa. The founding members of political parties were mainly intellectuals and professionals. For instance, OPP was established by employees of Uruma Shimpo, which was funded by the U.S. military. Under the military rule, most political parties selected ideological position cautiously, and kept little links to political parties in the mainland. Initially, most political parties also welcomed the U.S. military rule as an opportunity to liberate Okinawa from Japan. U.S. military then was celebrated as liberating force. Independence from Japan and UN membership were possible future.

Schoolteachers were influential in Okinawan subnational politics as well. The seminal reason for schoolteachers to organize together was the extremely scarce of education resources USCAR provided for the children after the Okinawa Battle. Schoolteachers picked up old textbooks from bomb shelters and designed pedagogy in the tents and barracks with strong commitment to educate Okinawan children as Japanese. Different from local political parties, schoolteachers continued the prewar nationalist education. They were also enthusiastic force to lead the campaign for reversion.

In 1951, the Okinawan Principals Organization (Kochokai) resolved at its meeting to request Okinawa’s reversion to Japan. Yara Chobyo (1968, 68), chair of the Okinawa Teachers’ Association (OTA) was a pioneer to reconstruct elementary education and appealed to USCAR to permit Okinawan teachers to participate training programmes in the mainland. The close links between schoolteachers and teachers’ organization in the mainland were influential as Okinawan national politics shifted from political movements to cultural movements. Yara and his OTA
colleagues later became the main advocator of the reversion movements (Oguma 1998, 483).

Local workers were another key actors to Okinawan national politics. Construction of U.S. military bases created great demand of local labor. Construction companies, mainly from mainland Japan, were the main employers of local workers. The working conditions provided were extremely difficult. In the heydays of military base construction, workers had to accommodate in big building with poor sanitary. In the meantime, local Okinawan workers never earned the same as regular “Japanese workers”, lest to say Americans.

In the meantime, local Okinawan workers’ could be less than one tenth of a regular “Japanese worker.” In 1952 and 1953, road workers and construction workers went on a series of strikes, demanding improvement of basic working conditions. The OPP and OSMP members of Parliament also argued workers in Okinawa should be protected under Labor-related laws, namely the Labor Union Law, the Labor Standard Law, and the Labor Relations Regulations Law, drafted and implemented by SCAP in mainland Japan. This argument was also an important reason for Okinawan nationalists to seek Japanese citizenship for better life.

Landowners in Okinawa were mostly victims of U.S. policy to compulsorily confiscate land to military use. The Okinawa Democratic league and the Okinawa People’s Party were the first few political party to request the U.S. military to pay rent to landowners. Kuwae Choko, who was also the founder of the Okinawa Democratic League, enthusiastically organized landowners to place their appeals to the U.S. military. In 1953, land committees, organized by landowners, integrated into the umbrella interest group, named Tochiren, to represent the landowners’ interest. Tochiren was structurally conservative and economic-oriented. However, land interests were key movements which provided momentum to keep Okinawan national after reversion to Japan (Hiyane 1982, 267-268).

The brutal Battle of Okinawa cost thousands of life. Buildings were bombed, and public facilities were destroyed. Right after the battle in mid-June in 1945, Okinawa was ruled under the U.S. reign. For strategic and political reasons, the U.S. military decided to make Okinawa as the front garrison to coordinate operation in this region. Land was seized. Rice paddy fields were bulldozed. Tombs and houses were removed. Military-civil conflicts became everyday practice in Okinawa.
Ie-jima incident was a classic case that local inhabitants suffered from U.S. military occupation. As the starting point of the Battle of Okinawa, Ie-jima was severely war-damaged by the bloodiest raid. One fifth of Ie-jima population was killed. Local inhabitants were evacuated in makeshift tents away from their homes. In the aftermath of the Battle, the Ryukyu Command, the U.S. Army division stationed in Okinawa, found it difficult to handle Okinawa chaos without proper definition of international law. At this stage, Okinawan inhabitants were treated as enemies and seized land was automatically categorized as American property.

Most Ie-jima inhabitants believed the U.S. military would liberate the villagers and recovered their life (Oguma 1998, 502). The U.S. government later recognized the vital importance of Okinawa as the U.S. security outpost as Cold War hostilities escalated since the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, and the outbreak of Korean War in 1950. RYCOM was reorganized as the U.S. Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Island, USCAR, in 1950 following the policy shift of U.S. military to deploy in this region permanently. After the San Francisco Treaty was signed to legalized USCAR rule in Okinawa, Ie-jima inhabitants understood their land would not be returned. In April 1953, the USCAR issued Ordinance 109 on land acquisition to legalize military expropriation of land with extremely minimum amount of rent through involuntary leases with duration of 20 years. This Ordinance soon provoked most landowners. Soon U.S. military bulldozers escorted by armed soldiers seized projected area.

The U.S. military took full advantage of the isolation and ignorance of Ie-jima farmers in the beginning. Involuntary land acquisition kept expanding. Eventually Ie-jima farmers understood their plight and considered their destiny as “land or death.” Since 1954, Ie-jima farmers started to communicate farmers in Okinawa Main Island. They gathered, discussed and shared common experiences and knowledge on how to negotiate with U.S. military effectively. Ie-jima farmers had mixed support from political parties in Okinawa. The OPP and OSMP were sympathized with Ie-jima farmers and opposed the entrenchment of U.S. colonialism in Okinawa. The conservative Democratic Party and core members of Tochiren accepted the U.S. lump sum payment offer and military land lease. They support Ie-jima farmers only under condition to extract maximum amount of rent from the U.S. military. Finally, the warmest sympathy for Ie-jima farmers came from mainland Japan. After Asahi Shimbun covered hardship in Ie-jima, despite the central government keeping away, most Japanese considered Okinawans as national fellows and opposed the U.S. land acquisition (Arasaki 1976, 135).
Ie-jima farmers received greater sympathy during this period. But they only had meager success at negotiation with the U.S. military. In 1955, the U.S. military decided to expand training range. Despite USCAR claimed to downsize evacuative scale from original 152 households to 15 in Maja hamlet, the land the U.S. Force offered was mostly unarable (Ahagon 1973, 23). Famine and ill prevailed. Two Maja women died of starvation, leaving behind 10 children. To protest against the brutal manner of U.S. Forces, the Maja inhabitants started a five-month long beggars’ march across Okinawa Main Island from Kunigami in the north to Itoman in the South to publicize the suffering of Ie-jima people. “Ie-jima beggars” delivered speeches and read Ryuka (Ryukyuan poetry) along the streets in return of food and money (Ahagon 1973, 59). The “beggars’ march” resonated loudly in Okinawa Main Island and generated compassion in the Okinawan public. Isahama, Konbu, and Oroku hamlets, communities located in Okinawa, also suffered from the U.S. military expropriation. Ie-jima people's struggle for survival was integrated as a core symbol of Okinawan anti-colonialism.

In July 1955, the U.S. military planed to expropriate more land in Isahama in central Okinawa. Okinawan farmers swiftly formed a landowners’ committee to support Isahama farmers’ impending resistance. The U.S. military managed to meditate some Isahama farmers to Yaeyama or Latin America. Some also found jobs in the U.S. military bases. But most Isahama farmers were hard to relocate and the physical violence occurred during the forceful land acquisition. In September 1995, as resistance escalated, a mutilated corpse of a six-year-old girl, named Yumiko, was found in Kadena village neighboring the major U.S. Air Force Base. The U.S. soldier who kidnapped, raped, and murdered her was sentenced to death by the U.S. martial court, while the Okinawan public was kept uninformed. Within a week, another U.S. soldier committed the same crime to rape another child. Isahama, and Ie-jima land acquisitions, and the Yumiko-chan incident together made Okinawan people extremely humiliated and caused collective outrage. The mass protest against U.S. crime after the Yumiko-chan incident eventually led to the earliest Okinawan Citizens’ Rally, which was named as the first wave of Okinawan Struggle by famous Okinawan historian Arasaki (1996).

The U.S. military occupation in Ie-jima both infuriated farmers, and, eventually, caused resentments against military repression. Another development underneath emotional protest was the rise of ethnic pride. Among participating political organizations, including the OTA, the Women’s Association, the OSMP, the OPP, and the Okinawa Democratic Party, Okinawan ethnic pride was mentioned repeatedly of the public debate, which was a complex mixture of loathe toward the Battle of
Okinawa, and consciousness to claim locals’ rights against the U.S. military (Arasaki 1976, 157).

Deceived by the U.S. military times, Okinawans lost hope on the plan to seek an independent state. Instead, mainstream Okinawan opinion preferred to seek equal rights by returning to Japan as a strategy to overcome U.S. military rule. Reversion to Japan started to appear as a hopeful option to turn current predicament around. The Ryukyu identity was still important for national politics, and it was contentious to define Ryukyu people as Okinawan. Between self-determination and reversion to Japan, Okinawan people recognized political opportunity to link Okinawan politics to mainland Japan. Consequently, the strategic turn to choose Japanese identity overtook potential alternative.

The more political motivated actors in the community of protest, especially the OPP and schoolteachers, took advantage of the Okinawa struggle to advocate reversion to Japan (Hiyane 1982, 283). In June 1956, a delegate was sent to Tokyo to deliberate on the land issue with Japanese government officials to define the Okinawans’ land struggle as protecting Japanese territory. For the mainland Japanese, the protest discourse to frame land struggle with Japanese identity received enthusiastic support. Political parties, trade unions, and citizens’ organizations in mainland Japan unanimously supported Okinawa’s reversion to Japan.

USCAR was utterly hostile to reversion. The repeal of Government of Ryukyu Islands was seriously considered during this critical juncture. USCAR also suggested to take necessary measures, including direct rule, to secure U.S. military interests in Okinawa. In order to deter any escalation of protest, the U.S. military issued order to prohibit soldiers and families from entering civil districts in central Okinawa which seriously inflicted economic loss as preliminary warning against the protest. The Koza City mayor resigned from this pressure and retreated from the leading coalition of the protest. At the same time, USCAR also suspended funding to Ryukyu University where many students participated in the protest. USCAR’s policy to dampen the protest partially paid off as most students were kept on campus. In 1958, the leading coalition was invited by Washington to discuss land dispute settlement. Under great pressure, the delegates agreed to the bettered new contract terms for land leases offered by Washington. Most landowners accepted contracts with the U.S. military and received amounts of money they had never imagined.
Cultural Resistance and Reversion Nationalism

The first wave of Okinawan Struggle against the U.S. land acquisition remained its resilience after the protest was appeased. In the following period, the Okinawan people sought unity in a form of nationalist identity as Japanese. The dominant framing of protest was based on the self-definition of Okinawa as “Japanese.” The campaign for Okinawa to revert to Japan became integrative for national politics after the rise of Cold War.

Within the protest community, division on policy and action plans was contentious. The default line was class. The OPP was the most outspoken critic against U.S. military rule. The OPP established close links with the JCP and justified the reversion to Japan as a revolution. USCAR were aware of the connection between the JCP and the OPP. The OPP leader Senaga Kamejiro were arrested and jailed in October 1954 for harboring blacklisted communist activists from Amami Island (Nakano and Arasaki 1976, 70-72). Another anti-U.S. parties was the OSMP. As the OPP and OSMP shared common grounds, the two parties formed progressive block against the conservative Ryukyu Democratic Party. The ideological divide among political parties should not be ignored. The conservative-reformist confrontation was stumbling stone for collective action.

On 28 April 1960, executive members of the labor unions and the Okinawa Teachers’ Association started the Okinawa Prefecture Council for Reversion to the Home Country (Okinawa-ken Sokoku Fukki Kyogikai, Fukki-kyo). The three left-wing parties, OPP, OSMP, and OSP, shared the leadership. In spite of financial shortage, the number of member organization of Fukki-kyo increased drastically. In 1965, Fukki-kyo already recruited 52 member organizations. The Council for Reversion thus became an influential model of coalition-building in the ethnic campaign of reversion (Arasaki 1996, 27).

Despite the reversion campaign enjoy bipartisan support, Fukki-kyo still had problem to recruit conservative political parties. For instance, the Okinawa Liberal Democratic Party refused invitation for the Council membership times. The OLDP employed a gradual method for reversion, emphasizing practical unification with Japan through business association. At the same time, most conservative political parties were very cautious to reject any connection to political struggle, which might be dubbed as communism and anti-Americanism.

The Council eventually only represented the politically progressive coalition in Okinawa. The All-Okinawan Military Workers’ Union (Zengunro), which represent workers’ of the U.S. bases and advocated
the three labor laws, considered reversion necessary to improve the working conditions. The All-Okinawan Labor Unions’ Association, which represented 30 labor unions in Okinawa, was also active to organize strikes to demand the protection of the three labor laws. It participated in political campaigns for reversion and the public election of the GRI Chief Executive and anti-Vietnam War protest. Consequently, the Council became coalition of class-based forces with similar resentments against the U.S. military rule.

The political foundation of Okinawans’ reversion movement institutionally influenced strategic options of reversion movements. Firstly, the Council for Reversion’s campaign chose to ally with the progressive block in mainland Japan. In the context of postwar Japanese nationalisms, the progressive block had strong commitment to the peace constitution and opposed the renewal of the U.S.-Japan security treaty (*Ampo*), which was signed in 1952 (Oguma 1998, 524). The anti-*Ampo* protest was a pivotal political movement with strong base of grassroots. Thousands of political party members, activists, unionists, artists, students, and other citizens were motivated into political actions all over Japan in seeking of “independence” and demilitarization. This nationalist sentiment underpinned the view that both Japan and Okinawa were colonized by the U.S.

The reversion of Okinawa campaigns were thus translated as united nationalist front against the U.S. military rule. Joint actions of the Okinawan anti-U.S. forces and their Japan counterparts were established. Okinawan reversion activists sailed across the border to meet Japanese activists on tea. The Council for Reversion members travelled to mainland Japan. Multi-forms of protest strategies and styles were applied.

Schoolteachers were key actors to promote Okinawa’s reintegration with Japan during this period. The Okinawa Teacher’s Association (OTA) members not only advocated reversion nationalism, but also lobbied the USCAR for the right to educate students as Japanese nationals, which was obedient to USCAR’s scheme to promote Ryukyu culture and history. Contrary to anti-statist posture to renounce the imperial icon of *hinomaru* flag, the OTA members strategically reinterpret the Japanese national flag as the icon of reversion nationalism to remind Okinawan students’ consciousness being ruled by foreigners.

On 19 August 1965, Prime Minister Sato visited Okinawa. He was an LDP nationalist protagonist for the reversion of Okinawa. The OTA members took this opportunity to mobilize pupils to welcome Prime Minister Sato. Okinawan people also wished the Japanese government to increase subsidies to Okinawa. It was also worthwhile to see
considerable hostility against PM Sato’s visit in protest of Japan’s support for America in the Vietnam War (Nakano and Arasaki 1976, 22). The mixed perception of Sata’s visit to Okinawa demonstrated complexity of reversion nationalism of Okinawa. Prime Minister Sato received message of strong wish of reversion and opposition against the Ampo renewal.

Another progressive political campaign lead by the OTA members was the “Two Laws on Education Struggle.” Okinawan school teachers were free to teach without restrict regulation. In 1967, as the contribution to Okinawa’s treasury from Japan increased, the Okinawa Democratic Party and the GRI Education Department planed to introduce two legislative bills. The first bill was related to improve working conditions and rewards for schoolteachers in accordance with mainland Japanese standards. The second bill, however, restricted the Okinawan schoolteachers’ rights to engage in collective strikes and political actions. At the same time, teachers’ performance evaluation was also introduced as in mainland Japan. This legislation was considered a step of the Japanese state to divide the protest community of reversion nationalism. On the day the Ryukyu Legislature was to pass these bills, workers, union members, representatives and schoolteachers came as a united front to take strike (Nakano & Arasaki 1976, 70). All the OTA schoolteachers also took voluntary annual leave from schools. As a result, the two education bills were formally repealed in 1967.

The “Two Laws on Education Struggle” led by the pro-reversion schoolteacher was considered a success for solidarity of the protest community. The mixed reaction of the OTA members to Prime Minister Sato’s visit and the “Two Law on Education Struggle” suggested disparate views of reversion campaign might exist between Okinawan activists and their counterparts. This problem was looming large as reversion to Japan became possible in few years, after Prime Minster Sato and U.S. President Johnson delivered the Joint Communiqué on 15 November 1967.

The reversion plan was compromising that the U.S. military continued to stay in Okinawa. During negotiation of terms of the Ampo treaty, the Japan Socialist Party (JSP) activists expres sed concerns to include Okinawa and Ogasawara in Japan’s defense responsibility. These responsibilities might drag Japan into warfare involving U.S. forces in Asia. The JSP argument reminded Okinawan people the suffering history to be ordered to sacrifice for mainland Japan’s security in the very last days of WW II. Once victim consciousness and traumatic memories Okinawan people generally shared the sense of solidarity between the Okinawan people and the Japanese protesters was significantly challenged.
The Vietnam War was critical for Okinawan people to further reflect on victim consciousness. By the mid-1960s, Okinawan anti-militarism acknowledged Japan’s involvement in the Vietnam War that indirectly supported the U.S. imperialism was *de facto* accomplice to American tyranny. Alternative opinion that Okinawan people should not kept quite on Japan’s support for U.S. raid mounted in Okinawa. Some students voiced dissent on reversion nationalism and left the Council to form the Anti-War Students’ Congress (*Hansen Gakusei Kaigi*). They kept skepticism toward emotional attachment to nationalist symbols and slogans. They also criticized the victim mentality of Okinawan people, which obscured the disparage attitude held by mainland Japanese and Okinawan people (Arasaki 1996).

Anti-War students also argued that the campaign for reversion and opposition to the U.S. military presence had to be separate. Up to this point, the value of reversion nationalism came to be challenged. In 1968, *Zengunro* members planed a general strike to protest entrenchment of discrimination in U.S. military bases. Before the general strike took place, the Japanese government expressed support for the U.S. operation in Vietnam and negotiated with Okinawan protesters to drop this idea. When negotiating with GRI Chief Executive Yara, the Japanese government promised to offer more economic aid and to promote early reversion. Prime Minister Sato also had several informal meetings with Yara to convince him to cancel the general strike in return of early reversion. Eventually Okinawa people understood the interest difference between Japan and Okinawa. The charm of reversion nationalism significantly diminished. In 1972, Okinawa returned to Japan, and everything apart from the U.S. military base presence changed. Reversion as the ultimate goal was achieved (Oguma 1998, 607-608).

**Beyond 1968: Post-Reversion Politics and International Turn**

The Okinawan anti-Americanism experienced abyss after reversion. Institutionally, Okinawan people were franchised to elect the prefecture governor and legislative representatives. Schoolteachers could teach with better support. Local political parties were integrated and reorganized as Okinawan branches of mainland political parties (Calder 2007, 128). Labor unions were integrated with mainland unions. After reversion, Okinawan national politics was integrated with metropolitan Japan and lost momentum for protest movements. During the low phase of protest in Okinawa, land was still expropriated by the U.S. military. Local economy kept to depend on external capital. Reversion-nationalism did not automatically entail whole new change. Protest participants were disappointed with post-reversion arrangement in politics. In order to
Imperial Periphery and National Politics

Improve living conditions in Okinawa, not surprisingly, economic development became new focus of Okinawan politics.

In order to improve income levels of Okinawa, the Japanese government passed several bills dedicated to meet commitment to provide equal living standard. The Okinawa Development Agency (Okinawa kaihatsu cho) was established within the Cabinet. A Special Law for Okinawa’s Regeneration and Development (Okinawa shinko kaihatsu tokubetsuho) was enacted in 1971. The First Okinawa Regeneration and Development Plan (Okinawa shinkokaohatsu keikaku) was drafted from the year of reversion in 1972. As envisioned by the Plan, Okinawa would establish an independent economy that no long required subsidies from the central government. The first Governor of Okinawa Prefecture Yara Chobyo, also former GRI Chief Executive, declared the construction plan of Central Terminal Station (CTS) as the first step to incorporate Okinawa into Japan’s rapid economic growth during the 1960s.

CTS was considered as strategic infrastructure for Okinawa’s industrialization. It was designed to increase Okinawa’s crude oil storage capacity and infrastructure conditions to develop oil and aluminum refining industry. In the 1970s, environmental pollution became major problem in mainland Japan. There were more than 3000 residents’ organization engaged in environmental watch and protection in 1972. Environment-polluted oil refining industry became costly in mainland Japan. As the last pristine land in Japan, Okinawa was a perfection location for litigation-laden oil refining industry.

Yakena district, a municipality facing Kin Bay and directly connected to Henza Island by the ocean road, was designated as the development site of petroleum industries. Since 1971, repeated oil leakage incidents from the tankers had polluted the ocean and caused serious damage to local fishery. Residents of Miyagi Island organized the Miyagi Island Land Protection Society (Miyagijima Tochi o Mamoru Kai). They successfully stop the Arabia Oil’s CTS construction. In 1972, Governor Yara authorized Mitsubishi’s development plan of land reclamation of 640,000 tsubo between Henza and Miyagi islands. The anti-CTS local residents established the Kin Bay Protection Society (Kinwan o Mamoru Kai). They repeatedly visited the prefecture government and Mitsubishi to demand a lock-out of the landfill work.

In September 1974, six fishing village inhabitants in Teruma District and the Kin Bay Protection Society brought the case to the Naha District Court, claiming that the Okinawa prefecture government’s authorization of the land reclamation project was illegal. This legal case also had support of progressive parties and unions, which were core political base of Governor Yara. On 19 January 1974, Governor Yara was forced to
delay petroleum industries’ plan for CTS construction and request Mitsubishi to redraft development plan other than CTS on the reclaimed land (Uehara 2009, 75).

Governor Yara’s administration did not stop Mitsubishi’s development plan. Months later, Mitsubishi complete the land reclamation and, however, requested the Okinawa government to authorize the CTS construction. The contract that Mitsubishi signed with the Okinawa prefecture government demanded the prefecture government to authorize Mitsubishi’s CTS construction. If the prefecture government fail to honor the contract, it had to face litigation mounted by the company for ¥50 billion in damages. The Kin Bay Protection Group and the Progressive Attorneys’ Organization came together to pressured Governor Yara to reject Mitsubishi’s application. They also sued Governor Yara for violation of due procedure to compensate the locals for their fishing rights when authorizing Mitsubishi’s development plan. Eventually the court ruled against the plaintiff. The construction of CTS tanks proceeded.

The first round of the Kin Bay struggle was a defeat. The recourse to legal action was less promising. In the course of collective action, inhabitants came to realize the value of a distinctive life style specific to their localities. This was different from reversion nationalism to protest against the U.S. military administration. Inhabitants who protested against CTS positively counted on their local characteristics to act. Throughout the protest, participants of the Kin Bay struggle sent messages to appeal to Okinawan people that local economy was increasingly dependent on Japanese government’s subsidies. Okinawan should hold a particular ethical position about the meaning of life, which was an attempt to develop local economy to acquire the means of living.

During the anti-CTS struggle, the importance of local industry, such as growing and selling seaweed, was stressed as a lucrative alternative source of income against the petroleum industry. At the same time, inhabitants also had a new perspective on themselves to live in a unique and wonderful place. Beside the environment, local community events and traditional festivals and rituals provided venues for enjoying and participating in the traditional lifestyle and culture of the community. The struggle in Kin Bay marked the importance of post-materialist views of affluence that became part of the Okinawa struggle after the reversion. A new protest culture developed through traditional lifestyles embedded in the locally-specific natural environments, away from the mainland-style industrialization and development.

The new framing of protest to concentrate on local environment also developed new strategies. Intellectuals, scientists, celebrities,
sympathetic outsiders, and international community of environmentalist and conservationist movements became new allies of Okinawa struggles. In March 1986, the Okinawa prefecture government appointed 14 members for the New Ishigaki Airport Discussion Committee to deliberate on the plan to build the New Ishigaki Airport. Through an environmental impact assessment, Shiraho was considered the best site for the new airport. This assessment soon invited critics from environmentalists.

About 17 researchers and professionals in Okinawa and mainland Japan questioned the official data on the airport construction project and formed the New Ishigaki airport Construction Examination Group to systematically rework the government’s environmental impact assessment on Shiraho. They argued that the official report was based on inadequate data and the information related to the environmental effects of the airport had been largely kept confidential. An U.S. marine biologist, Katherine Muzik, held similar view to the Examination Group. Muzik was living in Okinawa to research the coral around the island. She advocated the rare value of coral reefs around Shiraho and expressed worry of the destructive effect of the airport. Commissioned by the Naha-based Okinawa Ocean and Life Protection Group, in 1985, Muzik reported the rare value of the coral reefs in Shiraho at the Fifth International Coral Reef Conference and warned the threat of airport construction.

On the basis of this report, in 1987, a delegation from the World Conservation Union conducted investigation over coral reefs around Shiraho. On the 17th General Meeting of the IUCN, a resolution on the Shiraho coral reefs was passed to urge the Japanese government to reconsider the airport construction project and to develop a policy to protect coral in Shiraho. The IUCN resolution had a decisive effect of undermining the legitimacy of the airport construction plan in Shiraho. The government decided to move the construction site 4 kilometers to the north of Shiraho.

In August 1990, an IUCN delegate conducted another investigation on the coral reef ecosystem and recommended the prefecture government to find alternative construction site. Later in 1992, the president of the World Wildlife Fund and the Duke of Edinburgh visited Shiraho as part of the campaign to protect the Shiraho coral. The support from intellectuals and a British royal visit put great pressure on the Okinawa prefecture government to prepare another environmental impact assessment and gave up the airport construction in Shiraho finally.
Conclusion

In the 27 years of direct U.S. military occupation, the Okinawan people suffered from loss of political autonomy, systemic racial discrimination, lack of protection from workplace abuse, unprosecuted lawlessness, and distorted development, lest to say a huge sex industry and threats of continuing land expropriation. In order to liberate from the U.S. military rule, leading Okinawan political organizations and coalitions were formed. Reversion nationalism was advocated. Emotional attachment to Japan as the “homeland” prevailed. Alliance with sympathized forces in mainland Japan expanded. The Council for Reversion successfully organized mass demonstrations that led to the GRI Chief Executive election and the repeal of Two Laws on Education. Subsequently, as reversion nationalism made the cost for the U.S. military to manage social unrest in Okinawa too costly, reversion became a possible option as long as the U.S. military was guaranteed to stay in Okinawa.

The unsatisfactory reversion to Japan made Okinawan people to reflect the limitation to identify themselves as metropolitan nationals. In the vein of reversion nationalism, Okinawan activists advocated reversion to Japan in return of identical citizenship and relatively equal welfare. After the reversion to Japan realized and the U.S. military kept occupation, Okinawan people came to understand they had to seek alternative strategy to find new momentum and to create new space. Under this context, locality and traditional culture became resource to inspire new form of solidarity among grassroots. The anti-CTS movements in the Kin Bay area and the Shiraho anti-airport struggle extended the horizons of collective action. Based on fragmented organization and local identity, inhabitants intentionally stressed the autonomy and uniqueness of individual communities. In particular, political parties and unions in larger cities or mainland Japan played an important role, under conditions to respect the boundaries between outsiders (supporters) and insiders (inhabitants).

New awareness of the local substantially transformed the idea of Okinawan struggle. The community of protest shared knowledge and communication that forged a sense of solidarity. When the local protested within the arenas of metropolitan national political institutions, activists revoked distinctiveness of local culture and traditional ways of life to connect with nature. This strategy challenged previous waves of Okinawan subnational politics to seek assimilation with mainland Japan. At the time, the rise of environmentalism also casted doubts over frenzy to develop through state-sponsored industrialization and advocated new styles of economy fit in Okinawa’s existent resources. Furthermore, with links to international progressive networks, the Kin Bay and Shiraho struggles opened the window to
internationalize the local. Consequently, the scope and scale of Okinawan subnational politics extended.

Table 1.
Trajectory of Okinawa National Politics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>WW II to the 1960s</th>
<th>Mid-1960s to 1972</th>
<th>After 1972</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Juncture</td>
<td>WW II</td>
<td>Renewal of Ampo</td>
<td>Reversion to Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reproduction Mechanism</td>
<td>Liberation National Politics</td>
<td>Ethnic National Politics</td>
<td>Progressive National Politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actors</td>
<td>Political parties, schoolteachers, labor unions, and landowners</td>
<td>Fukki-kyo, schoolteachers, and the mainland progressive block</td>
<td>Environmentalists, intellectuals, scientists, and outside sympathizers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Legacy</td>
<td>Anti-Colonialism</td>
<td>Reversion Nationalism</td>
<td>International Connection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References


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