

Dis/articulation of Ethnic Minority and Indigeneity in the Decolonial Feminist and Independence Movements in Okinawa

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Introduction

1. On 16 May 2013, *Ryukyu minzoku dokuritsu sougou kenkyu gakkai* (The Association of the Comprehensive Studies for Independence of the Lew Chewans, or ACSILs) was established for the purpose of achieving independence for Okinawans who identify their ethnic roots in the Ryukyu Islands (i.e. Okinawa). At a meeting of the planning committee, Masaki Tomochi, Associate Professor of Okinawa International University, stated that its main objective is to 'achieve *amayuu* (a peaceful life) as a distinctive group of peoples,' with autonomy over their islands and absence of a military presence.^[1] Another committee member and professor at Ryukoku University, Yasukatsu Matsushima, used the Aland Islands in the Baltic Sea as an example to argue that 'the 21st Century's concept of sovereignty no longer required militarization of the state.'^[2] By identifying Okinawans as indigenous peoples vis-à-vis the Japanese military colonisation of the Ryukyu Kingdom in 1879, this meeting was significant for its anti-militarist discourse in Okinawa and for its scholarly, political and legislative work toward realising independence from Japan.^[3]
2. However, in a gesture of indifference towards this anti-militarist decolonial movement, the Japanese government has adopted an agenda with an ultra-nationalist trajectory. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2014 aimed to depart from the 'postwar regime' by 'bringing back a [militarily, economically and diplomatically stronger] Japan.'^[4] For instance, Abe has been calling for a revision of Article Nine of the Japanese Constitution, the provision that renounces war and limits Japan's military to self-defense. Abe's move for constitutional reform is part of his effort to rewrite Japanese colonial history and justify the re-militarisation of the Japanese state since he took office in 2012. When asked if he would make an official apology for Japan's colonisation of Korea, Abe responded that 'the definition of what constitutes aggression has yet to be established in academia or agreed upon in the international community. Things that happened between nations will look differently depending on whose perspective views the incident.'^[5] Aligning himself with this form of ultra-nationalism, Toru Hashimoto, the mayor of Osaka, Japan, rationalised that *ianfu* (comfort women) during World War II was 'necessary' to 'maintain discipline' and preserve the morale of soldiers on behalf of the military hierarchy.^[6] Whether the prostitution was forced or not became moot in light of state legitimacy and national security.^[7] Hashimoto further pronounced that 'American soldiers stationed in Okinawa should make more use of the island's adult entertainment industry,' which he said would deter sexual crimes against local women.'^[8] Shintaro Ishihara, the former Tokyo governor and a co-leader of the emerging conservative National Japan Restoration Party, upheld the colonial discourse of 'comfort women' as revealed by his recently publicised statement: 'Military and sexual industry go hand-in-hand. In Japan such industries have existed for a long time as the easiest means for the poor to earn their living; it is the principle of history.'^[9] While Hashimoto's remarks may be historically accurate, to declare that this is 'history's principle' serves to legitimise the state's classist gender violence. The comments of these men in leadership positions belie the unsolved problem of Japan's so-called post-colonialism: so-called because, as I will argue, Japan's colonialism persists as a companion to US colonialism in mutually rendering both women and

Okinawa as militarised objects. [10]

3. Condemning Toru Hashimoto's comments and demanding his immediate resignation, over two dozen women's organisations in Okinawa, including the Okinawa branch of the National Federation of Regional Women's Organisations (NFRWO), Okinawa: Women Act Against Military Violence (OWAAMV), Ai josei kaigi (I Women's Organisation), and Shin nihon fujin no kai (New Japan Women's Association), issued a joint statement two days after his remarks. [11] The coalition declared that the 'destruction of sexuality is a serious form of violence to the human body and soul, and this form of violence has been routinely employed as a strategy of war.... The military is a device of structural violence both in war and peace time.' [12] As the protest statement by NFRWO pointed out, the continued practice of defending Japan's wartime sexual slavery served to normalise militarised male sexuality and structural violence.
4. I further this position to argue that the discourse suggests a gendered dialectic of the 'master' (both Japan and the United States) and the 'slave' (women and Okinawa) narrative, all the while justifying a unique class of militarised and gendered citizenship for Okinawans. In other words, Hashimoto and Abe's sentiments sustain the wartime structure of moulding colonised subjects, women in particular, into dutiful nationals, contained merely as efficient and 'necessary' instruments for patriarchal building of a nation and military.
5. By analysing the gendered and racialised discourses of Okinawans and Okinawa as Japan's 'necessary' instrument through journalistic and political documents, I illustrate how colonialism in Okinawa is implemented within the US and Japanese empires. I then show how the category of Okinawans is articulated and disarticulated by two forms: one that Okinawans draw from in contemplating their 'equal' status; one that Okinawans invoke in expressing their 'indigenous' status. By unpacking the rhetoric of feminist and indigenous movements in Okinawa, I illustrate how the Japanese government contains Okinawans as an ethnic minority with 'equal' status in the context of multiculturalism. [13] Meanwhile, the United States conveniently uses this compromised state of Okinawa as a leverage to maintain its military presence in Asia and the Pacific Islands. I also discuss how the feminist decolonial movement in Okinawa reveals a simultaneous operation of the gendering and racialisation of patriarchal discourse that proved so critical to US and Japan relations, and how the 'indigenous' movements depart from the patriarchal discourse by setting a goal toward independence. In my conclusion, I then highlight the overlapping but important differences between minority and indigenous statuses in the decolonial movements of Okinawa.

An international, feminist, and demilitarization movement in Okinawa

6. Okinawan history has been indelibly marked by external aggression, first by the Japanese colonisation of the Ryukyu Kingdom by the Satsuma Clan in 1609, then by the integration of the Ryukyu Kingdom into Japanese sovereignty in 1879, and finally from 1945 to 1972, by the establishment of the US Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands (USCAR). Although Okinawa constitutes only 0.6 percent of Japan's total landmass, it nevertheless is burdened with 74 of Japan's total US military bases under the US-Japan Status of Forces Agreement (SoFA). This disproportionate military presence was enabled by American and Japanese efforts to maintain 'peace and security' in East Asia. Aided by such propaganda, Japanese post-colonialist policies operate in partnership with the agenda set by US militarism through the process described as the 'unburdening of empire.' [14] That is to say, Japan supplements the US military bases in Okinawa by alleviating the US of the need to officially address the high cost of territorial, administrative and legal complications.

7. The strategic collusion of Japanese and US governments via the feminisation of Okinawan women (and other women in Okinawa) sanctions and normalises a hegemonic dominion over Okinawa without a legitimate mandate.^[15] For instance, upon visiting Futenma US Marine Corps Air Station on 13 May 2013, Hashimoto recommended to Colonel James Flynn, a US Marine Corps commander, that 'Japan has places where sexual energy can be released within the law. It is impossible to control the sexual energy of hot-blooded Marines properly unless such places are officially empowered. Principles aside, I ask you to make good use of such places (*fuzoku*)'^[16] to reduce sex crime in Okinawa.^[17] A Pentagon spokesperson^[18] responded to Hashimoto's suggestion by saying, 'that goes against every single policy and value that we have.... We try to have respect for our neighbors, not the thought of looking at prostitution as a way to solve that or any problem.'^[19] However, the history of US military occupation in Okinawa and the commodification of Okinawan women as sexual objects prove otherwise.
8. The same issue of *Asahi Shimbun* featured the violation of women's human rights as an ongoing issue, using the example of a rape case in Okinawa in 1995. In that case, three US servicemen, Private first class Marcus Gill, Private first class Kendrick Ledet, and Private first class Rodrico Harp were accused of abducting and raping a twelve-year-old girl in Okinawa in 1995.^[20] Richard Macke, US Commander of Pacific Forces, referenced the case and stated: 'I think it was absolutely stupid. I have said several times for the price they paid to rent the car [used in the crime], they could have had a girl.'^[21] His comments implied that legalised prostitution would have prevented the crime. The discourses of the government officials of both the United States and Japan have worked to 'feminise' Okinawa-its land and its women in particular-as a site for 'sex work' and as an object of 'military desire' in ways that purportedly protect Okinawans from military and sexual violence (e.g. rationalising brothels and prostitution to prevent 'rape' cases).
9. Both Hashimoto and Macke suggest that Okinawan women are instruments in helping to wage US wars and to support American and Japanese security interests in the region. Under the provisions of the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1975, Japan agreed to host US military installations as a way to maintain 'peace and security' in East Asia. In return, Japan would benefit from the powerful presence of the US military.^[22] However, the priority of 'peace and security' only applies to the homeland security of the US and Japan, often at the expense of Okinawan women's sexual labour. Hashimoto's remark rests on the expectation that the US military bases remain in Okinawa. Presented as a state solution to control a militarised form of male sexuality, this argument encourages US servicemen to become lovers with Okinawan women^[23] or to utilise *fuzoku*—a professional adult entertainment service, while not having to concede to any preconditions of US military basing in Okinawa.
10. In response to these patriarchal, masculinist and sexist comments, a woman who identified herself as *Okinawa no fuzoku-jo* (a woman who works in the adult entertainment service in Okinawa), highlighted the gendered nature of Okinawan citizenship. She pointed out that, although Hashimoto had adjusted his comments towards political correctness and reiterated his stance against the 'comfort women' system during Japanese occupation, he nevertheless propositioned women workers in the adult entertainment service industry as 'comforting' the 'hotblooded US servicemen.'^[24] Further, she defied Hashimoto's unfounded order for Okinawan women to serve as prostitutes, arguing that compelling Okinawan women to work in the adult entertainment service industry to diffuse US servicemen's sexual needs is no different from the wartime comfort women employed by the Japanese military. This *fuzoku-jo*'s response signals a remarkable breakthrough in the discourse of a master (the state) - slave (Okinawan woman) dialectic that dominates the Japan, Okinawa, and US trilateral relations.^[25] The cycle of the systemic colonisation of women's sexuality through the master-slave narrative is vital in maintaining empire. Hashimoto views Okinawan women's sexual labour as a 'necessary' instrument, commodified and subject to disposal by the

Japanese state.

11. In other instances, though, the master-slave narrative has been strategically applied to the case of Japan and Okinawa relations as a tool in mobilising the anti-militarist feminist movement. In the 1995 Fourth World Forum on Women in Beijing, for example, Okinawa: Act Against Military Violence (OWAAMV), employed an allegorised image of the 'prostituted daughter' to illustrate and critique how the Japanese state entrusted Okinawan sovereignty as a patrimonial ward to the US. Representing the first grassroots-organised, feminist and antimilitarist movement in Okinawa, as a co-chair of OWAAMV, Suzuyo Takazato explained: 'Okinawa is the prostituted daughter of Japan. Japan used her daughter as a breakwater to keep the battlefields from spreading over the mainland until the end of WWII. After the war, Japan enjoyed economic prosperity by selling the daughter to the United States.'^[26] Here, Takazato strategically evoked an imagery of Okinawa as the twelve-year-old girl who was brutally raped by three US servicemen in 1995. Her statement successfully appealed for protection and sympathy, and problematised the gendered and patriarchal relations between Japan, Okinawa and the US.
12. In OWAAMV's strategic efforts to describe Okinawans as Japanese citizens vis-à-vis a symbolic familial relationship, they recognised the patriarchal relationship between Japan and Okinawa. This gendered rhetoric poses important questions. Can the issue of demilitarisation be effectively addressed in terms of a Japanese ethnic minority seeking equality, as symbolised in the patriarchal metaphor of a 'prostituted daughter?' Is there a new alternative for decolonising Okinawa and its master-slave, father-daughter relationship to Japan and the US? In the following section, I examine how Okinawa was incorporated into the national discourse as a member of an ethnic minority in Japan's multicultural discourse.

Multiculturalist discourse: Okinawans as Japan's ethnic and racialised minority

13. The racialisation of Ainu and Ryukyans became historically apparent at the World Exposition in 1903 where Okinawans, Ainu and the other minority groups in Japan's empire were exhibited in a *jinnui-kan*, a so-called 'ethnic cultural house.' The display juxtaposed westernised (i.e. civilised) Japanese people in a white supremacist way against ethnic others living in Japan, thereby treating Ainu and Ryukyans as displaced objects of the rising nation. In more recent times, a movement to 'restore [Japanese] national pride' was launched in 1996, led by Nobukatsu Fujioka, a Tokyo University professor, and his colleagues. Together, the academic interest group likewise marginalised Japan's 'minority' groups by seeking to absolve Japan's responsibility for war crimes in East Asia and the Pacific. With respect to the Ryukyans, they sought to erase Japanese military's compulsory mass-suicide mandates forced upon Okinawans during World War II.^[27] They aimed to restore the nation to a homogeneous, 'Japanese' ethnic group. Subsequently, pending the approval of these revisions by the Japanese Ministry of Education, revised history textbooks were to be used in junior high schools throughout Japan by 2001, as part of ongoing state efforts to reinforce *doka* (assimilation) and *kominka*, or Japanisation (as becoming the Emperor's subjects).^[28] In the past, the policy of *doka* aimed at establishing a Japanese race with the Emperor as the head of the *koka* (family-state), an effort that partly informs and inspires Fujioka's nationalist aspirations.^[29]
14. Hence, in Japan, contemporary Japanese national identity politics are strongly characterised by theories of ethnic and/or racial identity consciousness, which are intensely politicised by corresponding agendas and structures of ethnic and racial social markers.^[30] During a visit in May 2006, Doudou Diène, a UN special rapporteur on racism and xenophobia, questioned Japanese racism and its connection to the disproportionately high number of US military bases located in Okinawa.^[31] During the House of Councilors Diplomacy Defensive Commission, then Foreign

Minister Taro Aso denied Diène's allegation of Japanese racism against Okinawans. Aso argued that the concentration of the bases in Okinawa was instead the result of geopolitical necessity. [32] In response to Aso's rebuke, Diène submitted the following in his report of the special rapporteur on racial discrimination in Japan against national and ethnic minorities:

The manifestations of such discriminations are first of all of a social and economic nature. All surveys show that minorities live in a situation of marginalization in their access to education, employment, health, housing, etc. Secondly, the discrimination is of a political nature: the national minorities are invisible in State institutions. Finally, there is profound discrimination of a cultural and historical nature, which affects principally the national minorities and the descendants of former Japanese colonies. This is mainly reflected in the poor recognition and transmission of the history of those communities and in the perpetuation of the existing discriminatory image of those groups. [33]

15. Although Diène employed the language of 'minority' in his analysis, he ambiguously defined Okinawans as an 'indigenous' culture 'annexed' to Japan in 1879 in another section titled, 'Ethnic and demographic situation.' [34] However, he stopped short of officially recognising Okinawans as an indigenous people, instead categorising Okinawans as an ethnic and racial minority in Japan.
16. Indeed, a study conducted in 2007 by Lim John Chuan-tiong reflected the ambivalent identities of contemporary Okinawans, many of whom resisted being part of a Japanese homogenous identity. Chuan-tiong reported that 40.6 percent of Okinawan adult residents identified themselves as 'Okinawan,' 36.5 percent as 'Okinawan and Japanese,' and 21.3 percent as 'Japanese.' [35] A follow-up question also asked Okinawan respondents if Okinawa should become an independent state of Japan, with greater political autonomy, or if Okinawa should secede from Japan as an independent country altogether. To this point, 52 percent favoured a Japanese state of Okinawa over national independence. [36] Further, in response to the question on Okinawan independence from Japan, 20 percent of Okinawan residents approved this option, whereas 60 percent disapproved, and the rest were undecided.
17. The study concluded that a fluid Okinawan identity fluctuates in response to three contemporary contexts: an increase in US military base issues in Okinawa; a widening economic disparity between Japan and Okinawa; and the Japanese erasure of American/Japanese state violence against Okinawans. [37] Chuan-tiong thus showed that Okinawan articulations of 'Okinawanness,' as opposed to 'Japaneseness,' reflected, in 2007, their resistance to state discrimination against Okinawans, rather than a cultural interest in and political aspiration towards independence. A combination of social, historical and, above all, interpersonal explanations provides the backdrop in which Okinawans construe their ethnic and political identities.
18. One view highlights the structure of socio-economic dependency on the so-called 3ks: *kichi* (US military bases), *kanko* (tourism) and *kokyo koji* (public work). [38] In this respect, some Okinawans are affected by the opportunities created by the lease of land to the US military, tourism framed by and for the Japanese within the context of an 'exotic' Okinawa, and construction jobs facilitated by the Japanese government's industrialisation of Okinawa for the maintenance of US military facilities. Another explanation addresses a more complex effort to attain social status and equality as well as to reject the label of *dojin* a derogative term for indigenous. This position embraces interpersonal relationships between US servicemen and Okinawan women, and encourages the creation of families. [39] Anne Laura Stoler calls this type of structural and gendered relationship to the US military 'the empire's marrow,' where relations of power are 'knotted and tightened, loosened and cut, tangled and undone.' [40] She argues that the social organisation of racial membership, sexual access, and colonial status are not limited to so-called private sites, such as the home and the family. Rather, in Okinawa, the multiple spheres of militarised violence serve to contain Okinawa in domestic, sexualised and minority terms as they preemptively stunt and confine Okinawan anti-

militarist, decolonial and feminist forms of resistance in conferences and coalitions.

Decolonial feminist and indigenous articulations in movement cultures

19. As mentioned earlier, Okinawa: Women Act Against Military Violence (OWAAMV) began as a grassroots group of Okinawan women. OWAAMV included women survivors of militarised sexual violence, the women counsellors who work with them, and women in previous or current relationships with US servicemen. After their participation at the 1995 Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women Conference, OWAAMV hosted the first Women's International Network against Militarism meeting in Okinawa in 1997. Every other year since then, OWAAMV has attended meetings in militarised nations across the Pacific and the Caribbean, such as Guam, Hawai'i, Japan, Okinawa, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, South Korea and the US.[41] Through these coalitions, they have developed a political practice founded on an international feminist activism directed against the trans-hemispheric paradigm of US militarism in Asia, the Pacific, and elsewhere. In their view, the Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women Conference served as the point of departure where 'indigeneity' was conceived as an ideological platform from which OWAAMV was empowered to enact a feminist agenda against militarisation.[42]

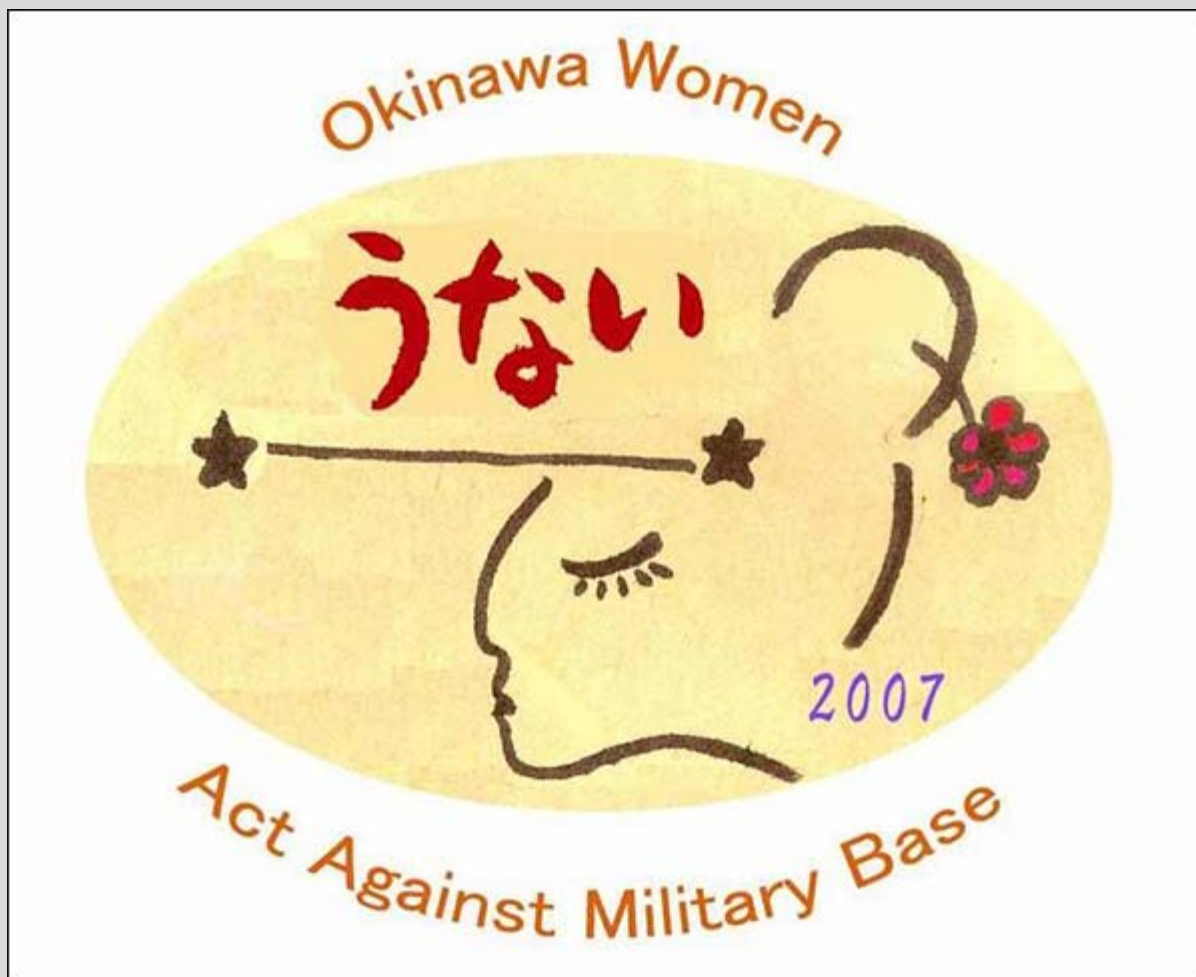


Figure 1. Okinawa: Women Act Against Military Violence Logo
Source. Okinawa: Act Against Military Violence, 2007.

20. In representing Okinawan women, OWAAMV created logos deploying images of *unai* (Okinawan

sisterhood in Okinawan language): one shows two women figures dressed in a traditional Ryukyuan costume signifying sisterhood among Okinawan women; the other logo illustrates an '*unai*' printed over a figure of woman whose hairpin is held in place by a *kanzashi*, a traditional ornamental hairpin that Ryukyuan women carried and used to protect themselves from sexual violence (Figure 1). In this respect, the term *unai* is politicised to articulate a feminist positionality, a national solidarity among Okinawan women and an opposition to Japanese women. [43] Both logos reinforce Okinawanness and sisterhood among Okinawan women and promote transnational networking with other indigenous women in militarised settings.

21. Another decolonial group is led by a coalition of anti-militarist non-governmental organisations. Mainly comprised of academics and other independent scholars residing in Okinawa, its members include the Association of Indigenous Peoples in the Ryukyus (AIPR), the Citizens' Diplomatic Centre for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Shimin Gaikou Center (SGC). Between 1996 and 1998, the Association appealed directly to the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP), strategically highlighting the imbrication of US militarism and Japanese imperialism at the international level. [44] In this instance, the UN Human Rights Commission and WGIP served as a platform from which grassroots organisations and scholars could demand recognition of Okinawan 'indigeneity' and highlight their plight as a colonised people within the interdependencies of empire. [45]
22. In March 1996, for example, the first written statement identifying Okinawan 'Indigenous Issues' was submitted to the UN Commission on Human Rights by SGC. In July 1998, a second paper titled, 'A Position Paper on the Rights of the Okinawans to Education and Language,' was crafted by two SGC Okinawan associates, Hidenori Chinen and Katsumi Izena. The document accounts for the history of Japanese colonialism and US militarism in Okinawa, beginning with the forceful 'annexation of the Ryukyus' in 1872. Addressing assimilation policies from an Okinawan viewpoint, they stated:

The alleged Agreement on the Ryukyu Annexation of 1872 was in contravention of the terms of Vienna Convention on Treaty Law, especially those of Article 51, and the customary international law dictating the prohibition of use of force. Therefore it should be invalidated.... In our opinion, the Okinawans still retain their sovereignty to preserve and develop their own languages, cultures and religions, based on their distinct history. Also, we denounce any assimilation policy and human rights violation by the Japanese government. [46]
23. As Chinen and Izena demonstrate, the process of rewriting history involves an intellectual and political sensibility premised on Okinawan self-determination and the deconstruction of the patriarchal state narrative of *kokutai*, which consists of two Chinese characters, the 'national' and the 'body.' They make the case that, as a formerly independent nation, Ryukyu was colonised by Japan, followed by a process of forced assimilation. One of the most significant aspects of this appeal to the UN is that it enabled Okinawans to claim ownership of collective identity as an 'indigenous' people. [47] By doing so, they and others can further bring to light the violation of Okinawan indigenous rights in the present—a growing awareness that has slowly begun to influence national and international discourses about Okinawa. Applying the term indigenous was a way to move beyond and disrupt Japan's effort to contain Okinawan 'citizens' within the discourse of ethnic minorities. In order to mobilise the politics of indigeneity as a strategic tool to decolonise and demilitarise Okinawa, Gosamaru Miyazato, a representative of AIPR, along with other Okinawan scholars, introduced the concept of indigeneity and relayed their participation in the UN conference to a major local newspaper. They sought to work towards the 'restoration of Indigenous Ryukyuan/Okinawan Peoples' rights to self-determination.' [48]
24. As Hawaiian scholar-activist Haunani-Kay Trask argues, indigenous peoples can be defined 'in terms of collective aboriginal occupation prior to colonial settlement,' asserting that "'indigenous

rights" are categorically distinguished from "minority rights".^[49] Similarly, Maori scholars Roger Maaka and Augie Fleras assert that while multiculturalism promotes the inclusion of and tolerance for ethnic minorities, multiculturalism can be detrimental to indigenous peoples when the state insists upon a distinct compartmentalisation of ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples. Whereas minorities become assimilated into a multicultural, state framework, indigenous peoples can seek a new social contract based on 'sovereignty and distinct collective rights: self-determining autonomy over land, identity, and political voice; emancipation through power sharing on a nation-to-nation partnership; and, finally, constitutional reform of a country's foundational principles.'^[50]

25. Similarly, Okinawan professor Koji Taira at the University of Illinois at Urban-Champaign analyses Okinawa's colonial history in relation to racism and 'Ryukyuan/Okinawan' identity.^[51] Taira describes the historical racialisation of the Ryukyus as inferior minorities vis-à-vis mainland Japanese under Imperial Japanese governance, stressing the distinct traits of 'Ryukyuan' culture and identity as different from 'Japanese.' Claiming a 'nation within' status for Ryukyus, Taira argues that Ryukyus 'deserve a modern international certificate of collective dignity and self-respect: a nation-state of their own'; to do so will uncover 'the well-concealed underside of the Japanese state and the impact of international geopolitics on Asia.'^[52] Thus, he stresses the distinctive, collective rights of Okinawans as an indigenous political community, as much as he advocates for the sovereignty of Okinawans.
26. Advancing Okinawan indigeneities put forward by OWAAMV and AIPR, the Association of the Comprehensive Studies for Independence of the Ryukyus (ACSILs) was launched by Okinawan scholar-activists. It is a nationalist movement that 'is only for the Ryukyus (i.e. Ryukyus) to determine the status and future of the Ryukyus' and set prerequisites for membership exclusively for those individuals who 'have ethnic roots in the Ryukyuan Islands.'^[53] In the prospectus, ACSILs clearly states the goal of independence from Japan by arguing that the Ryukyu Kingdom was previously a sovereign state, and it was overthrown in 1879 by Japan. Since then, it has been colonised by either or both Japan and the US, the conditions of which continue to place the Ryukyuan peoples at the forefront of war activities. Further, ACSILs conduct 'scholarly research in various disciplines' and hold two conferences annually.^[54] Given ACSILs' position on Okinawan independence, the nationalist faction of Japan labelled it a 'hotbed of terrorism.'^[55] A major national newspaper, *Asahi Shimbun*, published an article featuring the establishment of ACSILs with a provocative and antagonistic title "Okinawa Independence" Listen Japan, distrust of Japan, the Study Group Established Today, Marks the 41st year since Okinawa Reversion.'^[56] In response, ACSILs emphasised that its scholarly research is based on 'the premise of the prospect of Ryukyuan independence,' a goal that could achieve *amayuu* (a peaceful life).^[57]

Conclusion

27. The two streams of movements-the (international) feminist decolonial movement and the indigenous movements-are now converging as the Japanese government continues to force the construction of a new state-of-art US military base in the northern part of Okinawa, Henoko, ignoring the opposition expressed by 80 percent of Okinawans.^[58] The victory of Takeshi Onaga, a former Naha Mayor, who campaigned against the new base construction in the gubernatorial election in November 2015, further advances the public discourse on Okinawan's right to self-determination. Both feminist and indigenous movement activists joined the movement toward Onaga's victory, facilitated by the slogan of *jiko-kêteiken* (self-determination) and *oru Okinawa* (all Okinawa) in order to mobilise all Okinawans towards the mutual goal of demilitarisation and decolonisation. The victory of Onaga was a clear statement against the state, with *jiko-kêteiken* and *oru Okinawa* as possible political platforms. As Maaka and Fleras affirm, in order to account for the spectrum of perspectives on

human rights in various indigenous nations and communities, it is important to theorise indigeneity not necessarily as a form of claiming independence or secession, but as 'a political ideology and social movement by which a politicised awareness of original occupancy provides a principle and basis for making claims against the state.'^[59] As I have shown, Okinawan women and indigenous activists demilitarise their bodies and positionalities in their own terms as much as they redefine the histories of Japanese colonialism and US militarism in Okinawa. Their mobilisation of the right to *jiko-ketteiken* is a critical discursive site for addressing the interdependencies of empires.

28. I have shown that the framework of 'indigeneity' aims for the independence of the Ryukyu Islands. When coupled with Okinawan demilitarisation, this rationale exposes that gender is a key 'instrument' of colonial and military power; further, it is through Japan's political relationship with the US that Okinawa's coloniality has been maintained. Thus, attaining Okinawan's sovereignty may require a simultaneous assessment of global militarism and US-Japan relations embedded in the masculinist state narrative.
29. In this paper, I thus illuminated that the articulation and disarticulation of Okinawanness is deployed to define Okinawans' relationships with Japan, the United Nations and the United States. The (international) feminist decolonial movement revealed that the gendering and racialisation of Okinawans went hand-in-hand in the patriarchal discourse that proved so critical to US and Japan relations. The indigenous movements especially sought to move out of the patriarchal discourse by making a further distinction between the 'equal' (minority) and 'indigenous' (self-determining) statuses of Okinawans. Although the feminist and indigenous movements bring decolonisation to the forefront of the agenda, one main distinction is that while the feminist movements emphasise equal rights and demilitarisation, the indigenous movements argue for self-determination, and demilitarisation as non-minorities. The articulation of the distinctions between minority rights and indigenous rights has highlighted the complexities and convergences of Okinawanness in the struggle for human rights.

References

[1] '[The Association of Comprehensive Studies for Independence of the Lew Chewans](#) (ACSIL),' established in *Ryukyu Shimpō*, 16 May 2013, online: <http://ryukyushimpō.jp/news/storyid-206634-storytopic-1.html> (accessed 24 May 2013).

[2] 'The Association of Comprehensive Studies for Independence of the Lew Chewans,' paragraph 7.

[3] '[ACSILs home page](#),' online: <http://www.acsils.org/> (accessed 25 August 2013).

[4] [Kosuke Takahash](#), 'Shinzo Abe's nationalist strategy,' in *The Diplomat*, 13 February 2014, online: <http://thediplomat.com/2014/02/shinzo-abes-nationalist-strategy/> (accessed 9 January 2015).

[5] '[Shinzo Abe's inability to face history](#),' in *Washington Post*, 26 April 2013, online: http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-04-26/opinions/38843096_1_defense-spending-china-south-korea (accessed 16 May 2013). This comment was made when Abe took the office in December 2012 and called for a revision of the 1993 Prime Minister Yohei Kono's acknowledgement and expression of remorse for causing suffering to the comfort women.

[6] '[Hashimoto to urge "strict discipline" for U.S. military](#),' in *Japan Times*, 27 May 2013, online: http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/05/27/national/hashimoto-to-urge-strict-discipline-for-u-s-military/#.Uh0poH_nck8 (accessed 25 August 2013).

[7] 'Comfort women' or *ianfu* refers to the women and girls who were compelled to prostitute themselves by catering to Japanese soldiers in brothels located in occupied Japanese territories during World War II. The comfort women drafted ranged from countries such as Korea, China, Japan, Okinawa, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Indonesia. See for

instance, [Asian Women's Fund](#), 'The "Comfort Women" issue and the Asian women's fund,' Tokyo: Asian Women's Fund, 2004, online: <http://www.awf.or.jp/pdf/0170.pdf> (accessed 19 May 2013).

[8] Hiroko Tabuchi, 'Women forced into WWII brothels served necessary role, Osaka Mayor says,' *New York Times*, 13 May 2013. I also distinguish 'Japan' and Okinawa in my discussion as separate entities, and 'Japanese State' is used to describe the current political sovereignty of the Japanese nation-state.

[9] 'Ishihara "military and sex industry go hand in hand," *Jiji Dot Com*, 14 May 2013, online: <http://www.jiji.com/jc/zc?k=201305/2013051400418> (accessed 25 August 2013).

[10] See for the Japan and US colonial nexus, T. Fujitani, *Race for Empire: Koreans as Japanese and Japanese as Americans during World War II*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2013. In his book, Fujitani discusses the racialisation of Koreans in wartime Japan on the one hand while analysing the racialisation of Japanese Americans in wartime US on the other. His theory on this process is central not only to examining the US-Japan security nexus, but also of signalling the shift in ideology from 'vulgar' to 'polite' racisms in these respective states.

[11] A few of the women's organisations signed the statement: Okinawa-sen to nihongun ianfu-ten jitsuko iinkai (Exhibition Executive Committee for the Battle of Okinawa Japanese Army's 'comfort women'), Goi shitenai projekuto (Project Disagree). For primary sources for these organisations, see, [Women's Organization](#), online: <http://www.lococom.jp/talist/21331396304/20097081/> (accessed 25 August 2013); [New Japan Women's Association](#), online: <http://www.shinfujin.gr.jp/> (accessed 25 August 2013); [Project Disagree](#), online: <http://www.projectdisagree.org/> (accessed 25 August 2013).

[12] My translation. A statement circulated via email listserv announced: 'Protest statement: demanding Hashimoto Toru, a co-leader of the National Japan Restoration Party and Mayor of Osaka an apology and retraction of his statement,' 15 May 2013.

[13] A number of studies have been done to argue that Ainu (peoples indigenous to the northernmost island of Japan), Koreans and Okinawans have historically been colonial subjects under Japan. See John Lie, *Multi-Ethnic Japan*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001; Laura Hein and Mark Selden (eds). *Island of Discontent: Okinawan Responses to Japanese and American Power*, New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003; [Valerie H. Barske](#), 'Dancing through' historical trauma: Okinawan performance in post-imperial Japan,' *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, issue 24 (June 2010), online: <http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue24/barske.htm> (accessed 25 August 2013).

[14] See Victor Bascara, *Model-Minority Imperialism*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006. Through an examination of cultural, historical and literary documents of Asian American, Bascara illuminates that 'the year 1898 occasions ... the unburdening of empire, the removal of the ideological and material encumbrances that make expansion hard to legitimate' (pp. xix-xx).

[15] Although this paper's focus is on Okinawans, the 'women in Okinawa' is parenthetical to the acknowledgement that in fact many sex workers in Okinawa are from other Asian countries, such as the Philippines and Thailand.

[16] 'Hashimoto asks U.S. military to use sex industry in Japan,' in *Asahi Shimbun*, 14 May 2013.

[17] 'Alleviate Okinawa's burden,' in *Japan Times*, 18 May 2013.

[18] The full name is not available. 'Hashimoto asks U.S. military to use sex industry in Japan,' in *Asahi Shimbun*, 14 May 2013.

[19] 'Hashimoto asks U.S. military to use sex industry in Japan,' paragraph 9.

[20] The rape survivor's identity remains anonymous because Japanese law protects the identity of minors from the public

[21] 'Fired admiral gives public apology,' in *CNN*, 20 November 1995, online: http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/9511/macke_speaks (accessed 10 May 2013).

[22] Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Cost and Consequences of American Empire*, New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000.

- [23] Another comment made by [Toru Hashimoto](#) in an interview originally aired on *Toku-dane!*, 16 May 2013, online: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nzyQPkM5rRE> (accessed 19 May 2013).
- [24] 'To Mr. Toru Hashimoto-A protest from a woman who works at Fuzoku,' in *Hunter: Investigative Journalism*, 22 May 2013, online: <http://hunter-investigate.jp/news/2013/05/post-363.html> (accessed 23 May 2013).
- [25] See Fredric Jameson, 'Third-world literature in the era of multinational capitalism,' *Social Text* no.15 (Autumn 1986): 65–88.
- [26] Suzuyo Takazato, 'I refuse,' in *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, special issue (July/August 1996): 26. A statement made at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, September 1995. Ayano Ginoza, 'Okinawanness as a form of indigeneity in transnational anti-militarist feminist movement,' in *UCLA Center for the Study of Women News Letter*, 1 April 2011.
- [27] *Heiwa he no shogen: taikensha ga kataru senso'* (Testimonies Toward Peace: War Told by those who Experienced it), Itoman-City: Okinawa heiwa shiryokan, 2006. This is a collection of thirty-three oral stories of WORLD WAR II experienced by Okinawan people.
- [28] Donald Denoon, Mark Hudson, Gavan McCormack and Tessa Morris-Suzuki (eds), *Multicultural Japan: Palaeolithic to Post-Modern*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- [29] Richard Siddle, 'The Ainu and the discourse of "race",' in *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Fredric Dikötter, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997, pp. 136–57. *Minzoku*, ethnic/ethnicity, is regularly used as a synonym for the Japanese 'race,' ethnicity and nation.
- [30] Michael Omi, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 2nd ed., New York: Routledge, 1994.
- [31] [Doudou Diène](#), 'Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and all forms of discrimination: Report of the special rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, mission to Japan,' *United Nation Economic and Social Council*, 26 January 2006, online: <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4411820e0.pdf> (accessed 20 September 2008).
- [32] Diène, 'Racism racial discrimination, xenophobia and all forms of discrimination.'
- [33] Diène, 'Racism racial discrimination, xenophobia and all forms of discrimination.'
- [34] Diène, 'Racism racial discrimination, xenophobia and all forms of discrimination.'
- [35] "'Survey of Okinawan resident identities" conducted by John Chuan-tiong,' in *Okinawa Times*, 1 January 2006, online: <http://www.bekkoame.ne.jp/i/a-001/anketo.html> (accessed 25 May 2013).
- [36] 'Seifu no seisaku. 68 per cent (fuman) Okinawa aidentiti chosa 07' (Government policy: 68 per cent (unsatisfied), study on Okinawan identity 07), in *Ryukyu Shimpo*, 29 November 2007, online: <http://ryukyushimpo.jp/news/storyid-29336-storytopic-1.html> (accessed 25 January 2010).
- [37] For instance, in 2008, the Japanese Ministry of Education revised the historical event that took place during the Battle of Okinawa in 1945 when Japanese military forced Okinawans to commit mass-suicide. This governmental act to erase and rewrite the history of Okinawa resulted in a mass rally of Okinawans that year.
- [38] See Ayano Ginoza, 'Space of "militourism": Intimacies of U.S. and Japanese empires and indigenous sovereignty in Okinawa,' *International Journal of Okinawan Studies*, vol. 3. no. 1 (2012): 7–23.
- [39] See the interviews with nine Okinawan women chronicled in Ruth Ann Keyso, *Women of Okinawa: Nine Voices from a Garrison Island*, Cornell University Press 2008, in which Okinawan women from different generations articulate their complex relationships with U.S. servicemen and the ways in which their family and society react to them.
- [40] Ann Laura Stoler, *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2006, p. 63.

[41] In 1998 in Washington D.C., 2000 in Okinawa, 2002 in South Korea, 2004 in the Philippines, 2007 in San Francisco, 2009 in Guam, and 2011 in Port Rico. See for instance a website, [Women for Genuine Security](http://www.genuinesecurity.org/) that tracks the history of the meetings, online: <http://www.genuinesecurity.org/> (accessed 25 January 2015).

[42] OWAAMV argues that as a result of the U.S. military occupation, its peoples were the victims of militarised violent crimes and damage resulting from negligence, including: robberies, murders, rapes, kidnappings, sexual assaults, airplane and car accidents, chemical spills, bombings, and many other incidents. Even after the 'reversion' to Japanese governance, there were 4,700 reported crimes by U.S. servicemen stationed in Okinawa between 1972 and 2000, according to research conducted by OWAAMV. This was documented when I participated in the Women's Network Meeting in 2007. Okinawan women's bodies have been a sexualised location where militarised violence takes place and aggression is inflicted within a patriarchal paradigm. During the Battle of Okinawa the imperial Japanese army established approximately 130 military brothels in Okinawa. A little-known fact about this policy is that those who were forced to work at the brothels as *ianfu* (comfort women) included not only Korean, but also Okinawan women. See Cynthia H. Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000. According to the *Okinawa Times*, 141 rapes were reported to have been committed by U.S. service members in Okinawa between 1972 and 1999. See *Okinawa Times*, 4 July 2001.

[43] Miyume Tanji, 'The *Unai* Method: The expansion of women-only groups in the community of protest against violence and militarism in Okinawa,' in *Intersections: gender, history and culture in the Asian context*, issue 13 (August 2006), online: <http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue13/tanji.html> (accessed 25 January 2010).

[44] SGC was founded in 1982 by a group of concerned students and citizens who participated in the second UN Special Session for Disarmament, convened in New York, to address and support indigenous peoples and their human rights. SGC sought to engage with, and seek possibilities in, the UN human rights discourse that recognises multiple identities and agendas at a global level.

[45] Citizens' Centre for Diplomacy is located in Tokyo, Japan. See *Shimin Gaikou Centre*, online: <http://www005.upp.so-net.ne.jp/peacetax/#English> (accessed 2 March 2015).

[46] *Association of Indigenous Peoples in the Ryukyus*, online: <http://www005.upp.so-net.ne.jp/peacetax/e5.html> (accessed 20 September 2008). The document consists of four sections: (1) Okinawa's Geographical Position and Human Rights; (2) History as an Independent Nation; (3) Education and Languages in Okinawa (Ryukyu); and (4) Issues on Education and Languages of the Okinawans to be Addressed in the Future.

[47] Although the United Nations General Assembly adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in New York in 2007, the category of indigenous remains contested, as there is no official agreement on a single definition at the UN level. Defining indigeneity presents complex and diverse social issues that indigenous peoples face in contemporary society because the definition determines which groups of (indigenous) peoples hold authority over and access to certain resources.

[48] My translation. See *Association of Indigenous Peoples in the Ryukyus*, online: <http://ameblo.jp.aipr/> (accessed 10 December 2010).

[49] Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i*, University of Hawai'i Press, 1999, p. 33.

[50] Roger Maaka and Augie Fleras, *The Politics of Indigeneity: Challenging the State in Canada and Aotearoa New Zealand*, Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2005, pp. 31–32.

[51] The term 'Ryukyu' was the original name of Okinawa before Imperial Japan colonised it in 1879. The Kingdom of the Ryukyus consisted of over 160 small islands and the Ryukyu maintained self-governance until the period. When Imperial Japan colonised Okinawa, they renamed the Ryukyu to Okinawa.

[52] Koji Taira. 'Troubled with national identity: The Ryukyuans/Okinawans,' in *Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity*, ed. Michael Weiner, New York: Routledge, 2009, pp. 140–77, p. 141.

[53] 'The Association of Comprehensive Studies for Independence of the Lew Chewans.' The one page document titled, 'AICSILs Prospectus,' articulates their current position mainly from their colonial relationship with Japan, or Japanese people as colonialist settlers. However, it hardly analysed the interrelatedness of Japanese and U.S. imperial structures.

It defined its past as the Ryukyu Kingdom and the people as friendly and "truthful" citing a fifteenth century document, *Suma Oriental que trata do Mar Roxo até aos chins* by Tomé Pires, and as well as its 'national' characteristic discerned by its friendly foreign diplomacy with other countries.

[54] 'The Association of Comprehensive Studies for Independence of the Lew Chewans.'

[55] "'Tondemo" Okinawa terrorist theory,' *Ryukyu Shimpo* (10 February 2013), online: <http://ryukyushimpo.jp/news/storyid-202428-storytopic-12.html> (accessed 24 May 2013).

[56] *Asahi Shimbun*, 15 May 2013, online: <http://www.asahi.com/shimen/articles/TKY201305140722.html> (accessed 20 May 2013).

[57] 'The Association of Comprehensive Studies for Independence of the Lew Chewans.'

[58] 'Henoko chushi' 80 per cent isetsu kyoko, hanpatsu hirogaru' (80 per cent calling for cancellation of the forced relocation in Henoko, resistance spread), in *Ryukyu Shimpo*, 26 August 2014, online: <http://ryukyushimpo.jp/news/storyid-230631-storytopic-271.html> (accessed 3 January 2015).

[59] Maaka and Fleras, *The Politics of Indigeneity*, p. 53.

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