

Border-Crossers and Resistance to U.S. Military Rule in the Ryukyus, 1945-1953**Matthew R. Augustine****September 23, 2008**http://www.japanfocus.org/-matthew_r_-augustine/2906

Okinawa was administered by the United States military between the end of the Battle of Okinawa in June 1945 and its reversion to Japan in May 1972. Matthew R. Augustine's article covers the period stretching from the start of American military planning prior to the Battle of Okinawa to the return of the Amami Islands, the northernmost portion of the occupied Ryukyu Islands, in 1953. The article outlines the consequences of the American decision to administratively separate the Ryukyu Islands from Japan proper, and allow the military to run it as a military colony, along with the social and political currents that were set in motion as a result. As Augustine explains, this involved not only isolating Okinawa from Japan, but also the different islands of the Ryukyus from one another, in the process disrupting the economic, social, and political networks that had earlier sustained Okinawa's economy and society. However, as he details in the section that follows, Okinawans did not accept these conditions passively, and in their struggle for survival revived earlier links with Japan to the north and neighboring countries to the south through illicit smuggling networks. From there, Augustine discusses how the Cold War confrontation of the late 1940s led to a partial re-establishment of economic links with the mainland while rigorously continuing (or perhaps more accurately systematically monitoring) political separation.

Augustine concludes by explaining how the San Francisco Peace Treaty of September 1951, by restoring sovereignty to a newly democratized Japan while authorizing a potentially permanent foreign occupation of the Ryukyu Islands, made Okinawans conscious of the way in which the American occupation was frustrating their aspirations for full democratic rights and economic opportunity. Their frustration about this divergence of fates spurred a movement that championed Okinawa's reversion to Japan. Fueled by various incidents that generated grievances against American rule and by the counterexample of mainland Japan's economic prosperity in the late 1950s and 1960s, the movement intensified to such a degree that American officials themselves were convinced by the latter half of the 1960s that their interests would be better served by allowing reversion to happen. The U.S. military continued to maintain bases on Okinawa, however.

Border-Crossers and Resistance to US Military Rule in the Ryukyus, 1945-1953

Matthew R. Augustine

Sixty-six years after Japan's annexation of the former Ryukyu Kingdom in 1879, in the waning months of the Asia-Pacific War, the American military partitioned the Ryukyu Islands from Japan. The replacement of Okinawa Prefecture by US military rule in the Ryukyus from 1945 had profound implications, for residents of the occupied islands. A major repercussion of the military government's separation of the Ryukyus was the enforced isolation of the four main island groups from occupied Japan. The Ryukyuan-Japanese border severed long-standing administrative and economic links, while restrictive border controls prohibited free travel and interaction between the two sides. Another consequence of this imposed barrier was the socio-economic problem of how to provide for the livelihood and welfare of the island residents, who thereby became entirely dependent on the military government. These problems were compounded by the massive destruction, loss of life, and overall displacement of residents in the wake of war, especially in Okinawa.

Residents of the Ryukyus responded by developing a thriving smuggling trade that extended southwest from Okinawa to the Miyako and Yaeyama Islands, as well as to the Amami Islands and Japan in the other direction. The illicit smuggling trade became so rampant that in 1948 the military government responded by implementing measures to promote economic integration among the four main island groups. Trade barriers with Japan were relaxed in 1950, but the San Francisco Peace Treaty signed in 1951 reaffirmed that the Ryukyus would remain under US military rule, divided from Japan. By this time, the increasing cross-border interconnections between residents in the Ryukyus and Okinawan and Amamian residents in Japan had already given rise to an organized movement calling for reversion to Japanese sovereignty.

How did the establishment of the military government and new postwar borders actually affect the movement of residents within and outside of the Ryukyu Islands? Conversely, to what extent did the resistance of residents in the Ryukyus and their effort to overcome their division and isolation influence the military government's border controls and related occupation policies? Most studies of migration and border controls focus exclusively on the role of the nation-state in answering such questions, although some recent scholarship attempts to emphasize the agency of the migrants.¹ I argue that what happened at the territorial boundary between Japan and the Ryukyus was shaped by the interplay between the national politics of border controls and the actions of those who transcended these borders. This relationship was in turn strongly influenced by the emergence of the Cold War conflict in Northeast Asia. This article will therefore examine the interplay between these domestic and international forces.

A transnational history of border-crossings can best reveal the interlinked relationship between the various movements of people and the border politics of the US-occupied Ryukyu Islands. Weaving together the US occupation of the Ryukyus with that of Japan proper will also help break down the barriers of national history, which have largely ignored the Okinawan experience, beyond the realm of geopolitical issues relating to the large-scale US military presence. The politics of drawing and redrawing postwar borders as

well as the cross-border networks within and beyond the Ryukyus developed in a relatively short period of time. This study therefore focuses on the most fluid stage of US military rule in the Ryukyus, from the landing of Army forces on Okinawa in April 1945 until the reversion of the Amami Islands in December 1953.

Borders, Divisions, and the Isolation of the Ryukyus

Why were Okinawans arrested for illegal entry when they crossed into Japan after 1945? This question cannot be answered without considering, briefly, how Okinawa Prefecture was divided from Japan and renamed the Ryukyu Islands during the Asia-Pacific War. Examining the wartime origins of Okinawa's division from Japan in turn reveals the historical background behind the incorporation of the Ryukyus as a Japanese prefecture. The US State Department first conceived the idea of separating Okinawa from Japan while drafting the terms for Japan's surrender. In advance of the Cairo Conference in July 1943, the Territorial Subcommittee prepared a series of policy studies on various island groups surrounding Japan, mapping out the territorial boundaries for postimperial Japan.² The policy document on Okinawa began by stating that the "postwar territorial adjustments in the Far East will involve the question of the possible detachment of the Liuchiu Islands from the Japanese Empire."³ Consciously referring to Okinawa by its ancient Chinese name, Liuchiu, the document reminded the reader that the Ryukyus were stripped of sovereignty when Japan forcibly annexed the islands in 1879. Considering the future disposition of the Ryukyus, the document ended by outlining policy proposals primarily aimed at preventing Japan from using these islands again for imperial expansion.⁴

While the State Department continued to shape American policy towards the Ryukyus, the US military began producing detailed studies about the islands in preparation for occupying and using them as stepping-stones in the military conquest of Japan. On June 1, 1944 the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) published a 147-page intelligence report entitled *The Okinawas of the Loochoo Islands: A Minority Group in Japan*.⁵ This report found that, while the Japanese government implemented a heavy-handed assimilation policy, Okinawans were simultaneously discriminated against for not being fully Japanese. Consistently emphasizing the cleavage between the Japanese and Okinawans, the OSS report suggested that US forces might utilize this in psychological warfare and in the postwar occupation of Okinawa.⁶

Recognizing the geostrategic importance of the Ryukyus as a military base, the US Navy employed this logic of differentiating between Japanese and Okinawans as a convenient justification for advocating the separation of the islands. On November 15 the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations produced a longer report entitled *Civil Affairs Handbook: Ryukyu (Loochoo) Islands*. Although this 334-page report differed from the OSS report in methodological approach and sources consulted, both concluded that the Ryukyu Islands and its people were not innately part of Japan. Both texts also restored the former name, "Loo Choo" or "Ryukyu" in their titles, further emphasizing the identity gap between the Ryukyus and Japan.⁷ Based on the premise that imperial Japan had forcibly assimilated Okinawans, the two sources together raised the possibility of de-assimilation to justify the separation and military rule over the Ryukyus.

Dismantling the Japanese ruling structure—politically and culturally—in the Ryukyus emerged as one of the main objectives of the US military invasion and occupation. On March 1, 1945 on the eve of the Battle of Okinawa, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander-in-Chief of the US Pacific Fleet, issued a political and economic directive for the prospective military government in the Ryukyus. This detailed directive plainly spelled out that military occupation of the Ryukyus was necessary to destroy “Japan’s power of aggression and the military class which controls the Japanese Empire.” The directive granted the military governor the power to remove from office all high ranking or policymaking officials, and to dissolve all Japanese patriotic or secret societies.⁸ Then on April 1, 1945 Admiral Nimitz issued “United States Navy Military Government Proclamation No. 1,” as the US Tenth Army combat units landed on Okinawa Island. Declaring that “all powers of the Government of the Japanese Empire are hereby suspended,” the so-called Nimitz Proclamation signaled the administrative detachment of the Ryukyus from Japan. The newly established Military Government of the Ryukyu Islands thus replaced imperial Japan’s control over Okinawa in what would subsequently be referred to as the “disappearance of Okinawa Prefecture.”⁹

The separation and military occupation of the Ryukyu Islands marked the beginning of a historical transformation from what Okinawans called the “Yamato (Japanese) period” to the “American period.” The dawning of the American period represented not only a psychological separation from Japan but also the subordination of the Ryukyus to the US military. As soon as US military forces arrived in Okinawa, they began referring to Okinawans as “Ryukyuan” to discourage the islanders from identifying themselves with Japan.¹⁰ Then on July 3, 1945, the day after the Japanese surrender in Okinawa, Col. Charles I. Murray became the Deputy Commander for military command and began immediately cementing Okinawa’s political subordination. In a symbolic statement on the new status of the Ryukyus, the military government formed the Okinawa Advisory Council on August 15, the same day that Emperor Hirohito announced Japan’s surrender. The Council was the first political organization entirely consisting of Okinawans, thus breaking from the prewar Japanese system of denying the local population political representation. Murray quickly made it clear, however, that the fifteen members of the Council would be limited to assisting and advising military government officials.

While the Ryukyus were denied the far-reaching democratic reforms implemented in Japan, Murray recognized the value of a limited form of self-government to win Okinawan acquiescence to US military rule. As a result, on September 20, 1945 the military government held elections for mayors and assemblymen in the sixteen military government districts.¹¹ Another major event in the political rehabilitation of the Ryukyus was achieved on April 24, 1946 when Shikiya Kōshin, a respected local educator, was appointed civilian governor – a post denied to Okinawans under Japanese rule. Governor Shikiya expressed the hopes of many Okinawans when he stated in his inaugural speech that, “in striving to build a better Okinawa than before, we will achieve the golden age for Okinawa with our hands.”¹² Such reform measures, however, masked the fact that mayors, assemblymen, and governors in the Ryukyus were directly under the control of the US military government. The limits of political power in the Ryukyus were apparent in contrast to occupied Japan, where the local, regional, and central government exercised greater authority in interactions with US occupation officials.

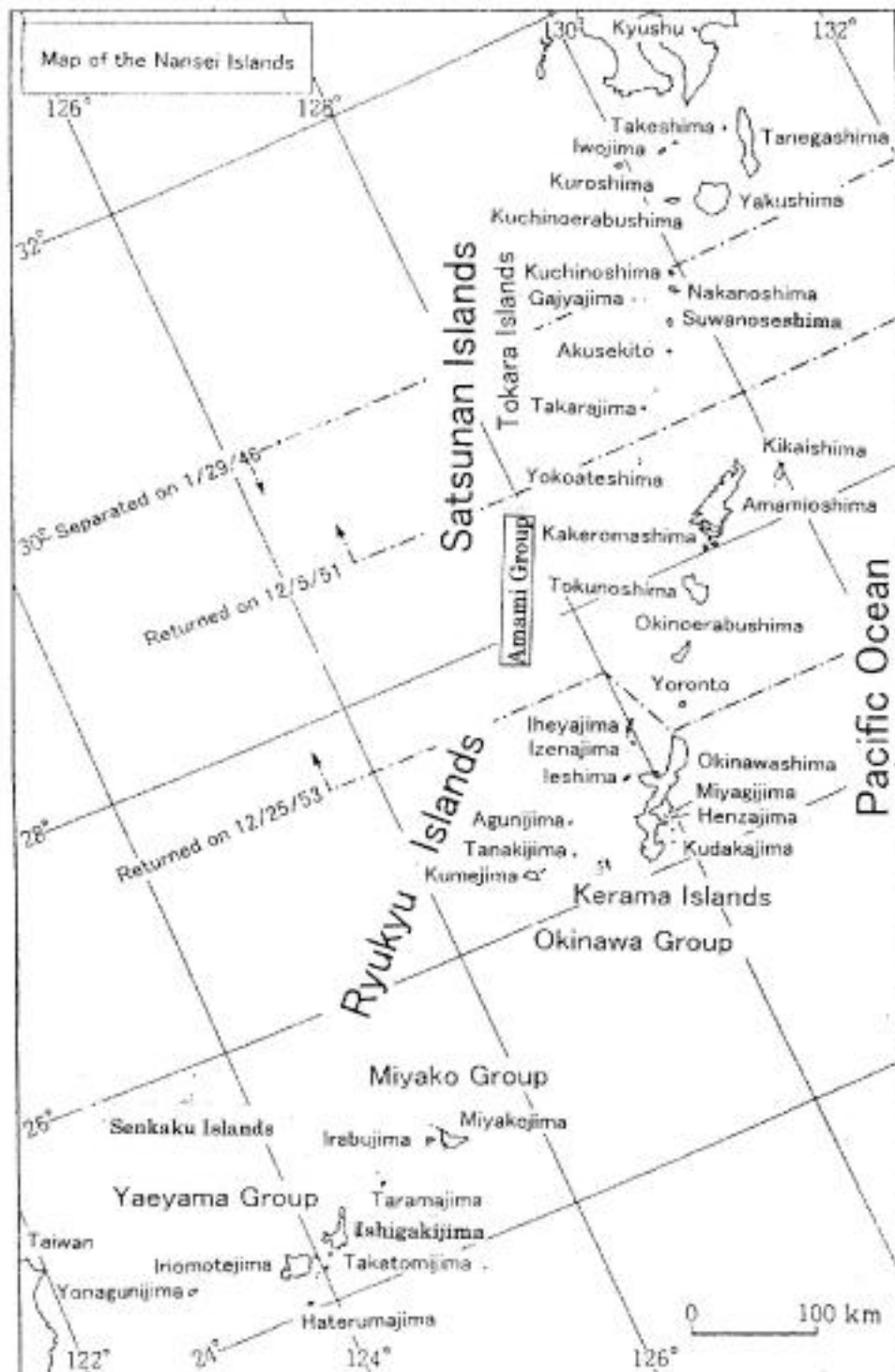


Figure 1. Map of the Nansei Islands

Source: Robert D. Eldridge, *The Origins of the Bilateral Okinawa Problem*.

The Yamato period was thus giving way to the American period, but where did the territorial boundaries of the Ryukyus end and those of Japan's begin? The Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), General Douglas MacArthur's headquarters in Tokyo, pushed for the 30° North Latitude as the line of territorial demarcation between the two occupations in Japan and the Ryukyus. This proposed border, however, was highly problematic for geopolitical and socioeconomic reasons. Most importantly, the establishment of the 30th parallel border meant that territory in addition to Okinawa, specifically the Amami Islands and part of the Tokara Islands, would be separated from Japan.¹³ Although the US Navy's command in the Ryukyus was interested in taking over the Japanese naval base in Amami Oshima, these islands continued politically and economically to function as an integral part of Kagoshima Prefecture after Japan's military defeat. The Amami Islands since the Meiji period had been sending elected representatives to the prefectural assembly in Kagoshima, where offices and records of all departments of local government were located.¹⁴ The public finance system there also correlated with and was dependent upon the larger financial structures in Kagoshima and in Tokyo. Furthermore, not only were family registries (*koseki*) and other official records of residents kept in Kagoshima, but Amamians strongly identified with Japan, rather than with the Ryukyus.

Despite such considerations, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), the highest echelon in the US military command, decided in late December 1945 that an expanded command in the Ryukyu Islands could better secure Okinawa. The JCS was also interested in Koniya Bay in the Oshima Straits, where the former Japanese Navy had set up a deep-water base as a safe retreat in battle and from typhoons. Rear Admiral John D. Price, who replaced Col. Murray as the chief military government officer in September, initially resisted this decision, emphasizing the high cost of administering the Amami and Tokara Islands. However, Price ultimately agreed to incorporate these islands into the Ryukyus in exchange for additional personnel, civilian and military supplies, and improvements in communication and transportation facilities. Having secured Price's consent, on January 29, 1946 SCAP sent a directive to the Japanese government, officially separating the Amami and Tokara Islands from Japan and adding them as a part of the Northern Ryukyus.¹⁵

The newly expanded Ryukyu Islands was initially marked by internal borders that administratively separated Okinawa from Amami and the other island groups. After military government teams from Okinawa assumed control of the Miyako and Yaeyama Islands in December 1945 and the Amami Islands in March 1946, autonomous governing bodies were formed in each of the island groups. Like the Okinawa Advisory Council, however, these so-called "provisional governments" were powerless and strictly controlled by the military governments set up in each of these island groups. The military government in Okinawa thus consciously divided the Ryukyu Islands geographically and politically into four provisional governments, as can be seen in Figure 2: one in the Northern Ryukyus (Amami Islands), one in Okinawa, and two in the Southern Ryukyus (Miyako and Yaeyama Islands).¹⁶ Under close guidance by the military government, these four separate island districts established autonomous political structures as well as autonomous economies. Furthermore, in an archipelago noted for its diversity of distinctive languages and cultures, the postwar divisions reinforced a strong sense of island and island group identities that distinguished, for example, the Amamians from the Okinawans. These four island groups,

collectively renamed the Ryukyu Islands, were thus marked by multiple lines of division, from Japan and from each other.¹⁷

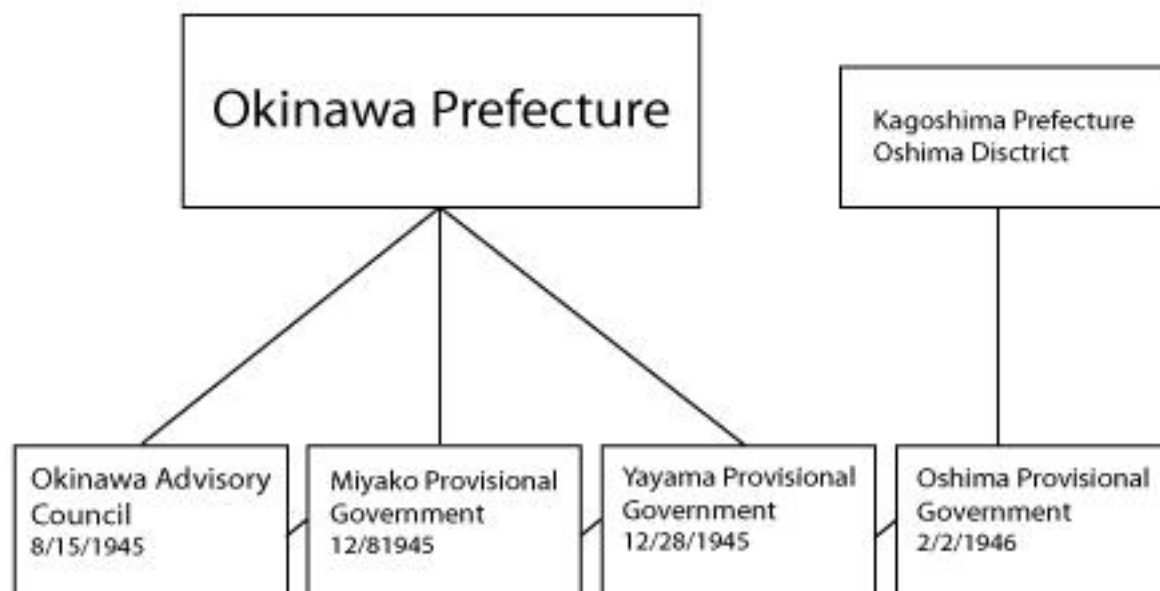


Figure 2. The Four Autonomous Governing Bodies, Ryukyu Islands, and Dates of Establishment

As a result of the multiple divisions that characterized the Ryukyu Islands, residents began their lives in the immediate postwar years cut off from long-established economic, cultural, and kinship bonds within the Ryukyus and beyond. The political and economic isolation, which proved disastrous for many¹⁸, was intensified by the social isolation that resulted from the imposition of stringent travel restrictions in Okinawa, then applied later to the other island groups. Such restrictions against population movements were first implemented during the Battle of Okinawa when the Tenth Army herded local residents into refugee camps. By the end of hostilities, most of the 320,000 Okinawans who survived the war found themselves confined within one of twelve such district camps on the island. Although the military government initiated the resettlement program in October 1945, in reality, much of Okinawa was still occupied by US Army units. Tens of thousands of Okinawans were forced to relocate to one or more camps and to live in tents for months and even years. In the face of US military bases with ubiquitous signs that read “OFF LIMITS,” the number of civilians authorized to cross into and out of designated districts was limited to a minimum.¹⁹ When permission was granted, Okinawans had to register and carry with them special identification passes so that the military government could closely monitor their movements. Okinawa had thus become an island off limits to its own native inhabitants.²⁰

Population control under American military rule extended to the rest of the Ryukyus which, unlike Okinawa, had experienced neither a ground invasion nor forced seizures of land for use as military bases. The residents of Amami Oshima therefore were dismayed when rigid travel restrictions were suddenly imposed. On February 4, 1946, the military government

ordered what amounted to a naval blockade of the Amami Islands, terminating all interaction between Amami and mainland Japan. Specifically, this directive entailed that: 1) unrestricted travel between Japan and Amami would no longer be permitted; 2) people who desired to travel between Japan and Amami would be limited to those intending to establish permanent domicile (*eijū*) in either place; 3) those granted permission to travel had to follow provisions set up for the planned repatriation program. Shortly thereafter, the free export and import of goods to and from Japan was also banned.²¹ Although Amami was now reincorporated into the Ryukyus, similar restrictions applied to all forms of interactions with Okinawa.²² This was the beginning of what has been referred to as the isolation period in Amami's postwar history.

The division and isolation of the Ryukyu Islands from Japan was enforced by the military government's strict border control policies. In the Ryukyus, as in Japan, the only border-crossings permitted by the military government was the voluntary repatriation of people displaced by the war. Thus, while the military government and SCAP both strongly encouraged the two-way flow of homeward-bound repatriation, all other forms of unauthorized immigration and emigration were deemed illegal.²³ In July 1946, the Army replaced the Navy in charge of the military government, and the newly reorganized Ryukyus Command (RYCOM) improved joint border control measures with the Army command in Japan.²⁴ For example, ships seized for unauthorized entry into Japan were returned to the Ryukyus under escort of the US Eighth Army. Once deported to the Ryukyus, the military government tried the crew, passengers, and owners of the confiscated vessels in appropriate courts for unauthorized exit or illegal trafficking.²⁵ Such restrictive border control measures were thus instituted by occupation authorities on either side of the 30th parallel in large part to reinforce the separation of the Ryukyus from Japan.

Intra-Ryukyuan Smuggling and the "Yamato Trade"

The establishment of stringent border controls fundamentally transformed the socio-economic foundations of the Ryukyu Islands, which had historically relied on maintaining contact with the outside world. In modern times, one of the most prominent characteristics of Okinawa Prefecture until the end of the Pacific War was large-scale international and domestic migration. In the prewar period, between 40-60 percent of the average income of Okinawans derived from remittances sent by international migrants. Through such remittances, return migration, and by sending foreign-born children to be educated in their native villages, Okinawan immigrants established what Edith Kaneshiro has called "transnational families."²⁶ Networks of families and friends also spread to the major industrial centers in Japan, from where temporary migrants returned with their savings. This system of transnational and domestic networks, however, ceased to function in the wake of the Battle of Okinawa and remained suspended throughout the initial years of US military rule.²⁷ By limiting contact with the outside world, the border controls of the military government thus severely disrupted everyday life within the Ryukyus.

The isolation of the US-occupied Ryukyu Islands compounded the residents' daily struggle for survival in the desolation left behind by the recent war. For example, food shortage quickly emerged as an acute problem on Okinawa Island, where the bombardment of heavy artillery reduced agricultural and fishing production to a bare minimum. Commercial

livestock such as hogs, chickens and goats, constituting an integral part of the Okinawan diet, had also been mostly slaughtered. Such total devastation left Okinawan residents in refugee camps completely dependent upon the US military for food as well as clothing and shelter. In July 1945 the military government was feeding an average of 295,000 Okinawans every day, and by September seventy-five percent of the food supplied was covered by rations. The military government was unable to support the growing demand for imported rations, leading to a reduction in the rations allotted to each individual.²⁸ Hungry Okinawans rummaged through cans of leftover food near US military bases, watering down the collected contents to eat as soup. Desperate to supplement their food with cooking oils and fats, some Okinawans were even known to have used automobile oil to deep-fry what was commonly referred to by locals as “Mobil tempura.”²⁹

Okinawans continued to rely on rations even after they left the refugee camps, although many also turned to the emerging black markets. The military government set up local rationing boards in every community to receive all available agricultural products for redistribution on the basis of need. By early 1946, however, the communally grown food and supplemental goods were no longer rationed for free but began to be sold as a part of postwar Okinawa’s transition back into a money economy. In May the military government introduced a new monetary system, exchanging Japanese yen currency still in circulation to the equivalent amount in Type “B” yen, a form of Occupation script printed by the US military.³⁰ This controlled economy, however, did little to prevent a virtual state of bankruptcy from unfolding in the face of a growing black market trade. Stolen rations and supplies from US military depots that flowed into the black markets were bartered or sold with commodities smuggled into Okinawa to compensate for the shortage of sundries. A “double currency” thus emerged between the official price and the black market price, resulting in rampant inflation that plagued the entire Ryukyuan economy.

While black markets became a ubiquitous part of everyday life throughout the Ryukyu Islands, those in Okinawa boasted an abundance of US military supplies. In the waning months of war, the US Tenth Army had unloaded large quantities of surplus goods in Okinawa that could enable over a half-year of sustained battle against Japan. Since the anticipated ground warfare in mainland Japan did not materialize, these items were left stockpiled inside the base camps. Okinawans employed by the military government to work inside the bases as construction workers, drivers, cooks, and housemaids discovered bountiful goods that were denied to them. Inside the barb-wire fencing, they found everything from non-rationed foods such as meat, fish, canned fruit, and milk, to durable clothing such as military fatigues, dress uniforms (HBTs), and shoes, as well as prized tools such as nails, hammers, and shovels. Many Okinawans who had access inside the military bases began taking small amounts of these surplus supplies, calling them *senka*, literally meaning “fruits of war.” Before long, pilfering goods from US military depots became a widely practiced trade referred to as “winning *senka*,” as if they were engaging in a battle for survival. In fact, winning *senka* was so common at the time that there was a saying, “men search for *senka* while women engage in prostitution,” reflecting local survival strategies in response to the dire conditions in immediate postwar Okinawa.³¹

The appropriation of surplus supplies from US military depots was followed by its redistribution in Okinawan society, usually through the black markets, but also through

kinship networks. Okinawan employees at military bases often shared their hard-won *senka* with their friends and family, but they sold the bulk of their goods to black market brokers who traded them with other smuggled commodities for a profit. A popular Ryukyuan poem captures the distribution of labor in this underground trade, reflecting social conditions in Okinawa at the time: “best pickings at the top, black markets in the middle, we at the bottom must win *senka*.” In other words, the upper class clung to the US military for access to power and prestige, the middle class could secure a decent living by trading black market goods, so the lower class was left to fend for themselves in pursuit of *senka*.³² In general, most of the *senka* was supplied by those who worked inside or lived nearby the major military bases in central Okinawa, then flowed into the thriving black markets in southern Okinawa. The emergence of new social classes in postwar Okinawa thus developed simultaneously with the geographical distribution of the US military bases and black markets.



Figure 3. Black Market Scene in Naha, Okinawa, circa 1948

Source: Okinawa Times Publishers, *Shashin Kiroku Okinawa Sengoshi*

The black market economy in Okinawa could not be contained within the artificial borders set up by the military government, but extended to other parts of the Ryukyus and beyond. According to Uehara Jingorō, a native of Itoman in southern Okinawa who was involved in the thriving black market trade, three main smuggling routes linked the Ryukyus to the rest of the region. One was the Taiwan route that spread from Miyako and Yaeyama, using Yonaguni Island as a relay station. The Hong Kong route was a large-scale extension of this Taiwan route. The third was the Japan route, otherwise known as the “Yamato trade,” spreading from Amami and Tokara with Kuchinoshima Island as its main base.³³ In other

words, Yonaguni, located on the southern border with Taiwan, and Kuchinoshima to the north along the 30th parallel border with Japan, prospered as the north-south relay stations for smuggling in the Ryukyus.³⁴ In defiance of the military government, residents of the Ryukyus were thus re-inventing new domestic and transnational networks of regional trade, this time based on a black market economy.

Before long a specialization of smuggled goods emerged in the Ryukyu Islands according to the three main routes. Uehara Jingorō's colorful description of the variety of goods bartered and sold along these routes provides a glimpse into the regional scale of the increasingly well-organized networks of underground economic interaction. Uehara maintained that the Taiwan route involving Miyako and Yaeyama islanders smuggled in large quantities of rice, sugar, and saccharine products. Sometimes foodstuff was supplemented by precious materials such as tires and rubber tubing used for bicycles that were otherwise unavailable in the Ryukyus. These goods were exchanged for *senka* such as military uniforms, wool blankets, and rations of canned foods.³⁵

While civil war raged in neighboring China, the Hong Kong route involved exporting another form of *senka* – munitions such as cartridge cases, as well as motors, engine oil and gasoline – that were recycled for use on the battlefield. In exchange, British-made shoes, hats, suits, as well as Hong Kong dollars were imported into the Ryukyus. Finally, American medical supplies, especially new antibiotics like streptomycin for tuberculosis, sulfa drugs, and morphine were in high demand on the Japan route. These were bartered for Japanese-made pots and pans, crockery, carpentry tools, and lumber for building houses. As Uehara pointed out, the specialization of commodities traded along these routes reflected the early postwar conditions in each of these places. The industriousness of the residents in the Ryukyus can be observed here by their ability to turn *senka*, entirely consisting of the US military imports to the islands, into a valuable export commodity.

The biggest reason that cross-border smuggling was a thriving business through the early 1950s was precisely because the Ryukyus were cut off and isolated, both from the outside world and from each other. As a result, smuggling during this period can be broadly distinguished between what might be called “international” smuggling involving Taiwan, Hong Kong and even Japan, and “intra-Ryukyuan” smuggling involving the four main island groups. The latter in particular acted as a catalyst that helped economically reintegrate the Ryukyus at a time when inter-island trade was treated more like foreign trade. Those who participated in the intra-Ryukyuan operations, such as Ibusuki Kenshichi from Tokunoshima of the Amami Islands, believed they were promoting free trade, not smuggling. Ibusuki was twenty-one years of age when he began buying goods from black marketers in Amami and reselling them for a profit in Okinawa, among other places. On several occasions, Ibusuki arranged with his friends who were employed as the crew aboard the official ferry liner to assist him in loading on board black market goods that he was sneaking into and out of Okinawa. Ibusuki claims that smugglers like himself “supported and reinvigorated the Amamian economy in the immediate postwar years.”³⁶

Intra-Ryukyuan smuggling became so widespread that the military government introduced a series of reform measures in 1948 to deal with the poor state of the economy. One of the main tasks was to fight rampant inflation, caused in part by large amounts of Japanese yen

smuggled back into the Ryukyus by repatriates, thus further fueling the black markets. In May the military government established the Bank of the Ryukyus, functioning as the central bank for the four main island groups and thus better regulating the flow of money. Then in July the B-Yen currency became the unitary legal tender throughout the Ryukyus, and all Japanese yen still in circulation was converted into this military scrip.³⁷ In October military government officials finally began to re-introduce a free enterprise system in the Ryukyus. This meant eliminating price controls and rationing “in an attempt to transform the black markets into a white market.”³⁸ It also meant that businesses were permitted to engage in free trade, to a limited degree, and inter-island trade within the Ryukyus was slowly reactivated. The material needs that drove so many residents to join the vast and growing smuggling networks at last convinced American authorities to dismantle some of the internal barriers that debilitated the Ryukyuan economy.

Meanwhile, the international smuggling trade continued to expand through the development of tight-knit island networks. One outstanding example of such a smuggling network was the Itoman fishing industry based on the southern tip of Okinawa. Before the war, the Itoman fishermen were well known for establishing wide-ranging fishing communities as far north as Izu in Japan and the Ogasawara Islands, and as far south as the Philippines, Micronesian islands, and Singapore.³⁹ The Itoman fishermen utilized these prewar networks to build smuggling bases not only within the Ryukyus but all along the Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Japan routes. Using profits made from the lucrative Hong Kong route, the Itoman fishermen expanded their smuggling activities to Kikaijima in the Amami Islands en route to Kagoshima, where they could obtain Japanese goods. In Kagoshima, the Itoman community managed inconspicuous inns near the harbor for accommodating fellow islanders, thus evading the watchful eyes of Japanese police. With money earned from rent, the Itoman residents of Kagoshima obtained second-hand fishing boats that could be used as smuggling ships.⁴⁰ Kagoshima thus became the front gate of the so-called Yamato trade, which quickly extended to other major Japanese harbor cities such as Osaka, Kobe, Hamamatsu, and Yokohama.

The large profits made by those engaged in the Yamato trade highlight the stark contrast between occupied Japan and the Ryukyu Islands in their respective economies. An *Asahi Shinbun* article dated December 31, 1949 reported that incidents of smuggling and the monetary value involved in the Hanshin area that year reached the highest levels since the end of the war. The goods seized included rubber, drugs, sugar, and machine parts worth an estimated total of 73 million yen at market price, but which could have been sold on the black market for as high as 500 million yen.⁴¹ Even though the overall pace of postwar recovery was still sluggish at this point, Japan remained the land of economic opportunity in the region, attracting smugglers from nearby territories. In contrast, the division and isolation of the Ryukyus, and US preoccupation with the islands as a military base, had left the entire archipelago a neglected wasteland with little prospect of economic growth. Four years after the US military invasion the islands had not approached self-sufficiency in food production, and the rationing system continued to feed a large portion of the population.⁴² The efforts of many residents to escape from such wretched circumstances lured them into the profitable Yamato trade, thus building underground networks that linked them back to Japan again.

Okinawa: 'Keystone of the Pacific' and America's Cold War Boundaries

After years of apathy and neglect that earned US-occupied Okinawa the nickname, the "forgotten island," the Cold War unfolding in the Asia-Pacific region helped determine the future political disposition of the Ryukyu Islands. US policy towards the Ryukyus was overhauled in October 1948 when the National Security Council (NSC) decided to develop the archipelago as a strategic base for containing the spread of communism in the region. This fateful decision meant that the Ryukyus were soon included in the American defense perimeter, thus militarily linking the islands to Japan. In March 1949 General MacArthur referred to the Asia-Pacific as "an Anglo-Saxon lake" in which the US line of defense "starts from the Philippines and continues through the Ryukyu archipelago . . . then it bends back through Japan and the Aleutian island chain to Alaska."⁴³ The delineation of America's new Cold War boundaries in the region also signaled an end to the isolation of the Ryukyus and the beginning of militarization there. Nowhere was this more dramatically effected than in Okinawa, which was transformed into a huge military base complex that would soon be dubbed the "Keystone of the Pacific."

The internal and external boundaries of the Ryukyus had to be reconfigured after the NSC in early May 1949 called for maximizing political and economic security in the islands. Maj. Gen. Joseph R. Sheetz began spearheading a comprehensive set of reform measures as soon as he arrived in Okinawa as the new Commanding General of RYCOM. On October 1, Sheetz issued a directive to establish a centralized Ryukyuan government in order to reduce the autonomous power of local civilian governments in the four main island groups.⁴⁴ The Provisional Government Assembly called for in this directive eventually paved the way for the federal system embodied in the Government of the Ryukyu Islands, which gathered representatives from the four *guntō* [island group] governments.⁴⁵ Sheetz also called for a reorganization of the military government along the lines of SCAP's "indirect" administration in Japan, so that American civil administrators could operate through Ryukyuan governmental authorities. As a result, when the United States Civil Administration for the Ryukyus (USCAR) replaced the military government in December 1950, it provided counterparts for subordinate departments in the Ryukyuan government.⁴⁶ Furthermore, Sheetz implemented new economic regulations aimed at stabilizing inflation and eliminating smuggling and black market activities. In February 1950 the Ryukyu-Japan Commercial Trade Agreement was signed, resulting in the lawful circulation of daily convenience goods and thus decreasing the significance of smuggling among residents.⁴⁷

Although residents of the Ryukyus welcomed what they called "the just governance of Sheetz" (*Shiitsu zensei*),⁴⁸ in reality the groundwork for the development of a military base economy in Okinawa was being laid. Starting with Sheetz, to the extent that American policies were directed toward economic growth and welfare, they pivoted on the construction of US military bases and their related industries. Americans first began pouring money into Okinawa shortly after the founding of the People's Republic of China in October 1949. Not only did Okinawa receive the Pentagon's \$58 million program for strengthening its military reservations but also increased appropriations authorized by the US Congress in the Government and Relief in Occupied Areas (GARIOA) funds.⁴⁹ The newly brokered Ryukyu-Japan Commercial Trade Agreement secured the GARIOA funds for the

construction of military bases in Okinawa, much of which was spent on importing large amounts of Japanese products. This carefully crafted appropriation of government funds was dubbed the “double usage of the dollar,” aimed at boosting both Okinawa’s and Japan’s recovery, with Japanese industry providing the engine of growth.⁵⁰

The outbreak of the Korean War on June 25, 1950 accelerated the militarization of Okinawa and the re-integration of the Ryukyu Islands into the Japanese economy, two policies that went hand-in-hand. Both the Ryukyus and Japan immediately became an integral part of the American war effort as forward deployment bases for B-29 bombers and new F-61s and F-80s taking off for the Korean peninsula. Although both occupied areas also provided goods and services called *tokujū* (“special procurements”) for US military forces, economic recovery based on the resulting war boom developed unevenly in each place. Most industrial sectors in Japan greatly benefited from American dollars spent on these *tokujū*, such as manufactured metal products and finished textile goods, as well as services such as repairs on US tanks and aircraft.⁵¹ This accounted for what were called the “textile industry boom” and the “metal industry boom” in Japan where standards of living gradually increased.

The Ryukyu Islands also experienced a war boom, especially in the form of a “construction boom,” albeit with a catch. Construction of US military bases in Okinawa was mostly contracted out to mainland Japanese companies as well as those from the United States. The Japanese government aggressively financed Japanese construction companies, which accounted for more than half of those doing the construction, reaping great profits. The local population primarily benefited from the construction boom beginning in November 1951, when thousands of Okinawan laborers were hired for construction projects.⁵² The low cost of local labor was the most valuable commodity in the Ryukyus as far as the American military was concerned. By one measure, Japanese laborers on US military bases in Okinawa earned, at a minimum, five times more than Okinawan laborers.⁵³ In contrast to the revival of the Japanese economic powerhouse, Okinawa was thus being rebuilt within the framework of an economy centered and dependent on the US military bases.

Besides their labor power, Okinawans had one other distinctive commodity for export – scrap metal – which accounted for the so-called “scrap boom.” The Battle of Okinawa, otherwise known as the “storm of steel,” had left behind the rusting skeletons of countless American tanks, jeeps, combat planes, and half-sunken vessels.⁵⁴ RYCOM initially offered Nationalist China these rusted relics of war machines so that they could be recycled and used against the Communists in the Chinese civil war. Enterprising Okinawans profited from smuggling out their share of scrap metals through the Hong Kong route. The Korean War then replaced the Chinese civil war as a greater source of profit, as Japanese industries were willing to pay a high price for scrap that could be converted into their own *tokujū* industry.⁵⁵ Before long, entire families of Okinawans left home together to gather this valuable commodity, this time smuggling it via the Japan route. Although USCAR strictly prohibited smuggling what they claimed was the property of the US military, residents continued to dig up scrap metal wherever they could find it and sold it on the black market.⁵⁶

The US military redoubled its efforts to stamp out smuggling during the Korean War,

especially after valuable scrap metals and even *senka* such as pistols, machine guns, and grenades began to be stolen and smuggled out of Okinawa.⁵⁷ Just four days after the outbreak of the Korean War, the military government announced new regulations against local residents leaving the Ryukyu Islands without permission. The announcement reflected US concerns that non-ferrous metals such as bombshells and other ammunition smuggled out of their military bases might end up in enemy hands. On August 31, 1950 the military government ordered all local newspapers such as the *Uruma Shinpō* (later, the *Ryukyu Shimpō*) to publish warnings against smugglers, illegal entrants, and owners and crew of unregistered ships.⁵⁸ In addition, the US Navy periodically mobilized landing ships (LSTs) – pilot ships of over 15,000-ton class – for apprehending smugglers. The defense perimeter of these ships covered Kuchinoshima to the north to the shores of Yonaguni to the south.⁵⁹ In fact, maintaining strict control over these islands on the northern and southern borders of the Ryukyu Islands emerged as a top priority for the military government during the Korean War.

From about 1948, military government and SCAP officials alike became increasingly concerned with another element in illegal border-crossings; namely, what they perceived to be “communist infiltration” into their respective zones of occupation. SCAP’s Civil Intelligence Section, established in early 1948, functioned like the CIA in occupied Japan.⁶⁰ The primary responsibility of its Counter-Intelligence Corps (CIC) was to identify and monitor “subversive elements” who might commit “acts prejudicial to the Occupation.” The CIC in the Ryukyu Islands was under the control of RYCOM. Like the Far East Command based in Japan, RYCOM was thoroughly committed to the containment of “communism” while preventing political activists from infiltrating its command. According to Kinjō Ryōan, who was employed by the CIC, “the CIC was not interested in smuggling per se. Instead, it was concerned with people who entered [the Ryukyus] from the outside, since spies were using smuggling ships to move about.”⁶¹ The military government lent the four Guntō police patrol cruisers to apprehend smugglers, while replacing ineffective civilian police with American Military Police and CIC personnel. As a result of these stepped-up measures, an *Okinawa Times* article quoted official figures of captured smuggling vessels jumping from 19 in 1949 to 109 ships just through August of 1950.⁶²

In the midst of growing concern over “communist infiltration,” a new set of travel regulations euphemistically called the “passport system” replaced repatriation between Japan and the Ryukyu Islands. Allegedly granting special permission to a limited number of temporary visitors “for compassionate reasons,” in reality SCAP and military government authorities began screening out political activists branded as agitators. Starting in August 1949 travel from Japan to the Ryukyus was permitted to individuals who were not deemed a security risk, based on lengthy investigations into their backgrounds. In order to obtain a travel permit, a police report had to be filed to determine whether or not the applicant had any political affiliations deemed detrimental to American interests. Upon receiving the security clearance, applicants were required to sign an oath swearing that they were entering the Ryukyus for legitimate purposes such as visiting family members. In order to emphasize this point, travelers were warned that they would be under constant surveillance, and that any violations would receive immediate punishment.⁶³ Similar

regulations were adopted in December 1949 for residents of the Ryukyus requesting special permission to travel to Japan.

The passport system highlighted unresolved questions regarding the legal status of residents in the Ryukyus. When Okinawan and Amamian residents of Japan traveled to their home islands, they were required to go through immigration procedures. A Ryukyuan immigration official inspected their passports issued by the Japanese government, which listed them as Japanese nationals. On the other hand, when Ryukyuan residents traveled to Japan, they carried passports issued by USCAR that listed each individual as a "Resident of the Ryukyus," without reference to their nationality. Although the Japanese government pushed to have residents in the Ryukyus recognized as Japanese nationals,⁶⁴ SCAP and USCAR avoided addressing complicated legal questions surrounding nationality and citizenship. Furthermore, CIC agents monitoring immigration procedures were more concerned about the political orientation and activities of border-crossers, including those who espoused reversion of the Ryukyus to Japan.

Cross-Border Reversion Movements in Okinawa and Amami

The incorporation of the Ryukyu Islands into America's Cold War boundaries meant closer ties and greater access to Japan, but the border at the 30th parallel still separated the two sides. The possibility of the Ryukyus' return to Japanese sovereignty was anathema to the US military, which aimed to retain the chain of islands as a valuable strategic asset. In the immediate postwar years, most residents in the Ryukyus were too preoccupied with rebuilding their lives to give much thought to political issues, and the few who did endorsed autonomy and independence from Japan. Nevertheless, by the early 1950s the reversion issue rapidly emerged to the forefront of public debate in Okinawa, and those who had journeyed to Japan, legally or otherwise, helped spur on this process.

Some of the earliest border-crossers were actually political activists who later became influential figures in the reversion movement. Yoshida Shien, for example, was working for the Okinawa Prefectural Office in Fukuoka, Japan, when he illegally entered Okinawa in late July 1946.⁶⁵ The Prefectural Office entrusted Yoshida to embark on a secret mission to investigate postwar conditions in Okinawa, since little information was available in Japan about what had transpired since the Battle of Okinawa. Entering Okinawa aboard a small steam-engine boat disguised as a fishing vessel, Yoshida attempted to meet Shikiya Kōshin, his prewar colleague and then-Governor of Okinawa. Although Shikiya declined to be seen publicly with a "stowaway" like Yoshida, other Okinawan officials secretly exchanged information about existing conditions in Okinawa and Japan.⁶⁶ Upon his return to Japan, Yoshida was appointed as the new director of the Tokyo Office of Okinawa Prefecture. Having witnessed firsthand the devastation and poor living conditions in Okinawa under US military rule, Yoshida soon became an enthusiastic supporter of reversion to Japan.

Yoshida Shien was one of the few Okinawan residents in Japan who advocated reversion in the early postwar years, but hardly any individual or organization within the Ryukyu Islands did so.⁶⁷ Instead, the Navy's initial policy of dismantling Japanese institutions won the support of many Okinawans, as reflected in Governor Shikiya's inaugural address promising to replace Japanese rule by building a "golden age for Okinawa." However, as Okinawans eager for self-government began to criticize Shikiya for failing to deliver on this

promise, the growing opposition against him led to the formation of the first political parties in 1947. On June 15, Nakasone Genwa founded the Okinawa Democratic Alliance (Minshu Dōmei), advocating greater autonomy for Okinawa, independent from Japan. On July 20, Senaga Kamejirō founded the Okinawa People's Party (Jinmintō), which was even more explicit about the need to "destroy Japan's military clique," "establish popular government," and "liberate the Okinawan race."⁶⁸ These and other political parties initially shunned Japan while welcoming American-style democracy, although their quest for autonomy would later put them on a collision course with the military government.

The repatriation of progressive Okinawans who were politically active in Japan proved instrumental in the formation of opposition parties. In particular, members of the League of Okinawans (Okinawajin Renmei) in Japan who repatriated after mid-1946 lent organizational experience to emerging local political figures like Nakasone Genwa in forming the Democratic Alliance.⁶⁹ The League was formed on November 11, 1945 to protect the livelihood of Okinawan residents throughout Japan, and soon espoused political independence for Okinawa. The League was also closely associated with the Japan Communist Party (JCP), which was reemerging as a powerful political force under the leadership of Tokuda Kyūichi, himself an Okinawan who supported independence. At Tokuda's initiative, in February 1946 the JCP sent a message to the League of Okinawans in Tokyo celebrating the detachment of the Ryukyus from Japan. Okinawans who either worked together with Tokuda or were otherwise involved in the socialist movement and union activism in prewar Japan also repatriated to Okinawa. Many joined forces with Senaga Kamejirō and the People's Party.⁷⁰ As a result, CIC officials subjected the People's Party to constant surveillance, although no evidence was uncovered at the time that directly linked the Party to the JCP.

Repatriation produced even more direct political links between progressive forces in the Amami Islands and Japan, leading to Amamian support for reversion long before any political organization did so in Okinawa. In December 1946, for example, JCP member and Amami native Kuru Gizō repatriated from Japan, after receiving Tokuda Kyūichi's blessing to establish a communist party in Amami.⁷¹ The following April Kuru formed the underground Amami Communist Party (ACP) with the help of Nakamura Yasutarō, editor of Amami Times and a Marxist who had endured years of incarceration for his beliefs in prewar Japan. Nakamura subsequently managed to smuggle in official publications of the JCP, such as *Zen'ei* and *Akahata*, aboard repatriation ships coming into Amami.⁷² Although the JCP officially advocated independence for Okinawa and Amami, the ACP came out in support of reversion, due to the strong sense of identification with Japan it shared with the majority of fellow islanders. In response to the news of a possible early peace treaty between the Allied Powers and Japan in mid-1947, an ACP-affiliated youth organization helped organize a public rally where many endorsed Amami's return to Japan.⁷³

Several years later, the ACP joined other political and social organizations in Amami that pushed forward the reversion issue to the forefront of their common agenda. Popular resistance against the military government's empty promises of democratization, coupled with poor economic conditions, led to protests in 1948-49 that evolved into the reversion movement of the early 1950s.⁷⁴ In August 1948, for example, Okinawa dockworkers at the US Navy port in Naha organized a general strike to protest against

harsh labor conditions and low wages. When RYCOM responded by closing all community ration stores and threatened to cut off food rations, the labor strike quickly transformed into a food ration struggle (*shokuryō tōsō*) throughout Okinawa.⁷⁵ Although the ration stores were eventually reopened, RYCOM announced in January 1949 that the price of rationed food would be increased by three times in order to reign in chronic inflation. Nakasone Genwa and Senaga Kamejirō immediately formed a popular front, organizing mass meetings and circulating petitions. They ultimately convinced all twenty-three members of the Okinawa Assembly to resign in protest.⁷⁶ The resulting food price crisis transcended not only class and politics but also geographical boundaries among the four main island groups, affecting residents throughout the Ryukyus. In Amami Oshima, public officials who could no longer afford to live off of their low salaries resigned and joined the black market, and some police officers even reportedly walked off of their job to become captains of smuggling boats.⁷⁷

While the majority of those who engaged in smuggling were motivated by economic reasons, increasing numbers did so as a form of political and social protest. For example, the military government's neglect of basic educational needs drove teachers to join the Yamato trade route to smuggle in teaching materials. In Amami Oshima, an incident involving two schoolteachers who smuggled back Japanese textbooks in October 1948 received an outpouring of public sympathy when they were fired from their jobs for illegally entering Japan.⁷⁸ Then in December 1949, a member of the Okinawa Youth Alliance in Japan smuggled into Okinawa sixty copies of Iha Fuyū's *Okinawa Rekishi Monogatari* (The Tale of Okinawan History). Known as the "father of Okinawans studies," this book was the culmination of Iha's lifelong work on Okinawa.⁷⁹ At a time when Okinawa lay in ruins and under US military rule, these smuggled books served as history textbooks for teachers and a source of pride and inspiration for Okinawan activists. Often becoming teachers upon illegally entering Okinawa, members of the Youth Alliance and the League of Okinawans smuggled in copies of the new pacifist and democratic Constitution of Japan.⁸⁰ Thus finding a way to keep one another informed, schoolteachers soon emerged as central figures in the reversion movement.

As Okinawan sociologist Ishihara Masaie demonstrated in his seminal work on *senka* and smuggling, the Yamato trade evolved into social and political networks between residents in the Ryukyus and Okinawan residents in Japan.⁸¹ Countering the censorship imposed by U.S. military authorities on either side of the 30th parallel, Okinawan smugglers brought back uncensored information about Japan, both in print and by word of mouth. These returning border-crossers spread the news, based on their first-hand accounts, of SCAP's democratization as well as the economic recovery of Japan that benefited Okinawan residents there but which was denied in the Ryukyus under US military rule. They particularly noted the booming Japanese economy during the Korean War, making Okinawans aware of the widening gap between Japan proper and the Ryukyuan economy. Once local residents recognized that US policy towards the Ryukyus was centered overwhelmingly on protecting its military assets, they began voicing their desire for reversion in order to gain political rights and economic aid from the Japanese government.

Although a few individuals in Japan had been advocating the return of the Ryukyu Islands to Japan, Amamian organizations were the first to lead a sustained reversion movement. As

soon as news broke in late 1949 that the Allied powers were engaged in peace treaty negotiations with the Japanese government, Amami residents and those in Japan began organizing to support reversion. Shortly after an Amami youth group in Miyazaki Prefecture publicly appealed for reversion in mid-February 1950, a student association in Tokyo and a youth group in Naze, Amami Oshima responded by holding similar rallies.⁸² These groups also initiated petition drives that were soon adopted by the Zenkoku Amami Rengō Sōhonbu (Federation of Amami Islanders' Association), or Amami Rengō. On November 15 the Amami Rengō sent a four-page petition to General MacArthur explaining that Amamians were Japanese nationals, not Ryukyans, and that they opposed the indefinite continuation of US military rule. The Amami Ōshima Nihon Fukki Kyōgikai (Amami Oshima Reversion Council), or Fukkyō, formed on February 14, 1951, immediately began collecting signatures of all residents over the age of fourteen calling for the return of the islands to Japan. By April 10, Fukkyō had collected 139,348 signatures, or 99.8 percent of Amamians, who supported the early return to Japan.⁸³

Just as the underground flow of people and information between Japan and Amami helped unite the cross-border reversion movement, a similar strategy was soon adopted in Okinawa. More than a month after the Fukkyō was formed in Amami, the first organized reversion movement was launched in Okinawa on March 29 with the formation of the Okinawa Nihon Fukki Sokushin Kiseikai (Association for the Promotion of Reversion to Japan), or Fukki Kiseikai. Following the example set by Fukkyō in Amami, the Fukki Kiseikai circulated petitions throughout Okinawa calling for reversion to Japan. By July 1951, 199,000 people, roughly 72 percent of the electorate in Okinawa had signed these petitions, which were sent to Japanese and American delegates attending the San Francisco Peace Conference.⁸⁴

Although Okinawan activists harnessed their own cross-border networks with pro-reversion forces in Japan, they were also spurred on by the surging momentum of the reversion movement in neighboring Amami. News of the latest developments in Amami was readily accessible, since as many as 50,000 Amamians entered Okinawa between 1950 and 1953 to work as laborers on the expanding US military bases.

Political activists from Amami as well as from Japan often disguised themselves as military base laborers in order to enter Okinawa, thus helping to spread the reversion movement throughout the Ryukyus.⁸⁵ The defiant act of crossing the 30th parallel border once again served an important role in the Amami reversion movement after the radio broadcast on July 10, 1951 detailed the final draft of the Peace Treaty. According to Article 3 of the draft, the United States sought the right to place the Ryukyu Islands under American trusteeship, implying that the islands' executive, legislative, and judiciary powers could indefinitely be controlled by the US. Upon organizing two large-scale citizen rallies, Fukkyō began conducting island-wide hunger strikes and decided to send delegates to Japan to make one final appeal for reversion directly to Prime Minister Yoshida. On August 10, eleven Fukkyō delegates from Amami illegally entered Japan to join hands with Amami Rengō, capturing national attention at this critical stage in the reversion movement.⁸⁶ One group was arrested and imprisoned for illegal entry, while the others managed to reach the Fukkyō office in Kagoshima, from where they found safe passage through Osaka before arriving at the Amami Rengō's Tokyo headquarters. In the meantime, members of the Fukkyō and

Amami Rengō contacted major Japanese news agencies such as *Asahi* and *Mainichi*, which gave extensive and sympathetic coverage to these delegates.⁸⁷ Riding a wave of increasing public support, the delegates from Amami were able to meet with Prime Minister Yoshida, Japanese Diet members, and SCAP officials, making a strong case for the reversion of their islands when Japan regained its sovereignty.

Conclusions: The Ryukyu Islands Re-divided

The San Francisco Peace Treaty signed on September 8, 1951 spelled the end of the Allied Occupation of Japan, and its Article 3 legitimated the division between postwar Japan and the Ryukyu Islands. Although most residents of the Ryukyus were disillusioned by the prospects of indefinite American military rule, the reversion movement in Amami Oshima only intensified as a result. In fact, the on-going Amami reversion movement was receiving such sympathetic media coverage in Japan and abroad that it prompted the US government to conduct two investigative studies of the Amami Islands. The first was a public opinion survey compiled by USCAR's Civil Information and Education (CI&E) office, which found that the overwhelming support for reversion was due to a combination of: a) feelings of close affinity and identification with the Japanese people and culture; b) a tendency to dissociate Amami from Okinawa and other Guntos; c) a belief that a trusteeship administration for Amami Oshima would be unsatisfactory. The survey concluded that favorable attitudes toward reversion "seem to be too intense and deep-seated to be changed overnight by any feasible information program."⁸⁸ Instead of launching a propaganda campaign in favor of trusteeship, the second investigative report compiled by anthropologist Douglas Haring recommended returning the islands to Japan. Detailing his findings that the people of the Amami Islands were "culturally more Japanese than Okinawans," Haring suggested that the reunion of the islands to Japan could help win back the hearts and minds of Amamians.⁸⁹ Unbeknownst to Amamians at the time, these reports would soon convince US policymakers to readjust the territorial boundaries of the Ryukyus.

Seven and a half years after the detachment of the Amami Islands from Kagoshima Prefecture, the US government in August 1953 declared its intention to return the island group to Japan. By then the Joint Chiefs of Staff were convinced that the Northern Ryukyus were of minor strategic value, especially in contrast to Okinawa, the "keystone of the Pacific." The US military's initial interest in the deep-water base at Koniya Bay in the Oshima Straits was ultimately deemed irrelevant. On the other hand, RYCOM from late 1949 put more value in the airfields that were being developed in central and southern Okinawa. The fact that the rugged and mountainous terrain of Amami Oshima was unsuitable for airfields made it easier for the US military to dispense with the territory. When the Amami Islands finally reverted to Japan on December 25, 1953, the external boundary of the Ryukyu Islands retracted to the archipelago south of 27° North Latitude.⁹⁰ The Amami Islands were thus transferred across the new borderline and back to Japan, while the Ryukyus remained under American military rule. Although the US military's strategic and security policies were paramount, the Amami reversion movement was nevertheless one of the most successful sociopolitical movements in postwar Japan.⁹¹

The effectiveness of the Amami reversion movement can be characterized by its unwavering dedication, high level of organization and, most importantly, the strong

identification with Japan and the cross-border unity with Amami residents in Japan. These traits rested on firm historical ties between Amami and Japan, as well as cultural bonds that simultaneously distanced Amamians from Okinawans. Douglas Haring found that Amamians themselves were often “too close to the issues to see them in perspective, but there is no question about their basic loyalties and complete psychological identification with Japan.”⁹² Haring also observed that throughout the prewar period, Amamians seeking social mobility moved to Kagoshima and beyond until nearly every Amami family was said to have a close relative living in Japan. In the early 1950s, the Amami residents in Japan, estimated at a population of 200,000, was nearly the same size as the 219,000 people residing in the Amami Islands. These large and active Amami communities in Kagoshima, Hanshin, and Tokyo succeeded in linking their reversion movement with the one unfolding within Amami. In this process, those conducting hunger strikes in Amami also received strong support from the authorities in Kagoshima Prefecture, which lobbied the central government for Amami’s re-incorporation into Japan.⁹³

In contrast to Amami, US military authorities exploited Okinawa’s ambivalent identification with Japan in its reversion movement. While support for reversion was strong in Okinawa, those with bitter memories of Japanese prejudice and discriminatory treatment towards them had mixed feelings. For example, a newspaper report on public opinion concerning reversion captures this ambivalence. As one Okinawan explained, “those who oppose American rule talk about racial prejudice and other related problems, but I believe that such things will be much worse under the Japanese.”⁹⁴ Ever since the OSS report in 1944 recommended utilizing cleavages between Okinawans and Japanese in psychological warfare, the military government attempted to foster a “Ryukyuan” identity to justify the separation and military rule in the islands. Although most residents may not have perceived themselves as “Ryukyuan,” the promise of American-style democracy and self-government in the immediate aftermath of war contributed to the wavering identity of Okinawans.⁹⁵ The Democratic Alliance thus continued to champion independence while the Socialist Party called for an American trusteeship going into the elections in March 1951. Even the pro-reversion coalition in Okinawa, the Fukki Kiseikai, split up shortly after the signing of the Peace Treaty in September, as the movement came to a standstill at a time when it was gaining momentum in Amami.

The fact that the reversion movement did not emerge in either Okinawa or Amami until the early 1950s demonstrates that questions of identity alone fail to capture the full range of motivations behind its supporters. Residents in the Ryukyu Islands expected and actively demanded greater political autonomy only to be disillusioned by details of the peace treaty negotiations, which revealed that the United States planned to continue its military occupation. The petitions circulated throughout the Ryukyus in 1951 were essentially a referendum against US military rule and its draconian ordinances, which convinced residents that indefinite occupation was actually akin to colonial rule. Reversion to Japan, on the other hand, promised democratic rights enshrined in the new Japanese Constitution, as well as the full benefits of citizenship. Pragmatic considerations of how to access Japanese health insurance, postal savings, pensions, and old-age benefits – all of which residents of the former Okinawa Prefecture were legally entitled to before 1945 – were crucial for supporters of the reversion movement.

Economic considerations also motivated residents in the Ryukyu Islands to support reversion, as many hoped to reap the benefits of the resurgent Japanese economy rather than remain a ward of the US military base economy. The political and economic barriers erected by the military government after the Pacific War suffocated the island economy, at least until the emergence of the intra-Ryukyuan smuggling trade. Against all odds, isolated islanders transformed a fledgling barter trade into a thriving cross-border black market trade, spurring economic interaction among the four island groups. The military government was forced to respond by introducing economic reform measures in 1948 and 1949 that included re-introducing a free enterprise system and inter-island trade. On the other hand, those engaged in the Yamato smuggling trade returned with news of just how much the Japanese economy was benefiting from the Korean War, as evidenced by the large profits some of them made in Japan. The widening gap between the burgeoning Japanese economy and the military base economy in Okinawa, in turn, led many residents to support reversion. As one Okinawan economist bluntly explained, instead of advocating reversion because “Okinawans are Japanese,” he supported reversion because “economic rehabilitation in Okinawa can be sped up by reuniting with Japan.”⁹⁶

The Yamato trade route between the Ryukyu Islands and Japan once dominated by smuggling thus began to share the scene with the cross-border reversion movement that began in the early 1950s. This indicated that the local residents’ economic struggle for survival through smuggling was replaced by a socio-political resistance manifested by the unfolding reversion movement. Political activists were now illegally traveling between Japan and Okinawa, and between Japan and Amami, often on the same route and same boats as those who were smuggling black market goods. Just as smugglers in the Ryukyus utilized their contacts with the Okinawan and Amamian communities in Japan, those residents in Japan also sneaked into the Ryukyus to investigate conditions in their home islands. This two-way flow of people, goods, and information enabled reversion activists in Japan and in Okinawa/Amami to coordinate their activities. Smuggling and the reversion movement were two forms of resistance against USCAR’s tight border controls and travel restrictions, as well as an overall resistance against the policy of separation between Japan and the Ryukyus.

Even after the reversion of the Amami Islands in 1953, residents in the Ryukyus continued to challenge the external boundaries that denied them free passage into Japan. Ishihara Masaie has keenly observed that the annual “4.28 rally at sea” (*4.28 kaijō shūkai*) held during the height of the Okinawa reversion movement in the 1960s was reminiscent of earlier smuggling operations.⁹⁷



Figure 4. 4.28 Rally at Sea (4.28 kaijō shūkai) at the 27th Parallel Border
 Source: Okinawa Times Publishers, *Shashin Kiroku Okinawa Sengoshi*

Boats carrying Okinawan and Japanese activists convened at sea on the 27th parallel on April 28, the “day of humiliation,” when Japan regained its sovereignty, divided from Okinawa. Many of these activists also protested the continuing US military presence in Japan and Okinawa, both of which served as forward deployment bases for the American-led war that was then raging in Vietnam. These actions at sea can be seen as an extension of the earlier period of economic and political resistance. The demonstrations at sea symbolized their rejection of the border, the division from Japan, and continuing US military rule in the Ryukyus.

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Notes

¹ For recent scholarship on the subject, see Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "The Frontiers of Democracy: Migration, Border Controls, and Citizenship in Postwar Japan," JCAS Symposium Series 22 (2005).

² Separate policy studies were prepared for such Japanese-held island territories as the Kurile Islands, Bonin Islands, and the Spratly Islands.

³ This introduction to the Territorial Subcommittee's report, "T-343 Liuchiu (Ryukyu) Islands," is cited from Robert D. Eldridge, *The Origins of the Bilateral Okinawa Problem: Okinawa in Postwar U.S.-Japan Relations* (New York: Garland, 2001), p. 52.

⁴ The report ended by considering three policy proposals for the Ryukyu Islands: 1) transfer to China; 2) international administration; and 3) conditional retention by Japan. For further details, see Ota Masahide, "The U.S. Occupation of Okinawa and Postwar Reforms in Japan Proper." In Robert E. Ward and Sakamoto Yoshikazu (eds.), *Democratizing Japan: The Allied Occupation* (University of Hawaii Press, 1987), pp. 296-297.

⁵ The OSS, which was the predecessor of what later became the CIA, had been conducting ethnographic research on the large immigrant Okinawan community in Hawaii since the spring of 1944. A copy of the final report by the OSS can be found in Okinawa kenritsu toshokan shiryō henshūhitsu (ed.), *Okinawa kenshi shiryō hen 2, The Okinawas of the Loo Choo Islands* (Yūgen gaisha san insatsu, 1996).

⁶ According to the OSS report, "Psychological Warfare in its various aspects might well be brought to bear upon the cleavage . . . between the two Japanese groups, each with its own physical type, its own history, its own dynasties, mores and attitudes." *The Okinawas of the Loo Choo Islands*, p. 122.

⁷ David John Obermiller, "The U.S. Occupation of Okinawa: Politicizing and Contesting Okinawan Identity, 1945-1955" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Iowa, 2006), pp. 87-89.

⁸ The directive also stated that all property belonging to the Japanese government and military was to be treated as public property and controlled as military requirements dictated. Directive from CINCPAC-CINCPAC to CG Tenth U.S. Field Army, subject: "Political, Economic and Financial Directive for Military Government in the Occupied Islands of the Nansei Shoto and Adjacent Waters," March 1, 1945. A copy of this directive can be found in Arnold G. Fisch, Jr., *Military Government in the Ryukyu Islands, 1945-1950* (Center of Military History, United States Army, 1987), pp. 262-271.

⁹ This is the title of a book written by Urasaki Jun, who was an official employed by Okinawa Prefecture. Urasaki Jun, *Kieta Okinawaken* (Okinawa jiji shuppansha, 1965). The division between Japan and the Ryukyus was actually formalized on July 2, 1945 when Japanese military officials signed surrender documents at Kadena, Okinawa.

¹⁰ Okinawans hardly ever referred to themselves as "Ryukyuan," many having seen through the US military's adoption of this name as part of a heavy-handed effort to separate them from Japan. Furthermore, Okinawans were disinclined to identify themselves as "Ryukyuan" because mainland Japanese since the prewar era had used the name, *Ryukyu-jin*, as a pejorative term implying that they were inferior to the Japanese. The indigenous name for Okinawans is *Uchinaachu*, a term that was discouraged from usage by those who advocated assimilation to Japan before the war, but is used today by Okinawans who are proud of their distinctive identity. I would like to thank Steve Rabson for this clarification.

¹¹ Okinawan men and women over twenty-five years of age were eligible to vote, a

historical event that preceded universal suffrage in Japan by three months, as enfranchised women turned out to vote in high numbers.

¹² Quoted from Nicholas Evan Sarantakes, *Keystone: The American Occupation of Okinawa and U.S.-Japanese Relations* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2000), p. 34.

¹³ Geographically speaking, as shown in Figure 1, Okinawa and Amami Oshima are the two largest islands among what the Japanese refer to as the Nansei Islands; the former belongs to the subgroup called Okinawa Islands while the latter are referred to as the Satsunan Islands. The Nansei Islands consist of the entire island chain southwest of Kagoshima Prefecture in Kyushu, Japan. The Amami Islands are located approximately halfway between Kagoshima and Okinawa, while the Tokara Islands are closer to Kagoshima than they are to the Amami Islands.

¹⁴ In fact, the Amami and Tokara Islands had not been a part of the Ryukyus since 1609. As a result of a military expedition led by Shimazu Iehisa against the Ryukyu Kingdom in 1609, the Amami and Tokara Islands were incorporated into the Satsuma domain. From 1609 until shortly after the Meiji Restoration in 1868, the Amami and Tokara Islands remained a part of the Satsuma domain, which also dominated the Ryukyu Kingdom. When the Meiji government established modern-day prefectures in 1871, the Amami and Tokara Islands were included in Kagoshima Prefecture while the Ryukyu Islands south of 27° North Latitude became known as Okinawa Prefecture in 1879.

¹⁵ This SCAP directive, "Governmental and Administrative Separation of Certain Outlying Areas from Japan" (SCAPIN 677), formally separated the Ryukyus, the Ogasawaras and other former Japanese territories.

¹⁶ Fisch, *Military Government in the Ryukyu Islands*, pp. 111-112.

¹⁷ Namihira Tsuneo, "Amerika gunseika no sengo fukkō: 1950 nen zengo no okinawa, soshite amami." In Nakano Toshio and Yakabi Osamu (eds.), *Okinawa no senryō to Nihon no fukkō: shokuminchishugi wa ikani keizoku shitaka* (Seikyūsha, 2006), pp. 221-223.

¹⁸ Following the Nimitz Proclamation that administratively separated the Ryukyus from Japan, Navy Military Government Proclamation No. 4 prohibited foreign trade and financial transactions.

¹⁹ The free movement of residents in Okinawa during daytime was first permitted in March 1947, and the curfew at night was finally lifted in March 1948. Until then, even local residents traveling to a neighboring district without permission from the police were arrested for trespassing. Miyagi Etsujirō, *Okinawa senryō no 27-nenkan: Amerika gunsei to bunka no henyō* (Iwanami Shoten, 1992), pp. 11-17.

²⁰ According to Wakabayashi Chiyo, the expression "off-limits" held two meanings in symbolizing the American occupation of Okinawa. One was an Okinawa under the exclusive control of the US military, cut off from international society. Another aspect referred to the internal manifestations of this condition by which people were driven out and swept out of their villages, and which became off-limits in their own native island. See Wakabayashi Chiyo, "'Ofu-rimittsu' no shima," *Gendai shisō*, March edition (Seidosha, 1999), p. 24.

²¹ Murayama Iekuni, *Amami fukkishi* (Nankai Nichinichi Shinbunsha, 2006), p. 50.

²² According to a military government proclamation on February 3, 1947, unauthorized travel between Okinawa and Amami became a punishable offense. Satake Kyōko, *Gunseika amami no mikkō, mitsubōeki* (Nanpō shinsha, 2003), p. 222.

²³ SCAP explicitly prohibited unauthorized immigration and directed the Japanese

government to mobilize its police force to be on guard against illegal border-crossers. SCAPIN 244, November 8, 1945.

²⁴ According to Arnold Fisch, by early 1946 the Navy found that the anchorages in Buckner Bay, Okinawa, were “not as desirable as originally thought,” and subsequently “lost interest in the Ryukyus except as a location for minor facilities.” *Military Government in the Ryukyu Islands*, p. 174. On January 1, 1947, the Army’s command in the Pacific was reorganized as the Far East Command (FECOM). RYCOM was placed under the jurisdiction of the general headquarters of FECOM in Tokyo.

²⁵ General Headquarters, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, “Treatment of Foreign Nationals,” *History of the Nonmilitary Activities of the Occupation of Japan, 1945 through 1950*. Volume VI, Part 4, pp. 133-134.

²⁶ Edith Kaneshiro, “Our Home Will Be the Five Continents”: Okinawan Migration to Hawaii, California, and the Philippines, 1899-1941” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1999).

²⁷ Wakabayashi Chiyo convincingly argues that one of the major transformations of postwar Okinawan society was that residents were prevented from maintaining such transnational links with overseas Okinawans. Wakabayashi Chiyo, “Jeepu to sajin: senryōshoki okinawa shakai no henyō to hen’i,” *Okinawa bunka kenkyū*, vol. 29 (March 2003), pp. 244-45, 254.

²⁸ The amount of rations authorized to Okinawans was initially set at 1990 calories per day, but was later reduced to 1530 calories per day due to food shortage. From the Deputy Commander for Military Government to the Commander, NOB Okinawa and Chief MG Officer, “Final Report of Military Government Activities for Period from 1 April 1945 to 1 July 1946.” Dated July 1, 1946. Found in Military Archives Division, National Archives and Records Service, RG 260, Box 25.

²⁹ Okinawa Taimusu (ed.), *Shomin ga tsuzuru okinawa sengo seikatsu-shi* (Okinawa Taimusu-sha, 1998), pp. 32-38.

³⁰ For a short time after the war this currency was used simultaneously with the new yen being circulated in Japan proper. From 1948, however, the circulation of the new Japanese yen was prohibited and the B yen became the only legal currency used in Okinawa.

³¹ Okuno Shūji, *Natsuko: Okinawa mitsubōeki no jō’ō* (Bungei shunjū, 2005), pp. 138-139. Trafficking *senka* was so common that from February to September 1946, 1200 out of the 1260 cases handled by the Okinawa civil courts involved *senka* and trespassing. Namihiro, “Amerika gunseika no sengo fukkō,” p. 221.

³² This Ryukyuan poem, or Ryūka, and its explanation can be found in Yakabi Osamu, “Ekkyō suru okinawa: Amerikanizumu to bunka hen’yō,” *Kindai nihon no bunka-shi*, vol. 9 (Iwanami Shoten, 2002). p. 249.

³³ Okinawa Taimusu, *Okinawa no shōgen: gekidō 25-nenshi*, vol. 1 (Okinawa Taimusu-sha, 1971), pp. 205-206.

³⁴ By the time the Chinese Communists drove the Nationalists into Taiwan in 1949, the smuggling activities in the Taiwan and Hong Kong routes gradually came to a halt, replaced by the Japan route via Kuchinoshima. Yakabi Osamu, “Kokkyō no kengen: Okinawa yonaguni no mitsubōeki shūsoku no haikei,” *Gendai shisō*, vol. 31, no. 11 (September 2003), pp. 187-188.

³⁵ Okinawa Taimusu, *Okinawa no shōgen*, pp. 205-206.

³⁶ “Round-table discussion on the age of smuggling,” Satake, *Gunseika amami no mikkō, mitsubōeki*, pp. 209-233.

³⁷ Military Government Special Proclamations No. 29 and 30, dated July 21, 1948, stipulated that Japanese yen had to be converted to the Type “B” military yen under penalty of law.

³⁸ Fisch, *Military Government in the Ryukyu Islands*, pp. 149-150.

³⁹ For more details, see Itoman City’s official website, “The Development of Itoman’s Fishing Industry.”

⁴⁰ Ishihara Masaie, *Kūhaku no okinawa shakai-shi: senka to mitsubōeki no jidai* (Banseisha, 2000), p. 239. Itoman residents in Kagoshima often came in contact with Amami residents, who had an equally well-organized base for their smuggling network.

⁴¹ *Asahi shinbun*, December 31, 1949. The editorial section of the *Asahi shinbun* on March 18, 1950 carried another article describing a high-profile arrest of nineteen people involved in the Ryukyus-Japan trade based in the Hanshin area. The authorities in this case estimated that the total amount of trade was worth anywhere between 200 to 500 million yen.

⁴² The apathy and neglect that characterized U.S. military rule helped Okinawa earn the nickname, the “forgotten island,” during the early postwar years. This nickname was coined by journalist Frank Gibney after his visit to Okinawa in 1949. See Frank Gibney, “Forgotten Island,” *Time*. November 28, 1949.

⁴³ MacArthur’s quotation is from *The New York Times*, March 2, 1949.

⁴⁴ U.S. Military Government, Ryukyu Islands, Directive No. 30, October 1, 1949.

⁴⁵ The four *guntō*, literally meaning island group) governments, with directly elected governors and assemblymen, were inaugurated in November 1950. The Provisional Government Assembly, made up of representatives hand-picked by U.S. authorities from throughout the Ryukyus, was inaugurated in April 1951. Both were replaced by the establishment of the Government of the Ryukyu Islands in April 1952.

⁴⁶ For further details, see Fisch, *Military Government in the Ryukyu Islands*, p. 128.

⁴⁷ Yakabi, “Kokkyō no kengen,” pp. 193-194.

⁴⁸ Namihira, “Amerika gunseika no sengo fukkō,” p. 237. The Japanese word, *zensei* means “good governance.”

⁴⁹ Takemae Eiji, *Inside GHQ: The Allied Occupation of Japan and its Legacy* (Continuum, 2002), p. 513.

⁵⁰ Fisch, *Military Government in the Ryukyu Islands*, pp. 162-163.

⁵¹ John Dower provides a more detailed list of these *tokujū*, which he estimates brought an estimated \$2.3 billion into Japan between June 1950 and the end of 1953. See John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Aftermath of World War II* (W. W. Norton: New Press, 1999), pp. 541-542.

⁵² Fisch, *Military Government in the Ryukyu Islands*, pp. 144-145; 164-165.

⁵³ Another figure showed that Japanese laborers at military bases earned, at the minimum, \$0.83 (99.6), which was eight to nine times more than Okinawan laborers who earned \$0.10 (11.0). Obermiller, “The U.S. Occupation of Okinawa,” pp. 216-217.

⁵⁴ Further destruction caused by strong typhoons as well as other war-damaged military vehicles from the Far East Command dumped in Okinawa resulted in an estimated 2.5 million metric tons of available scrap iron, copper, brass, and other non-ferrous metals.

⁵⁵ Ishihara, *Kūhaku no okinawa shakai-shi*, pp. 234-235.

⁵⁶ In the meantime RYCOM's export of scrap metals increased dramatically until it surpassed sugar as the number one export from Okinawa in 1951. Okuno, *Natsuko*, pp. 337-338.

⁵⁷ American G.I.'s also sold military-issued supplies to civilians on the black market. The Military Police were on guard against such illicit transactions, especially when they involved the loss of US munitions.

⁵⁸ Yakabi, "Kokkyō no kengen," pp. 195-196.

⁵⁹ Ishihara, *Kūhaku no okinawa shakai-shi*, pp. 236-238.

⁶⁰ SCAP's Civil Intelligence Section included the Public Safety Division, the Civil Censorship Detachment, and the 441st Counter-Intelligence Corps. See Takemae, *Inside GHQ*, p. 167.

⁶¹ Okuno, *Natsuko*, pp. 87-88.

⁶² *Okinawa Times*, December 13, 1951. Cited in Okuno, *Natsuko*, p. 271.

⁶³ Violators were imprisoned or fined 30,000 Yen. For further details, see Edith Kaneshiro, "For Compassionate Reasons': Okinawan Repatriations during American Occupation of Japan." In Ryukyu University, *Kenkyū seika hōkokusho, sengo okinawa to amerika: ibunka sesshoku no sōgōteki kenkyū* (Ryukyu University, 2005), pp. 330-331.

⁶⁴ The Japanese government's ordinance (*seirei*) no. 85 issued on April 27, 1947 recognized the family registries (*koseki*) in Okinawa as Japanese family registries. The possession of a Japanese family registry has been the basis for Japanese citizenship both in the prewar and postwar eras.

⁶⁵ Yoshida Shien was a public official for Okinawa Prefectural Government before the war. With the "disappearance of Okinawa Prefecture" after the war, he was employed by the Okinawa Prefectural Office in Fukuoka.

⁶⁶ Governor Shikiya did not meet with Yoshida out of fear of potential repercussions if the military government discovered that Yoshida had illegally entered Okinawa. Matayoshi Hirokazu, the Vice Governor, was among seven or eight people who met with Yoshida Shien. This episode of illegal entry into Okinawa was retold by Zukemura Tomonobu, who accompanied Yoshida Shien on the journey. See "Hikiagesha no kikan to mikkō," *Yonabaru-chōshi, shiryō-hen, 1, Imin* (Yonabaru-chō kyōiku iinkai, 2006), pp. 217-228.

⁶⁷ One exception was Nakayoshi Ryōkō, former mayor of Shuri, who submitted a petition to the military government on August 4, 1945, requesting that Okinawa be reunited with Japan. Realizing that his repeated appeals were falling on deaf ears, however, he left Okinawa on July 23, 1946 and moved to Tokyo where he took his case directly to SCAP and the Japanese government.

⁶⁸ Ota Masahide, "The American Occupation of Okinawa and Postwar Reforms in Mainland Japan," *Essays on Okinawa Problems* (Yui shuppan, 2000), pp. 191-192.

⁶⁹ Yamashiro Zenkō and Kuwae Chōkō, for example, were a part of the League's leadership before repatriating from Tokyo, and soon thereafter became actively involved in the Democratic Alliance.

⁷⁰ Aharen Yukitomo, for example, was a labor union organizer and member of the leftist Okinawan organization called the Sekiryūkai in the Kansai region in the 1920s. He repatriated to Okinawa in 1946 and was subsequently selected as a central committee member of the People's Party.

⁷¹ Kuru returned to Japan in June to become a liaison between the ACP and the JCP headquarters in Tokyo. For further details, see Kato Tetsuro, "Aratani hakken sareta

‘Okinawa/Amami higōhō kyōsantō bunsho’ ni tsuite,” *Okinawa no higōhō kyōsantō shiryō* (Fuji shuppan, 2004).

⁷² In August 1948 Nakamura was arrested for being in possession of Communist Party journals and other materials that had been smuggled into Amami Oshima. See Nakamura Yasutaro, *Sokoku e no michi: Kōbei 8 nen Amami no fukki undōshi* (Tosho shuppan, 1984), pp. 164-176.

⁷³ Tokuda Toyomi was one of Nakamura Yasutarō’s former students and a member of the youth organization who made a speech at the rally calling for reversion. See Nankai Nichinichi Shimbun (ed.), *Gojūnenshi*, p. 117. Cited in Robert D. Eldridge, *The Return of the Amami Islands: The Reversion Movement and U.S.-Japan Relations* (Lexington Books, 2004), p. 35.

⁷⁴ As David Obermiller argues, the protest movements that preceded the reversion movement reveals the core impulse that propelled the reversion movement; namely, “popular resistance to foreign occupation and Okinawa’s neo-colonial status.” See Obermiller, “The U.S. Occupation of Okinawa,” p. 201.

⁷⁵ Miyume Tanji, *Myth, Protest and Struggle in Okinawa* (Routledge, 2006), p. 58.

⁷⁶ After the Okinawa Assembly resigned en masse on March 2, 1949, Senaga and Nakasone conducted a public meeting on May 1, 1949. At the May Day demonstration, the popular front adopted the following three slogans aimed at obtaining greater democracy and economic relief: 1) direct elections for governor and assemblymen; 2) rollback of the 1948 income taxes; and 3) increase rations of supplementary military goods. For more details, see Obermiller, “The U.S. Occupation of Okinawa,” pp. 226-235.

⁷⁷ Nankai Nichinichi Shimbun (ed.), *Gojūnenshi*, p. 109. Citation found in Eldridge, *The Return of the Amami Islands*, p. 67, footnote 29.

⁷⁸ Fukasa Genzō and Morita Tadamitsu entered Japan by sneaking aboard the Kanato Maru, a ferry liner which was to be docked in Kobe for repairs from June 1948. For a full treatment of this incident, see Satake, “Kanato Maru to kyokasho mikkō jiken,” pp. 87-133.

⁷⁹ The Okinawa Youth Alliance published the original version of this book in November 1946. Shinmon Minoru, a full-time member of the Okinawan Youth Alliance in Kanagawa Prefecture, smuggled in Iha Fuyū’s books. Ishihara, *Kūhaku no Okinawa shakai-shi*, pp. 219-228.

⁸⁰ See Ishihara, *Kūhaku no Okinawa shakai-shi*, pp. 218.

⁸¹ Based on his groundbreaking book, *Kūhaku no Okinawa shakai-shi*, I was able to confirm with Ishihara Masaie that the Ryukyuan residents’ economic struggle for survival through smuggling in the early postwar years was later replaced by a more socio-political resistance as witnessed by the reversion movement. Author’s interview with Ishihara Masaie, September 26, 2006.

⁸² Nankai Nichinichi Shimbun (ed.), *Gojūnenshi*, p. 125. For further details, see Eldridge, *The Return of the Amami Islands*, p. 41.

⁸³ Murayama, *Amami fukkishi*, p. 248. According to Eldridge, while this figure was probably exaggerated, it nevertheless shows the residents’ overwhelming support for returning the islands to Japan. Eldridge, *The Return of the Amami Islands*, p. 71, footnote 88.

⁸⁴ In addition, 88 percent of those in Miyako signed similar petitions. See Takemae, *Inside GHQ*, p. 514.

⁸⁵ One such activist was Hayashi Yoshimi, an Amami native and member of the underground Amami Communist Party, who entered Okinawa in March 1952 as a laborer

while mobilizing Okinawan laborers to form a united front in the reversion movement. For a comprehensive treatment on Hayashi's underground political activities in Okinawa, see Mori Yoshio, "Ekkyō no zen'ei, Hayashi Yoshimi to 'fukki undō no rekishi," in Nishi Masahiko and Hara Takehiko (eds.), *Fukusū no okinawa: Diaspora kara kibō e* (Jinbun shoin, 2003), pp. 311-347.

⁸⁶ After the announcement on July 10 that the trusteeship clause in Article 3 could indefinitely isolate the Ryukyus from Japan, over 200 households are said to have similarly departed illegally from the Amami Islands between August 1 – 20. See Satake, *Gunseika amami no mikkō mitsubōeki*, pp. 137-144.

⁸⁷ As a result of the deluge of appeals that poured in from the Japanese public, the police eventually released the arrested men, who were allowed to join the rest of the Amami delegates in Tokyo. Satake, *Gunseika amami no mikkō mitsubōeki*, pp. 144-145.

⁸⁸ USCAR, CI&E Department, "The Reversion Movement on Amami Oshima, Final Report," Scientific Investigations in the Ryukyu Islands (SIRI), March 1952. Copy of this report is available in the Amami Branch of the Kagoshima Prefectural Library in Naze City.

⁸⁹ Douglas G. Haring, "The Island of Amami Oshima in the Northern Ryukyus," SIRI (Washington, D.C.: National Research Council, October 1952), p. 86. A copy of this report is also available in the Amami Branch of the Kagoshima Prefectural Library.

⁹⁰ USCAR Proclamation No. 27, dated December 25, 1953, subject: "Geographical Boundaries of the Ryukyu Islands."

⁹¹ Robert Eldridge demonstrates that the Amami reversion movement not only exercised "a clear influence on the policies of the Japanese government, but also had a significant impact on the decision making process of the US government . . ." *The Return of the Amami Islands*, p. 31.

⁹² Haring, "The Island of Amami Oshima in the Northern Ryukyus," pp. 17-18. The CI&E Department's public opinion survey found that 89 percent of respondents never identified themselves as Ryukyuan because Amami was historically an integral part of Kagoshima Prefecture. CI&E Department, "The Reversion Movement on Amami Oshima, Final Report," p. 8.

[93] Eldridge argues that the support and lobbying that the Governor of Kagoshima Prefecture, Shigenari Kaku, undertook would prove critical in raising awareness of the issue throughout the prefecture and Japan. Eldridge, *The Return of the Amami Islands*, p. 32.

⁹⁴ "Kizoku mondai meguri machi no koe wo kiku," *Uruma shimpō*, dated April 23, 1951. Cited from *Naha shishi: Shiryō-hen*, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 435-437. This quotation is evidence that the Japanese military's enforcement of collective suicide and false accusations of Okinawans as "spies" during the Battle of Okinawa weighed heavily on the minds of ordinary people when thinking about their future political disposition.

⁹⁵ Koji Taira has argued that the U.S. effort to force Okinawans to choose a semi-colonial, marginalized Ryukyuan identity over a Japanese identity was "a thinly veiled racist contempt for Okinawans as an inferior people." For further details, see Koji Taira, "Troubled National Identity: The Ryukyus/Okinawans," in Michael Weiner (ed.), *Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity* (Routledge, 1997), pp. 160-161.

⁹⁶ This quotation from Okinawan economist, Takamine Akitada, can be found in Ikemiyagusuku Shūi, *Okinawa hankotsu no jyānarisuto: Ikemiyagusuku Shūi serekushon* (Niraisha, 1996), p. 22.

⁹⁷ Ishihara, *Kūhaku no Okinawa shakai-shi*, p. 243.

