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Denarrating Japan’s Gendered and Raced Citizenship in Okinawa: A Transnational Plurality of Uchinanchu

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Introduction

In the face of increasingly tense moments of a new state-of-the-art US military base construction in Henoko Ora-Bay in Okinawa, the newly elected Governor of Okinawa Tamaki Denny and other Okinawans have been taking part in various kinds of peaceful resistance movements in order to repeal the Japanese government’s decision for the landfill construction of the base; an ongoing effort since April 2004. The peaceful demonstrations—a reverberation of the democratic voice of Okinawans at the Henoko construction site—has been physically silenced and removed by Japanese riot police forces at the tightly guarded gate of the US Marine base, Camp Schwab. The enforced government surveillances and police brutality against the peaceful protest highlight Japan’s sustained attitude towards Okinawans, the nation’s ethnic minority at its southern geopolitical peripheries, wherein Japan’s enforced security discourse is most articulated in the form of human rights violation and suppression of democracy.

The paradigm of the Japanese national security discourse insists on the importance of hosting, funding, and fortifying the US bases in Japanese sovereign soil as a “deterrence” of unidentified or unspecified threats to the nation state. On December 15, 2018, the second day of the government enforcement of the irreversible landfill at Henoko, the Minister of Defense, Iwaya Takeshi, made a revealing statement: “the landfill is not for the Japan-US Alliance, but for the Nihon kokumin (Japanese citizen)” (NHK 2018), but at the complete denial of the Okinawan people’s democratic will against the construction. In Iwaya’s discourse of Japanese citizenship, Okinawa and the residents of Okinawa, i.e. Okinawans, are reduced to a “deterrence,” or as bohatei (a breakwater), for the protection of “the Japanese citizens.” In other words, Okinawans are lesser and disposable Japanese citizens who are not worth protection of the nation-state, and rather are nationally designated as bohatei. This political metaphor that identifies Okinawan as a human blockade is not new. In 2013, then-Mayor of Osaka, Hashimoto Toru thanked Okinawan women for serving as “the
sexual bohateri” for the US military in WWII, presumably protecting the “Japanese.” The question arises: who or what is the category of “Japanese”? How has Japanese citizenship been historically constructed? And what is it that the Japanese government is protecting at the price of the violation of Okinawan women’s human rights?

In this paper, I explore the ways in which the Japanese nation-state, in partnership with the US and with the installation of US military bases concentrated in Okinawa, operates by a raced heteronormative discourse that places its deemed ethnic minority as disposable and subaltern, therein forming a homogeneous or pure Japanese citizenry to be protected. I compare this with that of the emerging international diversity narrative with a focus on the movement facilities by the Okinawa: Women Act Against Military Violence (OWWAMV). I will conclude with an analysis of the Governor of Okinawa, Tamaki Denny’s recent speech as a potential for mobilizing “multitudes” in Hardt and Negori’s sense. I argue for intersectional human rights that take into consideration not just gendered, but the sexualized, raced, classed, nationalized, and patriarchal matrix of citizenship construction.

1. Emergence of Raced and Gendered Nation-States

While “nation” refers to the unity of the “people,” “state” refers to institutional apparatuses such as the government, judicial system, military, and police. The nation-state (kokumin kokka), which relies upon the continuity between premodern past and modern present and future, wherein the myth of preexisting and unified ethnic homogeneity is reified. Thus, inclusion and exclusion of ethnic and racial minorities—or the colonized people as the Other in a state-sanctioned temporal and spatial scheme—is essential to the construction of a nation-state.

In Imagined Communities (1983), Benedict Anderson offers a conspicuous nature of defining nation, nationality, and nationalism, which Anderson argues are in fact “imagined communities” that are cultural artifacts of created and imagined commonalities between peoples. Anderson’s work marked a significant turn in the scholarly understanding of the nation, yet a large body of feminist literature since then has established an inseparable linkage between notions of nation and ideas of gender.

According to Rick Wilford there are largely two camps of theories regarding nationalism: traditionalist (or primordialists) and modernist (or constructionists), the latter which Benedict Anderson more comfortably falls into. Wilford suggests that primordialists understand “nations as natural and universal entities that, even if dormant, can be roused from
their slumbers when conditions allow. \[T\]he hitherto trapped essence of national identity is released and quickly assumes its ‘given’ shape” (Wilford 1998: 8), while constructionists “dismiss this atavistic understanding of nationalism, instead presenting it as a by-product of the wider modernization process associated with the rise of industrial capitalism. Here nationalism is perceived in contingent or pragmatic terms... Viewed from this perspective nationalism was contrived by intellectuals and political elites to ensure cultural homogeneity within a growing and increasingly urbanized population, thereby protecting the instrumental needs of a modernizing industrial society against its neighbors and competitors.” (Wilford 1998: 8).

Anthony D. Smith (1986) adds a third category of nationalism, the intermediate position. Smith’s intermediate position focuses on “the ethnic foundations and roots of modern nations.” His concern is with “the cultural forms of sentiments, attitudes and perceptions as these are expressed and codified in myths, memories, values and symbols.” While this is not to adhere to a fixed or essential belief in the naturalness of nations, neither is it to dismiss the effects of modernization upon nationalism. Thus, nationalism is ‘an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential “nation.” Smith “understands self and social identity to consist of a repertoire of coteries and roles: territory, class, religion, ethnicity, and gender” and gender “as standing ‘at the origin of other differences and subordinations.’” (Smith 1986:15 as cited in Wilford 1998: 8-9).

Smith’s understanding that nationalism is an ideological movement for those who are trying to maintain autonomy in that given system is a compelling one. Thereon, Wilford (1998) and others argue that gender is at the heart of the ethno-nationalism if ethnic identity and formations have its roots in descent and familiarity (Wilford 1998: 9; Racioppi 1995: 17) and that nationalism is gendered at a time of rapid political transitions (McClintock 1993: 61). This is a useful lens which helps elucidate the situation faced by Okinawans today.

(1) Emergence of nation, nationalism, and nationhood in Meiji Japan
Social historians of Japan have established that it was only in the early Meiji period (1867-1912) when the term kokumin (citizen) was popularized in Japanese history and institutionalized as political citizenship (Ikegami1995; Karlin 2002). That coincides with ryukyu shobun, the disposition of the Ryukyu Kingdom, by approximately 160 police officers and 400 military soldiers known as Kumamoto chindai bunkentai. The provisions of the first Japanese modern Constitution of 1889 vested the source of supreme sovereign power in the emperor [on the basis of his ‘unbroken mythic bloodline’] while codifying “the civic
right of imperial subjects... but actual exercise of power was divided between a bicameral Diet and a Cabinet” (Ikegami:186). According to Ikegami, Japan felt pressure from Western nations rising as nation-states to become “a mature civil society” (186). That is, Japan’s emergence as a nation-state was facilitated by an effort to elevate its governmental structure up to par with the Western powers and their revised prestige in the East during this period.

Implicit in the study of Ikegami and Pyle’s work is first, the notion of the Japanese as a homogeneous race, the myth of pure Japanese blood wherein the course of supreme sovereign power lies and symbolizes Japan; and second, to be a “mature civil society” means to masculinize the nation-state. In the modernization process of the Meiji era, gender symbolism and identity in the political scene, especially through militarism, became intricately intertwined with the national formation and mobilization of its transformation (Karlin 2002). Below I illuminate each point with direct implications for Okinawa to demonstrate how Okinawa was crucial for Japan to emerge as homogenous and masculine.

(2) Kominka, incorporating colonies into the nation

Even today, Japan thinks of itself as a largely homogenous population. With regard to Japan’s claim to homogeneity, John Lie argues that Japan is a multiethnic society providing examples of the existence of minorities in Japan “including the indigenous people of Ainu and Okinawans, colonial-era immigrants from the Korean peninsula and Chinese mainland, Burakumin (descendants of premodern outcasts) and others” (2004, 118). These ethnic minority groups were incorporated during the Meiji period when Japan mobilized its territories and incorporated an inclusionary idea of democracy and citizenship which included its imperial subjects and Japanization, or kominka of them. Japanization, then, was a process of constructing Japaneseness, an essence of Japanese people, by incorporating systems of race, language, and citizenship (Lie 2004). The definition of ethnicity and race are not clearly distinguished in Japan and they are often used interchangeably, or in most cases unidentified by the government altogether. This is not the case for citizenship. Japanese citizenship is defined not by multiethnicity of its citizens but by the dichotomy that Japanese constitutes an unmarked and normative group while foreigners as “universal ‘Otherness’” (Yamashiro 2013: 149; Creighton 1997: 212).

The systems of kominka, the system to make imperial subjects, was mobilized when Japan entered the second Sino-Japanese War in 1937. In the National Mobilization Law Japan’s colonial subjects were enlisted for the Japanese Imperial Military to fight in South China with a promise of citizenship in return. The objective of kominka was “to deprive an oppressed race of its cultural identity, and to have the ideology of the Emperor system infiltrate into that race’s daily life and, as a result, their internal obedience [to] be gained”
In Okinawa, the central program was an education in the politically determined “standardized” Japanese (Christy 1993). Christy argues that education and standardization of Japanese language in Okinawa was not merely to facilitate communication for understanding or to being understood in Japanese as Okinawan was incomprehensible to the Japanese, but to “fundamentally…change thinking process and identificatory impulses” (Christy 1993: 615). Christy points out that the Japanese government increased educational expenditures to more than half of the prefectural revenue by 1902 in order to “[break] the stubborn thought of the Okinawans and assimilating them to the civilization (bunmei) of the home island (naichi) (Ichiki Kitokuro, quoted in Ota 1976). Discrimination and forced assimilation toward Okinawans have never ceased over time (Kikuyama 1992; Akamine 2003; History of Okinawa Prefecture Vol 5 2011; Arashiro 2014).

However, as Lie delineates, after the defeat and pacification of Japan in WWII, followed by the seven years of US occupation of Japan and the pacifist constitution of Japan that denounces the possession of a military, Japan became more vulnerable to criticism from the Western countries about the undemocratic imperial Japanese empire. That atmosphere led Japan to institute an American-style “true” democracy, which is partly a source for the imagined “monoethnic Japan” (Lie 2014: 118). Thus, the presence of Okinawans and other ethnic minorities in Japan inevitably challenges the Japanese myth of homogeneity and the core of Japanese identity itself.

2. Raced and gendered Citizenship

Yamashiro asserts that “Japanese citizenship is racialized in Japan. …[because] legal citizenship in Japan is based on the principle of jus sanguines” (Yamashiro 2013: 151; Kashiwazaki 1998). Hence, the legality of Japanese citizenship is primarily determined by the Japanese bloodline passed on through birthparents who were Japanese citizens, therein reinforcing the myth of Japanese homogeneity. Differences in languages and culture between Okinawa and Japan, for instance, are relegated to a prefectural and regional difference. Thus, Okinawans’ decolonial claim to be recognized as indigenous peoples have been repeatedly silenced by the Japanese government (Ryukyu Shimpo 2016). I would further argue that Japan’s nationalizing of Okinawa since 1879 serves the government in arguing for an equally endowed Japanese citizenship as an Okinawan. In this light, when resistances and conflicts arise by the heavy burden of the US military presence in Okinawa, as well as a construction of a new US base in Henoko, Japan can claim nationalistic interest over local objections as all Okinawans are presumably “equal Japanese.” Such arguments are often used to deny any discriminatory acts that Japanese states inflict against Okinawans’ civil
and governmental resistances.

The police brutality at the sit-in site highlights a reemerging militarized Japanese masculinity backed up by the State. A New York Times article published in 2007 by Kenneth B. Pyle titled *Japan Rising*, describes that Japan was more concerned with “the implications for Japanese status and self-esteem… The point was rather how the Western powers and the Western people regarded Japan and the Japanese people” (2007: 163). However, as the increased threat perceptions and vulnerabilities increased in the post-Cold War era, Japan marked its presence internationally through its Self-Defense Forces participation in UN peacekeeping missions. Pyle describes a reemergence of the Japanese Self-Defense Force (SDF) with a masculine connotation: “Japan is becoming more muscular in its rhetoric and posture” (2007: 373).

I have argued elsewhere that the foreign policy relationship between Japan and the US has been sustained by a gendered intimacy (Ginoza 2016). During his speech in 2015 at a White House banquet, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe cited Dianna Ross’s hit song “Ain’t No Mountain High Enough” (1970) to describe the relationship between the two countries: “Ain’t no mountain high enough, ain’t no valley low enough to keep me from you… The relationship of Japan and the United States is just like this” (The White House 2015). In that speech Japan assigned itself the role of a black woman towards the then African-American President Barack Obama, creating a form of heterosexual relationship between the two countries.

Building on to that gendered analysis (Ginoza 2016), here I add a more in-depth understanding of the representation of race, citizenship, and power in what the speech represents because “[t]he reality of gender identity, like national identity, always exists beneath the level of contested representations and can only be approached through the analysis of representations” (Karlin 2002,:43). First regarding race: although feminine in the role “sung” by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Japan also leveled itself as racially equal to that of his counterpart, then President Barack Obama—African-American. From this point of view, given the history of institutional slavery, the Diana Ross figure emerges as an American dream, and the song marked as one of the number one hit song on the Billboard Chart in the US in 1970. Furthermore, the song is not about a passive woman who patiently waits for her man, but a strong-willed woman who is willing to cross high mountains and low rivers for him. The parallel, however, goes further. It was only in 1868 when African-Americans were granted unequivocal US citizenship under the 14th amendment to the US constitution. That time period is the same as the Meiji Restoration, and only a decade later did Japan dispose of Okinawa and incorporated Okinawans as its nationals. In this way, Abe’s well-crafted and prearranged reference to Diana Ross’s song elucidates a self-
confidence, prestige, and power as the equal partner to the US.

3. Reemergence of Japanese nation

A feminist international relations scholar, Cynthia Enloe, illuminates that the United States pressed Japan’s SDF’s participation during the Gulf War in order for Japan to be “mature” international actors by deploying troops abroad (Enloe 1993: 76). Such rhetoric of US “military humiliation” of Japan, tightly controls Japan’s notions of military masculinity. Such rhetoric is used to remind Japan of its imperialism and errors of violent militarized masculinity committed during WWII, but at the same time insulting Japan into being more militarized. For instance, the New York Times featured an article titled “Japanese Sun Again Rises Overseas” which pointed out that after years of military immobilism, Japan should be spending more money on its own military to be seen as a western equal (Shenon 1992 cited in Enloe 2004: 76). As a result, by the end of the Cold War, Japanese SDF spending increased to the third largest in the world next to the US and Russia.

More recently, the New York Times published an opinion similarly titled article “Japan: Again, a Land of the Rising Sun” by David Howell (2005), a Conservative spokesman on foreign affairs in the House of Lords of Britain. Listing a military upgrade of “overall power-projection capabilities, reinforced by a big expansion of intelligence resources, a new phase of ‘equal partnership’ defense arrangements especially with the United States, with interlocking ground, air and maritime forces at an unprecedented level of interoperability and intimacy.” In his op-ed, Howell warns readers of the “dangers” of Japan “arousing even more hostility” into “not nearly…a ‘normal’ country, but into a formidable player across a wide front.” Howell’s commentary assesses that the Japanese SDF reemerged as “a major military power both in East Asia and globally.” This can be read to evoke awareness in the West of the symbol of the Japanese Empire.

Japan reemerges because the first time it emerged as a nation-state when it was modernizing in the Meiji Era in which Japanese disposition of the Ryukyu Kingdom, or colonization of the Ryukyu Kingdom, occurred. The emergence of the Japanese nation state was triggered by the historical conditions of the time when Western nations such as Britain and the US had developed to become empires and they conceptualized Japanese to be lower in the hierarchy of race, modernization, and civilization as part of the larger “Asiatic race” (Yamashiro 2013: 148). Scholars of Japan and Japan’s ethnic and racial minorities have demonstrated that in order to emulate itself as an equal to the Western powers, Japanese asserted their racial superiority over the indigenous people of Ainu and Okinawans whom Japan itself had considered lower races (Siddle 2011 and 1996; Yamashiro 2013; Taira
(1) Okinawa as *bohatei* for “the Japanese Citizens”

In this section, I further examine the aforementioned remarks by the two Japanese politicians, Iwaya Takeshi and Hashimoto Toru in their context as well as from a women’s human rights discourse paying particular attention to implications for Okinawan’s human rights in relation to questions of citizenship. Although Hashimoto’s statement dates back five years, a critical feminist analysis from an Okinawan women’s human rights angle in relation to gendered citizenship of the comment is still scarce. Moreover, the repeatedly applied political metaphor of Okinawans in Japan’s security discourse reveals a consistency of the Japanese government notion of security in need of Okinawa.

Hashimoto made the following statement at the meeting of the *Seito Sozo* (Political Group of Okinawa Revolution) in June 23, 2013 during his visit to Okinawa on the Commemoration of the Battle of Okinawa:

“*[During the WWII] The Home Ministry of Japan (1873-1974) established the Recreation and Amusement Association (RAA) and had a branch in Okinawa as well. It is a historical fact that at that time, Okinawan women served as, in a way, *bohatei* to protect the other women and children. It is also a fact that the US military used [the servitudes]. Can those Japanese politicians who won’t point that out [to the US] and just obediently accepts the terms US proposes to them negotiate the terms of the Japan-US Status of Forces Agreement?*”

The first half of the commentary admits the fact that some Okinawan women were among the many comfort women from the Japanese colonies, whom were deemed as second-class citizens, and whom unwillingly or forcefully were brought to serve as *ianfu* (comfort women for the Japanese soldiers). The comment is uncritical of the government sanctioned Japanese soldiers’ sexual violence committed against the *ianfu* during the Battle of Okinawa. Hence, Hashimoto’s speech enunciates the inevitable relationship between the militarized hyper-masculine soldiers and women who could comfort the soldiers’ heavy mental and physical stress in times of war, as well as war training sites such as the US military bases in Okinawa. As he later tweeted that “stalwarts like US soldiers should utilize brothels. Otherwise their sexual energy can't be controlled” (Hashimoto quoted in *Sankei West* 2013).
(2) Okinawa, a feminized nation under the Japanese masculine state

Feminists criticized that the root problem is a failed recognition of women’s human rights (Asia-Japan Women’s Resource Center 2013). Even the local newspapers, such as Ryukyu Shimpo, quickly criticized Hashimoto’s remark for “a lack of human rights sensitivity,” arguing that his remark appoints “living women’s bodies in sex industry in Okinawa” as the outlet for the stalwarts’ sexuality (Ryukyu Shimpo 2013).

However, the article quickly replaces the intertwined body politic of the sexualized Okinawan women’s human rights with the “discriminatory gaze towards Okinawans,” “commodification of women,” and “demeaning men as foods” (Ryukyu Shimpo 2013). Instead, what Hashimoto’s speech performs is simultaneously gendered and radicalized citizenship embodied in Okinawan women’s bodies. Rick Wilford, a feminist political scientists, stresses that the intersections of sexism and racism is “of particular relevance for ethnic minority women,” who “possess only limited citizenship rights, leaving them exposed to exploitation” (1998: 18). Despite the importance of the public criticism from Okinawa, and a well-intended effort to appeal to different social categories of people, the criticism of Hashimoto’s comments, in turn, homogenized each categories of men and women and uncritically categorized a complex hegemonic matrix of gendered and raced human rights issue that Hashimoto’s speech act enables—the mutually complementary relationship between the militarized male sexuality and the sexual violence against Okinawan women.

The value that Hashimoto places in “soldiers who are placed at an extreme life or death situation,” extends beyond the Japan and US nation-states differences and highlights a Statehood that unquestionably necessitates a possession of military institution with soldiers that constitutes it (Sankei West 2013). The importance is of sustaining militarized masculinity that transforms citizens into “stalwart men.” What is critical for him is how to maintain soldiers’ livelihood regardless of their nationality. He repeated this position in support of the military in his commentary on a conviction of a former US Marine for the rape and murder of a twenty-year old Okinawan woman that a denial of the US bases is based on the Marine’s nationality and is a human rights violation toward the hard-working soldiers (Okinawa Times 2016). Thus, what emerges as the first half of Hashimoto’s speech act is the masculine Japanese hard power, equivalent to that of the US military.

Having elevated Japanese men’s hyper-masculinity through a heightened sexual violence against Okinawan women at the level of the world’s largest military power of the US, the last half of the speech encourages repentance to the Japanese government to articulate their equally masculine political positionally to the US. Such nationalistic positionality was most expressively articulated after the US occupation of Japan in the co-authored book,
The gendered nationalist discourse of emergence of masculine Japan can also be seen in the aforementioned commentary by the Minister of Defense, Iwaya Takeshi that “the landfill [base construction] is not for the Japan-US Alliance, but for the Japanese citizens” (NHK 2018). In a way, the people who heard the remark were Japanese citizens in Hokkaido with a purpose of assuring them they are the citizens of Japan and the US base construction in Okinawa is for their security. In response, an Akutagawa Award winner Medoruma Shun asked if the “Japanese citizens’ include Okinawans” (Ryukyu Shimpo 2018)³. The question is not so much addressed to the utterer of words, but to the Japanese state that Iwaya represents.

4. Reversing the Power Effect through Confession

As one of Japan’s prefectures, Okinawa, exists within the sovereign state of Japan. Medoruma Shun’s questioning of Iwaya inevitably drives to uncover the truth by demanding the state to “tell the truth” about who Okinawans are, or what Okinawa is, in particular to their relation to Japan. However, the Japanese State will not make a confession about their position; they probably never will for three reasons. The first reason is because, as Michael Foucault writes, confession is “a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the pretense (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile” (1978: 62-63).

In order for the confession to happen it requires a ritualized power relationship constituted with the speaker and the authority. In the above discourse Okinawa cannot occupy the position of “the authority” that demands the confession from the Japanese state, the speaker. Thus, engaging in that epistemological discourse is to defy the established power relationship between the State and Okinawa. Secondly, the answer already precludes other possibilities than yes or no and disavows another possibility to be enacted. Thirdly, if the answer is either “yes” or “no,” then the answer will produce new knowledge about the relationship between Okinawa and the States as an effect, thus it could produce Okinawa and Okinawans into existence in relation to the State. Rather, I argue, maintaining Okinawa’s ambiguous status of either is crucial for the State’s postcolonial identity, and reemergence of the militarized nation-state. Thus, the contemporary Japanese “nation-state” structure
is sustainable as the increasingly “masculine state,” only if Okinawa remains in the position of the “feminine nation,” wherein Okinawa and Okinawans are unidentified and left in an ambiguous state purposefully to their detriment and to Japan’s advantage. I argue, instead, that for Okinawa to challenge the institutional hegemonic dynamic, Okinawa has to make its own confession of “the truth” about who they are. Then the confessed truth of Okinawans positionality in relation to Japan becomes “knowledge” rather than a myth that maintains the status quo of Japanese homogeneity.

For Foucault, knowledge and power are not independent from each other; on the contrary, there is an inextricable linkage between them. Knowledge is an exercise of power and power always is a function of knowledge. Hence, Medoruma Shun’s question to Iwaya performs a pivotal role for Okinawa to come into existence to produce a form of knowledge to the repressive power of the state exercised in Henoko against the Okinawans. Henoko is also a space that is under surveillance where state disciplining is most overtly practiced through a deployment of riot police against the peaceful sit in protest led by Okinawan locals.

(1) Another possibility to deconstruct impasse of coloniality
The abnormal and violent daily scene at the Henoko base construction site composed of Japanese riot police officers, Okinawan Prefectural Police officers and a private security agency ALSOK (an abbreviation for Always Security Ok) as well as the sit-in protesters of mainly elderly Okinawan women. The spectacle of the state’s daily brutality represented by the police and ALSOK against the mostly elderly women can be read as a spatial and temporal reenactment of *kominka* and *ryosai kenbo* (good wife and wise mother) in the internal territory. Thus, the Japanese government’s argument that United Nations and others must not interfere with the so called “Okinawa problem” because it is a “family problem.” Hence, I hope to clarify to the established argument that Okinawa is a US military colony yet serves as a postcolonial spatial and temporal reenactment of nationalization and *ryosai kenbo*.

The forceful imposition of 73% of the total US military bases in Japan that Okinawa hosts and the construction of a new US base is, what both Chalmers Johnson (2003) and Yoshida Kensei (2008) call a US “military colony,” a place where Japanese laws do not apply. Yoshida argues that as a military colony the US bases in Okinawa function as an extension of the US state and by the principle of extraterritoriality (Yoshida 2008: 2). Yoshida provides the 1998 lawsuits by the residents near Kadena US Air Base who filed a complaint of the noise pollution and tremors from the aircrafts training. The Fukuoka High Court’s Naha Branch dismissed it “based on the judgement of the Supreme Court
that Kadena Air Base had been ‘offered’ to the US through the Japan-US security Treaty and SOFA, and therefore the residents did not have a right to demand limitation of the operation of the US military flights there” (Yoshida 2008: 1). The Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) which provisions regulate and ensure “effective operations” of the US military forces but are extremely lenient about regulating the US military forces’ misconduct. Another train of arguments is that Okinawa is a dual colony of the US and Japan (Akibayashi and Takazato 2009; Ginoza 2016). However, this argument places Japan in a subservient position to the US and does not quite account for Iwaya’s recent remark.

I propose, instead, a close gender analysis of nationalism. Jan Jindy Pettman’s observation that “[i]n a complex play, the state is often gendered male and the nation gendered female” provides an angle for addressing Medoruma’s question of citizenship (1996: 49). In this scheme, the Okinawa nation is gendered feminine and the Japanese state is male; Okinawa in a representational sense is assigned to be the ryosai kenbo where the island metaphorically raises the masculine riot police who represents the state. But as a racial minority, the Okinawa nation is the constantly feminine other in relation to which Japan recovers its statehood as a postcolonial empire. A majority of Okinawans have confessed, in a Foucauldian sense, that Okinawans are different from the Japanese, differences claimed that started an Uchinaguchi language revival movement, and some Okinawans launched an independence movement called “The Association of Comprehensive Studies for Independence of the Lew Chewans (ACSILs) in 2013. Then Governor of Okinawa, Onaga Takeshi articulated its sense of Okinawanness with the Okinawan word, not a Japanese one, in his Prefecture-wide mass rally that “Do not underestimate Uchinanchu” (Ryukyu Shimpo 2015). That is, the ongoing Japanese assimilation policy discussed above was and is not completely successful and has recently been actively confronted.

As the implementation of ideology, ryosai kenbo was necessary for mobilizing the nationalism and making soldiers during the Meiji period. It defined socially constructed the role of women as a good wife who support her husband who dedicates himself to the State and produces male, and as a good mother who raise sons to be soldiers to protect the nation-state. Iwaya’s remark that the enforcement of the construction of the US base is not for US-Japan relations, but for the Japanese citizen, may speak to this point of restructuring a masculine nation that is equally powerful to the US by requiring “the Japanese citizens”—mothers to be ryosai kenbo to raise sons, and the sons to be nationalized. Hence, the spectacle of Henoko is also of spatial and temporal importance where the state mobilizes its national subjects and a national discourse of enhanced masculinity. The US’s militarization of the Asia Pacific region has ideologically functioned by gendering of the region which created a hegemonic dependency of the region on the US (Ginoza 2018). As the most faith-
ful ally in the region, Japan’s role in fostering the American interest is not minuscule, and it is in Okinawa Prefecture where Japan’s notion of peace and security are embodied.

(2) Transnational and multilingual enunciation

Okinawa’s current status as a Japanese nation is both raced and gendered. The term “gendered and racialized citizenship” is not a new concept. Gender discrimination was not simply a secondary aspect of racial inequality, either. For Okinawans at the interpersonal level faced militarized violence due to their differentiated ethnic minority status in Okinawa, for instance, Japanese soldiers’ forced rape of comfort women during WWII, and ongoing US military servicemen’s sexual assaults against Okinawan women. Takazato Suzuyo, a co-chair of “Okinawa: Act Against Military Violence” (OWAAMV) states that the highest crime committed by the US soldiers in Okinawa has been sexual violence against women, although these crimes often go under-reported.

Since Okinawa’s return to Japanese sovereignty in 1972 until 2015, the Prefectural Police statistic on the number of incidents of sexual violence committed by US military is only 5,896 (Oyakawa 2018: 45). However, Oyakawa Yuko argues that the number is limited to the arrested incidents. The independent research conducted by OWAAMV about the US personnel’s sexual violence shows much higher numbers. Oyakawa shows that the non-prosecution rates since 2001 to 2008 is approximately 83% (45). Due to the reason, OWAAMV has argued that the US base in Okinawa is an issue of structural violence (Takazato 1996; Akibayashi 2004 and 2012). Takazato criticizes that issues of gendered structural violence are often replaced with “a space issue,” the land the US military occupy on the island (Takazato 1996). Such frustration among women in the demilitarization movement mobilized OWAAMV to deliver their voices not to stay within the domestic arena, but to extend a network of demilitarization internationally. In fact, OWAAMV was formed in response to the rape of 12-year-old girl by three US military soldiers stationed in Okinawa in 1995. This incident led to a Prefecture-wide mass protest attended by approximately 85,000 islanders in the following month. The majority of members of OWAAMV were women in their twenties through sixties with various backgrounds regardless of their location, social class, age, gender, jobs, or political affiliations. They consisted of city assembly members, students, rape survivors, educators, activists, and more.

One of the characteristics of the organization is an unconditional participation that allows for fluidity and flexibility of the participants, which scholar Kozue Akibayashi calls “loose connectivity” (2015, 53). This loose connectivity grants women of various social locations to prioritize and to take care of their own health, family, job situations,
or varied positionalities to the actions OWAAMV takes on. This kind of connectivity has been the key to the 20 years of organizational activities. Suzuyo Takazato, the co-chair of OWAAMV, explains that the objective of the organization is to act and theorize women’s experiences of living with the US military bases from the women’s subject position with feminist analysis.

At the 1995 island-wide mass protest against the heinous sexual transgression, the women realized that the incident was re-composed and replaced with an argument of inequality of the percentage of the bases in Okinawan lands as compared to that of Japan. While the structure of the militarized sexual violence manifests the hegemonic male patriarchy and supremacy over femininity, the prefecture’s response negates a critique of the security dependent on military bases. Akibayashi argues that although the human rights regime conceptualized the sexual violence in war, sexual violence in the long-term US base hosting nations lacks sufficient attention (2012: 108). Paying attention to the latter, OWAAMV took an international speaking tour in the US where, the OAAMV identified where the very problem lies. This gave Okinawan women a critical platform to emerge from the position of invisible, and to centralize their narrative in the Asia Pacific and the US (OWAAMV 1996).

During the first visit OWAAMV went to the Bay Area in California. That event led a group of American women to establish a non-profit organization “Women for Genuine Security.” One of the founders of WGS, Gwyn Kirk stated that “We, the American citizens need to envision a new form of security differ from the US Japan peace treaty” (1996). Since then, OWAAMV and WGS have been joined by the Philippines, South Korea, Japan, Guam, Australia, Marshall Islands, and Puerto Rico which led to an establishment of International Women’s Network Against Militarism, INWAM hereafter (Akibayashi 2012). Thus, OWWAAV’s recalibration of militarized livelihood through actions, not only bridged the vast Asia Pacific Islands, but also empowered critical female agencies.

The first INWAM meeting was held in Okinawa in 1997. One of the activities organized was the Privilege Walk. This activity aimed to physically experience and unveil hidden privileges amongst the women. The activity consisted of series of questions regarding the participants’ gender-orientation, social class, nationality, education, and race. It asked, for instance, if you have a college degree step forward, if you never have to worry about money for food, step forward. Takazato recalls that this intersectional activity made her and other women aware of hidden privileges and inequalities among the sisters. This realization led to ensure a safe space for all delegates to be able to speak in their own languages without the dominance of English which is a colonial language that deprived many native communities of their own tongue. The network had a volunteer amongst them who were
multi-lingual without hiring a professionally trained translator. WGS took an initiative to publish “Peace Activist dictionary” in English, Japanese, Tagalog, Korean, and Spanish. For the network, translating act which allows for differently situated voices to emerge out of subalternity, is not a simple communication tool, but a political action (Ginoza 2019). The twenty years of experience in the demilitarization solitary of OWAAMV and INWAM highlights a crucial point for demilitarization in Okinawa. They are, intersectional understanding of the nation-states, a network of diverse nationalities, of citizenships, gender, race, and class, as well as a multi-lingual international solidarity for Uchinanchu.

Conclusion

On December 8, 2018, calling Uchinanchu around the world, a Uchinanchu in Hawai‘i, Robert Kajiwara started an unprecedented petition titled “Stop the landfill of Henoko/Oura Bay until a referendum can be held in Okinawa” at the “We the People in Your Voice in the White House.” Kajiwara’s mother is from Okinawa, but he lives in Hawai‘i currently. This petition holds the US Congress accountable to discuss the matter if the petition reaches its goal of 100,000. By the end of 2018, it raised over 172,000 signatures (We the People 2018).

In the movements against the construction of a new base in Henoko, arguments of democracy are most frequently emphasized as a catalyst to make a case of Okinawans’ given Japanese citizenship, therefore the majority will to halt the construction must be respected. For instance, the recent public statement Governor Tamaki made on December 14, 2018 uses democracy as a trope of their citizenship:

“To the residents of Okinawa, Japanese citizens, and people overseas, haisai, this is the Governor of Okinawa, Tamaki Denny. On December 14, the Japanese government began a landfill in the Okinawan ocean for the US base construction. That event pains me. The Our Bay sea in Henoko district in Nago City the site of a new US base construction is a habitat of over 5,000 spices of sea animals and the largest scale blue corals in the Northern Hemisphere, which Okinawa is proud of as a world’s treasure. However, at this moment the Japanese is filling up the sea sands and soils for the construction of a new US base. It is humanity’s responsibility to protect the nature of the Oura Bay that boast an extremely rare biodiversity in the world for the future. To landfill in the sea that the residents of Okinawa and many visitors to the island love is, indeed, an unforgivable act. Furthermore, a number of geologic issues have been raised. For instance, underneath a section of sea lies an active fault line covered by a soft ground. ⋯ Such an ongoing Japa-
The government's forceful act is nowhere near a respectful gesture toward the democratic will of Okinawans. Okinawa is going to achieve a democracy that humans have established throughout the history in solidarity with people around the world. We will continue to ask the Japanese Government to listen to the voice of Okinawans and to seek a solution through dialogue. Okinawa is always waiting with an open door for a dialogue. Please lend us your voice and actions for Okinawa.

(My translation, December 14, 2018 on Tamaki Denny Facebook Page)

“People around the world” indicates “multitudes” in Harts and Negri’s discussion. They define the term as “an open network of singularities that links together on the basis of the common they share and the common they produce” (Hardts and Negri 2004, 129). As the first Prefectural Governor of Japan who is multi-ethnic, what Tamaki represents—racial/ethnic diversity in particular—has delivered a widened interpretation of Uchinanchu that is not confined in one’s essentialized nature, or birth place, residence, or citizenship. Tamaki’s slogan of creating a “new era of Okinawa” with three Ds—diversity, democracy, and diplomacy—have a potential for challenging the reemergence of Japanese kominka and the false notions of homogeneous nationalism.

NOTES
1 The list is only a few of the feminist contribution to understanding nation.
2 Ichiki Kitokuro (1867-1994) was a Japanese statesman, politician and cabinet minister. He was appointed as Minister of Education in 1914, in the following year as Home Minister, and Chairman of Privy Council in 1934.
3 There has been a number of newspaper articles on his remarks in Okinawa. Many academic discussion of his remarks are in relation to Comfort Women. See for instance, Park Ok Hye. “Korean Comfort Women in the Eyes of the Mangna and Net Generation.” Virginia Review of Asian Studies: 19(2017): 108-127;
5 A prominent Japan Studies scholar may answer that Okinawans are “semi-citizens,” which she proposes as a notion to move away from envisioning “a dichotomous contrast between citizen and non-citizen” and as the idea that “allows us to think of a range of different sets of social positions stretching towards the idealized vision of the ‘full citizen’” (Morris-Suzuki, 2015).
6 In reference to “the exceptional role of US power in the current global order,” Hardt and Negri, argue that the military bases which they call a “network structure” is not an act of benevolence on the part of the superpower but rather is dictated by the needs of counterinsurgency strategy. This military necessity recalls the debate between unilateralism and multilateralism and the conflicts between the United States and the United Nations, but it really goes beyond both of these frameworks. The network form of power is the only one today able to create and maintain order” (2004, 59). Although Hardt and Negri assess that US military occupies univalent position between “imperialism
and Empire,” Catherine Lutz and Cynthia Enloe call “the bases of empire” (2008), indicating that US bases function as the empire. According to Lutz and Enloe, empire is a state that has imperial ambitions, “either through indirect control over the political economy, laws, and foreign policy of other places. Whether or not it recognizes itself as such, a country can be called an empire when its policies aim to assert and maintain dominance over other regions… Alongside and supporting these goals has often been elevated self-regard in the imperial power, or a sense of racial, cultural, or social superiority” (2009, 9).

7 At my independent interview with Takazato Suzuyo in December 2018 in Naha.
8 At my independent interview with Takazato Suzuyo in August 2018 in Naha.
9 In the US national security discourse, the Asia Pacific islands and islanders are auxiliary in carrying out American interests with a heavy long-term military presence in the region. For instance, Hawaii which only constitutes less than 1% of the US land area, is home to 119 military sites including the US Pacific Command that overseas military operations in half of the world. Similarly, Okinawa constitutes only 0.6% of Japan’s landmass, but is also home to over 30 military bases which accounts for 74% of the total US bases Japan hosts. 15 military bases are in South Korea; one third of Guam is occupied by the military bases. In most cases, the heavy military presence in the Asia Pacific Islands were involuntary despite resistance of the islanders. The issue has raised layered problems of American centered discourse of security and peace which was increasingly articulated during and after the Asiatic Pacific Theater in the Pacific War.

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