

# The Mutual Gaze of Okinawans and Zainichi Koreans in Post-War Japan: From 1945 to the 1972 Okinawa Reversion

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**Abstract:** The present article deals with the ‘educational movement’ of the 1950-60s focusing on the issues of discrimination against *zainichi* Koreans and Okinawans. It examines the moments of mutual gaze between *zainichi* Koreans and Okinawans as both struggled for freedom and liberation against the US-Japanese system of domination. *Zainichi* Koreans and Okinawans were autonomously choosing their respective identities in accordance with the changes in political circumstances. They initially wanted to become liberated peoples belonging to (unified) Korea and Japan respectively. Of course, their goals of withdrawal of foreign armed forces from Korea and Okinawa and social reforms were ultimately thwarted. Nevertheless, the attempts of the marginalized to forge horizontal unity and relativize the Japanese nation state via the concepts of ‘motherland’ merit attention.

**Keywords:** *zainichi* Koreans, Okinawa, minority-to-minority relationality, educational movement, Third World.

## On the Fringes Once Again

In the wake of Japan’s defeat in the Pacific War, Okinawans and *zainichi* Koreans (Koreans resident in Japan), both of whom were classified as Japanese citizens under the empire, were reclassified as non-Japanese. This is a fact that nowadays is practically forgotten. Between 1945 and 1972 Okinawans lived under US military rule. While Okinawans’ Japanese citizenship was restored with reversion to Japan in 1972, the majority of *zainichi* Koreans,

who were stripped of Japanese citizenship after the San Francisco Peace Treaty was signed, continue to the present to be classified as “resident foreigners” lacking Japanese citizenship. Despite critical differences between the two groups, in recent years Okinawans have often identified with the plight of *zainichi* Koreans and vice versa.

In July 2014, the UN Human Rights Commission criticized discriminatory activities in Japan, singling out the hate speech of Zaitokukai (Zainichi Tokken o Yurusanai Shimin no Kai: ‘Association of Citizens against the Special Privileges of the Zainichi’) directed against *zainichi* Koreans. *Ryukyu Shimpo*, an Okinawan daily newspaper, responded to the Commission’s report by publishing an editorial denouncing “hatred of minorities.”<sup>1</sup> The editorial recalled that when elected local leaders from Okinawa demonstrated in Tokyo against the deployment of Osprey aircraft in Okinawa, they were condemned as national traitors or “non-nationals” (*hikokumin*) by right-wing protesters described in the press as “people with Hinomaru and Rising Sun flags in hand.” Okinawans empathized with *zainichi* Koreans who faced racial discrimination, which, as Okinawans contended, affected all minorities.

Similar identification with Okinawans is visible among *zainichi* Koreans. Kim Kigang – an actress and third-generation *zainichi* Korean – visits Henoko in Okinawa every other month to participate in rallies opposing the construction of a new US military base in Oura Bay. In an interview, she explained how Okinawa’s current situation resembles Korea’s own

history of colonial victimization, expressing rage against the Abe government's treatment of minorities and the weak.<sup>2</sup> Despite their official status as Japanese 'citizens,' Okinawans continue to experience discrimination. The discrimination that Okinawans face has inspired sympathy from *zainichi* Koreans, many of whom, including second and third generation Japanese born Koreans, still remain foreigners devoid of Japanese citizenship. This dynamic of mutual sympathy is not merely a recent phenomenon triggered by the hate speech issue spearheaded by Zaitokukai as well as rooted in US military deployment centered on Okinawa. To understand how these fellow feelings emerged, it is necessary to examine post-war Japan when Okinawans and *zainichi* Koreans interacted in an ongoing process of mutual support and identification.

Following Japan's Ryukyu annexation (1879) and the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty (1910), Okinawans and *zainichi* Koreans were reclassified as "Japanese subjects" and subjected to assimilation. Japanese intellectuals, attempting to justify colonial policies, propagated such theories as the *Nichiryū* (the theory that Okinawans and Japanese shared a common ancestry) and the *Nissen dōsorōn* (the claim that Koreans and Japanese had a common ancestry). Whereas the latter theory was largely a product of the Japanese colonialist scholarship on Korea in the beginning of the twentieth century, the former was supported by a number of Okinawan scholars and had older, pre-annexation origins. Both theories, however, were utilized for the purpose of legitimizing the forcibly imposed assimilation. The colonial policies that sought to suppress the cultural traditions of the colonized or minority ethnic groups were examples of institutional discrimination. Many Koreans and Okinawans looked to assimilation to escape the discrimination that affected their daily lives. One example of how such discrimination affected daily life were the ubiquitous signs "Koreans and Ryukyans Not Allowed" in

Tokyo, Osaka and other areas.<sup>3</sup>

Iha Fuyu (1876-1947), who systematized the *Nichiryū dōsorōn*, remarked following the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty of 1910: "Ryukyu is the first son, Taiwan the second, and Chosŏn the third." He meant this as an expression of "fraternal love" uniting the colonized and the colonizers within a hierarchy centered on the Japanese emperor. In this way, the Okinawans, considered "insiders" of a sort, and the Koreans and Taiwanese, the colonized, were all incorporated into this hierarchical imperial structure. The most tragic manifestation of this discriminatory structure occurred during the Great Kantō Earthquake in 1923, when Okinawans sought to accentuate their differences from Koreans and display their assimilation into the Japanese ethnogenesis out of fear of being mistaken for Koreans, many of whom were victims of a police-condoned massacre.

With the victory of the Allied powers in 1945, Koreans, Okinawans, and Taiwanese were reclassified, this time as "non-Japanese." The sovereign power to determine their status was transferred from the Japanese Empire to the Allies. While this meant liberation from Japan's assimilationist policies, the previously colonized were granted limited freedom to decide for themselves. The fate of the Okinawans and the remaining Koreans in Japan depended on post-war political relations between the United States and Japan. The labeling of *zainichi* Koreans and Okinawans as "non-Japanese" was the product of Japan's post-war governance structure designed to eliminate all traces of the colonial history of Korea and to place Okinawa under US rule. The result was the exclusion of these subjects from rights prescribed by the post-war constitution of Japan. In this way, Japan's "post-war democracy," predicated on its constitution, effaced memories of colonialism by rendering the former colonized populations invisible.

This article deals with ‘yet another’ post-war history as lived by *zainichi* Koreans and Okinawans –classified as non-Japanese – within the framework of the dominant order reorganized by the US and Japan. There have been several attempts to understand post-war Japanese history in a more diverse fashion by concentrating on the history of the peripheries invisible from the vantage point of the center, including Okinawans, *zainichi* Koreans, women and pollution victims. However, as Tobe Hideaki notes, these attempts have usually been limited to centre-periphery dichotomies, like ‘Japan vs. Okinawa’ or ‘Japanese vs. *zainichi* Koreans.’ There have been few attempts to view Japanese society through the prism of relationships *among* its minorities. This despite the fact that for minorities in Japan, “forging relations with other minorities was a crucial task required for locating themselves in places where they were surrounded by the majority.” Tobe attempted to grasp the combination of “extreme disharmony” and shared sympathy between *zainichi* Koreans and Okinawans. He focused on the American Occupation period when Okinawans and *zainichi* Koreans discovered similarities in their respective positions and Okinawans reached out to *zainichi* organizations. This article builds on Tobe’s insights and expands the scope of analysis to the reversion of Okinawa in 1972. Its focus is the mutual gaze between *zainichi* Koreans and Okinawans, a product of their special circumstances in Japan and Okinawa. In that period, the idea of returning to the Korean ‘motherland’ still dominated *zainichi* Korean society, while Okinawans were preoccupied with the task of reversion to Japan which they at that time referred to as ‘motherland’ as well.

### ***Classified as Japan’s “Non-Japanese”***

Tobe Hideaki, who conducted the first detailed examination of Okinawan perceptions of

*zainichi* Koreans, focused on the US Occupation period in post-war Japanese history, when Okinawans identified with Koreans and approached *zainichi* Korean organizations based on common interests. This was a time when Okinawans residing in mainland Japan were referred to as “*zainichi* Okinawans” while most Okinawans lived in Okinawa under American military rule. Tobe advances several reasons for such identification: the campaign to aid impoverished Okinawan residents in mainland Japan, Japan’s wartime defeat resulting in the separation of Japan and Okinawa, and the resistance in mainland Japan to discrimination against Okinawans, as well as the similarities between the international status of Okinawans and *zainichi* Koreans.

The international status of Okinawans and *zainichi* Koreans can be grasped through the way the General Headquarters (GHQ) of the Allied Power defined both groups. On November 1, 1945, the US Government provided General Douglas MacArthur with the ‘Basic Directive for Post-Surrender Military Government in Japan Proper’ (JCS1380/15). The document stipulated that “Formosan-Chinese” and Koreans were not to be classified as “Japanese.” They were to be treated as “liberated peoples.” However, the definition was self-contradictory since it also stated that both could be regarded as “enemy nationals” when necessary. It appears that the US Government was undecided on how to categorize Okinawans. Nevertheless, when GHQ ordered the ‘Repatriation of Non-Japanese from Japan’ (SCAPIN 600) on 15 January 1946, the “non-Japanese” category included Formosans (Taiwanese), Koreans, and Ryukyans (Okinawans). Despite the fact that at this time all three had Japanese citizenship, a legacy of colonial rule, the Japanese government defined them as people whose native land was outside of Japan and were to be repatriated to those places (SCAPIN 746; 927). Furthermore, on January 29, the directive

‘Governmental and Administrative Separation of Certain Outlying Areas from Japan’ (SCAPIN 677) unveiled a rigorous policy of separating Okinawa from Japan. In this way, both Korea and Okinawa – under the direct military governance of the Allies – were redefined as the native lands of Koreans and Ryukyans respectively. The Japanese Communist Party endorsed this agreement on February 24, 1946, with its ‘Message of Congratulations on Okinawa’s Independence’ sent to the founding congress of the League of Okinawans (*Okinawajin renmei*). The League of Okinawans, which had started out as a mutual support organization for *zainichi* Okinawans, was subsequently influenced by an ethnic Korean association, the League of Koreans in Japan (*Zainichi Chōsenjin renmei*, Chōren hereafter, formed in October 1945). The Okinawan group subsequently renamed itself as the League of Okinawans in Japan (*Zainichi Okinawajin renmei*) to reflect the *zeitgeist* of the new epoch.<sup>4</sup> Such spirit is further embodied in the League’s regulations, which specified that its aim was “to promote communication and mutual aid among those of Okinawan origin and contribute to the democratic reconstruction of Okinawa.” It, further banned “militaristic pre-war politicians and extreme nationalists” from membership. These regulations reveal the League’s mission to distance itself from pre-war Japanese militaristic nationalism and to promote democracy as the foundation for rebuilding Okinawa, an approach which resonates with the early years of Chōren as well. Instead of restricting itself to facilitating Korean repatriation, Chōren became closely aligned with the revolutionaries led by Kim Il Sung who dominated the northern part of Korea occupied by Soviet troops in 1945-48. Chōren barred “national traitors and war criminals” from its organization and defined itself as a national movement based on democratic principles. Its aim was to become the “official organization for foreigners of Korean descent.”<sup>5</sup>

Such a spirit of solidarity is also evident in the 1946 message that the Japanese Communist Party sent to the League of Okinawans:

For the Okinawan people who have been suppressed under Japanese feudal domination for centuries and have suffered under Japanese colonial exploitation since Meiji, the much hoped for road to independence and freedom, as part of the international democratic revolution, will be a great joy. Until now, Japanese monarchist imperialists (*tennōshugisha*) have argued that domestically, the Emperor and Japanese citizens are tied by blood, and that internationally the Koreans are homogeneous with Japanese and that Japan is included among the ranks of Asian races, in order to justify Japan’s imperial control over Asia. Okinawans too had Japanese ethnic identity imposed on them by the empire. Regardless of whether Okinawans and Japanese shared a common ancestry in the past, Japan’s domination over Okinawa since early modern times is an undeniable historical fact. This means that the Okinawans have been oppressed as an ethnic minority.<sup>6</sup>

This message places *Nissen Dōsoron* – used as historical justification by the Japanese Empire to colonize Korea – on the same plane as *Nichiryū Dōsoron*, thereby identifying Okinawa, like Korea, as a colony forced to accept Japan’s domination and its assimilationist policies. In short, the Japanese Communist Party viewed Japan’s wartime defeat as opening a path to independence and liberation for colonized people including Koreans and Okinawans.





Tokuda Kyūichi (the second from the left) and Kim Ch'ōnhæ (the tallest in the back row) leaving Fuchū prison together. October 10, 1945.

Perhaps the most telling symbolic moment defining the symbiotic relationship between *zainichi* Koreans and Okinawans under Japanese rule occurred when the Okinawan Tokuda Kyūichi (1894-1953, chairman of the Japanese Communist Party, 1945-53) and the Korean Kim Ch'ōnhæ (1898-1969) – both political prisoners held for long terms at Fuchū prison until their October 10, 1945 release – were released simultaneously. By that time, Tokuda had served eighteen years in prison.

Both Tokuda and Kim were active in the pre-war Japanese communist movement, both were involved in the resistance against the common enemy (Japanese imperialism), and they shared the historical experience of being ethnically oppressed by the Japanese. After their release, they respectively took up the positions of the secretary-general and a central committee member of the re-organized and legalized Japanese Communist Party. To this point, many Koreans and Okinawans viewed the United States as the “liberator,” responsible for releasing prisoners of conscience, freeing oppressed nations, and spreading democracy to Japan, Okinawa and Korea. Those classified as non-Japanese in the aftermath of the war and who faced a chaotic future in their “native lands” still attempted to expand their options

for national self-determination based on a hopeful attitude towards the US military. Tokuda Kyūichi argued that “Okinawa has no choice but to become a self-governing national republic, after having been under the complete political and economic control of the colonizers.”<sup>7</sup> With the support of Japanese Communists, the League of Okinawans actively propagated the autonomy of Okinawa to GHQ while seeking to aid the Okinawan population in Japan proper. At the same time, the League of Okinawans was supportive of North Korean Communist leaders’ acceptance of the Allies’ proposed trusteeship for an undivided Korea (as agreed at the December 1945 Moscow Conference of the US, UK and USSR foreign ministers). This was to be the first step in the gradual transition from “trusteeship→ autonomy→ independence.” It was the foundation for Chōren’s support for a trusteeship in Korea. The League of Okinawans initially sought autonomy under the trusteeship of the United States with a goal of eventual independence in accordance with the free will of Okinawans.<sup>8</sup> At a 1947 symposium held by the Okinawan Youth League, the representative of Chōren claimed, in a similar spirit, that “the way towards happiness and cultural advance for Okinawans and towards world peace is for Okinawa to become an independent country.”<sup>9</sup>

***The past repeated: embracing the politics of nationals/non-nationals, once again***

These attempts at self-determination were thwarted in early 1947 when the League of Okinawans was beginning to organize nationally. By that time, the United States was deferring the trusteeship plan that would have placed Okinawa under the supervision of the UN and the Security Council, where the Soviet Union, its allies and other proponents of decolonization could challenge American actions. Instead, the US prepared the Okinawan governance plan in collaboration

with Japan. The plan would acknowledge Japan's residual sovereignty while assuring the creation of a large network of US military bases in Okinawa. At the heart of the US-Japan collaboration was the Emperor's message sent to the US State Department in September 1947: "The Emperor hopes that the United States will continue the military occupation of Okinawa and other islands of the Ryukyus. In the Emperor's opinion, such occupation would benefit the United States and also provide protection for Japan ...The Emperor further feels that United States military occupation of Okinawa (and such other islands as may be required) should be based upon the fiction of a long-term lease - 25 to 50 years or more - with sovereignty retained in Japan."<sup>10</sup> With this plan, the US sought to secure both direct control of the strategic islands and a long-term lease of the military bases in Okinawa, while Japan sought both to protect the Emperor and secure the defense of its mainland and its future claims to Okinawa. However, both parties would have to wait for the signing of the Treaty of San Francisco in September 1951 to implement this plan. The legal status of Okinawa was postponed until the treaty came into force. The same was true for the legal status of *zainichi* Koreans. As illustrated by such incidents as the Hanshin (Osaka and Kobe) education struggle of 1948, when Korean ethnic education was suppressed, *zainichi* Koreans were denied rights to cultural autonomy as a liberated "non-Japanese" ethnic group and political rights as Japanese citizens. They simply were allowed to retain Japanese citizenship until the treaty ending the occupation came into force, when Japanese governmental control over them took effect and their former Japanese citizen rights were finally eliminated.

Meanwhile, with intensifying Cold War tensions and the policy changes of the reverse course of the Occupation, *zainichi* Koreans were branded as Communists and *daisangokujin* (third-country nationals) who disrupted the social

order with subversive political activities. In September 1949, in the wake of the success of the Chinese Revolution, SCAP's 'Organizations Control Ordinance' (*Dantai tō kiseirei*) led to the disbanding of Chōren with its links to North Korea, together with its affiliate student organization, the Korean Democratic Youth League in Japan (*Zainihon chōsen minshu seinen dōmei*). Ethnic Korean schools run by Chōren were closed. Kim Ch'ōnhae and other activists complained to GHQ, pleading for the retraction of Chōren's disbandment to no avail. Chōren would be succeeded by a new pro-DPRK group, Chōsen Sōren. Kim eventually moved to North Korea in June 1950, just before the outbreak of the Korean War.

Those who most closely witnessed the frustrations of the *zainichi* Korean movement were members of the League of Okinawans. Since 1946, the Japanese Government and media regularly used the term "third country nationals" with reference to criminal activities instead of "non-Japanese," even though the latter term was still being used in GHQ-issued SCAP documents. Resident Chinese in Japan demanded official explanations on the usage of this term.<sup>11</sup> In response to this terminological shift, Okinawans sought to avoid being included in the ranks of such "third country nationals" as resident Koreans or Taiwanese. Okinawan conservatives in fact raised this issue early on when the League of Okinawans was organized. For instance, a government official of Okinawan origin, Yoshida Shien, oversaw post-war Okinawan administration in Tokyo and opposed the formation of the organization. He criticized the League as an imitation of "the League of Koreans (Chōren) that cleverly exploited their privileges as third country nationals for better living conditions" and argued that its formation implied "willingly giving up becoming Japanese."<sup>12</sup> Those with views like Yoshida's increased in number as the similarities in the international status of *zainichi* Koreans and Okinawans turned into grounds for Japanese discrimination against

Okinawans, rather than a foundation for their solidarity in resistance. Communists were excluded from the League of Okinawans, and initiative inside the organization was overtaken by those who had been influential before Japan's defeat and who favored Okinawa's reversion to Japan. Once Chōren was disbanded, the League of Okinawans changed its name to the League of Okinawa (*Okinawa renmei*) on October 5, 1949. This change from identifying with the Okinawan people to identifying instead with a specific territory was initiated to further distance the reconstituted organization from Chōren, the League of Koreans, the name that referred precisely to a de-territorialized group of people. That the people of the Ryukyus, originally recognized by GHQ as non-Japanese, avoided inclusion in the category of "third country nationals," was largely due to the swift change in the organization's political line, which now favored reversion to Japan. Nevertheless, official Japanese government documents continued to identify Okinawans with *zainichi* Koreans, which eventually led the organization to disband and reconstitute itself as the Okinawa Association (*Okinawa kyōkai*, June 1951). The term "*zainichi* Okinawans," which had been used for some time after the war, eventually disappeared in the process.<sup>13</sup>

With the founding of the People's Republic of China in October 1949 and the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, US policy of turning Japan, and particularly Okinawa, into an "anti-communist fortress" was intensified, including the strengthening and expansion of military bases in Okinawa. Japanese corporations with lucrative contracts for "Korean War special procurements" (*Chōsen tokuju*) to support the US military became the catalyst for Japan's post-war economic revival. For Okinawans, however, the Korean War brought the nightmare that they would be engulfed in war with disastrous results as they had several years earlier in the Battle of Okinawa. During the Korean War, the islands were in

preparatory mode for military action. Blackouts were imposed and even cooking smoke coming from households was regulated. Fear of war escalated and there were rumors of Soviet invasion. Confusion and anxiety reached a peak.<sup>14</sup> For Okinawans, the Korean War brought home the realization that as long as their island was militarily occupied they would never be released from the specter of war. The sudden emergence of the reversion movement in Okinawa in 1951, before the signing of the San Francisco Treaty, was triggered in part by fears generated by the Korean War.

The San Francisco Treaty, together with the Japan-US Security Treaty signed on the same day, September 8, 1951, provided the framework for US bases in Japan, including Okinawa. They theoretically could naturalize as Japanese, but throughout the 1950s few *zainichi* Koreans succeeded in restoring their former Japanese citizenship.<sup>15</sup> Subsequently, *zainichi* Koreans and Okinawans re-oriented themselves respectively towards Korea and Japan and attempted to liberate themselves from discrimination as 'non-nationals' by obtaining citizenship in 'their' nation states. Many *zainichi* Koreans aspired to become "Korean/Chosŏn nationals". In subsequent decades, significant numbers of those affiliated with South Korea were able to gain South Korean citizenship while those affiliated with North Korea remained de facto stateless while living in Japan which did not recognize North Korea or the documents issued by the North Korean authorities. Following the reversion of Okinawa to Japan in 1972, Okinawans became Japanese citizens.

Shimota Seiji (1913-2003), a novelist of Okinawan origin, entered the Literature Department of Tokyo Imperial University as a student in 1935, the same year as a great Korean prose writer, Kim Saryang (1914-1950). They lived in the same boarding house, building mutual comradeship. A *zainichi* Okinawan who returned to the mainland after the war,



Shimota became a Communist in 1947 while working at the office of the New Japan Literary Society (*Shin Nihon bungaku kai*). During that time, many progressive Okinawans welcomed the Japanese Communist Party's support for Okinawa's independence and joined the Party under the auspices of the League of Okinawans. At the same time, facing harsh conditions under American military rule, many moderate Okinawans pressed for reversion to Japan. They formed the 'Association for the Promotion of Reversion to Japan' (*Nihon fukki sokushin kiseikai*). Shimota was hopelessly caught between the two camps. For Shimota, the independence of Okinawa offered the promise of liberation from the ethnic discrimination that had persisted long after the 1872 "Ryukyu Disposition" (*Ryūkyū shobun*) in which the Ryukyus were incorporated as a province under Japanese rule. On the other hand, having been subjected to assimilationist education and identifying as a Japanese subject, his feelings were complex.<sup>16</sup> When the term "people of Okinawa Prefecture (*Okinawa kenjin*)" was changed to "Okinawans" (*Okinawajin*) under post-war US military occupation, he wrote that "there was a sense of discrimination in the changed terminology. We felt



A demonstration demanding Okinawa's reversion to the motherland. April 27, 1969. Source: Okinawa Prefectural Archives

a certain anxiety issuing from the connotation that there was a separate ethnic group called the Okinawans, apart from the Japanese." In other words, even as a Communist Party member, Shimota felt a sense of incongruity at being classified as non-Japanese. As soon as the Treaty of San Francisco took effect and Okinawans residing in Japan proper could freely re-enter their native islands, Shimota went over to witness the cruel reality of Okinawa under US military control. He depicted it in his novel *Okinawa Island* (1956-1957), greatly shocking readers in Japan proper. He subsequently plunged into the movement for the reversion of Okinawa to the Japanese 'motherland' (*Sokoku fukki undō*). The Japanese Communist Party overcame internal divisions at its Sixth National Congress



in 1955 and launched a movement for Okinawa's reversion to Japan. The Okinawan issue was then viewed by the JCP as a question of 'national reunification' rather than a problem of 'national independence.'<sup>17</sup> At that time, it was common to refer to Japan as the 'motherland', both on the Right and on the Left of the reversion movement. 'Motherland' could be a signifier for a number of intentions, from the desire to assimilate as Japanese to interest in gaining the rights of Japanese citizens, but references to it were always underpinned by the wish to appeal to the solidarity of presumed Japanese 'co-nationals' to free themselves from US military oppression.<sup>18</sup>

However, Shimota wrote that he came to realize that both the Japanese government and its citizens had "forgotten about Okinawa" in the same way they had "forgotten (and were still forgetting) about Korea, Manchuria, Taiwan, and the former Japanese mandate territories in the South Seas" after the end of the war.<sup>19</sup> From Shimota's remarks, we can discern his understanding of the similarity between Japan's modes of post-war forgetting about the territories, which the Japanese Empire once conquered and controlled but were forced to relinquish after its defeat, and forgetting about Okinawa.

In the same period there were *zainichi* Koreans who expressed ideas like Shimota's. In 1959, when both the Okinawan reversion movement and the movement among pro-North Korea-oriented *zainichi* Koreans for return to their (North Korean) 'motherland' were reaching their peak, Fujishima Udai (1924-1997), a Japanese Communist journalist deeply involved in both movements, cited the following statement by a *zainichi* Korean:

The interest shown in us by the people of our motherland is enormous. However, I cannot understand why Japanese are so disinterested in their Okinawan compatriots. Their issue is the same as

ours and I understand Okinawans' mood very well, but it looks as if the Japanese do not understand it."



"With Throbbing Hearts, to the Socialist Motherland" Akahata headline, December 20, 1959. On the photos: the first ship leaving Japan on December 14, 1959, with *zainichi* Koreans being transported to North Korea on board

The reason why Fujishima's Korean interlocutor "understood Okinawans' mood" was not only the post-war experience of the violent separation from their respective nations experienced by both *zainichi* Koreans and Okinawans, but also a shared identification with their respective nations. Both nationalities also shared a common resentment concerning Japanese discrimination of minority groups and Japanese disinterest in Okinawans' orientation toward what they then referred to as their 'motherland'. As Shimota's remark demonstrates, both Okinawans and *zainichi* Koreans at times were able to move their gaze away from an exclusive fixation on their respective nationalities and look at each other with mutual sympathy.

**Aiming to become people of the Third World**

The ‘motherland’-oriented social movements of both Okinawans and *zainichi* Koreans took definite shape around 1955. In the case of Okinawa, the Korean War reinforced the recognition by the US military of the strategic importance of the Ryukyus as the “keystone” of American military supremacy in the Western Pacific. Okinawan resistance to expropriation of their land in the mid-1950s turned the island into an “island of struggle.” The islanders were painfully aware that they could not escape the danger of war without dealing away with the American bases. Most significantly, increasing numbers favored Okinawa’s reincorporation in Japan with an end to US occupation and access to the rights embodied in the Japanese Constitution.<sup>20</sup>

At the same time, the Korean War cemented the separation between North and South Korea. In 1955, the North Korean Workers’ Party consolidated its leadership over the Japanese *zainichi* movement with the formation of the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (Chōsen Sōren), which defined *zainichi* Koreans as ‘overseas nationals’ of North Korea and encouraged their participation in the cause of national unification and socialist construction. The General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, formed in 1955, was to stand at the center of the *zainichi* movement. Excluding pro-South Korean *zainichi* Koreans, it sought to unite ethnic Koreans in Japan around the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan. At this time, ethnic Korean Communists left the Japanese Communist Party to join the General Association. In this way, *zainichi* Koreans affiliated with Chōsen Sōren, in contrast to those who supported South Korea, came to shoulder a ‘dual task’ of fighting for both the unification of Korea and their own rights in the Japanese society<sup>21</sup>.

A second association of *zainichi* Koreans at that time was Mindan, or the Korean Residents Union in Japan, whose members aspired to South Korean citizenship. While those affiliated

with Chōsen Sōren could not obtain Korean citizenship, many affiliated with Mindan succeeded in gaining South Korean citizenship. Until the early 1960s Mindan was much weaker than Chōsen Sōren. The proportion of South Korean passport holders among *zainichi* Koreans surpassed 50% only in 1969, after the legal status of South Korean citizenship was clarified through the 1965 South Korea-Japan normalization treaty. With Mindan politically affiliated with South Korea, it opposed both US troop withdrawal from Okinawa and Okinawa’s reversion to Japan. Inasmuch as this paper deals with pre-1972 cooperation of *zainichi* Koreans and Okinawans, its focus is on Chōsen Sōren.

From the perspective of the present, we cannot deny Tobe’s observation that the ‘motherland’ orientation of post-war *zainichi* Koreans and Okinawans “in the end served as a useful excuse for Japanese society to suppress memories of imperialism, abandon responsibility [for the past] and take satisfaction in ‘ethno-national homogeneity.’”<sup>22</sup> But the ideas espoused by these movements also included perspectives quite different from the ‘nationalizing’ projects of modern nation states because of their Third-Worldist’ ideological foundation. This vision prioritized the ‘people’ aspiring to liberation from imperialism and possessing the revolutionary dynamism needed to transform the existing social order. Both movements challenged the US-Japan security system (Anpo) and Japan’s post-war political order grounded on US-Japan security arrangements. *Zainichi* Korean and Okinawan progressives saw US military intervention and the system of US bases as fundamental causes of both Okinawa’s and the Korean peninsula’s geopolitical problems. Accordingly, they advocated withdrawal of US troops and national unification as well as solidarity with each other’s movements for return or reversion to their respective ‘motherlands.’ Among Okinawans, the use of terms like “motherland”

(referring to Japan) or “Okinawa prefecture resident” instead of simply “Okinawan” was encouraged by reversion movement activists. These ‘returns’ or ‘reversions’ were conceptualized as, first and foremost, liberation from US colonialism, in the context of the anti-colonial movements surging throughout Asia and elsewhere at that time.

A typical progressive movement that embodied *zainichi* Korean-Okinawan solidarity was the education movement spearheaded by the Japan Teachers Union (*Nikkyōso*). Educational issues were central for both *zainichi* Koreans and the Okinawan reversion movement. Formed in 1947, the Japan Teachers Union organized against a separate peace agreement with the United States and its anti-Communist allies prior to the conclusion of the 1951 San Francisco Treaty at a time when the Korean War raged. The unionized teachers adopted their famed resolution, “Do not send our students to the battlegrounds once again!” They called for a general and inclusive peace agreement that would embrace both the Soviet Union and China, as well as securing Japan’s independence from the US, and they opposed Japan’s re-militarization. To carry out this resolution in the context of the education movement, in 1951 the Japan Teachers Union organized annual Pan-national Meetings for Educational Research (*Zenkoku Kyōken*) where participating *zainichi* Korean and Okinawan delegates could meet. Until Okinawa’s reversion to Japan in the early 1970s, the issues of Okinawan, *zainichi* Korean, Ainu and *burakumin* (a Japanese outcaste group) education were often dealt with together. Among these groups, Okinawans and *Zainichi* Koreans were organizing motherland-oriented movements at that time. For example, at the Eighth Pan-national Meeting for Educational Research in 1959 educational issues pertaining to these groups were debated on the ‘Human Rights and Ethno-national Education’ panel.<sup>23</sup>

Progressive Japanese educators in the 1950s

generally viewed post-war Japan as a US neo-colony. Thus Japan under US military occupation and with the continued US military presence following the end of the occupation, like Korea, was regarded as an oppressed nation. From this perspective, the goal for Japan was independence and social reform. Education for *zainichi* Koreans was framed in this context.<sup>24</sup> The discussion of Japan’s responsibility for ethnic Korean education at the second Pan-national Meetings for Educational Research in 1953 was emblematic of this perspective:

In a word, *zainichi* Korean education is not some problem of foreigners’ education, which may be regarded as a distant affair. In addition to our feelings of responsibility and our self-reflection, we should think about the acute issue of our beloved young pupils who must live amidst pan-pan culture in our country colonized by American imperialism. Viewed in this light, the *zainichi* Korean education issue is by no means the problem of ethnic Koreans alone. It is an issue of solidarity for the sake of oppressed peoples’ liberation and anti-colonial resistance. Thus, it must be approached with deep sympathy, and related to the issues of peace and independence that we are pursuing.<sup>25</sup>

Here, the Japanese ethno-nation is presented as a victim of American imperialist rule along with *zainichi* Koreans, rather than a victimizer. It is Japanese national victimhood that is emphasized here. Koreans and Japanese were called on to have solidarity with each other as victims who would work toward both Japan’s independence and peaceful coexistence on the Korean Peninsula and elsewhere, encouraging each other’s ethno-national education systems and working to abolish discrimination in their respective communities.

Once the San Francisco Peace Treaty came into force in 1952 and the US Occupation of Japan

ended, the primary basis for viewing Japan as an oppressed colony was the continued US military occupation of Okinawa, in addition to American bases remaining in mainland Japan. A representative of the Teachers' Association of Okinawa attending the 2nd Pan-national Meeting for Educational Research called for Okinawa's reversion to Japan, citing its oppression under US military rule. Other participants from Japan reacted to this by calling for "reconstruction of ethno-national education" aimed at solidarity with oppressed "Okinawan co-nationals" (on the understanding that Okinawans were "co-ethnics" of the Japanese from Japan proper). They further appealed for a heightened "sense of ethno-national crisis" and for turning the Okinawa reversion movement into a pan-Japanese one.<sup>26</sup> By 1966, following the 1960 struggle against the US-Japanese Security Treaty, the movement for Okinawan reversion to Japan developed along with opposition against the US war in Vietnam. At the 15th Pan-national Meeting for Educational Research in 1966, "Okinawan teachers reported on the circumstances of their islands which remained under American military occupation 20 years after the end of the war, the islands having been turned into a giant military base. They appealed for Okinawa's immediate reversion to the motherland."<sup>27</sup> Because of these efforts, a report presented to the 17th Pan-national Meeting for Educational Research in 1968 noted growing interest in Okinawa:

Unless Okinawa is unconditionally and fully restored to Japan, we will remain dependent on US imperialism and devoid of national sovereignty. So, resolution of the Okinawa issue is the precondition for the realization of our national tasks.<sup>28</sup>

By the late 1960s, for progressives, the liberation of Okinawa from American military rule was gaining greater attention as a central task of the Japanese people (*minzoku*). In the context of the progressive educational

movement of postwar Japan, *zainichi* Koreans and Okinawans were emblematic of the suffering of Korean and Japanese people under American imperialism. Whereas US military dominance in Asia was strongly criticized, awareness of the complicity of Japanese in the domination of Korea and Okinawa from the Meiji through Showa eras at times remained weak.

Some people recognized the two intertwined problems of *zainichi* Koreans and Okinawans as Japanese issues. For example, Fujishima Udai (1924-1997) published a paper in 1958 entitled "Three Original Sins of Japan: Okinawa, *burakumin* and *zainichi* Koreans." He mentioned that among the crimes committed by the Japanese capitalist state in the course of its formation since the Meiji era, three "representative major ones about which the nation (*kokumin*) lacks both direct historical experience and awareness" were Okinawa, *zainichi* Koreans and *burakumin*. Fujishima sharply criticized Japanese citizens for their lack of awareness of all three issues. As Fujishima wrote: "The Japanese government discriminates against its own compatriots in Okinawa and in the still-to-be-liberated *burakumin* villages. Therefore, one can expect that this government will naturally discriminate against *zainichi* Koreans, who are not Japanese citizens. The roots of discrimination lie in pre-war colonialism." Fujishima hoped that greater awareness of the "original sin" of Japanese colonialism would provide background to understanding discrimination against Korean, Okinawan and *burakumin* minorities giving rise to a reform-oriented social energy capable of changing Japanese society and helping it to overcome its pre-war attitudes.<sup>29</sup>

Shimota recalled an episode from his colonial-era relationship with Kim Saryang (1914-1950) when he protested against the lack of interest and discriminatory attitudes of the Japanese government and people toward Okinawa. Kim was a well-known Korean writer, some of



whose major fiction works were written in Japanese. Shimota noted that “Kim and I used to debate the issues of Korea, Okinawa and *burakumin* discrimination until the late hours, coming to the conclusion that, despite differences on the surface, all these issues shared the same essence.” Most likely, the ‘essence’ he referred to was colonialism, internal in the case of Okinawa and *burakumin* and external in the case of Korea.<sup>30</sup>

Fujishima’s criticism and his reference to Japan’s “original sin”/victimizer role towards ‘others’ inside Japan’s borders indicated not only the problematic nature of Japan’s nationalist exclusivism, but also the limitations of anti-hegemonic ethno-nationalism in the post-war Japanese Left.. Post-war progressives, as exemplified by the Communists, viewed Japan as a satellite of American imperialism and an oppressed nation. They emphasized their solidarity with other Asian nations as “fellow victims of imperialism” rather than an awareness of Japan’s own imperialist victimization of other Asians.<sup>31</sup> Such a political mood influenced progressive educational milieu as well. For example, Morita Toshio, an activist in the Japan Teachers Union, maintained that:

Even if those who consider the Japanese from Japan proper as perpetrators of discrimination and see the Okinawans as discriminated possess good intentions, I do not think that the insistence on the original sin and atonement will lead to the consolidation and unity of the toiling, oppressed and discriminated masses. One has to be clear about the complex circumstances which can arise in the future, and which may impede people’s unity and solidarity between different ethno-nations.<sup>32</sup>

Here, the “complex circumstances” referred to the possibility of Japan making an imperialist “comeback” in Asia under the aegis of US hegemony. Morita saw *Zainichi* Koreans as a

partner in an international solidarity movement to be developed in the process of the “general struggle against the Japanese and American ruling classes, for the independence of and democracy in Japan, for the reversion of Okinawa and *burakumin*’s liberation.”

In short, progressive Japanese, with Japanese Communists as a leading force (Communist influence was initially predominant in the Japan Teachers Union<sup>33</sup>) in the post-war period, regarded Okinawa, in the spirit of the left nationalism of that era, as emblematic of U.S. imperialist oppression of Japan and thus as a territory to be restored to Japan. At the same time, they considered *zainichi* Koreans as a part of the Korean people who, along with other Asian and African nations, would rise up against U.S. imperialism and eventually return to unified Korea. The assumption was that discrimination against *zainichi* Koreans was the result of pursuit of profit and imperial ambitions on the part of U.S. and Japanese ruling circles. In other words, the Japanese Left, with its lukewarm attitudes towards the issue of responsibility for Japan’s imperialist and colonialist past, did not fully recognize the discrimination which Okinawan and *zainichi* Korean people had been subject to even before the war, and which continued throughout the post-war period.

### ***Encountering the Reality of the ‘Half-Japanese’***

*Zainichi* Koreans associated with Chōsen Sōren, through their social movement and their schools, dissociated themselves from Japan while orienting themselves toward what they regarded as their home country, Korea. Gima Susumu, a high-school teacher in Okinawa, vividly captured Okinawans’ conflicting emotions arising from contact with the *zainichi* Korean population. The Teachers’ Association of Okinawa had sent a representative to attend the Pan-national Meeting for Educational

Research every year since its second meeting in 1953. Gima attended the 19<sup>th</sup> Pan-National Meeting held in Gifu Prefecture in 1970. That year's convention took place hard on the heels of the Nixon-Sato Communique of November 1969, promising the reversion of Okinawa to Japan by 1972.<sup>34</sup> The Pan-National Meeting in Gifu welcomed this development, but Gima distanced himself from this prospect and instead spent time with *zainichi* Korean attendees. He later published his observations and feelings under the title "My Showdown with the Japan inside Me."<sup>35</sup>

Listening to the tales conveyed to me by Kim and two or three other Koreans, I concluded that what is referred to as 'motherland', differs sharply in the case of *zainichi* Koreans and us Okinawans. How proud the they feel when they mention Democratic People's Republic of Korea! Compared to that, what is my case? I cannot be proud about Japan. I always feel anguish. Such a remark may provoke anger, but I sometimes envy Koreans. To me, Japan is a place, which I am striving for, but at the same time have to reject. It may sound like a jump in logic, but I do not want to become a so-called Japanese. I have been thinking this way for the last eight years. If I write something like this, my writing will be criticized as 'delirium'. I may be chided for sabotaging the cause of reversion to the motherland. But the reason why I came to think so, is because of my ability to look at Japan simultaneously from inside and from outside after the 27th parallel became the separation line between us and Japan.<sup>36</sup>

Talking with *zainichi* Koreans at the meeting, Gima realized that the situation of Okinawans and *zainichi* Koreans contrasted sharply, even though both peoples were in an 'abnormal' state of subjugation. Gima recollected that the difference came largely from the fact that the Okinawan people, who supported reversion to

Japan, aspired to return to an independent and idealized country, having turned a blind eye to the history of discrimination that Okinawans had experienced under Japanese rule. He further criticized the acquiescence of Okinawans to Japan's harsh rule that had earlier contributed to turning the entire population of Okinawa into human shields by the Japanese military during the Battle of Okinawa in the attempt to slow the US military's advance to Japan's home islands in the final months of the Pacific War. He then criticized the territorial division of Japan and Okinawa by the U.S. and Japanese authorities and the de facto military colonization by the U.S., without any consultation with the Okinawan population. Gima pointed out the clear difference between Okinawans' feelings toward Japan and the feelings of *zainichi* Koreans affiliated with Chōsen Sōren toward their Korean , even though both peoples were in an abnormal state of separation from their respective 'motherland.' Gima wrote that for this reason he even "envy Koreans."

Nevertheless, Gima suspected that the people of Okinawa, who had been "historically treated as barbarians" by the Japanese were desperate to prove themselves as Japanese in order to avoid discrimination. He found that this desire for assimilation persisted throughout the reversion movement. What stirred his emotions was Pak Sunam's "The Heart of *Zainichi* Koreans." Pak, a second-generation *zainichi* Korean author, hated her ethnicity due to the discrimination suffered at the hands of Japanese in her childhood. However, she started a new life in 1949 when she began to receive nationally- oriented education at a middle school for *zainichi* Koreans. "Here, I was freed from self-contempt. I learned what we lost and what was taken away from our world: the dignity of our soul, our language, our history, our love of ourselves as well as others, and so on. Each and every day was a step towards a new world," she recalled.<sup>37</sup> Compared to Pak, many second-

generation *zainichi* Koreans were still living under assimilationist policies even after the war. While they were not accepted as ‘proper’ Japanese, they could no longer live as Koreans either: their identity was fragmented, and they had to live as ‘semi-Japs’ (*pancchokpari*), ‘half-Japanese’ of sorts. Pak Sunam opened up to their cry. At that point, the second-generation, devoid of the original experience of growing up in Korea, already constituted the mainstream of the *zainichi* Korean society. While they were able to return to North Korea, the question of whether to leave Japan or remain there posed a difficult dilemma for many. Indeed, the numbers of naturalized *zainichi* Koreans were also growing at that time.<sup>38</sup> Recording the history and realities of *zainichi* Koreans, Pak Sunam launched her journey, searching for her identity as a second-generation *zainichi* Korean. “The Heart of *Zainichi* Koreans” is a part of her journey’s record.

During her journey of rediscovery, Pak Sunam observed two problems that *zainichi* Koreans faced: first-generation *zainichi* Koreans led miserable lives in the wake of the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that took many Korean lives or their experience as forced laborers in Kyushu coal mines during the empire; and second-generation *zainichi* Koreans were treated as ‘half-Japanese.’ She also learned of the plight of boys from *burakumin* villages and Okinawa.

This winter, I stayed in a *burakumin* village in Kobe. A ‘thug’ expelled from both school and work called himself ‘an underground person.’ In the self-contempt of those boys who were in a bottomless pit just because they were born ‘non-humans,’ I caught a clear glimpse of an element of the half-Japanese. When we first saw each other, we exclaimed in surprise at discovering ourselves in each other’s inner self. Familiarity, however, was not everything I found in the ‘underground’ thug. Between half-Japanese boys and the

thug was the hatred of seeing each other as ‘dirty, barbaric, and threatening.’

I see the naked reality of Japan in the boys of Okinawa and the ‘underground’ thug who squarely reflected the ironies of Japan. In that regard, they were the most Japanese among all the Japanese.<sup>39</sup>

Pak identified ‘an element of the half-Japanese’ in the *burakumin*. It was a mixed feeling of sympathy and hatred. In that tension, she saw ‘the most Japanese among all the Japanese’ in the sons of ‘non-humans’ who were ‘expelled’ to the ‘bottomless pit’ and subjected themselves to ‘self-contempt’ as outcast and marginalized Japanese posing a direct challenge to the stereotypical ‘desired human character’ of the eponymous booklet which the Minister of Education published in 1966, one year before she published her story, “The Heart of *Zainichi* Koreans.”. The Ministry of Education booklet was meant to establish the ‘model Japanese character’ for educational purposes. The booklet, expectedly, emphasized “love of country and respect for the Emperor,” who was supposed to embody the Japanese nation.<sup>40</sup> This ‘model Japanese character’ was designated by the authorities as a key to shifting the energy of the 1960 struggle against the security treaty with the US, into infatuation with the economic life that was to emerge through rapid growth. Pak deconstructed this ‘model Japanese’ - a project of social engineering from above - from the perspective of the marginalized, a perspective which Gima Susumu wholeheartedly embraced. In Gima’s words,

The *zainichi* Koreans she [Pak] describes are depressingly akin to the Okinawans. I saw the image of Okinawa Prefecture people in the account of a *zainichi* Korean who attempted to earn recognition as a Japanese in exchange for his life by volunteering for the Special Forces. The entirety of Okinawa also attempted to

prove itself as pure Japanese by actively collaborating in the war. Just as Pak saw the shades of 'half-Japanese' in *burakumin* boys, I found the mirror image of Okinawa in *zainichi* Koreans. It was a surprisingly bizarre familiarity.<sup>41</sup>

Many Okinawans attempted an escape on a personal level by assimilating into Japanese society, rather than uniting to stand up against discrimination. But such a course meant living permanently as 'half-Japanese.' It even amounted to supporting the logic of discrimination imposed by Japan, according to which non-Japanese deserved to be discriminated against. This is what Gima came to realize. This epiphany brought Gima closer to discarding illusions about the 'motherland.' What some called the 'Motherland' in reality was a combination of the view of the population of Japan proper who were uninterested in Okinawa and its reversion movement, and the goals of the Japanese government which encouraged discrimination against Okinawans and schemed to implement joint US-Japanese domination over the strategically important islands. At the same time, the Japanese government paid little attention to Okinawans who sought an immediate unconditional return to Japan instead of an Okinawa subjected to joint control by the U.S. military and the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF). As long as Okinawans continued to hold out for a return to Japan they would be doomed to reliance on the structures of this kind imposed on them by the Japanese 'motherland.' As to the Japanese government, having long ignored the Okinawan reversion movement, in 1965 the then Japanese Prime Minister visited Okinawa and remarked that without Okinawa's reversion, Japan's post-war period could not end. The remark, however, is usually interpreted as an expression of the desire to use the Okinawa issue in order to readjust the nature of the US-Japanese alliance and reshape this alliance, rather than a sign of interest in reversion per se.<sup>42</sup>

What if one imagines the creation of another 'motherland' different from the actual 'motherland' of Japan? "A showdown with the Japan inside myself" was exactly such an attempt. Okinawans' own movement for assimilation into mainland Japan, epitomized by the phrase "You should even cough in the Yamato style," would be sure to perpetuate the image of Okinawans as half-Japanese, while reinforcing discrimination by Japanese against the *zainichi* Koreans, the Okinawans, the Ainu, and the *burakumin* population. Hence, Gima concluded that he could become a Japanese only by untethering himself from the Japan inside his mind, which led him to want to be incorporated into the motherland of Japan. He concluded by identifying his own ideal of the 'motherland.'

I hope that in the future Japan will become a country where Okinawa can express its own unique character to the fullest. It will not be a culturally homogeneous, purist, Tokyo-centric country. Japanese culture can only prosper and broaden its horizon when it embraces Okinawan culture as distinct. Only then, I assume, would the ethnic education of the *zainichi* Koreans be able to gain nationwide acceptance.

I am certain that a new ideology that will transform Japan in the future will be born among the Okinawan, *burakumin* and resident Korean populations, the most outcast and underprivileged in Japanese society. When we deeply study and understand the least privileged and turn their weakness into strength, 'the ideology of the weak' will be born.<sup>43</sup>

At a time when Okinawa was experiencing an identity crisis in the lead-up to its 'return' to Japan, Gima keenly linked the experience of the *zainichi* Korean population, another 'underprivileged' group in Japanese society, to that of the Okinawans. Drawing on the Okinawan experience, he proposed a future-



oriented ideology that would enable Okinawans to overcome their self-imposed isolation within Japanese society, expand the horizon of their identity in a new and multi-faceted way, while overcoming discrimination and eventually transforming Japanese society through the acceptance of multiple cultural streams.

## Conclusion

Gima's optimistic scenario for solidarity among oppressed peoples soon reached an impasse. In 1970, at the very moment that Gima proclaimed a 'showdown with Japan in myself,' the mention of Okinawa in *Ningen* (Humanity), a supplementary textbook for *burakumin* liberation education, provoked an incident. The textbook criticized discrimination and basic rights infringements. It was compiled as a supplementary textbook for primary and middle school students by the research wing of The Buraku Liberation League, The Pan-national Research Society for Liberation Education, in cooperation with the Osaka Teachers Union. The textbook was distributed free of charge by the Osaka Prefectural Board of Education to primary and middle school students. However, the Association of Okinawan Residents in Osaka protested the mention of discrimination of Okinawans alongside the *burakumin* liberation problem and *zainichi* Korean issues in a middle school textbook and demanded the deletion of the Okinawa-related account. The problem did not stop here. In October 1970, Yara Chōbyō, the chair of the Ryukyu government, also demanded that the Osaka Prefectural Board of Education delete the Okinawa narrative. In January 1971, the Okinawa Parliamentary Club in the Diet, which included left-wing parliamentarians, proposed that the Ministry of Education prohibit the use of *Ningen* in the schools. The incident provoked very strong reactions among Okinawans. The Association of Osaka's Okinawan Residents explained that their protests against the

mention of Okinawa in *Ningen* was based on the belief that discrimination against Okinawans was fundamentally different from practices that targeted *burakumin* or *zainichi* Koreans. Treating all these forms of discrimination as analogous could, according to the Association, damage the image of Okinawans and invite discrimination against them.

This incident recalls the episode with the exhibition in the Humanity Pavilion in Osaka in 1903. The Humanity Pavilion of the 1903 Osaka Industrial Exhibition featured Okinawans exhibited in a human zoo-like manner, alongside Ainu, Taiwanese aborigines, Chinese and Koreans. Protests in Okinawa forced the organizers to cancel the exhibition of Okinawans (similarly, Chinese and Koreans were withdrawn after public protests, whereas the Taiwanese and Ainu remained).<sup>44</sup> Here too, the protests did not question the inhumane character of the exhibition as such, but the fact that Okinawans received the same treatment as Ainu or Taiwanese. In other words, the protests reflected the insistence on the part of Okinawans on their achievements in assimilation as subjects of the Japanese Empire and insistence that their situation differed fundamentally from that of Koreans or Ainu. As we have seen, 70 years later, Okinawans reacted similarly in the *Ningen* incident. If there was a difference, it was their ambition to become authentic Japanese subjects in 1903 vis-à-vis their desire to be assimilated into the Japanese national majority seven decades later and to avoid discrimination as a minority. In the former case, colonialism was the issue: Okinawans wanted to be counted as full-blown Japanese imperial subjects rather than a colonized people. In the latter case, the pivotal issue was that of political nationalism, the desire to be integrated into the mainstream of the Japanese political nation. However, the underlying discriminatory structures in both cases did not receive adequate attention. .

The *Ningen* incident led to counter-protests from the Teachers' Association of Okinawa. The unionized teachers stressed the fact that various forms of discrimination are superficially different but in essence are the same. All forms of discrimination are imposed by the ruling classes. Ending discrimination against Okinawans, by this logic, could only be achieved through the struggle to end all forms of discrimination.<sup>45</sup> However, this incident, taking place on the eve of Okinawa's 'reversion to Japan', clearly demonstrated that, rather than following Gima in finding the common element of discrimination confronting Okinawans, *zainichi* Koreans and *burakumin*, the majority of Okinawans not only remained deeply influenced by Japan's assimilationist ideology but also rejected any association with these other oppressed groups.

The present article has focused on the 'educational movement' of the 1950-60s, and on the issues of discrimination against *zainichi* Koreans and Okinawans. It stressed the mutual gaze of *zainichi* Koreans and Okinawans as each struggled for freedom and liberation against the US-Japanese dominating order. Both *zainichi* Koreans and Okinawans aspired to become liberated peoples by articulating their belonging to respectively (unified) Korea and Japan. Neither succeeded either in securing the withdrawal of US armed forces and closure of US bases or in social reforms directed toward achieving equality with the Japanese. Okinawans were, however, successful in contributing to the end of US rule in Okinawa and return to Japanese rule, but

within the framework of continued American base domination. Whereas the majority of *Zainichi* Koreans remained outside the boundaries of Japanese nationhood, Okinawans were integrated as nationals within the Japanese state, eventually strengthening Japan's view of itself as a 'homogenous nation.' The attempts of the marginalized to forge horizontal unity between *zainichi* Koreans and Okinawans nevertheless merit attention. The issues of equality remain no less pertinent today.

Even after the 1972 Okinawa reversion to Japan, Okinawans still face discrimination. This has made them even more aware of their identity as a minority group. At the same time, a generational and status shift occurred among *zainichi* Koreans. By 1969 309,637 *zainichi* had obtained South Korean citizenship. Social changes among *zainichi* Koreans were also underway. By 1975, marriages between Koreans accounted for less than half of all *zainichi* marriages, that is, the majority were mixed Korean-Japanese marriages.<sup>46</sup> The number of *zainichi* Koreans who obtained Japanese citizenship (102,881 by 1984) exceeded the number of returnees to North Korea, over 93,339 by 1984, the last year of repatriation<sup>47</sup> The ideology of the 'motherland' was relativized in this process, and discussions of permanent settlement in Japan as a Japanese ethnic minority have continued. This means that a number of changes took place in the conditions of the mutual gaze between *zainichi* Koreans and Okinawans. Shedding light on these changes is my future task.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Shasetsu: zō hyōgen shinsa Nihon no jinken towarete iru (Editorial: 'Human Rights in Japan are Questioned as the UN Conducts Inspection on Hate Speech'). *Ryukyu Shimpo*, 24 August 2014
- <sup>2</sup> A *Zainichi* Korean Supports Okinawans by Song. *Kyodo News*, 16 January 2016.
- <sup>3</sup> Arakawa, Akira (1971). *Hankokka no kyōku* (The Ominous Anti-State District). Tokyo: Shakaihyōronsha; Yi, Sŭngnyōl (1997). *Ilche ha Chosōnin chabon'ga ūi kŭndaesōng* (The "Modernity" of Korean Capitalists under Japanese Rule) In Yōksa munje yōn'guso ed., *Han'guk ūi kŭndae wa kŭndaesōng* (Korea's "Modern Era" and "Modernity"). Seoul: Yōksa pip'yōngsa.
- <sup>4</sup> Arasaki, Moriteru (1982). Okinawajin renmei (The League of Okinawans), *Shin Okinawa bungaku* (New Literature of Okinawa), Vol. 53. Naha: Okinawa tainususha.
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- <sup>6</sup> Nakano, Yoshio ed. (1969). *Okinawa: Sengo shiryō* (Okinawa: The Postwar Materials). Tokyo: Nihon hyōronsha.
- <sup>7</sup> Oguma, Eiji (1998). "*Nihonjin*" no kyōkai: Okinawa, Ainu, Taiwan, Chōsen, shokuminchi shihai kara fukki undo made (The Boundaries of the Japanese: Okinawa, Ainu, Taiwan, Korea from Colonial Control to Reversion Movement). Tokyo: Shin'yōsha, 488.
- <sup>8</sup> Tobe, Hideaki, *Zainichi* Okinawajin sono nanori ga terashidasu mono, 224-225.
- <sup>9</sup> Tokuda, Kyūichi et. al (1947). Okinawa mondai ni kansuru zadankai (A Symposium on the Issue of Okinawa), *Seinen Okinawa*. No. 3, 1947.
- <sup>10</sup> Shindō, Eiichi (1979). Bunkatsu sareta ryōdo Okinawa Chishima soshite anpo (The Divided Territory: Okinawa, Kuril Islands and the Security Treaty) *Sekai*, Vol. 401, Tokyo: Iwanami shoten.
- <sup>11</sup> Mizuno, Naoki (2000). "Daisangokujin" no kigen to rufu ni tsuite no kōsatsu (A View on the Origin and Popularization of the Third Country Nationals Idea), *Zainichi Chōsenjin kenkyū*, Vol. 30, *Zainichi* chōsenjin undōshi kenkyūkai.
- <sup>12</sup> Oguma, Eiji, "*Nihonjin*" no kyōkai, 490-491.
- <sup>13</sup> Tobe, Hideaki, *Zainichi* Okinawajin sono nanori ga terashidasu mono, 232-233.
- <sup>14</sup> Sasamoto, Yukuo (2006-2007). "Chōsen sensō to Okinawa: Okinawa taimusu wo yonde (The Korean War and Okinawa: Reading Okinawa Times)." *Jinmin no Chikara* (People's Strength) Vol. 840-846, *Jinmin no Chikara* henshūinkai.
- <sup>15</sup> Kim Yōngdal (1980), *Zainichi Chosenjin no kika: nihon no kika gyosei ni tsuite no kenkyu* (The Naturalization of *Zainichi* Koreans: a Research on the Japanese Administration of Naturalization), Kobe: Kim Yōngdal, 15-17.
- <sup>16</sup> Shimota, Seiji (1993). *Churakasa: minshushugi bungakuundo to watashi*, Tokyo: Kōchi shōbō; Shimota, Seiji (2000). *Shimota seiji zenshū* (The Complete Collected Writings of Shimota Seiji), Vol. 5, Tokyo: Shimota Seiji zenshū kankōkai, 582.
- <sup>17</sup> Nihon kyōsantō Chūōiinkai (1994). *Nihon kyōsantō no Nanajūnen jō* (Seventy Years of the Japanese Communist Party. Vol. 1). Tokyo: Shinnihonshūppansha, 246.
- <sup>18</sup> Oguma, Eiji, "*Nihonjin*" no kyōkai, 503-521.

- <sup>19</sup> Shimota, Seiji (1959). Okinawa to sabetsu no mondai (The Problem of Okinawan Discrimination), *Buraku*, No. 114. Tokyo: Buraku mondai kenkyūjo, 8.
- <sup>20</sup> While the majority of Okinawans favored reincorporation into Japan over US rule in the 1950s and 1960s, there was and remains a pro-independence minority. The leader of pro-independence Ryukyu Kokuminto, Kiyuna Tsugumasa (1916-1989), envisaged Okinawa becoming a pro-US, anti-Communist state. He participated in the Asian Peoples' Anti-Communist League, spearheaded by South Korea's Syngman Rhee regime (1948-1960). See Lim Kyoung-hwa
- <sup>21</sup> Kajimura, Hideki (1993). *Kajimura Hideki chosakushū* (The complete works of Hideki Kajimura), Vol. 3, Tokyo: Akashi shoten, 139-143.
- <sup>22</sup> Tobe, Hideaki, *Zainichi Okinawajin sono nanori ga terashidasu mono*, p. 235.
- <sup>23</sup> Higa, Yasunori et. al (2013). Nikkyōso kyōken zenkoku shūkai ni okeru *zainichi* Korian kyōiku wa dono youni ronjirarete kitaka (How was the Education of Koreans in Japan Discussed at the Pan-national Meetings for Educational Research Organized by the Japan Teachers Union in the 1950s and 1960s?), *Ōsakadaigaku kyōikugaku nenpō* (*Annals of Educational Studies*), No. 18.
- <sup>24</sup> Oguma, Eiji (2002). *Minshu to aikoku: sengo nihon no nashonarizumu to kōkyōsei* (*Democracy and Patriotism: Nationalism and the Public Sphere in Postwar Japan*). Tokyo: Shin'yōsha, p. 368.
- <sup>25</sup> Nihon kyōshokuin kumiai (Japan Teachers Union) ed. (1953). *Nihon no kyōiku* (*Japan's Education*) 2. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, pp. 469-470. 'Pan-pan' refers to the girls who sold sex to US soldiers during the American Occupation. 'Pan-pan culture' connotes the US culture imported to Japan, particularly the culture of military prostitution, usually seen as vulgar and sordid.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 459.
- <sup>27</sup> Nihon kyōshokuin kumiai ed. (1966). *Nihon no kyōiku* (*Japan's Education*) 15. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, p. 462.
- <sup>28</sup> Nihon kyōshokuin kumiai ed. (1968). *Nihon no kyōiku* (*Japan's Education*) 17. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten.
- <sup>29</sup> Fujishima, Udai (1960). *Nihon no minzoku undō* (*Japan's National Movement*). Tokyo: Kōbundō, p. 28.
- <sup>30</sup> Shimota, Seiji. Okinawa to sabetsu no mondai.
- <sup>31</sup> Oguma, Eiji "Nihonjin" no kyōkai: Okinawa, Ainu, Taiwan, Chōsen, shokuminchi shihai kara *fukki undō made*. 368-373
- <sup>32</sup> Morita, Toshio (1970). Buraku Okinawa *zainichi chōsenjin wo meguru sisō jōkyō* (The Situation of Thought over Buraku, Okinawa and *Zainichi* Koreans), *Buraku mondai kenkyū*. No. 26. Buraku Mondai Kenkyūjō.
- <sup>33</sup> Benjamin C. Duke (1973). *Japan's Militant Teachers: A history of the Left-Wing Teachers' Movement*. Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii. 76-77.
- <sup>34</sup> Takahashi Junko (2003). "Fukki" zengo ni okeru "Okinawa mondai" gensetsu no hen'yō katei: kyōiku kenkyū zenkoku shūkai no jirei kara (Changes in the Discourses on the Okinawa Problem before and after Its Reversion to Japan: Examined in the case of the Pan-national Meeting for Educational Research), *Nenpō shakai-gaku ronshū*, No.16. Kantō shakai gakkai.
- <sup>35</sup> Gima Susumu (1970). Uchinaru Nihon tonō taiketsu (Confrontation with the Inner Japan), in



*Okinawa no sensei-tachi: Hondo tonno shin no rentai wo motomete* (Okinawa Teachers: Looking for True Solidarity with the Mainland), co-edited by Japan Teachers Union and Teachers' Association of Okinawa. Tokyo: Gōdō shuppan, p. 240.

<sup>36</sup> Gima Susumu, "Uchinaru Nihon tonno taiketsu, p. 240.

<sup>37</sup> Pak Sunam (1967), *Zainichi Chōsenjin no kokoro: han Nihonjin no genjitsu kara* (The Heart of *Zainichi* Koreans in Japan: From the Reality of Half-Japanese People), *Tenbō*, No. 103. Tokyo: Chikumashobō, p. 146.

<sup>38</sup> Kim Yōngdal, *Zainichi Chosenjin no kika: nihon no kika gyosei ni tsuite no kenkyu*, 17-19.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>40</sup> Monbushō (1966), *Kitai sareru ningenzō: Chūō kyōiku shingikai tōshin* ("The Image of Ideal Japanese": Central Council for Education Supplementary Report), *Kōhō shiryō*, No. 33. Tokyo: Monbushō.

<sup>41</sup> Gima Susumu, "Uchinaru Nihon tonno taiketsu, p. 245.

<sup>42</sup> Arasaki Moriteru (2005), *Okinawa no gendaishi* (Okinawa's Modern History), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 26-27.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 269.

<sup>44</sup> Kirsten L. Ziomek, (2014). The 1903 Human Pavilion: Colonial Realities and Subaltern Subjectivities in Twentieth-Century Japan *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 73, No. 2, 493-516

<sup>45</sup> Teachers' Association of Okinawa (1971). *Kaihō kyōiku dokuhon "ningen" ni tsuite no kenkai* (View on *Ningen*, the Textbook for Liberation Education), *Buraku kaihō*, No. 15.

<sup>46</sup> The statistics are available at the [website of the Korean Residents Union](#).

<sup>47</sup> Kim Yōngdal, *Zainichi Chosenjin no kika*, 24.