論　文

# The Influence of Sociopolitical Factors on Local History Writing:
# A Case Study of Yomitan Village's *Senjikiroku*

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**Abstract:** The 1945 Battle of Okinawa between U.S. forces and the Japanese Imperial Army turned Yomitan Village into a battlefield, killing approximately a quarter of its residents. Over the past eighty years, the village has carefully preserved the memory of the war through museum exhibits, war memorials, and peace studies programs, all of which are based on the village's records of local war history. An intriguing aspect of these historical war narratives is that, before the compilation of oral histories began in the late 1970s, there was a pocket of time in the postwar period where the locally shared recollections—or collective memories—of these events remained undocumented. Why did the local history writing process begin in the late 1970s, and what does this imply? Broadly stated, this paper investigates the influence of sociopolitical factors on the writing of local history. Specifically, it focuses on the case study of Yomitan Village and investigates how the sociopolitical environment of the village in which the local war history was collected and documented influenced the structure and content of the historical narratives in its local historical records, *Senjikiroku* (戦時記録; "Wartime Records"), as well as its future retellings.

**Keywords:** Local History, Battle of Okinawa, Collective Memory, Gender

**アブストラクト**：1945年，アメリカ軍と日本帝国陸軍の間で沖縄戦が展開すると，読谷村は戦場となり，村民のおよそ4分の1が命を失った。戦争体験の記憶は，1970年代後半から自治体に繰り広げられた村民の聞き取り調査により収集され，村の集合的記憶（collective memory）として今でも残っている。その内容は博物館の展示や戦争記念碑，平和学習プログラムなどを通じて伝え継がれている。なぜ地元の歴史記録の執筆は1970年代後半に始まったのか，そしてそれは何を意味するのか。本稿は，社会政治的要因が地域史の執筆に与える影響を検討する。具体的には，読谷村の事例を中心に，『戦時記録』の歴史的叙述の構造や内容，およびその後の語り直しにおいて，地域の戦時記録が収集・記録された村の社会政治的環境がどのように影響したのかを明らかにする。

**キーワード**：郷土史，沖縄戦，集合的記憶，ジェンダー

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## I. Introduction

On April 1, 1945, as World War II neared its end, American forces composed of 183,000 soldiers landed on the coast of Yomitan Village, Okinawa. The land battle between these forces and the Japanese Imperial Army which ensued—referred to as the Battle of Okinawa—turned the farming village into a battlefield, killing approximately a quarter of its residents. Death came in various forms: "hails of bullets" flying from various directions, starvation and malnutrition, diseases like malaria, and—perhaps most regrettably—at one's own hands and those of loved ones amid the *shūdan jiketsu* (集団自決; forced "mass suicides") in hideouts and caves.[1] One central historical narrative revolves around the *shūdan jiketsu* which took place in the Chibichiri Cave, where a mother, cornered by the threat of imminent capture, was forced to take the life of her children. Over the past eighty years, the memory of such harrowing events has been carefully preserved through museum exhibits, war memorials, and peace studies programs, all of which are based on the village's records of local war history.

An intriguing aspect of these historical war narratives is that, before the compilation of oral histories began in the late 1970s, there was a pocket of time in the postwar period where the locally shared recollections—or collective memories[2]—of these events remained undocumented. Why did the local history writing process begin in the late 1970s, and what does this imply? Broadly stated, this paper investigates the influence of sociopolitical factors on the writing of local history. Specifically, it focuses on the case study of Yomitan Village and investigates how the sociopolitical environment of the village in which the local war history was collected and documented influenced the structure and content of the historical narratives in its local historical records, *Senjikiroku* (戦時記録; "Wartime Records"), as well as its future retellings.

Key to this investigation is the interplay between memory and history, specifically on how collective memory of war was compiled into a unitary local history within a certain sociopolitical environment. Indeed, while the topics of postwar political history (Yamauchi 2007, Hashimoto 2009), the local history writing (Kobayashi & Uechi 2003, Nakamura 2001), and the war memorials (Kitamura 2006, Sugita 2006) of Yomitan Village have been studied separately, the influence that each topic has on the others has yet to be investigated. This paper aims to address this void by tracing the historical process in which the narrative was documented and remembered in the context of the various sociopolitical changes that took place in Yomitan Village from 1945

(1) This description of the Battle of Okinawa is derived from the "Battle of Okinawa in Yuntanza and Postwar Community Reconstruction" exhibition text at the Yuntanza Museum in Yomitan Village, Okinawa.

(2) French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1925) coined the term "collective memory" to mean the shared memories and representations of the past that exist within a social group or society, shaped by intricate forms of social communication. Like personal memories, "collective memories" often center on tangible 'places' such as historical landmarks, as well as metaphorical 'places'—which Pierre Nora (1989) terms *realms of memory*—like symbols, myths, rituals, and artworks.

to the present. Additionally, it incorporates a content analysis of the local historical record, *Senjikiroku,* as well as interview responses from the director of the local history museum. By doing so, this paper investigates how the sociopolitical environment in Yomitan Village influenced both the timing and nature of the local history-writing initiative that took place beginning in the late 1970s.

## 2. Setting the Scene: U.S. Military Occupation of Okinawa (1945-1972)

The movement to write local war history began in the late 1970s, but understanding the preceding sociopolitical environment is essential to explain its timing. Under the U.S. Military Occupation of Okinawa (1945-1972), identity and education became a key focus in political discourse on reversion to Japan, directly influencing how local war history was written in Yomitan Village. While not all-encompassing, the U.S. Military had a significant impact on the structural reconstruction of Okinawa in the immediate postwar era. A 1946 U.S. Naval Military Government document details how educational activities in Okinawa ceased due to war damage and describes the collaborative efforts to rebuild schools, create materials, secure supplies, and establish an Okinawan Department of Education under U.S. supervision. During the initial occupation, the Military Government followed directives to ban prewar Japanese nationalist practices like Shinto ceremonies and introduced new educational policies with local boards of education appointed in each district (Naha City Board of Education 2002). U.S. military policies focused on banning prewar Japanese militarism, democratizing education through a school board system, and rapidly restarting education for refugees (JICA 2006).

Under such circumstances, education—as a means of shaping how the Okinawan people identify with ideologies like nationalism and democracy—became a crucial component of the U.S. Military occupation in Okinawa. One way the U.S. Military Government aimed to bring these agendas to fruition was through its *seijin kyōiku* (成人教育) or "Adult Education" initiatives. In 1949, the U.S. military government established adult education regulations in Okinawa to teach adults essential knowledge of English and democracy, foster moral character, and enhance cultural qualities which, Taira (2001) argues, became part of the broader colonial language policy. In conjunction with the plan for *seijin gakkō* (成人学校) or "adult schools," frameworks for English language institutions and study abroad programs were developed, aiming to cultivate an elite educated class of Okinawans trained at American universities. These students were known as the *beiryū-gumi* (米留組) or "study in the U.S. group," who were expected to become local leaders in fields such as higher education, business, and politics (Yamazato 2012). In 1948, the U.S. Military Government integrated the local *bunka-bu* (文化部) or "Culture Division" into the Civil Administration's Department of Education as part of its Adult Education initiative, with funding directly provided by the Military Government. Taira (2001) notes how this was aimed to systematically enhance social education, reflecting the U.S. policy of making Okinawa the "Keystone of the Pacific."

Despite these ambitious policies established by the U.S. Military Government, in practicality, the top-down approach to monitoring social education in Okinawa did little to change the experience of education for the Okinawan people. Chobyo Yara (1968, p. 47-48) recalls how, even years after the war, the U.S. military provided no official directives or financial resources needed for reconstruction, leaving the projects stalled indefinitely. This void created by the incomplete educational reconstruction projects was filled by local leaders and educators who implemented on-site changes to the curriculum and school policies, those which reflected the political stance supporting the reversion of Okinawa to mainland Japan. Indeed, the signing of the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty instigated the rise of prefectural and local debates on educational policy, most predominantly around Okinawan identity amid the ambiguous presence of both U.S. and mainland Japanese authorities. While the 1951 treaty concluded the U.S. occupation of mainland Japan, Okinawans continued to be ʼstateless peopleʼ with citizenship from neither Japan nor the U.S. and governed directly by the U.S. military (Johnson 1990, p. 6). With heightened attention towards the movement for reversion, a nationwide fundraising campaign to rebuild war-damaged Okinawan schools emerged. As the leading figure of this movement, Chobyo Yara (later the first governor of post-reversion Okinawa) contributed to the politicization of discourse on educational policy. In his 1977 memoir, Yara reflects on his views on education at the time, writing that since "reversion was the premise for everything," the purpose, methods, and system of education "should be the same as in mainland Japan" (Yara 1977, p. 19). This ideology is reflected in what Miyagi (2007) calls the institution of "education as Japanese" supported by schoolteachers and education board members in Okinawa during the U.S. Military Occupation, under which Okinawans, led by teachers, persuaded the U.S. forces to allow the raising of the Japanese flag at homes and schools. This "education as Japanese" reflected the local peopleʼs dissatisfaction with the U.S. Military Government and overshadowed any major movements toward advocating for a unique Okinawan history or identity.

While the U.S. Military Occupation policies themselves did not come to full fruition, the response of the Okinawan people towards these policies left lasting impacts on local ways of organization and local conceptions of identity. For instance, while the "adult schools" encouraged by U.S. military directives were never fully established, the concept of social education and public centers gained traction among the residents and were later adopted by local *Kominkan* (公民館)[3] or "community centers" (Kobayashi & Uechi 2003). Additionally, contrary to the US study abroad programʼs goal of fostering pro-U.S. leaders, Okinawan students frequently felt recognized as and encountered discrimination similar to mainland Japanese people, strengthening their sense of Japanese national identity (Yamazato 2012).

Furthermore, many of the U.S. Military Occupation policies led to repercussions that created new space—

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(3)  Predominantly established throughout Japan beginning in 1946, Kominkan promoted community development and social education after World War II. Despite grassroots efforts to build them in every community, financial constraints in the early 1950s left many without physical facilities (Wang 2019).

both in a literal and ideological sense—for women. In a literal sense, the above-mentioned "Culture Division" and "community centers" institutionalized an administrative mechanism that supported various community groups, one being the *fujin-kai* (婦人会) or "women's associations" (Taira 2001, p. 87). Indeed, the first women's association in Yomitan Village used a community center that was completed in Zakimi in 1951 as a base for their activities (Kano 2008, p. 26). The neighborhood's grassroots educational initiatives of the 1950s, driven by this Women's Association, were pivotal in community child-rearing efforts. The members of the association, most of whom identified as mothers, were driven by the goal of collaboratively raising their children, establishing a precedent for the future roles of mothers in local social projects (Kano 2008). In terms of ideological spaces, Kinuko Maehara Yamazato (2012) shows that, in addition to strengthening the Japanese national identity of the *beiryū-gumi*, the study abroad programs instigated discussions on gender, reaffirming Patricia Hill Collin's (1990) claim that gender is intimately tied to other aspects of identity. According to Koikari (2015), there also existed instances where American, Okinawan, and Japanese elite women jointly pursued a series of activities related to homemaking, (re)defining the occupation as an occasion for feminine affinity and affiliation among women of different backgrounds. In these ways, women and gender roles emerged as a recurring theme within the sociopolitical discourse on the identity of Okinawans, particularly in comparison to their counterparts in the U.S. and mainland Japan.

Under these circumstances, the realization of the Reversion of Okinawa in 1972 left a tremendous impact on the Okinawan people, specifically on the changing conceptions of their identity. Yoshihiko Miyagi (2007) reflects on the identity crisis he experienced as an elementary school student during Okinawa's reversion to Japan. He recalls feeling conflicted as a student "educated as a Japanese" when confronted by mainland textbooks that excluded Okinawa, with social studies marking Japan's southernmost point as the Yoron Island. This exclusion fostered both a longing for the mainland and an identity crisis of whether he could truly identify as "Japanese," given the differences in upbringing and history.

Additionally, the persistence of U.S. Military Base presence after the reversion created a shift in understanding of Okinawan and Japanese identities. Chobyo Yara's reversion ideology had initially aimed to remove U.S. military bases and achieve a peaceful Okinawa by trusting Japan to assert the rights of Okinawan people as Japanese citizens. However, as the potential of continued military base presence began to surface, the "reversion" movement initially led by Chobyo Yara and others began to intertwine with anti-war and peace efforts, influenced by mainland Japan's progressive groups and the *Nikkyo-sō* (日教組) or "Japan Teachers' Union." Thus, the goal of the "reversion" movement shifted from reversion itself to becoming a means for anti-war and peace activism. These sentiments intensified as the masses in Okinawa experienced disappointment in the continued presence of U.S. military bases despite the 1972 reversion. These political frictions surrounding the reversion process and the consequent rise of social discourse on national identity created an incentive to organize prefectural and local histories, ones which upheld the stories and identities of the Okinawan people. As

discussed in the case study of Yomitan Village below, these identity-shaping initiatives used the mechanism of community centers introduced during the U.S. Military Occupation to rapidly textualize local histories.

## 3. Yamauchi Administration (1974-1998) and the Collection of Local War History

Yomitan Village, Chobyo Yara's hometown, as well as the host for much of U.S. Military Base facilities, became a model of post-reversion reconstruction. Tokushin Yamauchi, who served as mayor for six consecutive terms from 1974 to 1998, led extensive revitalization efforts during his administration. He is well-known for his political initiatives focused on "cultural reconstruction," promoting peace, and advocating for the reduction of U.S. military bases. In his 2007 book, *Yomitan Village, Okinawa: Peace and Autonomy Created by Constitutional Power*, Yamauchi provides an autobiographical account of his leadership in the local reconstruction projects. Yamauchi's administrative policy included (1) leveraging the Japanese Constitution's principle to protect local autonomy, (2) countering military bases with cultural strength, and (3) asserting that the protagonist of Yomitan Village is its residents (Yamauchi 2007, p. 196). A close examination of his points reveals how his administrative policies were strongly influenced by the pre-reversion politics discussed in the previous section. In point (1), he shares Yara's stance that Okinawa is part of Japan and argues, therefore, that Yomitan Village residents should be treated fairly under the national constitution. In point (2), he frames his administrative agenda based on the anti-U.S. military base rhetoric that emerged within debates on the nature of the reversion. In point (3), he quotes the motto of the community centers founded in the early years of the U.S. Military Occupation.

It was within this sociopolitical environment under Yamauchi's local administration—particularly for its "residents as protagonists" motto and the "culture strategy" —that the movement to write a local war history emerged in the latter half of the 1970s. On the one hand, Yamauchi's administration developed a prototype of community development with "residents as protagonists." This self-governance movement led by the Yamauchi was deeply connected to the struggle against the military bases, which included campaigns against the construction of asphalt plants and antenna bases on residents' land (Hashimoto 2007). Additionally, projects focusing on residents' well-being that were initially deemed unfeasible, like constructing public parks and a "comprehensive welfare center" within a military airfield, were realized under the motto.

On the other hand, Yamauchi promoted a "cultural strategy" against military bases, designating historical, cultural, and natural sites as local "cultures" that needed protection and preservation (Yamauchi 2007, p. 60). For instance, in his "Phoenix Plan," Yamauchi leveraged the principles of Feng Shui (Chinese geomancy) to resolve a critical impasse in negotiations over the location of new village infrastructure, arguing for the cultural significance of the land being used by the military bases (Fig. 1 & Fig. 2). By implementing this "cultural strategy," Yamauchi aimed to use local history and culture to argue against the construction and maintenance of military bases on village land. Consequently, the "culture strategy" also led to the creation of

Fig. 1 Map of Yomitan Village



Fig. 2 Diagram of Yomitan Village's
Feng Shui Patterns

the local history archives in 1974 and the opening of the Yomitan Village Historical and Folklore Museum in 1975 (Yomitan Village Board of Education 2022, p. 116-122). A key aspect of this history-writing initiative was its dependence on oral histories. "Oral history" can be defined as an intensive method of interview that records individual experiences vocally recounted by a narrator and recorded by an interviewer (Leavy 2007, p. 153) and is considered an alternative to traditional forms of historical methods that are often inadequate for capturing marginalized voices (Gluck 2002, p. 4). Beginning in the late 1970s, Yamauchi's administration started collecting oral histories from villagers to document their experiences of war and postwar reconstruction, positioning "residents as protagonists" in the local history. According to the Chairman of the Yomitan Village History Editorial Committee, Den Miyagi (2002), the Yomitan Village History Editorial Office conducted extensive "oral interviews," repeatedly held "discussion meetings," and gathered "personal experience essays" contributed by the residents. These materials provided detailed accounts of life in Yomitan Village before and during the war, particularly in relation to the northern (Yomitan) airfield and the presence of stationed Japanese soldiers in surrounding settlements. It also extensively documented the wartime experiences of villagers who were outside the prefecture or overseas, offering a comprehensive record of the village's history.

Yamauchi (2007) explains, "In addition to its outward goal of eliminating military bases, the "cultural strategy" was also designed to inwardly foster local solidarity by constructing a shared collective memory." Indeed, as Yamauchi states in the preface of the *Yomitan Village History* series published during his administration, "Any experience, if left only in the memories of individuals, disappears with that generation. By transforming it into written words and preserving it as a record, it becomes history, and the 'lessons' therein are passed on to the future" (Yamauchi 2002, p. 35). Miyagi also describes the goal of the editorial team as preserving the memory of war that was "at risk of fading away" to pass down "the wartime experiences as a negative legacy to future generations" (2002, p. XXIV).

Behind this local movement towards writing war history was a larger wave of prefectural grassroots history writing that emerged in the 1960s, when, driven by town and village mergers, individuals and small groups

started documenting local identities. From the mid-1960s to the late 1970s, during the height of the reversion movement, about 50 municipal and district histories were published. This period also saw the publication of 'History of Okinawa Prefecture' and 'History of Naha City,' which included more structured and thorough documentation. However, most works remained single-volume efforts by few local historians. From the late 1970s, there was a significant shift toward creating "histories by and for the residents," leading to the establishment of the Okinawa Prefecture Regional History Council in 1978. This period emphasized extensive research, local material collection, and multi-volume publications, aiming to make histories accessible and scientific. Consequently, numerous municipal histories were published in the 1980s, focusing on comprehensive themes like war experiences, folk culture, language, and migration, reflecting a more organized and community-involved approach to history writing (Nakamura 2001, p. 102-103). While the *Senjikiroku*—the fifth volume of the *Yomitan Village History* series—was not published until 2002, the first volume of the series was published in 1986, reflecting the prefectural trend to write local history.

It was within this prefectural movement towards grassroots history writing that the collective memories of war and reform in Yomitan Village began to be collected in the late 1970s. The establishment of historic sites and the collection of oral histories from local survivors of the Battle of Okinawa were intended to shape how the local people interpreted their historical past and engaged with the political present.

## 4. *Senjikiroku* and the Legacy of Yamauchi's "Culture Strategy"

The various testimonials and historical data collected by Yamauchi's administration were preserved in the serialized publication *Yomitan Village History,* namely in its fifth volume titled *Senjikiroku* (戦時記録; "War-Time Records") divided into two parts. The first volume covers Japan's involvement in World War II, the Pacific War, and detailed personal accounts from village residents, while the second volume examines the village's role in the conflict through historical records, casualty statistics, internment camps, and oral histories, concluding with reflections on the significance of remembering the war.

The creation and publication of the *Senjikiroku* had several functions beyond its explicit agenda of data collection and preservation. Firstly, by basing the records on the memories of the survivors, the volume embodies the "residents as protagonists" motto of the village. Although the *Senjikiroku* was compiled by a local editorial committee rather than historians, it is largely based on oral histories collected from the villagers, reflecting the spirit of the nationwide progressive movement to empower marginalized communities through history writing. Secondly, by documenting the various war experiences and organizing them into the *Senjikiroku*, the Yomitan Village History Editorial Committee was able to transform the loose sociocultural assemblage of collective memories into a concrete and unitary local history, establishing an institutionalized form of shared history for the village. Benedict Anderson (1986) argues that the nation is an imagined political community,

where imagined is not the same thing as false or fictionalized, but rather a reference to the unselfconscious acknowledgment of solidarity and shared history with others who comprise the "nation" (p. 26). Anderson's notion of an "imagined community" to explain the construction of the nation can be conceptualized on a local level to explain Yomitan Village's creation of a shared history. Indeed, the Yomitan Village Editorial Committee engaged in "subject-creation"[4] that established the village as a collective historical and political subject, one composed of men, women, and children who share a narrative of continued resilience and suffering. Thirdly, the documentation of Yomitan Village's local war history allowed the collective memories to take up historical meaning within a larger historical context, specifically on the themes of nationalism, militarism, and education. The narratives in *Senjikiroku* tend to ascribe the suffering and trauma experienced by villagers to the militaristic government, paying particular attention to the nationalistic education that normalized self-endangering patriotic attitudes. Such sentiments are expressed in the testimonials by a female testifier. In her testimonial titled "Memories of Yukiko-san," she recounts the story of her friend Yukiko (nicknamed Yuki-san) who, as a nurse, administered euthanasia shots during the mass suicides in the Chibichiri Cave:

> It seems that after the war, especially after the "mass suicide" of Chibichiri Cave came to light, people thought various things about Yuki-san, but I don't think it was her fault, I think it was all Japanese education that was wrong. She just received a proper Japanese education. I think Japanese education made her a "Yamato Spirit Woman." (In Tōyama 2002, p. 465)

As demonstrated in this testimonial, the tragedies experienced by the residents in Yomitan Village during the war were narrated in a way that tied the memory of war into the larger historical narrative of nationalism, militarism, and education—as well as gender—in modern Japan. These themes reflect the nature of the suffering experienced by the residents, not only during the prewar and wartime period but also into the postwar period marked by the continued presence of U.S. military bases and the threat of violence. Indeed, the 1995 incident where a schoolgirl was raped by three U.S. servicemen sparked widespread protests and a rally of 85,000 people. According to Inoue (2007), this event catalyzed a shift in Okinawan identity towards a confident, diverse, middle-class citizenry championing democracy, human rights, and women's equality. The participation of nearly 10% of the prefecture's population in the demonstration marked a significant resurgence of the antimilitarism movement, which, for the first time, centered on the U.S. military presence as a form of violence against women and children (Fukumura & Matsuoka 2002). This politically gendered understanding of militarism and violence is reflected in the oral history of *Senjikiroku*.

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(4)  In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Marxist historians launched the "People's History Movement" (*Kokuminteki Rekishigaku Undō*), urging marginalized groups like women, farmers, factory workers, and outcasts to document their own histories and those of their communities, engaging in what Curtis Anderson Gayle (2010, p. 1) calls "subject-creation" by "raising their voices and putting into practice their own distinct forms of historical representation."

One oral historical account reveals a horrific experience in prison camps immediately after the war:

*I saw a young woman, around twenty years old, and someone who seemed to be her mother being dragged into the bushes by several American soldiers, their mouths covered. But there was nothing we could do. We could only silently hurry away. To this day, I still wonder whether that mother and daughter survived or died. Every time I hear of another assault by American soldiers, that scene vividly comes back to me.*[5]

As explicitly stated by the testifier, the horror of violence by military men is not a story from the past, but a reality that the residents must face in the present. The various allusions by the oral histories to sexual violence committed by the military and their correlation to local women's war experiences highlight the political significance of *Senjikiroku* and its role in the local anti-militarism movement.

Indeed, women emerge as a central subject in many of the war narratives depicting loss and destruction, especially in those adapted into peace studies programs and museum exhibits. The reason for this is the emphasis placed on stories depicting the peace of "everyday life" —centered on concepts like families, culture, relationships, and welfare advocated in Yamauchi's "residents as protagonists" agenda—as something that can be destroyed by war, and the tendency of women's experiences to be closely associated with such concepts. A comparative content analysis of testimonials by men and women in the *Senjikiroku* shows that, firstly, families often played a more central role in women's narratives which emphasized their proximity to and roles within the household; and that, secondly, women more frequently referenced "children" in their stories, even if they were not mothers themselves at the time. The nature of oral history that tends to amplify marginalized voices in history, as well as the political discourse on the gendered reality of militarism and the local advocacy for protecting "everyday life," worked collaboratively to bring women's experiences as central narratives of the Yomitan Village's war history.

For instance, of the various memoirs included in the *Senjikiroku*, the narrative of the "mass suicides" that took place in the Chibichiri Cave—whereby a mother took the life of her own children—emerged as a key narrative within Yomitan Village's war history. Within the *Senjikiroku*, the chapter "Mass Suicides" includes oral histories of four survivors: a woman born in 1919, a man born in 1933, a woman born in 1936, and a woman born in 1919. While the four testimonials are told from distinct perspectives, they all contain descriptions of the darkness within the narrow cave and the tragic sequence of events that unfolded within it (Tōyama 2002, pp. 477-486).

The narratives within these pages have been adapted into life-sized reenactments at the Yuntanza

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(5)  An oral historical account found in *Senjikiroku* (lower volume; pp. 816-817). This paper leaves the name of the testifier as anonymous for ethical considerations.

Fig. 3 "Battle of Okinawa in Yuntanza and Postwar Community
Reconstruction" Exhibit at the Yuntanza Museum

Museum's "Battle of Okinawa in Yuntanza and Postwar Community Reconstruction" Exhibit (Fig. 3) and incorporated into peace studies programs. Director Katsuya Uechi of the Yuntanza Museum, commenting on the significance of the narrative of the Chibichiri Cave, emphasizes the universal theme of maternal sacrifice during wartime, aiming to convey its relevance to contemporary audiences:

> *The desire is for many visitors to understand that the act of a mother harming her beloved daughter as an ultimate act of love, considering her most cherished, is something that can occur within the utmost human mistake of war. This is not intended to be viewed as a past event but rather as something that should be known to many visitors of our current times.*[6]

Uechi suggests that the impact of the "Reenactment of the Chibichiri Cave" in teaching the importance of peace hinges on visitors' ability to empathize with the "motherly love" depicted among the historical characters. This use of cultural norms and assumptions about motherhood serves as a mechanism intended to connect the contemporary audience with past dilemmas. The communal narrative voice used to describe the scene presents the past as relatable to the present. For instance, the exhibition text stating, "we must never repeat the mistake of war," is not just a reflection on the past but a call to actively reject war in the present. Visitors are meant to feel not just pity or empathy for the victims of the Chibichiri Cave as distant observers but to cultivate a strong aversion to war and a sense of responsibility to promote peace.

The role of emotions in influencing political outcomes has been widely studied by political scientists and

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(6)  Quoted from an interview with Director Katsuya Uechi of the Yuntanza Museum in January 2023. The original Japanese phrase Director Uechi used to describe the mother's motive for assisting in her daughter's suicide was *sai-ai* (最愛), which this paper translates as "ultimate act of love."

international relations scholars.[7] In his study on passion in global politics, Andrew A. G. Ross (2005) suggests that 'affective connections' reproduce political identities that individuals become intensely committed to. Emma Hutchison (2010, p. 73) goes further by suggesting "how such 'affective energies' can be both purposefully cultivated and inscribed into representational and narrative structures that shape social and political realities." Indeed, the significance of these narratives, recounted through the real voices of war survivors, is that they illustrate the Battle of Okinawa as something proximate to contemporary society. The adherence of the "Battle of Okinawa in Yuntanza and Postwar Community Reconstruction" exhibition to the narrative of motherhood allows the exhibition to connect with contemporary social movements by women. For instance, in 2015, Mayumi Shiroma, a mother of three children and a Yomitan Village council member, co-founded the Okinawa branch of the "Mama's Association Against Security-related Laws" alongside other mothers in Okinawa to advocate for "a peaceful and secure society for mothers."[8] It is one of five associations composing the nationwide Civil Alliance for Peace and Constitutionalism (安保法制の廃止と立憲主義の回復を求める市民連合, abbreviated as "市民連合"), a coalition advocating for the abolition of security-related laws that allow for the exercise of collective self-defense as violations of constitutional principles.[9] Under the emotional slogan "we won't let anyone's child die,"[10] the association finds communal value and purpose in the women's identities as mothers who engage in political advocacy for the sake of their children.

In this way, the motif of "mothers" in local history and its discursively essentialized role of women as loving caregivers for children continue to shape the political identities of women in Yomitan Village, especially in the context of political issues concerning militarism and violence. In turn, these prevailing norms surrounding motherhood, in conjunction with the continued presence of militarism in daily life, have influenced how the local history of war has been (re)narrated in museums and peace studies programs, its initial construction and consequent retellings being shaped by the emotional solidarity that a mother's sacrifice is intended to evoke among audiences. Consequently, the mnemonic practice of narrating the history of war becomes a gateway for contemporary audiences to reconstruct collective identities and reinterpret collective memories, transmitting not only historical narratives but also emotions and political identities across time.

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(7)   Examples include Bethany Albertson & Shana Kushner Gadarian's (2015) *Anxious Politics* and Yohan Ariffin, Jean-Marc Coicaud, & Vesselin Popovski's (2016) *Emotions in International Politics*.

(8)   *Ryukyu Shimpo-sha.* "*Todoke Mama Mesen: 3 Ji Haha ga Gikai ni Yomitan Son Gisen, Shiroma Mayumi-san.*" *Ryukyu Shimpo,* September 10, 2018. https://ryukyushimpo.jp/news/entry-800362.html (Accessed May 20, 2024).

(9)   *Shimin Rengo.* "*Shimin Rengo to wa.*" *Shimin Rengo.* https://shiminrengo.com/about (Accessed May 21, 2024).

(10)  Taken from the "Mama's Association Against Security-related Laws" Facebook profile. https://www.facebook.com/mothers.no.war/ (Accessed May 20, 2024).

## 5. Conclusion

This paper demonstrated how the sociopolitical environment in Yomitan Village influenced both the timing and content of the local war history-writing initiative that emerged in the late 1970s. The collection of documents and oral histories began during the early years of Mayor Tokushin Yamauchi's administration (1974-1998), which advocated a "residents as protagonists" agenda and emphasized anti-U.S. military base movements that prioritized preserving local land as cultural heritage. The timing of these efforts aligns with a broader surge in grassroots history-writing movements across Okinawa during the 1970s. The nature of the recorded history in Yomitan's *Senjikiroku* reflects the political climate of the time, with narratives crafted to foster local solidarity and support Yamauchi's creative agenda. The historical memorials and peace studies programs that later emerged based on these records also reveal the gendered sociopolitical rhetoric of the era, emphasizing themes like family, motherhood, and cultural preservation. Ultimately, Yomitan Village's historical narratives, particularly those highlighting women's experiences, continue to influence the local understanding of history and collective identity, reinforcing themes of cultural preservation and resistance against militarism in Yomitan Village's ongoing fight for peace.

One major limitation of this study is that it does not address the village residents' perspectives on the local war history, museum exhibition, and peace studies programs. Future research could investigate the local reception of the historical narratives to reveal the impacts of the local history-writing efforts, as well as to draw a clearer picture of how these narratives shape the way the residents view their political, ethnic, and cultural identity.

## Acknowledgements

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