Peer-Reviewed Article

Imagining Different Futures: Okinawans' Arguments for Reversion to Japan in 1951*

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Abstract

This study aims to interpret the narratives in favor of a reversion to Japan by Okinawans in Okinawa and in Tokyo/Japan in the socio-political context of 1951. Pro-reversion arguments in Okinawa rarely mentioned the presence of U.S. bases due to the exclusive U.S. occupation. Pro-reversion opinion in Tokyo that prioritized the issue of Japanese sovereignty over Okinawa in exchange for the bases reflected the fear of being seen as akin to the "non-Japanese" Koreans, who were regarded as pro-communist in GHQ occupied Japan. Okinawans' wish to return to Japan in 1951 should be understood as a maneuver to seek better living conditions in both Okinawa and Tokyo/Japan.

Introduction

The Japanese government repeatedly insisted that Japanese nationals would not tolerate the separation of Okinawa Islands from Japan and that local Okinawans also confirmed their desire to be in the Japanese domain when they communicated with the United States before the San Francisco Peace Conference in 1951 (Eldridge 2003: 204-209, 222).[1] Some local people in Okinawa launched a signature campaign in April 1951 to express their preference for a reversion to Japan. The pro-reversion group of Okinawans in Tokyo actively sent petitions to the policy makers of Japan and the United States. A previous study indicates that U.S. government officials paid careful attention to the nation-wide sentiment and to the pro-reversion preference in Okinawa, in the process of preparing the Treaty draft that underpinned the efforts of the Japanese government (Eldridge 2003: 214-217).

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1 Ogasawara Islands were another case raised in the territorial issue regarding islands to which the Japanese government insisted on the "national sentiment," along with Okinawa's case.

The story of the territorial issue of Okinawa in 1951, the year of the San Francisco Peace Conference, seems to fit comfortably into the nationalistic narrative of Japan. The general explanation for the pro-reversion preference of Okinawa of that time resonates with it: they sought to return to "homeland" Japan (Arakawa 2013:47-48), or it is understood in the continuity of the effort of becoming "Japanese" in the prewar era (Oguma 1998: 497-498). In this narrative, the pro-reversion Okinawans in Okinawa and in Tokyo tend to be described as one political entity that forged the reversion campaign in each place to support the "national goal" of Japan.

Close analysis of the pro-reversion discourses of Okinawans in Okinawa and Tokyo, however, sheds light on different aspects of the story. This study aims to submit alternative explanations of the pro-reversion preference in 1951 within the contemporary socio-political context. As discussed in the following sections, the pro-reversion argument in Okinawa emphasized the image of prewar Okinawa as the ideal, while avoiding mention of how the U.S. base would affect the lives of people on the island. Okinawans in Tokyo prioritized the confirmation of Japanese sovereignty over Okinawa, which secures their Japanese nationality in exchange for allowing the U.S. military station in Okinawa. The two pro-reversion arguments should be interpreted in the context of the contemporary socio-political conditions, that is, the exclusive power the United States held over Okinawa and the suppression of Korean people under GHQ (General Headquarters, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers) occupied Japan. Through analysis and interpretation, this study will demonstrate that the emergence of the pro-reversion preference in 1951 could be better understood as a result of the contemporary historical contingency and not entirely the outcome of Japanese nationalistic sentiment of Okinawans or the continuity from the prewar era.

Recent years have witnessed a series of publications on the society and politics of early postwar Okinawa (Mori and Toriyama 2013; Toriyama 2013; Koike 2015; Wakabayashi 2015). The status issue, however, has not yet received much academic analysis. A few exceptions are Oguma (1998), Toriyama (2001), and Sakurazawa (2007). Toriyama clarifies the drastic change of the social structure due to the intensive military base construction that possibly fostered a pro-reversion sentiment in Okinawa. The scope of his analysis is, however, restricted mainly to the Okinawa Islands. Oguma and Sakurazawa explain why the pro-reversion opinion emerged and attracted people's support in 1951 from a historical viewpoint, but both tend to treat Okinawan people as a collective agent, paying less attention to the location of the advocates, that is, from where the arguments were made. Regarding the difference inside the Okinawan community, Tobe (2000) points out the complicated cultural power relations between Okinawa and Tokyo. Political issues such as the administrative status of Okinawa are, however, not the main theme of his historical analysis. This study expects to contribute to the literature by offering a cross-border, socio-political analysis on the Okinawans' orientation to reversion in the early postwar period.

Our discussion first serves to introduce the outline of the Okinawa status debate in 1951, and the common characteristics of the pro-reversion arguments respectively in Okinawa and Tokyo. It then clarifies the difference between Okinawa and Tokyo in the way the pro-reversion opinions were expressed, based on the arguments that appeared in the media. In the following section, the cause of the difference is explained in the context of the socio-political conditions in both places. This study focuses especially on the political context of the GHQ occupation in order to interpret the "Japanese sovereignty first" argument made by Okinawans in Tokyo.

1. The Okinawa status debate and pro-reversion argument

The pro-reversion argument, or the status of Okinawa in general, became a political agenda in Okinawa in 1951 when the schedule of the Sun Francisco Peace Conference was fixed by the Allied Powers. *Uruma Shimpō* and *Okinawa Times*, the two main local newspapers, offered a forum for the Okinawa status debate from February to August 1951.[2] The framework of the debate was the dichotomy of the pro-reversion position vs. the anti-reversion. Although the anti-reversion camp could be divided into the pro-trusteeship and pro-independence factions, the discussion on the whole showed a dichotomous structure. This pro and con framework was shaped by the anticipation that Okinawa would be put under the "trusteeship" of the United States or the United Nations after the Peace Treaty.[3] From February 6 to August 15, *Uruma Shimpō* featured five pro-reversion opinions (by four persons) and seven anti-reversion opinions (by five persons) while *Okinawa Times* printed six pro-reversion opinions (by five persons) and four anti-reversion opinions (by three persons) from March 23 to July 25, 1951.

In the pro-reversion camp, Kamiyama Seiryō, Takamine Meitatsu, and Kaneji Saichi are the most active contributors, who publicized their opinions in a long series of columns.[4] Kaneji was chief secretary of the local political party Okinawa Social Mass Party (Shakai Taishū tō), while Kamiyama and Takamine, ex-bureaucrats with the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Commerce and Industry, respectively, were residents of Tokyo from prewar times. Having participants from Tokyo was one of the characteristics of the pro-reversion group. The main contributors on the anti-reversion side, Ikemiyagi Shui, Nakasone Genwa, and Shiroma Morio, were all local residents, respectively president of *Uruma Shimpō* newspaper company, general manager of another local political party the Republican Party (Kyōwa tō), and a lawyer.

The pro-reversionists in Tokyo and Okinawa shared many points in their narrative. Returning to Japan is "just natural" and "like a child going back to its parents' place" according to the phrases frequently used in the arguments.[5] Besides this naturalization, they stressed the positive aspects of pre-war Okinawa prefecture, despite the fact that the Okinawan had faced social discrimination under the rule of the Japanese Empire.[6] They highlight the political autonomy and suffrage

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2 A few exceptions are Nakasone Genwa and Nakayoshi Ryōkō. Nakasone publicized his pro-independence opinion as early as 1945 in the name of "house rent" that insisted that the Okinawan people are the owner of the islands from which the U.S. military rent the land (Nakasone 1955:183). Nakayoshi Ryōkō started publicizing his pro-reversion opinion in Okinawa in August 1945, then launched the political campaign in Tokyo in 1946 by organizing the "Association for the reversion of the Okinawan islands to Japan" (沖縄諸島日本復帰期成会) (Nōtomi 2004: 49-53).

3 *Uruma Shimpō* has 22 reports about Okinawa's future status from 1946 to 1950 in which 12 items imply trusteeship as the possible option. *Uruma Shimpō* continued to feature similar articles in 1951. For example, "Peace treaty suggested from comments/Ryūkyū and Bonin islands will be under trusteeship of the United States" (談話からうかがう講和／琉球, 小笠原は米国の信託) on February 12.

4 Kamiyama Seiryō, "Advocating for reversion to Japan" (日本復帰提唱), vol.1 to 3 in *Uruma Shimpō*, Feb. 10, 11, 13; Takamine Meitatsu, "Okinawa, where are you going" (沖縄よ何処へ行く), vol. 1 to 4 in *Uruma Shimpō* from Jul. 10 to 13, and in *Okinawa Times*, Jul. 10, 12,13, 15; Kaneji Saichi, "Advocating to belong to Japan" (日本帰属提唱), vol.1 and 2 in *Okinawa Times*, Apr. 1 and 3, and "Again, advocating reversion to Japan" (再び日本復帰提唱), vol. 1 to 6 in *Uruma Shimpō*, May 22 to 25, 28, 29.

5 Kaneji emphasized the geographical closeness and racial and linguistic similarity between Okinawa and Japan (ibid., *Okinawa Times*, April 1 and 3). Kaneji and Kamiyama use the expression that Japan and Okinawa are "parent and child": Kaneji, "Advocating to belong to Japan" (日本帰属提唱), *Okinawa Times*, Apr. 3, and Kamiyama, "Advocating for reversion to Japan" (日本復帰提唱), *Uruma Shimpō*, vol.1, Feb. 10, 1951. Similar rhetoric appeared in the petitions for Okinawa's reversion to Japan sent by the Okinawan people in Tokyo. Eight out of ten of these petitions filed by Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan contain such expressions. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1950)

6 Okinawa, once known as Ryūkyū Kingdom before the Meiji Restoration, experienced discriminatory treatment and was exposed to the pressure of assimilation under the rule of the Japanese Empire. Reference to the memory of discrimination was found in the Okinawa status debate in 1951. For example "Opinions of status issue from the street" (帰属問題に街の声), in *Uruma Shimpō* Apr. 23, 1951. Pro-reversionist Takamine also referred to the "discriminatory treatment" in expressions such as "…young people in these day have no inferiority complex as the elderly did when they mentioned 'the discriminatory treatment' …" in "Okinawa, where are you going," *Uruma Shimpō*, vol. 4, Jul. 13, 1951.

they gained as Japanese nationals, the economic development Okinawa achieved under Japan's rule, and the cultural and educational modernization they experienced in prewar times.[7] In evaluation of the postwar situation, they emphasized that Japan has changed drastically to a democratic country, which implied that Okinawans would not suffer from discrimination anymore in Japan. They argued that the Japanese economy was recovering steadily from the damage in the war so that Okinawa, still suffering from the severe destruction of the land battle, could continue its rehabilitation if aid from the United States were to stop due to its return to Japan.[8]

The future image of Okinawa would be, they suggest, a continuation from that in prewar Okinawa prefecture: that is, enlargement of political freedom, regaining suffrage, and smooth recovery of the islands' economy within the Japanese domain.[9] In other words, returning to Japan was portrayed as going back to the "normal" path Okinawa had been tracing since it had became a part of the Japanese nation state.

2. Differences among pro-reversionists over "leased land" status

There is a new factor brought in to the postwar Okinawa scenario, however: the U.S. military presence. This was the very point that the anti-reversion group was concerned about.[10] One of the reasons why they opposed reunification with Japan was the possibility of Okinawa becoming "leased land" (租借地). Ikemiyagi, an active contributor to the status debate, preferred U.N. trusteeship, claiming that if Okinawa returned to Japan now, that would mean return with the massive U.S. bases left intact. The United States would keep full control over their military installations even if Okinawa became a part of Japan again. Therefore, it was highly possible that Japan and the United States had an agreement to put Okinawa under a form of "leased land" status that would allow Japan to hold the sovereignty and the United States to keep political power over the land. It would bring a more difficult situation to local Okinawans.[11] The expectation that the United States would not withdraw from Okinawa was held not only by Ikemiyagi, but was widely shared by local Okinawans. They had witnessed, since the late 1940s, the huge investment in base construction and related expenses that had changed the landscape of the island drastically (Toriyama 2013: 103-112).

Despite the U.S. presence in postwar Okinawa, the pro-reversion camp in Okinawa seldom mentioned how the U.S. base's presence would affect the society

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7 Assimilation and "Japanization" was, in some aspects, regarded as a "tool" to achieve modernization (Oguma 1995: 281-282). Pressure to be Japanese also tended to have resulted in a discriminatory mindset among Okinawans (or sometimes called "Ryukyuans") against "less modernized" people such as the indigenous people in Taiwan, as was revealed in the case of "*Jinruikan jiken*" (Human exhibition incident in the 5th National industrial exposition in Osaka) in 1903.

8 See Kamiyama (ibid., *Uruma Shimpō*, February 10), Takamine (ibid., *Uruma Shimpō*, Jul. 11 to 13, and *Okinawa Times*, Jul. 12, 13, 15), and Kaneji (ibid., *Okinawa Times*, April 3, and *Uruma Shimpō*, May 25, 1951).

9 In terms of the continuity, Takamine stresses the importance to hold on the same path that Okinawans came through in prewar times. He assesses that the Okinawans succeeded in becoming "authentic Japanese" (*rippa na nihonjin*), so that continuity in education, which is necessary to preserve Japanese identity, is important to him. See Takamine, "Okinawa, where are you going," *Uruma Shimpō*, vol. 4, Jul. 13, 1951. Kaneji uses a similar expression: "At this moment, I cannot stand for seeing all the effort of nearly one century become in vain when Okinawa is cut off from Japan and Okinawan people reject being Japanese." See Kaneji, "Again, Advocating Reversion to Japan," *Uruma Shimpō*, vol. 2, May 23, 1951. The obsession to keep being Japanese itself, of course, implies the uneven position Okinawa was given in the Japanese Empire.

10 Shiroma Seizen (城間盛善), another anti-reversionist in the local debate, criticized the Okinawa image drawn by the pro-reversion group as implying the complete returning to the prewar status, with U.S. military withdrawal. Shiroma, "On accepting the Peace treaty" (講和の受入態勢について), *Uruma Shimpō*, vol.2, Mar. 4, 1951.

11 Ikemiyagi Shūi, "Why I advocate the U.N. trusteeship" (何故国連信託を主張するのか), *Uruma Shimpō*, vol.3, Feb. 9, and "What does belonging to Japan mean?" (日本帰属は何を意味するのか), *Uruma Shimpō*, vol.3, Mar. 19.

and lives of the islanders when Okinawa was put under Japanese sovereignty again. Kaneji did not respond to the risk of the "leased land" arrangement that Ikemiyagi had raised in the status debate. He only replied that the concern of being "leased land" only displays overanxiousness, by citing the statement of the Consultant to Secretary John Foster Dulles that the United States was not demanding extraterritorial rights over the military bases, but only the continued extension of facilities.[12]

It was some members of the pro-reversionist group in Tokyo, instead, that referred to the future presence of the U.S. military bases and the possibility of becoming "leased land." Pro-reversion opinions in *Okinawa Shin Mimpō* sometimes expressed a different opinion from those of the local Okinawans: they suggested that they would accept U.S. military bases in Okinawa, or agree that Okinawa would become leased land for a certain period, if Japanese sovereignty were allowed over the islands.[13] For example, the editorial in the issue of January 5, 1951 argued "considering the tension in world politics today, we think there is no choice but to let the United States use Okinawa as a military base to ensure the future of Okinawa, Japan, and peace for the Far East. However, we have a completely different opinion on the idea to cut Okinawa off from Japan and put it outside Japan's territory."[14] A similar argument appeared again in the editorial "Appeal again to Envoy Dulles" on February 5, 1951.

The ex-Diet member Ie revealed this type of pro-reversion argument in the Committee on Foreign Affairs in the House of Councilors in February 6, 1951. Regarded as knowledgeable of the current situation of Okinawa and the Okinawans, Ie pointed out the difficult situation that Okinawans in Japan would face should Japan lose sovereignty over Okinawa. He said: "If Okinawa is put under a trusteeship system, we will fall into a sad situation in which our *koseki* (household registration) won't belong to any country." On the U.S. military bases stationed in Okinawa, he said "because we accepted unconditional surrender at the defeat, it can't be helped that Okinawa's land will be leased to the U.S. bases, or that we will allow them to stay in Japan's sovereignty territory." After the Committee on Foreign Affairs in the House of Councillors, Ie commented that "it is Okinawans outside Okinawa that will be in a troublesome situation," and confessed that he honestly felt that it would even be fine if Okinawa become "leased land" for military use in exchange for achieving Okinawa's reversion to Japan.[15] The rhetoric of "we are not opposed the U.S. bases being stationed in Okinawa" was repeatedly expressed in the petitions sent to U.S. authorities by the pro-reversion group in Tokyo.[16]

Kamiyama and Takamine did not use such an apparent rhetoric in the arguments they published in the local newspapers.[17] The prioritization of Japanese sovereignty, however, meant to put the U.S. base issue in Okinawa in secondary position. This shows a striking contrast with the pro-reversion argument in Okinawa. The pro-reversion advocates in Okinawa just kept silent on the U.S. presence. Few responded

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12 Kaneji, "Again, advocating reversion to Japan," *Uruma Shimpō*, vol. 4, May 25, 1951.

13 *Okinawa Shin Mimpō* is the ethnic newspaper published in Fukuoka prefecture from 1946 to 1953. The main readership was the Okinawan people who evacuated to Japan before the Okinawa land battle and remained there in the immediate postwar period.

14 "Appeal to envoy Dulles as Okinawan people" (沖縄人としてダレス特使に訴う), Jan. 25, 1951.

15 "Even if becoming leased land militarily / Okinawans hope reversion to Japan / Ie and Nakayoshi plead in the Committee on Foreign Affairs" (軍租借地になっても／沖縄は復帰を希望／参院外務委で仲吉氏等発言), *Okinawa Shin Mimpō*, Feb. 15, 1951.

16 For example, the petition to the "Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, Lieutenant General Matthew B. Ridgway" dated Apr. 18, 1951 (Nakayoshi Ryōkō Documents, 009), the petition to President Truman dated May 10, 1951, "Voluntary Okinawans in Tokyo / Petition to the U.S. president" (沖縄出身東京在有志／米大統領に請願) in *Okinawa Shin Mimpō*, Jul. 15, and the petition to "His Excellency the Ambassador John Foster Dulles" dated July 14, 1951 (Nakayoshi Ryōkō Document, 016).

17 One exception is Kamiyama, who suggested that the goal of the United States is just the securement of the military institutions in Okinawa, not the territoriality. "Suggestion for reversion to Japan" (日本復帰提唱), *Uruma Shimpō*, vol.2, Feb. 11, 1951.

to the concern of the risk of being "leased land" as discussed above.

For the local Okinawan, however, daily life with massive U.S. bases did matter if Okinawa returned to Japan. When Takamine visited Okinawa in early 1951, a local Okinawan asked him: "I think it's no problem belonging to Japan. But the U.S. military would not withdraw from Okinawa for sure. Given this, what happens to the legal and economic status of people in Okinawa? Without a clear explanation, I cannot agree with Okinawa's reversion to Japan." Introducing this conversation in *The Okinawa*, an ethnic magazine issued in Tokyo, Takamine continues his reply: the reversion to Japan is "the primary issue of ethnic survival" (民族存立第一義的要件) and "concrete issues" (具体的問題), such as the U.S. base problem, could possibly be solved by the "good will" of Japan and the U.S. government.[18]

It is highly possible that the reversion-to-Japan advocates in Okinawa would have known their counterparts' way of arguing in mainland Japan. Pro-reversion groups in Tokyo and in Okinawa have confirmed that, via personal contact in 1950, they shared the same political preferences and common goal so as to push forward the campaign hand in hand (Yoshida 1976:41). Besides, Okinawan people in Okinawa, in Japan, and in overseas immigrant communities such as Hawaii were sharing the ethnic journals and publications since the postal service was restored.[19] In spite of the active exchange of information among Okinawa communities, the pro-reversionists in Okinawa seem not to have commented on this "sovereignty first, base issue second" type of argument.

The intricate relationships and positionalities between Tokyo and Okinawa were the flip side of the argumentation over the status issue. Early in 1951, Nakayoshi and Kamiyama in Tokyo encouraged the local Okinawan people to clarify their political attitude toward the Okinawa status issue as the peace treaty was being scheduled.[20] At the same time, however, they describe their position as that of "being an outsider," and assumed the people in Okinawa to be the primary stakeholders. Takamine stated that "this status issue is primarily up to the local Okinawan people. If the majority are against going back to Japan, I will withdraw my pro-reversion argument."[21] A similar tone was found in Nakayoshi's narrative.[22] On the other hand, Taira Tatsuo, the Okinawa Guntō Governor and well-known advocate of reversion to Japan, struck a different tone in his new year's remarks in 1951. He said that fellow Okinawans in Tokyo cry out to encourage the locals to declare their opinion on the status issue, but this is because the Tokyo Okinawans do not know the actual conditions in Okinawa.[23]

3. Interpreting the opinions gap based on the socio-political context

Why did the pro-reversion advocates in Okinawa refrain from referring to the U.S. bases issue? How can we understand the "sovereignty first, base issue

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[18] Takamine Metitatsu, "Reply to the objection to belonging to Japan" (日本帰属への異論に関する所見) in *The Okinawa*, April issue, 1951.
[19] For example, *Okinawa Shin Mimpō* in 1948 reprinted an article from *Hawaii Times* of Jun. 5th, *Uruma Shimpō* of October 25th, and *Kōsei Okinawa* from Honolulu of December 5th. *Kōsei Okinawa*, May 1948 issue reports the list of Okinawan publications they received from Japan, Okinawa and Brazil, in which *Okinawa Shin Mimpō* and *Uruma Shimpō* are found.
[20] Nakayoshi Ryōkō, "Okinawa will return to Japan: If local people wish / Return to Japan / Refrain from being mute like stones" (沖縄の復帰：地元住民が希望せば／日本に返へる／石の如く黙するをさけよ) in *Okinawa Shin Mimpō*, Apr. 5, 1951. Kamiyama Seiryō, "Suggestion for reversion to Japan," vol.3 in *Uruma Shimpō*, Feb. 13,1951.
[21] Takamine Meitatsu, "Okinawa, where are you going," vol. 1, *Uruma Shimpō*, Jul. 10, 1951.
[22] Nakayoshi Ryōkō, "Strong will of islanders as key for reversion" (日本復帰は島民の決意が鍵) in *Okinawa Shin Mimpō*, Aug. 5, 1951.
[23] The New Year interview with Taira, *Okinawa Times*, January 1, 1951.

second" style of their counterparts in Tokyo? Focus should be set on the contemporary socio-political factors in order to answer the questions.

Local Okinawans under U.S. control

As I mentioned, the pro-reversionists in Okinawa described the post-reversion blueprint as one in which pre-war Okinawa would be resurrected. They assumed that Japan, the newborn democratic state, would assure political rights and support economic rehabilitation. This logic, i.e. that reversion to Japan equaled returning to the "normal" Okinawa, implied that the then current situation of Okinawa was somehow "irregular."

Okinawa had changed drastically, however, by the time of the peace treaty. The construction of the U.S. base and related industries received huge investment and caused a sudden economic "bubble." On the other hand, some social aspects such as agriculture and education were paid less attention and provided less money (Toriyama 2013: 103-107, 112-121). Agriculture was once the main industry of Okinawa in the prewar era, but the majority of the arable land was taken forcibly by the Unites States for the military's use in the first few years of the occupation era (Toriyama 2013: 133-134, 153-157). Taking these postwar changes into account, together with the frustration and worries of the local Okinawans caused by the rapid social change, the way the pro-reversionists imagined the future of Okinawa can be interpreted as a form of negation of the present Okinawa that has been customized for U.S. military purposes.

The U.S. presence in Okinawa was intensive. It held exclusive power in governing Okinawa, which was unlike mainland Japan where GHQ exercised control indirectly. In such an atmosphere, it is easy to imagine how difficult it would be to question the future of the U.S. bases should Okinawa return to Japan. Vice Governor Matayoshi Kowa implied such difficulty in his contribution to *Uruma Shimpō*. Showing his understanding of the desire of Okinawan leaders in Tokyo, he said that pro-reversion argument is "too sensitive an issue" in facing the U.S. friends who had given the hand of support to the devastated Okinawa and shared the hardship of reconstructing it.[24]

Added to this, the political tension in East Asia at that time made the local Okinawans feel that they could not intervene in or negotiate with the United States over the military bases. The Korean War had broken out in June 1950, roughly one year prior to the San Francisco Peace Treaty Conference. By the time of the Okinawa status debate, as mentioned already, many articles in local newspapers suggested that Okinawa would be put under the trusteeship of the United States or the United Nations. Keeping silent on the military base issue in the pro-reversion argument might have been the safest strategy the local people could take in such a political climate.[25]

Okinawans in Tokyo and their reversion-to-Japan argument might evoke the image of "colonial elites." Previous work points out the cultural hegemony Okinawans in Tokyo held over fellow Okinawans (Tobe 2000: 50-51). Indeed, most of the active reversionists in Tokyo were "successful people," such as ex-bureaucrats and an ex-Diet member. Nevertheless, they represented all of the Okinawan people. Regarded themselves as an "outsider," they behaved as an informant when summoned to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.[26] They kept sending

[24] Matayoshi Kowa, "On the status issue" (帰属問題をめぐって), *Uruma Shimpō*, Jun. 25, 1951.

[25] To put the stress on the cultural, historical, and "blood line" connections between Okinawa and Japan (Japan as parents and Okinawa as an orphan, for example), so as to describe the reunion with Japan as "the natural course," could be understood as the strategy of the pro-reversion group in order to mitigate the impression that they were rejecting the U.S. control over Okinawa.

[26] At the committee, the summoned Okinawans stated it was the wish of all islanders to have Japanese sovereignty over Okinawa even if they are put under "leased land" with the military bases. "Even if becoming leased land militarily / Okinawa hopes reversion to Japan / Ie and Nakayoshi plead in the Committee on foreign affairs," *Okinawa Shin Mimpō*, Feb. 15, 1951.

the message to the decision makers that they would accept, if reluctantly, the military bases in exchange for Japanese sovereignty over Okinawa.[27]

Local anti-reversionists were dissatisfied with such behavior by their representatives. Shiroma Morio, who posted a series of articles questioning the pro-reversion opinion, claimed that "we, Okinawan residents" had never received any inquiry from Tokyo about their opinion on the Okinawa status issue, nor had they entrusted Okinawans in Tokyo with authority regarding this matter. His statement was a reaction to the message the Tokyo group had sent to Ambassador John Foster Dulles that the local Okinawans in Okinawa also wished to return to Japan but that they had just hesitated to clarify their opinion.[28]

Okinawans in Tokyo/Japan

The behavior of the Okinawan elites might have come mainly from their personal affinity with Japan. They could simply be criticized for having been ignorant about the local Okinawan situation. This study, however, tries to clarify why the majority of Okinawans in Japan also supported that sort of argument, by taking the contemporary factors into account, that is, the ambiguous political status of the Okinawans under the GHQ occupation, and of the Korean people oppressed in Japanese society due to their dual status of being "liberated people" and "Japanese."

Koreans and the Okinawans had been exposed to similar discriminatory treatment under the prewar Empire of Japan, while their legal and administrative status varied in some aspects such as the eligibility and suffrage for national election and the category of *Koseki* (household registration). "No Korean, no Ryukyuan" in "room for rent" signs indicates their similar social status in prewar Japan (Ishihara 1992: 96). Okinawan people sometimes compared their social position to the "colonies." Higa Shunchō, an Okinawan intellectual living in Tokyo, wrote in his diary in September 1910 that Okinawa is the first son, Taiwan the second and Korea the third, when he referred to the annexation of Korea by Japan (Higa 1969:37). Prewar Japanese society tended to regard Okinawan people as akin to Korean people, which was more obvious in Kansai area where the largest communities of both were located (Uechi 2015: 9).

The legal status of Okinawans under GHQ occupation was unclear. Official statements by the Japanese government suggested that they were supposed to be Japanese until the Peace Treaty was enacted. General MacArthur made the statement in July 1947 that Okinawans are not Japanese (Amakawa et al. ed. 1996: 30).[29] Indeed, Okinawan people were the subject of the census survey in March 1946, together with Koreans, Taiwanese and Chinese.[30] GHQ repatriation programs implemented on the basis of the census intended to send back "non-Japanese" to their homelands. While the GHQ repatriation project sent 141,582 Okinawans back to their home islands by the end of 1946, 60,000 or more stayed in Japan (Amakawa et al. ed. 1996: 32). The decision to return or not was a difficult one due to the limited information on the United States controlling

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27 Some petitions sent to GHQ authorities and the Japanese government by the Association for reversion of the Okinawan islands to Japan contain the names of Kamiyama and Takamine as well as that of Ie Chōjo, a prewar Diet member (member of the House of Peers), and Nakayoshi Ryōkō, the founder. See, for example, the petition to MacAuthur dated Oct. 2,1946 (Nakayoshi Ryōkō Documents, vol.1, 001, Naha City Museum of History), and a document titled "Petition on Okinawa's reversion to Japan" sent to "Democratic Party of Japan, the House of Councilors" which seems to be dated in 1947 (Nakayoshi Ryōkō Documents, vol.1, 002).

28 Shiroma Morio, "On status issue: Putting question on the reversion-to-Japan" (帰属問題に就いて―日本帰属の内実を問う―), *Uruma Shimpō*, vol.1, Feb. 21.

29 "Okinawans are not Japanese / General MacArthur's statement" (沖縄人は日本人ではない／マ元帥の見解発表) in *Okinawa Shin Mimpō*, Jul. 15, 1947.

30 "Survey on return or stay / Implement in March 18" (帰るか、残留かの調査／三月十八日一斉に実施／洩れなく登録しよう) in *Okinawa Shin Mimpō*, Mar. 5, 1951.

Okinawa. Being cut off from Japan administratively, it was difficult for them to come back to Japan once they were repatriated to Okinawa (Tobe 2010: 230-235). Okinawans who had decided to stay on in Japan had no choice but to keep on making a living in Japan.

Okinawan people who had stayed back in Japan started to regard themselves as "non-Japanese."[31] In the early occupation period, Okinawans were willing to utilize their unique status to try and secure their day-to-day existence. The League of Okinawans (沖縄人連盟) petitioned and won a GHQ proclamation in January 1946 that referred to Okinawans as "refugees," in respect of whom special consideration was required.[32] The League of Okinawans described their social position thus, that they "have to demand the right to live as Japanese from the Japanese government" while they "have to request protection as non-Japanese to the GHQ authority."[33] The League of Okinawans also held communication with Korean organizations over the "common" issues they faced in Japanese society (Tobe 2004: 223).

The legal status of Korean people in GHQ Japan was also ambiguous. They numbered approximately two million in Japan at the end of the World War II (Kim 1997: 77). With the voluntary return and repatriation project of GHQ, 538,196 Koreans had stayed back as on April 30, 1950, thus constituting the biggest ethnic group in postwar Japan (Amakawa et al. ed. 1996: 196). Officially, they held Japanese nationality until the Peace Treaty enacted between Japan and the Allied Powers, similarly to the Okinawans. The GHQ authority, however, excluded them from the "Japanese" category while recognizing that they had been Japanese subjects, and held the option to treat them as "hostile nationals" (like the Japanese) if necessary (Amakawa et al. ed. 1996: 11).

Japanese society tended to regard Korean people as "disruptive elements" since the early occupation period (Heo 2010: 169-172). The Hanshin educational struggle in April 1948, the first and the only case in which GHQ issued an emergency declaration, symbolized the severe suppression of the Korean people in Japan.[34] The nation-wide newspaper *Asahi Shimbun* frequently featured reports on Korean-related events and incidents from 1948 to 1949: the Hanshin educational struggle from April to May 1948, North Korean flag-raising cases in late 1948, the control over illegal brewing from late 1948 to the first half of 1949, and the closing down of Korean ethnic schools and resistance of the Korean community in late 1949. Most of the descriptions connoted a negative evaluation of the Koreans. For example, an article of April 24, 1948 points out "the unlawful and irresponsible leaders in the Korean community" as partially responsible for "the recent social disorders." It continues that GHQ authority has stated that all of the remaining Koreans in Japan should obey Japanese laws and regulations since November 1946.[35] Similar unfriendly tones could be found in other articles.[36] The Korean Ambassador to Japan also pointed out

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31 Nagaoka Chitarō "Characteristic of the League of Okinawans" (沖縄人聯盟の性格に就て) in *Jiyū Okinawa*, May 5, 1946. *Jiyū Okinawa* is the periodical issued by the League of Okinawans.

32 "Directive from General MacArthur GHQ , "Japanese government shall provide food, housing, clothing to the indigent Okinawan refugees" (マ司令部の指令"窮乏せる沖縄避難民に対し政府は十分な食糧と住宅、衣料寝具等を支給すべし"／沖縄本島への帰還可能性調査中／連盟の請願を認め暖かい処置) in *Jiyū Okinawa*, Jan. 25, 1946.

33 Editorial "Under the flag of the League" (聯盟の旗の下に) in *Jiyū Okinawa*, Jun. 15, 1946.

34 Hanshin Educational Struggle refers to the collisions in Kobe and Osaka between the GHQ-led Japanese government and Korean residents in Japan over the autonomy of Korean ethnic schools. Protesting to the local administration against their forcibly closing down Korean elementary schools, large demonstrations were held on April 24, 1948. More than 1700 people were arrested in Kobe. A clash in Osaka resulted in the death of a teenage boy shot by Japanese police (Kim 1997: 409-411).

35 "Abide by Japanese law / On Korean school case / Authority's statement" in *Asahi Shimbun*, Oct. 23, 1948.

36 For example, "Big scuffle in getting back the seized illegal liquor / Again in Yao city / 8 police injured" (Oct. 23, 1948) and "4 teachers 'confined' / Complaining 'we don't understand Japanese' / 200 Korean children" (Dec. 3, 1949).

the negative image imparted in the way Japanese mass media reported on Korean-related cases, in the memorandum sent to the Chief of Staff in April 1949 (Kim 1997: 537-538).

To be regarded as similar to Korean people meant another difficulty in GHQ Japan because of the connection between Korean organizations and the communist party. GHQ first supported the communists as an anti-militaristic and pro-democratic group. As early as May 1946, however, they started to harden their attitude. In May 1950 General MacArthur officially attacked the Japanese Communist Party in a public statement and banned the party's periodical *Akahata* in June 26, the day following the outbreak of the Korean War (Takemae 2002: 209-210).

Close relations of Korean people with the communist party were visible from the beginning of the occupation. Kim Chon Hae (金天海) was a leading figure of the prewar Japanese Communist Party, among the other Japanese communist leaders such as Shiga Yoshio (志賀義雄) and Tokuda Kyuichi (徳田球一). A mass meeting on October 10, 1945 to celebrate the release of political prisoners including the three leaders gathered more than 1,000 people, the majority of whom were Koreans (Takamine 2002: 168-171; Kim 1997: 172).[37] The League of Koreans, the nation-wide ethnic organization in Japan founded in October 1945, was largely dominated by the Korean communists by 1947 (Kim 1997: 177).

Besides the activist network from the prewar era, the Korean organizations' approach to the Communist Party should be ascribed to the severe living conditions of the Koreans in GHQ Japan. Dismantling of the Japanese munitions companies and repatriation of more than 10 million Japanese from the overseas territories resulted in high unemployment rates among the Korean population. Illegal breweries and other small businesses were the way they made their living (Rhee 2013: 137-142). The League of Koreans tackled this hardship by engaging in campaigns and activities to secure their right of living (Heo 2010: 175-179), in which the Japanese Communist Party cooperated. They even proclaimed, in the first-year commemoration meeting of the Hanshin Educational Struggle held in April 1949, that joining the party was the only way to realize better living conditions. More than 300 Koreans joined the Japanese Communist Party on the same day, and another 1,300 did by July. The recruitment of such a large number of people was meant to be, as the League of Koreans clarified, a mass demonstration against suppression by the Japanese government (Kim 1997: 543-544).

GHQ Government Section (GS) had paid special attention to the League of Koreans since the North and South Korean governments were established in the Korean peninsula in August and September 1948 (Kim 532-533). The ex-enemy state Japan became the strategic bulwark for the United States against the rise of communism in East Asia. In August 1949, GS suggested to Japanese officials that the League of Koreans be dissolved. This decision reflected the need GHQ felt to deter the League of Koreans from exerting influence over the political climate in the Korean Peninsula as well as in Japan (Kim 1997: 561-564, 567).

The negative representation of the Korean people under the shadow of the Communist Party is the clue to understanding the "Japanese sovereignty first" discourse brought in by pro-reversionist Okinawans in Tokyo. Collaboration between the League of Okinawans and Korean organizations seems to have ceased in the first half of 1947 (Tobe 2004: 223). At the central meeting held in July 1948, a member of the League of Okinawans criticized another member who gave a speech to encourage Korean people in the Hanshin struggle rally as his act would "have a

[37] The release of the political prisoners was realized on the initiative of Korean communists (Kim 1997: 170; Takemae 2002: 174).

serious impact on the public image" of the League. The article reporting the central meeting also picked up the members' unwillingness to be regarded as pro-communist.[38] When Kamiyama Seiryō, the ex-bureaucrat and active pro-reversionist, was assigned to the chair of the League of Okinawans in August 1948, he visited the official residence of the prime minister to explain "the characteristics of the League of Okinawans" to correct "the misunderstanding" of prime minister Yoshida (Kamiyama ed. 1966: 25). The League of Okinawans changed its name to the League of Okinawa (沖縄連盟) in October 1949. Kamiyama retrospectively admitted that the intention in changing the organization's name was to differentiate themselves from the League of Koreans, "that means, the sort of communists" (Arasaki 1982: 44-45).

Okinawan people with their ambiguous nationality and memory of discrimination in prewar Japan realized the difficulties of living in Japan as a "foreign national." An article in *Okinawa Shin Mimpō*, June 25, 1951 stated that Okinawan people in Japan are Japanese who hold suffrage, and are entitled to the rights of subsistence and free choice of employment as was declared in the new Japanese constitution. The article describes the embarrassing situations they experience in their daily lives, such as being told not to vote in the election, requests to present a foreign resident registration card at their children's schools, and "the unreasonable treatment in university admission which treats Okinawans students as though they were as foreign as Koreans."[39] These are because Okinawa was regarded as a "foreign country," the article explains. For those living in Japan under such conditions, the sovereignty of Japan over Okinawa was felt to be the primary goal to be achieved in the peace treaty.

4. Conclusion

Detailed analysis of both pro-reversion arguments sheds light on the contemporary socio-political situation among each of the groups that moved the Okinawans to reunion with Japan in 1951.

The pro-reversionists in Okinawa were living under exclusive control of the U.S. military and would, for the foreseeable future, have to keep living next to U.S. military institutions. Therefore the U.S. base issue was a very risky item to touch on for them. Pro-reversion arguments with the prewar Okinawa image could be read as the negation of the reality in which the U.S. ruling and military institutions were changing the whole society. Keeping silence on the presence of U.S. bases could be understood as the strategy of the governed, the people with limited power in the increasing Cold War tension in East Asia.

In Tokyo, on the other hand, it might be true that the handful of "political elite" Okinawans in Tokyo claimed to represent the whole Okinawan community, working close to the Japanese policymakers. The majority of Okinawans in Japan also gradually realized how difficult it would be to live as "foreign nationals" and "pro-communists" in Japanese society, learning from the hardship the Korean community faced in GHQ occupied Japan. They found the way to secure the right to live in Japan in assuring their Japanese nationality. The U.S. base in Okinawa was something they could tolerate in exchange for Japanese sovereignty over Okinawa.

In retrospect, the strategy of the pro-reversionists in Okinawa and Tokyo in 1951 seems too optimistic and

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[38] "League of Okinawans assembly in Beppu / Tackling problems" (沖縄人連盟の別府大会賑ふ / 問題の解明に真剣), in *Okinawa Shin Mimpō,* Jul. 5, 1948.

[39] "Unreasonable treatment of Okinawans as *Sangokujin*" (本土在住沖縄人の三国人扱いは不当／倭島局長見解を表明) in *Okinawa Shin Mimpō,* Jun. 15, 1950.

opportunistic. The exclusive U.S. control that lasted until 1972 caused serious human rights violations and the reversion to Japan did not drastically change Okinawa's political situation in terms of the U.S. base installation. The concern of "leased land" was not overanxiousness in this sense. In postwar Japan, the Korean community has been fighting for the human rights of the ethnic minority. Political maneuvers in Tokyo/Japan that distanced themselves from the Koreans and identified with the Japanese under the GHQ occupation could be criticized as being selfish and fainthearted.

Nevertheless, the contemporary socio-political context in Okinawa, Japan, and East Asia should be taken into account as far as the reversion to Japan in 1972 is concerned. The early postwar pro-reversion issue is worthy of being revisited in order to clarify the way people with limited power sought better living conditions under the uncertain political situation of the early Cold War era.[40] Such research will offer a view of the historical and structural standpoint from which political power operated in the early Cold War situation of East Asia and of how the people negotiated and reacted for safeguarding their own right of existence.

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[40] In this regard, the mechanism of how the right to live and the legal status are connected, and how the nation-state (and the governing power in general) appropriates the connection to the nationalistic discourse and the ruling tactics, should be analyzed in further research.

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