

**Constructing a Collective Sense of “We, Okinawans”:
How Overseas Okinawans (*Zaigai Doho*) Shared Information about Their Home
Islands
in the Immediate Post-World War Two Period**

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Abstract

This paper illustrates how Okinawans in Japan, Hawaii, North America, and Brazil took initiative in sharing information about their homeland and Okinawan relief activities before the San Francisco Peace Conference in 1951, the occasion in which the U.S.-occupied Okinawa’s international status was to be determined. The ardent way that ethnic newspapers, leaflets, and periodicals were forwarded and shared among Okinawans on a cross-pacific scale suggests a predecessor to the Okinawan information network that was constructed in the early 1950s which, in turn, indicates a subtle “sense of unity” shared by Okinawans overseas.

1. Introduction

This paper highlights how Okinawans in overseas areas such as Japan, Hawaii, North America, and Brazil began to actively disseminate information about their homeland and Okinawan relief activities from 1945 through the late 1940s before the San Francisco Peace Conference, the occasion in which the international status of the American-occupied Okinawa was to be determined.

Okinawa had sent migrants to North and South America, Hawaii, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Islands as well as to the Japanese mainland before the Pacific War. This study clarifies the ways in which Okinawan people who remained outside of Okinawa heard about the Battle of Okinawa lasting from April 1 to June 23, 1945 during the war and started to exchange information about their war-damaged home island and daily life in respective residential areas afterwards. The analysis of Okinawan ethnic media such as *Jiyu Okinawa* (自由沖縄) in Tokyo, *Okinawa Shin Mimpo* (沖縄新民報) in Fukuoka, and *Kosei Okinawa* (更生沖縄) in Honolulu among other leaflets reveals 1) how this

shared information on Okinawa became a trigger for Okinawan relief campaigns in Okinawan migrant communities and 2) how overseas Okinawan media brought the news on relief campaigns in other areas to local readers. These two points lead to the demonstration of how the Okinawan information network and the subsequent emergence of a sense that “we are Okinawan,” or a type of unity among Okinawans living outside Okinawa, were formed.

The reason for employing the term “unity” or the expression “sense that we are Okinawan” in this paper is to avoid the term “identity” and is based on the hypothesis that the collective sense of being Okinawan in this period did not transform into meaningful political power, as the concept of “identity politics” implies when Okinawan people are concern with the status issue of their home. The aim of this paper, therefore, is to illustrate the active networking among Okinawan people and to grasp the subtle sense of “we Okinawans” that emerged from this exchange of information. The gap at this time between the naissance of the feeling of “we Okinawans” and the absence of political action of any form to support Okinawa’s separation from Japan, or Okinawa’s independence, is left to be studied in further papers.

It goes without saying that my research owes much to the previous literature on Okinawa and its identity/identities and to immigrant studies including Shiramizu (2004), Shimada (2012), Lim (2005), and Sakashita (2017).

Shiramizu (2004) is informative work in terms of the Japanese ethnic media in prewar Hawaii, New York, and Brazil, mainly focusing on the relationship between the immigrant-sending and receiving areas when discussing the ethnic media’s influence on the identities. This paper centers more on the multiple relationships among the overseas Okinawan communities and sheds light on the way in which they share the ethnic media itself and by doing so, the home island’s information. Shimada (2012) argues that Okinawan relief efforts by Okinawans in Hawaii during the late 1940s strengthened the Okinawan identity in Hawaii. He adds that the sharing of information on the Okinawan relief activities in Japan, Hawaii, and North and South America could have forged a sense of unity among the Okinawan people in each place.

Lim (2005) and Sakashita (2017) analyze Okinawan identities in postwar Okinawa. Especially the framework employed in Sakashita (2017) points out that concepts such as “ethnicity” and “nationalism” should be understood as trans-bordered and multiple phenomenon. Indebted to their literature, this paper turns to Okinawan people outside of Okinawa to clarify how they (re-)construct the information network and its possible influence on their sense of unity.

2. Okinawan migration before the Pacific War

Okinawa Prefecture sent the first migrants to Hawaii in 1899. The migration destination list grew to include Mexico and the Philippines in 1904, French territory New Caledonia in 1905, Peru in 1906, and Brazil in 1908 while the U.S. remained the main option. After the Immigration Act of 1924 enacted in the U.S., the imperial Japanese domains of the South Sea islands (*Nan'yo Gunto*), Taiwan, and Manchuria became alternative destinations for migration (Isa 2008, 190-191; Kimura 1981, 56-57). Singapore and Borneo in Southeast Asia joined the list in the 1920s, while the Japanese mainland, especially the Hanshin area such as Kobe and Osaka, also witnessed an increased Okinawan population (Isa 2008, 191; Tomiyama 1990, 123-124). As Table 1 shows, Okinawan migrant communities existed on both sides of the Pacific by the early 1940s.

Table1: Top 10 overseas areas with an Okinawan population (1940-1942)					
①	Saipan	34,396	⑥	Philippine Archipelago	9,899
②	Brazil	16,287	⑦	Argentina	2,603
③	Palau	15,827	⑧	British Malaya	1,095
④	Hawaii	13,146	⑨	Republic of China	883
⑤	Peru	10,717	⑩	U.S. mainland	854
① and ③ are from Asano (2006, 93).					
②,④,⑤,⑦, and ⑩ are from Shimada (1995, 5-6).					
⑥, ⑧, and ⑨ are from "Okinawa immigration documents (statistics, pictures and maps)" in Shin Okinawa Bugaku, vol.45, p.149.					

Most Japanese immigrants, including Okinawans, were confined in concentration camps in the U.S. mainland, and some of them were deported to Japan. Several countries and areas including Argentina, Brazil, and Hawaii allowed Japanese immigrants to remain though under strict social and economic control and censorship (Shimada 1995, 5-6, 8, 9).

More people from Okinawa moved to mainland Japan during the wartime as drafted workers, and about 60,000 were evacuated mainly to southeast Kyushu. Another 20,000 were sent to Taiwan under Japanese government policy after the surrender of Saipan in June 1944 (Miyako Island History Compiling Board 2013, 341; Asano 2006, 85). Kyushu contained about 47,000 Okinawan evacuees at the end of the war. This number was expected to increase to more than 50,000 due to an influx of repatriated Okinawans from the ex-Japanese territories in the South Pacific islands and demobilized soldiers who were unable to return to Okinawa because it had been put under exclusive U.S. control after

the land battle (Yamashiro 1978).

The Battle of Okinawa, the last land battle of the Pacific War, was reported in the media of several areas and countries. *Hawaii Times*, the Japanese newspaper in Honolulu, and *Asahi Shimbun* in the Japanese mainland spotlighted the Okinawa land battle. The *New York Times* published news related to Okinawa and the Ryukyu Islands with increasing frequency starting in the beginning of 1945,¹ counting 13 articles related to Okinawa in March 1945. When the Battle of Okinawa broke out the next month, the publication issued news on Okinawa almost on a daily basis, including “ATTACKS ON RYUKYUS OPEN NEW WAR STAGE” on April 1.² Brazilian newspapers, too, seem to have printed news on the Okinawa land battle. A letter from an Okinawan in Brazil to their relative in Hawaii reads, “Japanese news agencies halted service, and Japanese newspapers have stopped publishing since the end of 1941. We can only learn about Japan and our home island Okinawa through Portuguese newspapers.”³

Further research is required to clarify to what extent overseas Okinawans were able to gain Okinawa-related news through local media. At least some of them found and heard the term “Okinawa” in the foreign lands where they lived. Overseas Okinawans were longing to learn more about what was happening on their home island when many media sources were reporting on the fierce land battle.

3. The relief campaign in Hawaii

Japanese newspapers in Honolulu conveyed firsthand information from Okinawa to the Okinawans in Hawaii. *Hawaii Times* continually featured news on the Okinawa land battle, in Japanese and English, almost every day during the last two weeks of the battle, which ended officially on June 23.⁴ News sometimes came with photos that showed readers the severe damage of the battle on Okinawa.⁵ Second-generation (Nisei) soldiers

¹ For example, “HALSEY SMASHES 83 JAPANESE SHIPS; Navy Fliers Sink 25 of Them, Destroy or Hit 331 Planes in Formosa, Okinawa Attacks” from January 7, 1945 and “TWIN AIR BLOWS RIP OKINAWA, NAGOYA; ON LUZON: JAPANESE DESERT TOWNS AND THEIR MONUMENTS” from January 24, 1945.

² The *New York Times* online search results for the word “Okinawa,” accessed October 23, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/search?query=Okinawa&sort=oldest>.

³ “Everywhere in the Same Trouble / Relief Activities in Trouble / Hardship on Brazil Doho (いづこも同じ……/難航の救援運動/ブラジル同胞の苦行)” in *Kosei Okinawa* from April 1948.

⁴ For example, “Japanese Open Death Stand in South Okinawa” from June 8, 1945, “U.S. Troops in Vital Gains on Okinawa / Marines Reach Top of Kunishi Ridge by Surprise Attack” from June 13, 1945, and “Admiral Ota Is Found Suicide in Okinawa Cave” from June 18, 1945. The Japanese version of the same articles was also printed in the same paper.

⁵ For example, “U.S. Soldier Carrying Enemy’s Dead Body in the Shuri Castle (「米兵が敵死体調

stationed in Okinawa sometimes sent in their personal observations of the island while engaging in military duty on the front line. Thomas Higa Taro, who served as an interpreter, was one of the active writers. *Hawaii Times* published four reports from him, including “Nothing Left in Naha and Shuri” on August 4, 1945. Nisei soldier Yoshioka Takeshi wrote to *Hawaii Hochi*, the other Japanese-language newspaper in Honolulu, reporting that he was asked by local Okinawans to inform the people in Hawaii how they were suffering from shortages of daily commodities and suggesting the launch of a clothing drive if permission was granted from the U.S. military in Hawaii (Shimada 2004, 240).

Moved by the Niseis’ reports, Okinawans in Hawaii organized a clothing drive for war-damaged Okinawa (沖縄戦災民救済衣類募集運動) in November 1945 (Tamayose 1951, 29-30; Shimada 2004, 241). By December, 500 boxes of clothes and items were collected, sorted out, and shipped from Oahu. Okinawan people in Maui, Kauai, and the Hawaii islands also participated in the movement (Shimada 2004, 241; Tamayose 1951, 30). 1,769 boxes were sent by February 1946, and one of the organizers recorded 181,413 items, including clothes for children and women, shoes, and commodities, which were shipped by January 1947 (Tamayose 1951, 30-31).

Okinawan relief activities in Hawaii are notable in terms of the variety of commodities they sent, such as sewing machines, hogs, and goats for milk. The Okinawa Relief and Rehabilitation Foundation (沖縄救済更生会) raised funds to send five Okinawan youths to U.S. universities in 1948 (Tamayose 1951, 31-38; Wakukawa Seiyei Manuscript Publishing Committee 2000, 43-52; Shimada 2004, 241-246). Okinawan people in Hawaii also supported their relatives in Okinawa by directly sending them food, stationery, clothes, etc,⁶ and vice versa, people in Okinawa frequently asked their friends and relatives in Hawaii to send them daily use items.⁷

ぶ首里の城」)” from June 11, 1945 and “Traces of Shells Tell the Fierce Battle in Shuri (「砲弾の跡激戦語る首里」)” from June 21, 1945.

⁶ “Misuse of Military Postal Service (「軍事郵便の濫用」)” in the monthly *Kosei Okinawa* from December 1947 and “Parcels to Okinawa / Pack Properly / Many are Undeliverable (「沖縄行き小包/包装は厳重に/配達不可能が多数」)” in *Kosei Okinawa* from April 1948 describe the mass transport of relief parcels from Hawaii to Okinawa.

⁷ Houn Tamayose’s “Words to Doho in Homeland (「祖国同胞に与ふ」)” in *Kosei Okinawa* from November 1947. Wakukawa Seiyei Documents contain a letter dated October 8, 1949 to Wakukawa, chief organizer of the Okinawa Relief and Rehabilitation Foundation, from his niece in Okinawa in which she requested cooking oil, sugar, and clothes.

4. Self-help organizations in Japan

During wartime, Okinawans in mainland Japan received less information about Okinawa compared to their counterparts in Hawaii. The two-paged *Asahi Shimbun* only reported on the progress of the battle, and postal service between Japan and Okinawa ceased operation around the beginning of 1945.⁸ Okinawans in Japan were profoundly concerned about the negative news that was reported from their home island under battle.⁹

In 1945, two organizations were formed by Okinawans in Tokyo. One was the Okinawa Patriotic Association (報国沖縄協会) founded in July, just after the news on the surrender of Okinawa reached the general public. The other was the League of Okinawans (沖縄人連盟) founded in November. The former was a semi-official organization with financial support from the Japanese government but was short-lived. The latter was launched under the leadership of ex-socialists and communists to appeal to the GHQ (Yamashiro 1978, 276-277; Arasaki 1969, 26). Furthermore, the Okinawa prefectural offices were not in Tokyo but in Kyushu, where large numbers of Okinawan evacuees stayed and required administrative assistance.

Two Okinawan media sources, *Jiyu Okinawa* by the League of Okinawans and *Okinawa Shin Mimpo*, issued with the support of the prefectural headquarter office in Fukuoka, manifest the eagerness of Okinawan people on the mainland to obtain and share information about their home island. For example, *Jiyu Okinawa* issued on January 1, 1946 reports that Sakae Uechi, an ex-Japanese soldier who escaped from his home island Okinawa, gave a talk titled “The Truth of the Okinawa Land Battle” at the League of Okinawans foundation meeting in December 1945 in Tokyo and attracted “more than one thousand spectators.”¹⁰ A special issue of *Jiyu Okinawa* from February 10, 1946 collected

⁸ Seiryu Kamiyama in Tokyo recorded in his diary on January 4, 1945 that his parcel to Okinawa had been rejected and returned (Okinawa Kenjinkai Association Hyogo Branch 35-Year History Editorial Committee 1982, 76). Evacuee Kazuko Kakazu in Kagoshima, Kyushu received the last letter from her father in Okinawa, which was dated February 9, 1945 (Naha City General Affairs Department Women's Section 2001, 154).

⁹ Sargent Choko Kuwae in Tokyo retrospectively recalls his anxiety about his family in Okinawa as he was informed through the newspaper and radio that the U.S. military was defeating the air stripes and other military facilities of the Japanese army in Okinawa (Kuwae 1991, 31).

¹⁰ “Resolutions and Reports, Great Achievement! / Okinawa Kenjin Meeting (決議に、報告に、多数の収穫! / 沖縄県人大会)” in *Jiyu Okinawa*, the periodical by the League of Okinawans, from January 1, 1946 and “Everyone Should Join! / Okinawan Meeting for Supporting the Repatriated (一人残らず参加せよ! / 引揚民救済沖縄県人大会)” in the first issue of *Jiyu Okinawa* from December 6, 1945.

transcripts of several talks on the Battle of Okinawa from witnesses who were in Okinawa, such as an ex-policeman and a Hawaii-born Nisei U.S. interpreter.¹¹ *Okinawa Shin Mimpo*, established in January 1946, also published articles based on the experiences of those who witnessed the cruel land battle in which approximately 94,000 non-military lives, one fourth of the local population, were lost.¹² Parts of private letters were also shared if they contained information about Okinawa.¹³ *Uruma Shimpo*, a local newspaper in Okinawa since July 1945, was brought into Japan by people who had escaped from Okinawa and became another resource of information.¹⁴

5. Contact with *zaigai doho* (overseas Okinawans)

Okinawan people in Japan tried to resume contact with their overseas counterparts. The League of Okinawans asked the GHQ in a petition they submitted in November 1945 to allow them to communicate with Okinawans in Hawaii and in the ex-Japanese territory

¹¹ “Desolate Burnt Field (荒涼たる焼野原)” and “Suffrage to Women, One Step Ahead (一步先に婦人参政権)” were based on the experience of an Okinawan-American who stayed ten days in Okinawa as an interpreter for the U.S. “Report on Okinawa’s Surrender (玉砕戦の報告を聴く)” was based on a talk by a former policeman about what he witnessed before his evacuation which included many names of those who were killed, died of suicide, and were injured.

¹² For example, “Island in Shining Lights / No Currency Needed / Okinawa Nowadays (闇の全く無い島/新円も旧券もいらぬ/その後の沖縄)” from February 25, 1946 by the head of Naha postal office and a former prefectural engineer; “Suggestive Election / Vote by Parole / Women Votes, Too / Okinawa Nowadays (示唆に富む人民選挙/口頭で意思表示/ひと足お先に夫人の投票/その後の沖縄)” from March 5, 1946 by an ex-Japanese soldier; and “The Notable Last / *Okinawa Shimpo* Stopped Issuing in Defeat (特記される最後/戦敗で廃刊の沖縄新報)” from April 5, 1946 by a civilian who had repatriated from Okinawa.

¹³ “Working as a Hospital Director / Letter from Dr. Hamamatsu (病院長として活躍/浜松氏からの便り)” in *Okinawa Shin Mimpo* from February 25, 1946 was based on a letter from Dr. Hamamatsu to his wife in evacuation. “Okinawa afterward / Letter from Mr. Nakayoshi, the Former Mayor of Shuri / Shuri in Quick Reconstruction / Hospital and School Opened (その後の沖縄/仲吉前首里市長からの便り/首里の復興 捗る/早くも病院と学校開設)” in *Okinawa Shin Mimpo* from April 5, 1946 was based on Nakayoshi’s letter to his friend in Tokyo.

¹⁴ “Okinawa into 11 Cities (沖縄を十一市に)” in *Jiyu Okinawa* from January 1, 1946 refers to *Uruma Shimpo* as a news resource. Similar examples are “From Military Government to Civil Government / Create the History of New Okinawa / Civil Government Was Born by the Hand of Okinawans (軍政から民政へ/新生沖縄の歴史は創る/沖縄人自身の手による民政誕生)” in *Jiyu Okinawa* from June 15, 1946 and “New-Born Yayeyama Island in Spring / Raised Smoke Signal of Reconstruction / First Report from Mr. Miyara, the Head of the Branch Office of Civil Government in Yayeyama (春の新生八重山に/自主再建の狼火 / 沖縄府八重山/宮良支庁長の初便り)” in *Okinawa Shin Mimpo* from March 25, 1946.

Nan'yo Gunto.¹⁵ Two Okinawan migrants in the U.S. assisted this trans-border communication.

Shinsei Kochi and Shingi Nakamura were members of the Research Group on the Atomic Bomb Damage and People (原爆被害民情調査団) sent by the American government. They stayed in Japan from November 1945 to January 1946, during which Kochi went to Kyushu and observed the devastating situation of the Okinawan refugees suffering from prolonged evacuation (History of the Okinawans in North America Editorial Board 1981, 185-189). In Tokyo, the two Okinawans coincidentally ran into members of the League of Okinawans on the street when the League was presumably holding a fundraising campaign for Okinawan children in Kyushu.¹⁶ According to a *Jiyu Okinawa* article, Kochi and Nakamura encouraged the League members and promised to call for Okinawan relief activities in “North and South America and Hawaii.”¹⁷

Kochi and Nakamura left Japan with a departure message titled “Greeting to the Suffering Okinawan People in the Home Country (戦禍に苦しむ祖国縣民への挨拶).” Back in the U.S., they released a report based on several documents they brought from Japan, including the message from the League of Okinawans to the *zaigai* or *kaigai doho* (在外 / 海外同胞). This message was presumably addressed to the “Okinawan communities in North America, Hawaii, and several countries in South America, Mexico,

¹⁵ “Petition to MacArthur GHQ / Asking for Return Permission to Okinawa (マ・司令部へ請願書提出—早急帰還許可を懇願—)” in *Jiyu Okinawa* from December 6, 1945 and “Petition to MacArthur GHQ / Voice for the Rebuilt of Okinawa (マ司令部への請願書—起ち上る再建の叫び!)” in *History of the Okinawans in North America* (History of the Okinawans in North America Editorial Board 1981, 196).

¹⁶ “Save the Okinawan Children without Home Island / League of Okinawans Fundraising on the Street / 12,000 Yen in a Week (郷里を失える沖縄疎開学童を救え/連盟街頭で義損金募集/一週間で一万二千余円集まる)” in *Jiyu Okinawa* from January 1, 1946 reports that the League was actively fundraising on the streets of Tokyo from the end of 1945. “Good, Impressive News from North America / Okinawan Doho in North America Give Support to the Refugees / Asking the Leagues to Distribute the Relief Items (北米より感激の朗報/難民救済に在米同胞活躍す/連盟を通じて救援品配給を請願)” in *Jiyu Okinawa* from June 15, 1946 suggests how the two Okinawans from the U.S. met the League members in Tokyo.

¹⁷ “Good, Impressive News from North America / Okinawan Doho in North America Give Support to the Refugees / Asking the Leagues to Distribute the Relief Items (北米より感激の朗報/難民救済に在米同胞活躍す/連盟を通じて救援品配給を請願).”

and Canada” (History of the Okinawans in North America Editorial Board 1981, 198) with a cover letter titled “Returning from Japan (日本より帰りて).”¹⁸

These three messages, “Greeting to the Suffering Okinawan People in the Home Country,” the message by the League members to the overseas doho, and “Returning from Japan” have two points in common: the term “doho” is used to signify all Okinawa-born people, even those who do not know each other in person, and the areas where the doho live, Hawaii and Mexico for example, are specifically mentioned. With a plea in the report to aid their home island, these two points possibly helped Okinawan people picture “Okinawans around the world,” one that may differ from a vision based on the family, friends, and hometown-based chained migration.

Kochi and Nakamura’s “Report on the Situation around Okinawan Prefectural People in Postwar Japan (戦後の日本における沖縄県人情勢報告)” appeared in Tamayose’s address in 1951 (Tamayose 1951, 31) and acted as a catalyst to launch relief activities in several places. Kochi and Nakamura first organized the Committee of Okinawa Relief in New York (沖縄救援ニューヨーク委員会) and visited Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, and San Francisco and sent a letter to Arizona to ask that local relief committees be organized there. The League of Okinawans in America Offering War Damage Relief (在米沖縄戦災救援連盟) was founded in Los Angeles in June 1946 as an umbrella organization of the local committees (History of the Okinawans in North America Editorial Board 1981, 199-201). Josei Onaga in Sao Paulo, Brazil, sent a letter to the League of Okinawans in America Offering War Damage Relief in September 1946 to inquire the League’s regulations. He intended to inform the “4,000 families in Brazil” about the relief activities in the U.S. so they could begin a similar campaign (Taminato 1981, 78). In June 1947, the League of Okinawan Relief (沖縄救援連盟) was founded in Sao Paulo.

According to a private letter from Sao Paulo to Hawaii published in *Kosei Okinawa’s*

¹⁸ Houn Tamayose, a Buddhist monk and an opinion leader in Honolulu, recalls in his contribution to the magazine *the Okinawa* in Tokyo that Kochi and Nakamura sent a four-page publication to Hawaii titled “Report on the Situation around Okinawa Prefectural People in Postwar Japan (戦後の日本における沖縄県人情勢報告)” (Tamayose 1951, 31).

April 1948 issue, the League of Okinawan Relief raised as much as “60,000,000 cruzeiros or 30,000 U.S. dollars” in few months. Part of the money was supposed to be sent to the League of Okinawans in America Offering War Damage Relief in Los Angeles in order to purchase necessary items to be shipped to Okinawa.¹⁹ Onaga and Nakamura did not know each other until Nakamura launched the relief activities in the U.S.²⁰ It would be safe to say, therefore, that the call for Okinawan relief efforts connected the two otherwise strangers in different cities solely because they were from the same island. The first letter from Onaga to Nakamura was reported by *Relief News* (*Kyuen Nyuusu* 救援ニュース), a periodical of the League of Okinawans in America Offering War Damage Relief (Taminato 1981, 78). It is notable that the reader of *Relief News* in the U.S. may have come to know that someone in Brazil wanted to communicate with them and was trying to launch similar relief activities in Sao Paulo for the same purpose of supporting their shared home island.

Kochi and Nakamura’s report reached Hawaii in early 1946, where people had already sent boxes of clothes to Okinawa by the end of 1945. Seiyei Wakukawa, the chief organizer of the Okinawa Relief and Rehabilitation Foundation, recalls the report by Kochi and Nakamura which encouraged Okinawans in Hawaii to send clothes to Okinawan refugees living with weak supply lines in Japan, though the new project was not realized in the end (Wakukawa Seiyei Manuscript Publishing Committee 2000, 42-43).

The first boxes of rescue items from Hawaii to Okinawa were made possible with support from the U.S. military authority (Shimada 2004, 240). An alternative way to channel money and items from overseas was via LARA, the Licensed Agencies for Relief in Asia. The international platform, which started operation in Japan in June 1946, included Okinawa as its target in June 1947 (Oku 2018, 50).²¹ Onaga’s private letter reveals that the money the League of Okinawan Relief raised in Brazil was likely sent to either LARA directly or the League of Okinawans in America Offering War Damage Relief as brokerage in North America, where the necessary items were purchased and shipped (Taminato 1981, 90-91). LARA offered the transportation framework when

¹⁹ “Everywhere in the Same Trouble / Relief Activities in Trouble / Hardship on Brazil Doho (いづこも同じ / 難航の救援運動/ブラジル同胞の苦行)” in *Kosei Okinawa* from April 1948.

²⁰ Onaga introduces himself by informing Nakamura of his life story in the letter to Nakamura dated July 1, 1947 (Taminato 1981, 93). It suggests that their first contact would have been in the postwar period.

²¹ Taminato noted that the visit of Dr. G. Ernest Bott, the representative of LARA in Japan, to Okinawa in February 1947 was a trigger to expand their activities to Okinawa (Taminato 1981, 92).

Okinawans in Hawaii purchased and sent about 500 hogs from Portland, Oregon to Okinawa in 1948 (Shimada 2004, 244). More than 2,800 goats also arrived at Okinawa in the late 1940s through LARA, partly due to a relief campaign by an Okinawan Christian organization in Hawaii (Oku 2018, 52).

6. Communication among Okinawans

The Okinawan people migrating across North and South America, Japan, and Okinawa were featured in the monthly paper *Kosei Okinawa* in Honolulu. The first issue from November 1947 printed congratulatory messages for the new ethnic paper from Shinsei Kochi of Los Angeles, from the president of the League of Okinawans in Tokyo, and from Governor Shikiya of the Okinawa civil government.²² An article titled “Message from the League of American Residents (在米連盟のメッセージ)” was a reprint of a welcome speech from the “Welcome Party for the Guest from Hawaii and the Repatriated Nisei (「米布連絡使節並に帰還二世歓迎会」)” held in August 1947 in the U.S. mainland. The article mentioned that the party’s guest, Dr. Tengan, the secretary of the Okinawa Relief and Rehabilitation Foundation, had visited the local relief committees on the American mainland. This suggests not only the exchange of information but also the flow of people and staff were connecting Okinawan communities.

The first issue of *Kosei Okinawa* reported on the founding of a local relief committee in Brazil and its fundraising activities. It also published an article with list of names of the committee members as well as the main donors and introduced the pamphlet *News from Postwar Okinawa* (終戦後の沖縄事情) that Onaga issued in Sao Paulo.²³ The same article informs Hawaii readers that *News from Postwar Okinawa* No. 4 reprinted the statement “Appeal to the Okinawan Doho in Hawaii (布哇沖縄人同胞に訴ふ)” that the

²² Shinsei Kochi’s “Blessing the First Issue (創刊号を祝す)” and “Can’t Help but Be Deeply Moved / Okinawa Governor Shikiya / Encouraging the Okinawa Relief and Rehabilitation Foundation (感激措く能わず／志喜屋沖縄知事／更生会を激励).” The message from the League of Okinawans lacks the title due to unclear printing, but the signature of the president, Nakahara, indicates it. Comments from Governor Shikiya were originally made when he first heard of the Foundation’s project from *Hawaii Times*, which was sent from Hawaii to Mr. Okuda, the correspondent of the Foundation in Okinawa.

²³ “Okinawan Relief Campaign by Doho in Brazil (ブラジル同胞の沖縄救援運動)” in *Kosei Okinawa* from November 1947.

Okinawa Relief and Rehabilitation Foundation printed in *Hawaii Times* and *Hawaii Hochi* in June 1947. Here, the *Kosei Okinawa* article exemplifies cross-referencing among Okinawan communities. The appeal the Foundation issued in the two local Japanese-language newspapers in Honolulu reached Brazil through the Okinawan network, and it was reprinted in the periodical to seek attention from those in Brazil. The relief activity news and the periodical information from Brazil were then brought into Honolulu and in return picked up by *Kosei Okinawa*. This illustrates how the appeal in Honolulu was forwarded and read by local readers in Brazil while informing Okinawan readers in Hawaii about the relief activities of their counterparts in Brazil.

Okinawans in respective places enthusiastically exchanged their publications. *Kosei Okinawa* in the November 1947 issue listed publications they received: *Relief News* from the mainland U.S.; *News from Postwar Okinawa* and *Kaihou* (会報) of the League of Okinawan Relief from Brazil; and *Uruma Shimpō* from Okinawa, which was forwarded to North and South America according to its editor. *Kosei Okinawa* from May 1948 listed their latest arrivals: *Uruma Shimpō*, the Okinawan civil government periodical *Joho* (情報), and several journals by the U.S. military authority in Okinawa; *Okinawa Shin Mimpo* and *Jiyu Okinawa* from Japan; and *News from Postwar Okinawa*, *Kaihou*, and *Nanbei Jiji* (南米時事) from Brazil.²⁴ Minutes from the second general assembly in Los Angeles of the League of Okinawans in America Offering War Relief in May 1948 listed a variety of publications from Tokyo, the U.S., Okinawa, Brazil, and Argentina while mentioning the League of Okinawans in Japan, the Okinawa Relief and Rehabilitation Foundation in Honolulu, and other relief organization in Brazil, Peru, Canada, and Mexico as their supportive organizations (History of the Okinawans in North America Editorial Board 1981, 213-215).

Each publication cited and reprinted the shared newspapers and other periodicals. For Onaga in Sao Paulo, *Relief News*, *Jiyu Okinawa*, and possibly other publications sent from Nakamura in Los Angeles were the resources for his own publication (Taminato 1981, 104). In the *Kosei Okinawa* December 1947 issue, the article “Naha City Standing up in the Ash and Dust (灰燼の中から立ち上る那覇)” was based on the content from

²⁴ “New Arrival Publications (近着刊行物)” in *Kosei Okinawa* from May 1948.

Okinawa Shin Mimpo; “Tax Income in the First Six Months / Only about 6,000,000 Yen (半歳の諸税収入/僅か六百余万元)” was from *Uruma Shimpō*; and “Charity Ballet for Okinawa Refugees’ Relief / Nisei in Brazil / Youth Generation Leads the Campaign (沖縄戦災民救援バイレ/ブラジル国在住二世/男女青年の活躍)” was based on the periodicals from Brazil, all of which are indicated in the articles. A close survey of *Okinawa Shin Mimpo* in Fukuoka reveals a similar tendency.²⁵

7. Conclusion: networks and a sense of unity

This paper argues that all the practices mentioned above, such as the sharing and cross-referencing information among Okinawan relief groups and the issuing of their own publications based on forwarded periodicals and journals, imply the emergence of an Okinawan network on both sides of the Pacific Rim in the early postwar period. Okinawan people such as Onaga in Sao Paulo, Nakamura in Los Angeles, and Wakukawa in Honolulu were presumably conscious of the Okinawan network. In addition to these community leaders, ordinary Okinawan readers might also have had a similar impression.²⁶

Furthermore, the psychological influence of visualizations of overseas Okinawans in the form of articles in ethnic media should not be ignored. The first issue of *Kosei Okinawa* in which the greetings, congratulatory messages, and contributions from Okinawans in various places were published together most likely impressed local readers on the globality of “we Okinawans.” A similar example is found in *Okinawa Shin Mimpo*. Its January 5, 1948 edition spent one whole page reporting the details of relief activities in the U.S., Hawaii, Argentina, and Brazil under the title “Great Devotion of Overseas Brethren / Warm Beam of Love / Comes beyond the Pacific Ocean / To People in Okinawa

²⁵ For example, “Okishikina the Sumo Wrestler in Good Fight for Fundraising (救済募金募集に“沖縄名”善戦)” from June 5, 1948 is from *Hawaii Times*; “Significance on the Participation of Okinawan Representative (沖縄代表出席の意義)” from July 25, 1948 was based on *Uruma Shimpō* and *Okinawa Times*, the local newspapers in Okinawa; and “Working on Okinawans’ Destiny / Hope for New Face / League of Okinawans in America Offering War Damage Relief / President Nakamura Kengoro (沖縄の運命開拓/新人の出現に期待/在米沖縄復興連盟/会長 中村権五郎)” from December 5, 1948 was based on *Kosei Okinawa* as indicated in the articles.

²⁶ A Letter from a person in Tokyo to Wakukawa in 1948 tells that he was informed about the relief activity by the Foundation in Honolulu through *Relief News* from the U.S. and *Hawaii Star*. Wakukawa Seiyei Documents 0000050670, file title “Taira Sumiyoshi and others.”

(はらからの愛・海外にうづまく/暖い愛の放射線/太平洋をこへて/沖縄の人々に集中).”

However, the positive news shared in the media did not necessarily reflect reality. Relief activities in Brazil and Hawaii sometimes faced trouble with *kachigumi* (勝ち組) groups that were in denial of imperial Japan’s defeat after August 1945.²⁷ Onaga in Sao Paulo reported in 1947 that 95% of Okinawan people in Brazil still believed in the victory of Japan so much so that he could not bring up the topic of Okinawan relief in his letter to the Okinawa Relief and Rehabilitation Foundation in Honolulu.²⁸ Onaga also kept complaining to Nakamura in Los Angeles on how difficult it was to launch a relief campaign among Okinawans sympathizing with the *kachigumi* mentality (Taminato 1981, 76-77, 79, 83, 86-87). “Everywhere in the Same Trouble / Relief Activities in Trouble / Hardship on Brazil Doho” in *Kosei Okinawa*’s April 1948 issue reports the fact that “there are many Okinawans who are against aiding Okinawa and try to disturb the relief efforts,” and the article requests Okinawan people in Hawaii to write letters to their families, relatives, and friends in Brazil to make them aware of the reality.

As the title “Everywhere in the Same Trouble” suggests, the Okinawan community in Hawaii had a similar group called *kattagumi* (勝った組) as Shimada describes in detail (2004, 192-224). Articles in *Kosei Okinawa* imply the challenges they experienced during the fundraising activities. For example, a reader letter to the editor laments how many doho were influenced by misleading advertising and were at loss.²⁹ A private letter from

²⁷ “Everywhere in the Same Trouble / Relief Activities in Trouble / Hardship on Brazil Doho (いづこも同じ /難航の救援運動/ブラジル同胞の苦行)” in *Kosei Okinawa* from April 1948.

Kachigumi, or the “Winners,” were a part of Japanese *zaigai doho* who undeniably believed in the victory of their homeland, imperial Japan. Many Okinawans joined the group, and in Brazil, they carried out terrorist attacks on those who accepted Japan’s defeat, resulting in the assassination of Japanese political leaders in 1947. Hawaii did not observe violence such as assassinations, but *kachigumi* or *kattagumi* (勝った組) in Hawaii also became an obstacle for relief activities by refusing to aid Okinawa, a domain of imperial Japan.

²⁸ “Letter from Brazil / With the Foundation / Want to Work Together (ブラジル便り/更生会の事業にも/是非参加したい)” in *Kosei Okinawa* from December 1947.

²⁹ Jinkichi Higa’s “Way to Save Okinawa Forever (沖縄を永遠に救ふ途)” in *Kosei Okinawa* from October 1948.

Maui Island to Wakukawa in Honolulu dated January 22, 1948 points out that “it is better not to discuss the victory or defeat in the war” when they are recruiting new members to the Foundation.³⁰

Nevertheless, the visualization of Okinawans who were anonymous to each other in disparate places working on relief activities and sharing the same goal to support their home island was powerful enough for readers to imagine the united body of “we, Okinawans” spread around the Pacific Rim. The message Kochi and Nakamura left to the Okinawans in Japan as well as in and around the U.S. and the message by the League of Okinawans to the Okinawans overseas both addressed Okinawan people in a general, abstract matter while specifically referring to the locations of their residence.³¹ The name of the countries and areas appeared later again in Okinawan media when Okinawan people in their respective places began relief activities in response to the messages.

Shimada points to the Okinawan relief activities in Hawaii as the main factor in constructing Okinawan ethnic identity in Hawaii (2012, 118). Responding to the call for relief activities, collecting money, clothes and other items, and boxing them for those in Okinawa whom they will never meet were impactful practices to unite the local Okinawan people in Hawaii, where family and hometown ties had historically been stronger. Whether this was also the case in the U.S. and Brazil requires further study.

The focus of this paper is the effect of Okinawan media that exposed readers to 1) the call for relief activities to a generalized group of Okinawans in a wide range of locations, 2) information about relief activities that emerged in each place in response to the call, and 3) articles forwarded and reprinted from Okinawan communities in other locations.

Part of this comes from the classic discussion on the effect of modern newspapers on “imagined communities” by Benedict Anderson (1997). This paper does not go so far as to argue that Okinawan media helped people to imagine the imagined community, a seed for the independent modern nation state. Still, print technology and the practice of reading print media should be taken into consideration when the mentality of the readership matters. Okinawan media at this time was not only the medium to transmit information but also the apparatus to construct a sense of unity among distanced Okinawan doho who had never seen each other before.

Two questions are left. First, to what extent should the effect of media be considered?

³⁰ Wakukawa Seiei Documents 0000050340, file title “Old letters” from Y.M. in Maui to Wakukawa.

³¹ A similar expression is found in “Foundation Remarks (創刊の辞)” in the first issue of *Kosei Okinawa* from November 1947 that it is to be a supportive, leading umbrella organization for the relief efforts “by the hands of all the overseas Okinawans in Japan, North, Central and South America, and Hawaii.”

Okinawan intellectuals in different communities did tend to keep in contact during the prewar time.³² Historical record shows that a catch-all Okinawan organization was established in 1934 in the U.S. (History of the Okinawans in North America Editorial Board 1981, 99-101). To evaluate the effect of postwar Okinawan media, a temporal comparison between prewar and postwar periods, a spatial comparison among immigration destinations, and a social class perspective should be introduced in further research.

The second question is to what extent the active networking and the possible sense of unity affected the Okinawa status issue in the San Francisco Peace Conference of 1951. Research on political opinions regarding the status issue among Okinawans in Okinawa, Japan, and Hawaii suggests that there were notable differences among the three communities. Okinawa witnessed pros and cons discussions on the issue of reversion to Japan while the pro-reversion argument was the mainstream of discourse in Japan, and few arguments were found in Hawaii (Uechi 2012). In addition, the political and administrative differences in the three areas had supposedly created the discrepancy among the three groups. How to interpret this contrast between the active networking that possibly backed the sense of unity among Okinawan migrants and the discrepancy on the topic relating to the reversion to Japan is a question left for further discussion.

³² Wakukawa Documents reveal that several leaders of the League of Okinawans in Tokyo were his old friends from prewar times. Even if not close friends, people with higher education sometimes still recognized each other. Onaga in Sao Paulo wrote to Nakamura in Los Angeles that Governor Shikiya in Okinawa was his junior high school classmate. In the same letter, Onaga also mentioned that three people named in *Relief News* were his classmates as well (Taminato 1981, 93).

【論文】Constructing a Collective Sense of 'We, Okinawans':
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in the Immediate Post-World War Two Period

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【論文】Constructing a Collective Sense of 'We, Okinawans':
How Overseas Okinawans (Zaigai Doho) Shared Information about Their Home Islands
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【論文】Constructing a Collective Sense of ‘We, Okinawans’:
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