

Voices of Despair

Encounter Between a Sex Worker and a Soldier in Postwar Okinawa in Sueko Yoshida's *Love Suicide at Kamaara*

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Love Suicide at Kamaara, which won the 10th New Okinawan Literature Prize in 1984, is a short story that describes a love affair between a young fugitive US soldier, Sammy, and an Okinawan 58-year-old sex worker, Kiyo, and their final act of double suicide. The story is set in downtown Koza, which is located near the largest military base in the Far East, Kadena Air Base. Koza had rapidly “developed” in the 1950s, influenced by social upheaval. The battle of Okinawa had led to the destruction of domestic residences and agricultural facilities across the region. These pressures, compounded by the subsequent land expropriation by the US military after the war, forced many of those who lost their homes and access to food supplies to immigrate to Koza, seeking work. As Tsuneo Namihira points out, many women immigrated to the main island of Okinawa from Amami Oshima and other remote islands, which had been left out of postwar economic development, and had no choice but to engage in sex work (245-50). The main character in the story, Kiyo, is from the Tsuken island, which was completely devastated by fire in the battle, and immigrates to the main island of Okinawa. The story is set around 1980, when the economic boom of the special procurements from the Vietnam War had passed, and the number of US soldiers in the town had decreased. Using an analogy between the decline of the town and Kiyo’s old age, this story takes a point of view that is close to the

impoverished old woman. In this story, Kiyo, who has much more difficulty in procuring customers as she ages, supports the young fugitive soldier from the US military for half a year in her house at Kamaara.

Since its publication, *Love Suicide at Kamaara* has received positive reviews for accurately portraying an aspect of the political situation faced by Okinawa and because the plot of the story grabs readers' interest from beginning to end. At the same time, however, negative opinions have also been given, regarding the description of the love affair, or sex scenes as unsophisticated and vulgar.¹ However, it is in the description of the love affair that Hyoduk Lee sees the essence of the work and reads the inherent resistance. Western ideology often forces a narrative of superiority over the colonized, and thus justifies their exploitation and oppression. As Lee points out, colonial fantasies are often represented as a form of exotic international love story, which contributes to the justification of colonialism on the grounds that the colonizers are loved by indigenous women. In his paper, "Anticolonial Fantasy," Lee focuses on the structure, which follows the exotic international love story, but, at the same time, dramatically reverses and subverts the gendered relations between colonizer and colonized. He concludes that the story succeeds in deconstructing the colonial fantasy and presents a counter narrative. That is to say, Lee rebuts the conventional negative opinions that regard the work as unsophisticated and vulgar, and brings out a political narrative strategy.

US military expansionism in Asia in the 1950s was always facilitated by policies on controlling women's bodies. In order to boost soldiers' morale, the US military worked on introducing these policies in postwar Japan to establish a system that enabled soldiers to buy sex without fear of venereal diseases. These policies necessitated violations against women but concealed the fact. In addition, policies

on controlling women's sexuality restructured towns around military bases into ones whose economies were dependent on sex work and divided the inhabitants into groups that were antagonistically pitted against each other. According to Naoki Sakai, the US military after World War II took the policy on controlling women's sexuality as a model for bio-politics that developed to help solidify its control over the colonized population (49). Future research will explore how the policy on controlling women's sexuality is related to bio-politics in postwar Okinawa further, but for now, I would like to point out that US military expansionism after World War II and the rule over the towns around the bases cannot be discussed without taking the policies on women's sexuality into account. Therefore, it makes sense to include politics in the analysis of the love affair described in *Love Suicide at Kamaara*, which focuses on Koza, changing according to the progress of both the Korean War and the Vietnam War, and Kiyo, a sex worker who has been working there for about thirty years. However, Lee places so much emphasis on the comparison of the settings between *Pocahontas*, the prototype of exotic international love stories, and *Love Suicide at Kamaara*, that the interpretation diverges from the lived experiences of an elderly sex worker and a fugitive soldier in postwar Okinawa. In addition, the theme of *Love Suicide at Kamaara* questions not only the US occupation of Okinawa, but also Japanese imperialism. In this paper, following Lee's interpretation that the work succeeds in becoming a counter narrative of the exotic international love story, I reinterpret the work, situating it in the political situation in postwar Okinawa, in which the US-Japanese rule has substantially continued, and scrutinizing its critical strategy of the resistance to the rule.

What Kiyo's Old Appearance Represents

The scene that first draws readers' attention in *Love Suicide at Kamaara* is Kiyo's old appearance and the psychological torment she

feels when Sammy looks at her. Of the four sections that make up the story, the first three all begin with descriptions of her aging appearance:

Kiyo was awakened by the sound of the lighter hitting the floor. She opened her eyes and saw a faint wisp of smoke drifting toward the sunlit ceiling. Glancing over at the other bed, she saw Sammy looking at her with a cigarette between his teeth. He must have been watching her sleep for some time. Kiyo rolled over and faced the wall. She knew he'd been getting an eyeful of her hair, which was starting to turn white at the roots, and the lusterless nape of her bony neck. She felt painfully exposed and pulled the blanket up above her ears. (178)

Such descriptions of her fear of aging are not limited to this passage, but instead permeate the whole story. Furthermore, from Kiyo's fears that Sammy will leave her behind and return to the military in the near future, we can see that she is being driven into a corner mentally as the story unfolds.

However, the following passage demonstrates that her story is not merely a personal one about the ending of a romantic relationship. On a day when she does not procure any customers at all, Kiyo decides to go to the black soldiers' district. The progress of Kiyo's old age is told as if it refers to the process of Koza's decline after the boom of the Vietnam special procurement had passed:

Lately there were fewer soldiers on the street. Maybe her "unemployment" continued because she was old and had lost her appeal. Still, how could anyone make a living in this business with so few soldiers around? A feeling of helplessness blew up from under her feet like the cold wind.

I could go to the black soldiers' district in Miyazato. . . .

Kiyo turned the corner at the fabric store. From here, if she went down the side street, she would be at the place where she used to work. The smell of damp air assaulted her nose as she turned the corner. Kiyo stopped and looked around. Dirty cinder blocks. A rotting wooden fence. Houses with low clay-tiled roofs. (212-14)

She has more difficulty attracting soldiers these days, not only because she is growing old, but also because of the decline of the town of Koza. Moreover, the musty appearance of the black soldiers' district seems to be a metaphor for Kiyo herself. For example, although the translated version fails to convey the subtle nuance, "dirty cinder blocks" (214) in the original text is reminiscent of the double meaning of spots as in the stain of the cinder blocks and blotches of the skin due to old age. In this way, Kiyo's experience seems to be not a personal story, but one of all inhabitants in Koza, whose lives were regulated by the stationed American troops.

However, when we examine Kiyo's life history as presented in this passage by consulting the political situation and how Koza was constructed, the description of her getting old takes on another aspect. As the town was constructed in the 1950s, it became racially segregated into such regions as the white soldiers' district, the black soldiers' district, and the Okinawan people's district. Furthermore, the Yaejima district was set up in the northern part of Koza, where sex workers, called "tokusyufujin," were secluded. The term "tokusyufujin" has discriminatory connotations. It refers to women who became prostitutes after the war, or else who were raped by soldiers of the hostile country. During the Korean War, which broke out in 1950, many soldiers committed sexual exploitation in that district.

According to Yuki Fujime, when the US participated in World War I, it withdrew the licensed prostitution system that 19th century

empires commonly utilized and sought a new military protective policy called the “American Plan,” thereby more cunningly managing prostitution. The “American Plan” grants the army the authority to establish prohibited areas of prostitution near military bases, but it never prohibits soldiers from buying sex—only women’s selling of it. After World War II, GHQ (General Headquarters) appeared to abolish Japan’s slavery system by declaring a decree of the abolition of licensed prostitution. In fact, however, it retained Japan’s pre-war and wartime licensed prostitution system by changing the exterior trade signs to Café, or fancy Japanese-style restaurant. The main purpose of the decree was not to abolish sexual exploitation, but instead to protect soldiers from venereal disease, and “it arranged the grounds to keep women under surveillance and arrest them by criminalizing prostitution, and enforced the inspection for and treatment of venereal disease more easily” (135). Fujime states that, “Generally speaking, in contrast with the regulationism in the 19th century that registered particular women and obliged them to undergo inspection of venereal disease periodically in order to protect soldiers, the ‘American Plan’ is neo-regulationism that enables police to arbitrarily arrest and restrain all women suspected to be prostitutes and enforce them to undergo inspection” (133).

Although the situation was a little bit different from that of mainland Japan, several decrees that prohibited prostitution were also issued in Okinawa, keeping step with the ones on the mainland. However, through negotiation, the US military and the inhabitants of Okinawa agreed to establish a new district for prostitutes, Yaejima, as mentioned earlier. As Natsuno Kikuchi emphasizes, the US military was not the only party concerned with the establishment of Yaejima, but the inhabitants were also invested (110-25). The two parties cooperated on this plan for several reasons, such that it would protect ordinary women from rapes and sexual violence by soldiers who had

grown ferocious, having just come back from the battlefield.² However, the most effective measures for the US military to make the inhabitants assist the plan was the implementation of “off-limits.” When venereal diseases spread during the Korean War, the US military designated several areas throughout the town as “off-limits” to soldiers. This was because, it was explained, the spread of venereal disease was caused by a lack of control over infected women. For those who catered to the US soldiers, “off-limits,” in a sense, amounted to economic sanctions. In this way, through the proclamation of decrees that prohibited prostitution and the implementation of off-limits areas, the US military brought sex workers together in one place; they then effectively and thoroughly forced the sex workers to undergo inspection for venereal disease with the help of local police and inhabitants. In this way, Yaejima became the district where the sex workers known as “tokusyufujin” were gathered together.

In addition, the Anti-Prostitution Law, enacted in 1956 in the mainland of Japan, enabled the women’s movement, which had protested against prostitution since the 1940s, to collaborate with various unions such as teacher and welfare unions, and the movement gathered momentum. Finally, an anti-prostitution Law was enacted in Okinawa in 1972 in accordance with the mainland version, and thus sex workers became criminals.

Kamaara is another name for the district known as Yaejima.³ Kiyo, working as a streetwalker in Kamaara, lives in solitude in the most marginalized district in the town of Koza. Even inhabitants of another marginalized district such as the black soldiers’ district are capable of “peering down at her” (216) now. One passage that shows Kiyo’s personal history (she used to work in a bar in the black soldiers’ district before she became a streetwalker) implies that she has fallen socially as she ages. That is to say, the description of the old woman, which is woven throughout the whole story, indicates the period in

which Kiyo had been exposed to inhabitants' gaze as a fallen woman. Moreover, by noting that the description is not narrated by a storyteller with an objective viewpoint, but always from Kiyo's subjective one, expressing her feeling of "the hideousness of her old age" (186), the description of her old appearance can be construed as her sense of guilt that has deepened throughout her life in Koza. It shows how her guilt deepened over time as she internalized the gazes of those around her. Thus, on the one hand, Kiyo's old appearance represents the declining town Koza, and on the other hand, it is a stigmatized body of a fallen woman excluded from the inhabitants' living area.

Toward the Will "To Live Together"

When it becomes obvious that Sammy is finally leaving Kiyo behind, and her future is desperate, she washes her body "carefully" (228) before committing suicide. She is considering wearing the "gaudy pink dress" (230) from the clothing she has worn to attract soldiers, but decides instead to wear Kumejima-tsumugi, traditional clothing made on the Kumejima island. Then, she "open[s] the propane gas jets, turning all three" (230) and lies in bed.

Kiyo wrapped herself in a towel. As she got out of the shower, she could hear Sammy snoring. Somehow it sounded louder than usual to her. . . . She took out a gaudy pink dress but decided against it. For some reason, Kiyo suddenly felt like wearing Japanese clothes. She took out Kumejima Kimono, which she stored at the bottom of the dresser, and stared at it vacantly for a while. The snoring stopped and Sammy turned over. . . . When she staggered back into bed, Sammy turned over again and began to sit up. Now Kiyo picked up the lighter that was next to the bed. Lying flat on her stomach, she placed the soft pillow on top of her head. Then, gathering her resolve,

she turned the flint wheel with a click. (228-30)

Just before the above quotation, the magnitude of Kiyo's description of her fear and uneasiness increases as the story approaches its end. However, in that quotation, the psychological description that has been floating in the foreground of the narrative fades away, and the ending is narrated indifferently. The shift in the manner of description emphasizes her non-resistance to death, juxtaposing her will to survive, which has been maintained even though her life has not been easy. Before her death, "for some reason, she'd suddenly wanted to bathe" (228), and "for some reason, Kiyo suddenly felt like wearing Japanese clothes" (230). Driven by the impulse that she herself does not understand, Kiyo cleans up her body and wears the Kumejima-tsumugi, and then confronts death. What does her behavior express? Furthermore, what does their double suicide represent?

After washing her body "carefully" (228), Kiyo puts on the Kumejima-tsumugi. Since it seems that Kiyo regards Kumejima-tsumugi as a symbol of purity, in contrast to the "gaudy pink dress" (230), this behavior can be read as a way of purifying her body, and further implies that she wishes for atonement for the guilt that has deepened throughout her life and, after that, perpetual purity. In fact, Kumejima-tsumugi has been designated as an intangible cultural heritage by the Minister of International Trade and Industry since 1977. This designation was, however, one of the political processes in which Okinawa was integrated into Japan as a locality. According to the thesis written by Takashi Yasue on the Okinawan traditional crafts promotion policy and the situation of the Kumejima-tsumugi industry after the return of Okinawa to Japan, both the national and prefectural governments had developed the policy to integrate Okinawan traditional crafts into Japan's industrial economy from the mid-70s to the beginning of the 80s. The Japanese government embarked on the

promotion of traditional crafts by establishing and promulgating the “Law for the Promotion of Traditional Craft Industries” in 1974. This was because “facing the end of the rapid economic growth, ‘the basic economic conditions’ of Japanese society has shifted to create policies so-called ‘low growth equals stable structure’” (14). In Japan during that period, both the government and enterprises advocated regionalism, decentralism, localism, and traditionalism correspondingly in economy, politics, society, and culture. As soon as Okinawa returned to Japan, major companies successfully made inroads into Okinawa as though a dam had broken and the water flowed rapidly down the river. Thus, companies in Okinawa were integrated into enterprises that had vast capital. In addition, the Okinawan prefectural government, at first, announced a plan to regard traditional crafts as a keystone to promote peace economics to free Okinawa from its economic dependency on the military bases; however, the government revealed the policy to situate it on the tourism industry and its resources. Thus, “Dentou Kougei ka (Traditional Crafts Division)” of Okinawa was reorganized in 1983 into “Kougei Sangyou ka (Crafts Industry Division).” In this way, as Yasue highlights that “the Okinawan Traditional Crafts Promotion Policy ha[d] obviously been under the process of reorganization from the perspective of ‘from traditional crafts to industrial crafts’” (22). Furthermore, as part of the powerful measures to reconstruct the industry of remote islands, policies of protection and promotion of Kumejima-tsumugi were pursued.

Kiyo’s behavior where “she took out Kumejima Kimono, which she stored at the bottom of the dresser, and stared at it vacantly for a while” (230), before facing death can be interpreted as her search for comfort and identity in the Okinawan tradition. The very tradition, however, was being subsumed under the Japanese economy around 1980, which is the time period of this story. When you take this fact

into account, Kumejima-tsumugi can be said to represent Okinawan traditional crafts, which were integrated as industrial resources into the Japanese economy after its reversion to Japan, just as Kiyō is deemed as part of the human resources from remote islands to be engaged in sex work for the US armed forces. Now, Japan relentlessly started to usurp things in which Kiyō sought for comfort.

At this point, I would like to shift my focus onto the other question: what does their double suicide mean in the end? It is undeniable that their death in a gas explosion caused by Kiyō represents the event that has formed the core of people's critique of the nation-state in postwar Okinawa—namely, “mass suicide.”⁴ The setting of the story, in which a lighter appears both in the very beginning and in the end, hints at the use of the prop as something decisive. Commencing with the description of a lighter, the story presages its ending (the story begins with “Kiyō [being] awakened by the sound of the lighter hitting the floor” (178) and ends with the description that “Now Kiyō picked up the lighter that was next to the bed. Lying flat on her stomach, she placed the soft pillow on top of her head. Then, gathering her resolve, she turned the flint wheel with a click” (230). The props of the lighter and gas obviously allude to the hand grenade used in the “mass suicide” during the battle of Okinawa. The description of the ending where Kiyō commits double suicide by turning the flint wheel overlaps with the scene of “mass suicide,” where, in many cases, women threw grenades and died in the explosion with their children and the elderly since common households of that period lacked male hands because of conscription. In addition, Sammy can be read as almost adolescent, even though he is old enough to join the army, in the sense that he is totally dependent upon Kiyō for his livelihood when he escapes to her house. This interpretation can also be confirmed by its narrative technique: free indirect discourse. Although the story sets the third person as a non-participant narrator, it

overlaps with Kiyo's viewpoint or holds one very close to hers. Because of this structure, we cannot read Sammy's thoughts. Thus, despite the fact that the title of the work includes the words "Love Suicide," it cannot be known whether Sammy also wishes death. However, at the end of the story, Kiyo makes sure that Sammy is sleeping several times before picking up the lighter and "turn[ing] the flint wheel with a click", based on the impulse that she should commit suicide before Sammy wakes up and prevents her from committing the act. Sammy's life is totally left to Kiyo's decision.

The battle of Okinawa, which was the consequence of the Japanese imperialist expansion, was not only engraved on Okinawan people's minds as an experience of its sacrifice for the mainland of Japan, but also formed their critical viewpoints in the struggle against both Japanese and American imperialism in the postwar period. In particular, "anti-reversion and anti-nation theory" was advocated at the end of 1960s, when it became apparent that the US and Japanese governments, by reconfirming the US-Japan Security Treaty, agreed to maintain military bases in Okinawa even after the administrative rights were returned to Japan; thus, Okinawa's reversion in 1972 was not an act of liberation from the US military occupation after all. One of the main advocates of the "anti-reversion and anti-nation theory," Keitoku Okamoto, in his essay "Suiheijiku no Hassou (Horizontal Way of Thinking)" criticizes the nation from the people's viewpoint with reference to "mass suicide." Okamoto explains that Japanese government's control over Okinawa since the Meiji period was achieved through its imperialist education and religious reformation, which implanted into the mind of every Okinawan person the illusion that Okinawans are subjects of the Japanese Empire, thereby supplanting the preexisting "communal will" of Okinawan communities. This imposition of the emperor's will helped enforce the idea that "mass suicide" is inevitable because loyal subjects of Japan

should choose death over being taken captive by the enemy: “when communal physiology, which normally works to live together, gets distorted by external conditions, it attempts to live together imaginarily by choosing to die together in reality” (176). Then, by comparing the characteristics of the reversion movement at the end of the 60s with those of “mass suicide,” Okamoto critically examines the group psychology of the people who sought freedom toward Okinawa’s reversion to Japan. He points out that by amplifying the extraneous feeling toward Americans in communal physiology, which was originally aroused from the individual’s sense of danger in daily life, the movement established its main aim as an “escape from the rule of a different race” and glorified Japan as the mother country that would save Okinawa from continuing danger. Thus, he analyzes that “‘mass suicide’ and the reversion movement were two manifestations of one thing” (191).

However, one should be aware that, through a comparative analysis between “mass suicide” and the reversion movement, Okamoto regards neither of them as inevitable consequences. On the contrary, he insists that “communal physiology” is *not* influenced by external conditions alone. He regards “communal physiology” as a living creature: “it does not exist as a fixed entity like a thing” (191). With this recognition, he pursues concrete ways in which people take “sense of order” which tends to accept domination by power critically in order to “restore the will ‘to live together’ again” (191). Okamoto’s theme centers on how people can survive by finding a way to negate external conditions, leading to death, not only conceptually, but also from people’s everyday lives.

Before Kiyō decides to commit double suicide with Sammy, she proposes they go to the Tsuken island where she is from and tries to make a living together. However, Sammy declines her proposal. She wishes to live with Sammy somehow until just before their death.

However, soon after her proposal is turned down, the story shifts to the scene of their double suicide without explaining anything. The rapid shift of scenes reminds us of Okamoto's statement mentioned above: "when communal physiology, which normally works to live together, gets distorted by external conditions, it attempts to live together imaginary by choosing to die together in reality" (176). In this way, *Love Suicide at Kamaara* can be construed as a work that represents "mass suicide" in the context of postwar Okinawa, in which the US–Japanese rule has substantially continued.

However, just as Okamoto seeks for the possibility of reviving the will "to live together" in the analysis of the relationship between "mass suicide" and the form of Japanese rule over Okinawa, we can find in this story that the possibility of another future is, albeit only slightly, embedded. However, in the work, traces of the people in the past who persistently opposed the social structure are called to mind, even if they are not readily noticeable in the plot of the story. In fact, this young fugitive soldier occupies an important position in the story. He reminds us of the anti-war movements initiated by soldiers that spread in Okinawa as well as those who assisted fugitive soldiers from the battlefield during the Vietnam War. Compared with the period between the second half of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s when the figure of a fugitive soldier generated the most political implication, the movements fell into decline around 1980, but the setting of Sammy as a fugitive soldier is obviously derived from this past. The thesis written by Masashi Tokuda is critical with regard to this topic. Tokuda describes in detail how the anti-war movement by soldiers who had been incited by anti-Vietnam War sentiments and the Black Liberation Movement in the US was developed in Okinawa, and how the unique movement in Okinawa was a result of the influence of the soldiers' anti-war experiences. After the mid-1970s, by which time US troops had withdrawn from Vietnam, many soldiers went back to

their daily lives, and the anti-war soldiers' movement faded away from the center stage. However, the setting of Sammy as a fugitive soldier brings the historical context to mind.

Osamu Yakabi cites some examples that those who once approached death under the structural compulsion of the Japanese military's top-down communication came back to themselves by hearing "voices of others" (58), and survived. By drawing Jean-Luc Nancy's analysis in *The Inoperative Community* of the characteristics of such a community, which leads to fascism, and the concept of "communication" that fissures in that community, Yakabi rethinks the discussion in the context of "mass suicide" of the battle of Okinawa and explains the voices of the surrounding people that actually prevented such suicide as "voices of others," which are different from "the voice of one's own [community]" (58-59).⁵ At this point, we need to reread the opening and ending scenes where a lighter is disposed. In the beginning of the story, "Kiyo [is] awakened by the sound of the lighter hitting the floor" (178). Since it is indicated that the lighter is used by Sammy to light a cigarette, it is reasonable to interpret that the prop is some sort of a signal from him. As stated before, the lighter in the beginning functions to presage the story's ending. At the same time, however, the story, which begins with the description of Kiyo being awakened by a lighter, implies the possibility of Sammy intervening in Kiyo's act. At this point of my discussion, we find the last description that "she turned the flint wheel with a click" (230) as important. The scene *only* suggests their double suicide. That is, we can confirm that Kiyo turned the flint wheel, but we will never know whether the gas filling her room caught fire or not.

Conclusion

Finally, what I should note as the most important thing is that when Kiyo, an Okinawan sex worker, hears the voice of Sammy, an

American fugitive soldier, her act indicates solidarity beyond racial divides. Tokuda carefully collected the thoughts of people who criticized the goal to “escape from the rule of a different race” advocated by the reversion movement and called US soldiers to solidarity. Through this work, he tried to establish that people did seek solidarity beyond racial divides. As Yoshida indicates and Tokuda records, there was a possibility of solidarity beyond barbed wire around 1972, when the new form of the US-Japan imperialism was revealed. In addition, what should be noted in his discussion is that he insists that “soldiers, employees in military bases, and civilians *(re)discovered* and *reinvented* the problems of racism and exploitation in frontline bases in Okinawa” (128; emphasis added) rather than it being the case that the “anti-Vietnam War sentiments and the Black Liberation Movement [in the 60s in the United States] flew into the movement in Okinawa” (112). He recognizes that the movements developed by ascertaining the specificity of the time and the area and overcoming the various constraints.

Yakabi, who attempted to inherit the experiences of the battle of Okinawa as a person who had not experienced it first-hand, puts a question to us now by trying to find another possibility in the past. The word “inherit” is not a passive act such that we merely hear about the memories of the battle of Okinawa from a victim. Rather, we *inherit* memories of the past as the will “to live together” sought by previous generations. To trace back to the past is also to seek a new thought to revive our will “to live together” in the present and for the future. Okamoto attempted to examine Okinawan peoples’ group psychology in order to pursue communal self-reliance by comparing the characteristics of the reversion movement at the end of 60s with those of “mass suicide,” and Yoshida, in the form of a narrative, rewrote “mass suicide” in the context around 1980. As their work shows, by consulting previous generations’ experiences people have continued to

create new ideas “to live together” as a resistance force. We have a duty to *inherit* the previous generation’s thoughts “to live together” and create them anew in facing our own present conditions of living.

Notes

1. Although highly evaluating the work, members of the selection committee of the 10th Okinawan Literature Prize think the sex scenes unnecessary. See Shimao et al. In this essay, all citations from the works in Japanese are Sakima’s translation.
2. Sexual violence and murder have been frequently committed by US soldiers, especially in Koza in postwar Okinawa. For more details, see Takazato and the work of Okinawan Women Act Against Military Violence.
3. See Onozawa, especially 71-73.
4. During the battle of Okinawa, inhabitants who internalized the Japanese imperialist education and militarization policy committed suicide with their families mostly by using a hand grenade distributed by the Japanese army in various places in Okinawa. One of such places is the Kerama islands, which is notorious for suicide acts in Okinawan history. This tragic event is called “mass suicide.”

The term has been in active discussion since a court battle over the narration in the Japanese history text book between the author and the national government took place in 1984; however, in this paper, I applied the widely used term, “mass suicide.” Throughout the court battle in 1984, against the demand by national government, which attempted to deny the resident massacres by Japanese soldiers, the Okinawan side insisted that the decisive factor of “mass suicide” was the Japanese army’s enforcement and inducement to action, and a historian, Masaaki

Aniya, and a sociologist, Masaie Ishihara, proposed the alternative term “collective death” instead of “mass suicide” in order to avoid the misunderstanding that the event occurred because of the residents’ own accord. In the 2000s, in criticism of historical revisionists’ movements to trivialize the fact of resident massacres and “mass suicide,” a new concept, “compulsory collective death,” was proposed to clarify the Japanese army’s enforcement. Even though Osamu Yakabi recognizes the concepts as highly appraised, he points out, at the same time, that those concepts are constructed by countervailing historical revisionists’ movements; therefore, there “still remain the problem how we should consider the inverted act of ‘mass suicide’ that parents took their children’s life, and family members killed each other under the structural enforcement.” Then, he selects the term “compulsory group suicide.” This term critically reveals the fact that a number of residents committed “mass suicide” without any direct or definite military orders.

5. For example, a daughter’s voice: “I will never die!” (Yakabi 59), a person who “happened to eat Myrica growing on the tree and came to himself/herself by its sour taste” (60-61), and a son’s voice: “Never die, mom!”

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