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LIVING WITH THE US MILITARY: THE WOMEN WORKING ON OKINAWAN BASES

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Introduction

This study explores international relations by studying Japanese women working on the US military bases in Okinawa from a gender perspective. The US bases in Okinawa have been a focal point of Japanese politics ever since Okinawa was "returned" to Japan in 1972. It is difficult, however, to really grasp the reality of living with the bases through media coverage focused on military-related incidents and political discussions about base issues.

In recent years some researchers, mainly those in the field of cultural studies, have been more attentive to the varied experiences of people living with foreign military bases. For example, Aoki (2013) has drawn a new picture of the American occupation by focusing on cultural exchange through music. Music as a way to close the distance between soldiers and locals has also been researched by Nanba (2014), who describes how embracing "base culture" can be a way for people living with the bases to construct new identities for themselves. This study follows the same path as the above research insofar as it focuses on the complex emotions and experiences of people living with foreign military bases, but it goes even further by not confining their lives to the realm of culture but instead understanding them as part of a greater political complex. To accomplish this, we focused on Okinawan people working on American bases in Japan, because even though these workers act as a vital connection between the military society and the local one, they have been ignored by most military base research.

Currently there are around 26,000 Japanese in 10 prefectures employed as base workers for the American military. Most base workers are employed in the Kanagawa and Okinawa prefectures. As of November 2017, there were about 9,000 people working on bases in Okinawa (LMO 2018, 18).

Presently, 5% of Okinawa's prefectural gross income comes from base income. The base income is derived from different resources. The income of base workers is the second biggest, after military base rental payments[1] (Shima 2016, 19). These two sources of income are mostly being paid by the Japanese government, as part of the *Omoiyari Yosan* ("Cost Sharing for the US Forces Stationed in Japan"). The current system makes the Japanese government (specifically, the Ministry of Defense) the lawful employee of the base workers, and the American military is designated as the user (Yamakawa 2010, 22). This study analyzes Japanese citizens being indirectly employed by the Japanese government as "base workers."[2]

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[1] In 2015, the base income was around 230 billion yen (Okinawa Prefectural Government Military Base Affairs Division 2018: 40) http://www.pref.okinawa.jp/site/chijiko/kichitai/syogai/ toukeisiryosyu30.html.

There is a paucity of literature on base workers. Toriyama (2007, 2013) has explored base workers in the postwar period and makes visible the importance of Okinawan labor on the American bases and the strategies employed by the US military to secure it. Analyzing postwar Okinawa with a focus on base workers lays open how reconstruction policies that relied on acquiring and securing an Okinawan work force shaped Okinawan society. A collection of interviews by the *Okinawa Times* tells of the varied work experience of postwar base workers and their relationship with American soldiers (Okinawa Times Chubushisha Henshubu 2013).

This study aims to analyze the experiences and sentiments of base workers. Specifically, it will deliberately focus on women, who traditionally have been thought to exist separate from the realms of politics, diplomacy, and the military. It was Enloe (1989) who first posed the question "Where are the women?" in international relations. She was reimagining international relations, a field traditionally focusing on personified nations and (mostly male) politicians, through the inclusion of "ordinary" people's experiences—especially those of women. Enloe also extended the feminist slogan "the personal is political" to "the personal is international." [3]

Realizing the entwinement of "the international" and "the personal" of international relations and the everyday lives of people, it becomes clear that sustaining the US bases in Okinawa depends on the daily acceptance and support of people living with the bases. The people working for the US bases not only provide them with their labor force, they also gravely contribute to the normalization of the bases.

We use Enloe's definition of militarization: "the step-by-step process by which something becomes *controlled by, dependent on, or derives its value from* military as an institution or militaristic criteria" (Enloe 2000, 291, emphasis in original). Implementing this definition, we aim to assess the ways in which the lives of Okinawan women are being militarized, as well as the ways in which the women themselves contribute to the militarization process in Okinawan society.

There are a few bodies of literature on militarization and gender in the context of Okinawa, and they tend to focus on the military-related violence experienced by Okinawan women. For example, Akibayashi (2008) has linked the training soldiers go through, especially the process of dehumanizing the "enemy," with the sexual violence Okinawan women are subjected to by American soldiers. Takazato (1996) has defined the incidents of violence by American soldiers in Okinawa as an inherent military problem and understands the suffering of Okinawan women as a symbol of the historical abuse of Okinawa.

In conjunction with research on sexual violence by American soldiers, there exists a growing body of literature on military prostitution in Japan. Kikuchi (2010) has analyzed the process of Okinawan women losing their land to American military bases and being pushed into prostitution through the establishment of the "A sign" system, which was designed to control prostitution. Onozawa (2013) has conducted extensive interviews with former hostesses,

[2] Other than the Japanese citizens being employed through the Labor Provision Agreement between the Japanese government and the American military, there are also many civilians working on base through private worker dispatch agencies. They were not counted in the 9,000 full-time base workers in Okinawa as of November 2017. There is no official number for how many people are employed on base in this way. The people working on base through worker dispatch agencies are not a direct subject of this research. Furthermore, while there are also different types of contracts for full-time employees, we will not discuss the differences in this study.

[3] For a review of important concepts of feminist international relations, see Fumika Sato. "Gunjika to Jenda" [Militarization and Gender]. Jendashigaku [Gender History], 10 (2014): 33–37.

giving us insights into the varied faces of prostitution in postwar Japan.

Miyanishi (2012) has criticized research focusing on military violence, saying that it paints a one-sided picture of Okinawan women as passive victims. By focusing on the experiences of Okinawan women married to American soldiers, she was able to show Okinawan women as independent actors. Her research has contributed to overcoming the one-sided victimization of Okinawan women. However, in focusing solely on showing Okinawan women's relationship with the military as empowering, she makes light of the difficulties that come with living with the bases. Her analysis of the tension between the married couples does not consider the existing power structures between American military personnel and Okinawan society.

Building on the above research, this study aims to reflect on both suppression and emancipation in the context of American military bases in Japan as experienced by the women working on these bases. By drawing a picture of the complex reality of living with the bases, we shed light on the various ways in which the process of militarization is gendered.

The study is organized as follows: in Section 1, we introduce the social and economic background of women in Okinawa and their historical relation with military bases; in Section 2, we go into detail about the methodology used in this research and the interviewees; in Section 3, we expand our analysis of female base workers' experiences within the frameworks of "resistance" and "obedience"; and in Section 4, we present our conclusions.

I. *Putting Okinawan Women into Context*

Okinawa has the lowest average income in Japan (MHLW 2017), even though the working hours are relatively long compared to the rest of Japan. Since the average income for men is the lowest in Japan, the labor of Okinawan women is essential to household incomes. This is reflected in the high employment rate of Okinawan women with children (Japan average: 52.4%, Okinawa: 62.5%). However, the hours Okinawan men spend on childcare and housework are almost the same as the average of all of Japan, resulting in long working hours coupled with the responsibilities of childcare and housework falling mostly on Okinawan women (MHLW Okinawa Labor Department Equal Employment Office 2016). The fact that Okinawa has the highest divorce rate in Japan（MIC Statistics Bureau 2018, 26） is also likely related to the fact that Okinawan women must shoulder the household duties and do not or cannot rely on their husbands.

Onozawa (2013) has shown that after the Second World War, Okinawan women were more likely than men to take up professions that were dependent on the American military bases because they were economically more vulnerable. Sex work was the most feminized labor they were engaged in. Unequal social structures resulted in many Okinawan women working as sex workers for the American military to make a living. It is important to consider the narratives of women working on military bases in this historical context.

1. Data and Methodology

In the following chapters we will detail the experiences of women working for the military bases, based on interviews Nora Weinek carried out for her master's thesis project. How these women experience living with the bases, the conflict, compromise, and acceptance born out of

this interaction—as well as the way in which they daily renegotiate their relationship with the bases—cannot be explained sufficiently through quantified data. In addition, the research on base workers is very limited and accessible statistical data is hard to come by. Given all of the above, this study follows a qualitative approach.

The fieldwork was conducted from March to May of 2016 through a series of around one-hour (single and group) semi-structured interviews with the ten Okinawan women listed below. The interviewees included women working on US Army, Marine, and Air Force bases, and all were accessed through snowball sampling. They worked in places like call centers, hospitals, restaurants, mess halls, dry cleaners, and offices.

Since the interviews contain delicate information pertaining to these women's personal lives, no concrete information about their workplaces will be given to protect their privacy. All names used are aliases and may at times be switched to further protect the women. The interviews covered personal data, as well as such matters as "work description," "friendship with Americans," "how others view you," and "positives and negatives of working on base." However, they were oriented around the interviewees, allowing them to dominate the topic of conversation to an extent. Depending on the situation, some additional political questions were asked, such as "Has the way you think about the relationship between Okinawa, Japan, and America changed since working for the military bases?" All interviews were recorded, with permission from the interviewees, and later transcribed.

TABLE 1. INTERVIEWEES WORKING ON US ARMY, MARINE, AND AIR FORCE BASES

Alias	Kazuko	Sachiko	Yoshiko	Hatsuko	Fumiko	Mitsuko	Setsuko	Haruko	Mariko	Yoko
Age	60s	60s	50s	50s	50s	50s	40s	30s	30s	30s
Children	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Age when hired	10s	40s	20s	40s	40s	40s	30s	20s	20s	20s
Life course	CW(1)	RE(2)	D(3)	D(3)	RE(2)	RE(2)	D(3)	CW(1)	CW(1)	CW(1)

Note: Abbreviations: D = divorced; CW = continuing work; RE = re-employment

We deliberately chose not to base the analysis of the interview data on a hypothesis, but rather searched for patterns in the narratives of these women. Therefore, we divided the interview transcripts into small segments, adding keywords, and later grouped these. From these groups, we built our analytical framework according to a grounded-theory approach.

In the following section, we focus on the "conflicts" these military base workers experienced through living as women in Okinawan society. In the third section, we examine the ways in which these women both "protest" and "obey" the military structures of their workplace.

II. *Becoming a Base Worker*

In this section, we analyze the female base workers' experiences, focusing on their inner conflicts. Their positions as women in Okinawan society were closely related to their choosing to work for the American military. This does not mean that they agreed on everything about the bases—in fact, their work appeared to be a recurring source of inner conflict. They were also careful to distance themselves from the stigma surrounding women who are close to the

military. In the following sections, we describe the female base workers' motivations (2-1), their inner conflicts (2-2), as well as their status and stigma (2-3).

1. Motivations

The interviewees can be sorted into three life course groups.

Continuing work group. The women in this group became base workers in their late teens or 20s, either before having children or while they were still very young (Kazuko, Haruko, Mariko, Yoko). Because of their employment on base, they were able to balance career and household and did not have to stop working. The wage for base work is relatively high compared to other employment opportunities in Okinawa, and the base offers benefits such as childcare leave. All of the women in this group were married with children, and either planned to work on base until retirement or had actually done so. Yoko explained that "private companies do not grant [childcare leave]; that is why you have to stop [working]. If I was working somewhere else, I would have become a housewife." The other women also mentioned that the greatest benefit for them was having more time they could spend on taking care of their children, and their secure employment enabling them to work while raising their children.

Re-employment group. The second group consisted of women (Sachiko, Fumiko, Mitsuko) who started working on base in their 40s or even later. After giving birth, they worked part-time for private companies, and some of them became housewives for a number of years as well. Once their children got older, they again searched for full-time employment, but the only organization in Okinawa offering full-time employment to women in their 40s turned out to be the American military. Sachiko considered the fact that there was not much overtime involved in working on base and, therefore, "you have time for yourself." She also mentioned the increased security compared to her previous part-time work as the biggest appeal of working on base.

Divorced. The third group consisted of women who had been divorced (Setsuko, Hatsuko, Yoshiki). Since they had to make a living alone, they felt more insecure about their livelihood. Setsuko said, "I would not have been able to raise three children with an ordinary part-time job." As a single mother, she highly valued her position at the military base.

This last group, women in their 40s and 50s, was the most vulnerable, and the one most heavily dependent on the American military. To them, the bases made a big difference, and they would likely have had much difficulty keeping their livelihood without them. The second group had already reached 50 and over, but since they were married, they appeared to feel more secure; nonetheless, they had no option other than the military bases to find a full-time position once they reached their 40s. In contrast to the other groups, the women in the first group chose to work on base to realize a lifestyle close to their ideal. Their dependence on the bases was not as strong, since they also had the option to work (part-time) somewhere else or become housewives. However, through the years, their chances for full-time employment outside the bases will grow smaller, making them more dependent.

2. Conflicts Surrounding their Work

In this section, we focus on the conflicts the women experienced as a result of their dependence on the bases. Surprisingly, not all the interviewees were opposed to the anti-base movement; a few of them were sympathetic. Throughout the interviews, more than one of them emphasized that "it would be better if there were no bases" or that they were wishing for "peace." However, they usually followed these statements up with remarks about how their livelihood depended on the bases, and they noted that this led them to betray their beliefs.

Mariko said, "In reality it would be better if there were no bases, [...] weapons, and all of that; it would be better without them." She continued, "We do not live in a world like that, so it cannot be helped, but in reality it would be better without all of that." Yoshiko explained why she continued working on base even though she is against war the following way:

> In the depths of my heart, I do not want to work for this war-waging military, but I have to make a living. Do you know the saying, "necessity knows no law"[4]? You don't want to, but you are doing it for your livelihood.

The women were avoiding positioning themselves as political actors, emphasizing that they were only doing what was necessary to survive and framing their actions as natural and obvious.

Kazuko, who had worked for the bases until her retirement, expressed clearly that she was "against the bases" but followed that statement with "it is difficult because my livelihood depends on it." She then pointed to her daughter, who was sitting next to her, and expressed her gratitude toward her former base employment, saying, "Because I was working [there], she was able to grow up."

Indeed, because of the employment conditions on base, these women were able to balance both their work and household and be confident in the fact that they "can do it themselves and make a living [themselves]" (Sachiko). The American military bases were meeting the needs of women in different stages of their lives and became a vital tool of empowerment for them. Therefore, they chose to continue working there even if they felt conflicted about the military itself.

3. The Status and Stigma Associated with Working for the Military

The reason these women chose to work on base was not only a financial one. They gained confidence in being base workers, and that confidence was not only grounded in their financial position. The women distinguished themselves from ordinary Okinawan society by having access to the extraordinary space that the American military inhibits, and they connected this with their social standing. Sachiko described being able to get inside the bases as a "small feeling of superiority." Haruko also stated that she thinks "everyone [around her] must be jealous" about her position on base.

The female base workers perceived an uplifting of their social standing through their connection to elite American sites and services, but in doing so they had to be careful to avoid the stigma often attached to women close to American soldiers. Yoshiko, who started dating her former American husband 30 years ago, told me that her mother and other relatives protested the relationship at the time. Even the people at her former workplace, especially the men, were

[4] Original Japanese: "Se ni hara wa kaerarenu."

critical of her. She described the experience as being treated "like a prostitute."

However, Yoshiko believes that things have changed. "Now it is a normal thing," she said. Hatsuko also stated that there are hardly any people who hold prejudices against women dating soldiers. She believes that international marriage with soldiers has become thoroughly accepted in Okinawan society, as she emphasized with the following statement:

> I do not think people think much of it. They might say something like "good for you," when hearing that someone is dating. I cannot believe anyone would want to ruin another person's happiness.

Hatsuko exclaimed that there was no stigma attached to dating soldiers, but she also emphasized that female base workers were "earnestly" working, and that base work was not used as a way to date soldiers. The fact that she was so insistent on separating women working on base from those dating soldiers hints at some assumptions she might hold herself. Additionally, Hatsuko said that when she started working on base, her boss warned her: "You are coming here for work, so do not go out with soldiers or meet them at bars after work." This statement clearly shows that the stigma against women who are close to the military had not fully disappeared in recent years.

III. *Resistance and Obedience*

In the previous section, we discussed how the women followed up their criticisms of working on the military bases with some form of praise for the military or the soldiers. Similarly, if they made a statement about the necessity of the military bases, they would round it up by admitting that people living close to the bases experience some difficulties. In this section, we further expand our analysis of the female base workers' experiences, using the frameworks of "resistance" and "obedience." We examine the female base workers' resistance to the racialized base hierarchy (3-1), their uneasiness with and admiration for the soldiers (3-2), and their hopes and fears concerning an Okinawa without American military bases (3-3).

1. Racialized Hierarchies: Frustration and Resistance

The majority of the base workers were Okinawan but, in most cases, their supervisors were "foreigners"[5] (American civilians in military employment or soldiers). In other words, the workplace power structures were racialized. Setsuko, who worked as a manager in a fast food restaurant, said that she felt that Americans had more authority even if they were not higher in rank. She expressed her frustration with the "foreigners":

> Foreigners can speak English, but they cannot work. They are good at customer service but not at the actual job; that goes for management too.

[5] Original Japanese: "gaijin." The women made no distinction between American soldiers, their families, or American civilians who were working as US Army employees—all of them were *gaijin*. The term could also include foreign workers from other countries like Korea or the Philippines working on the bases. To the Okinawan women, foreign, American, and military were all categories that overlapped.

Setsuko criticized the work attitude she perceived in the soldiers while praising the Japanese staff's abilities.

In between fieldwork, Weinek had a chance to talk to an Okinawan man who had also worked part-time on American military bases. He said that he had often heard people working on base say similar things, like "Americans really don't work; without us this place (the military bases) would be over."

Through statements like this, the base workers are able to reject the racialized hierarchies temporarily. What they are saying is "The ones who truly hold the power are not the soldiers; in fact, we Okinawans are running the bases." This narrative is an act of resistance that enables them to regain their dignity in the middle of unequal power structures.

Kazuko was also dissatisfied with her work relations:

> Coming to Okinawa, working in this position, even an amateur, even a low-rank soldier, even a 21-year-old child can [give orders].

Kazuko was angry that soldiers transferred to Okinawan bases were immediately given a higher rank in the base hierarchy, even though they might have had less experience or been younger. What is interesting here is that she also objects to taking orders from "low-rank soldiers." Even though she was criticizing the base hierarchies, she appears to have internalized those structures and discussed them using "military logic." However, her anger did not stop at work place relations, as we can see from the quotation below:

> I feel they are looking down on us. Let me just say this: no matter what, they (the soldiers) are on top. Even now that has not changed; that will never change no matter what.

We could feel her anger grow even bigger as she talked with her daughter about the racialized discriminative gaze she felt coming from the American soldiers. Kazuko's daughter, Haruko, was also employed on base:

Kazuko:	Because they are Americans, they have been educated to believe they are on top, those soldiers.
Haruko:	Exactly, "in the States."[6]
Kazuko:	They look down on us.
Haruko:	For them it is a given, though.
Kazuko:	That is the difference [between Americans and Okinawans].
Haruko:	Completely different.
Kazuko:	No matter how many years pass, [they believe] they are the number one in the world.
Haruko:	Exactly: "America is the top."
Kazuko:	Working [there], you can tell from the way they act.

Setsuko was the only interviewee in a leading position. She related that often the Japanese

[6] "In the States," as well as "America is the top," are original quotations that have not been translated. Talking to Weinek, the women sometimes mixed English with Japanese. On one hand, it is likely that they were reminded of the people on base with whom they used English. On the other hand, this could also have been an attempt to assert their status by showing their ability to use English. In subsequent quotations we have marked original English with "" marks.

workers would agree on something and the Americans (referring to both people working together with them and their supervisors) would have a different opinion. With respect to times where she had to follow the American way of doing things, she described her actions as follows:

> When the people on top are not looking, we do it our way, but if we are told [we] absolutely [have to do something], there is no other option than doing it.

Again, we witnessed Okinawan women performing small acts of resistance on base.

2. Soldiers: Fear and Respect

In this section, we discuss the ambivalent statements the women working on base made about the American soldiers. During the interviews, some women stated that no matter how good a position may be, if it was a night shift or involved being alone with a soldier, they would refuse to take it or even stop working on base. For example, Mariko, who works in a fast food place, said that she had a chance to become a delivery driver, which would have meant moving up one rank and receiving higher pay in the form of tips. However, she rejected the offer since it would involve visiting soldiers in their homes. Yoko, who was sitting next to Mariko when she relayed this story, was sympathetic and added, "It is scary, it is scary when they are drunk."

Yoko explained that when she started her position on base, her mother was scared knowing that Yoko would be around many soldiers. Yoko calmed her mother by telling her, "Inside the bases, they are all coming for work, [therefore] inside the bases is probably safer [than outside]." In other words, it was her perception that as long as the soldiers were inside the bases, working, they did not pose an immediate threat, but once they were outside and not under surveillance anymore, the soldiers became dangerous to women in Okinawa.

Sachiko recalled the time when she got "chased by a foreigner" when she was young. Ever since that day, she has been scared to go outside at night. Previously, she had described working on base as "peaceful," but after remembering this episode, she stated the following about her work:

> My work on base is during the day, so it is bright outside [...]. I do not meet any foreigners during my work. [...] I would not do it if it was a night shift; I would quit [work].

From this statement we can see that even though the women may not see the soldiers as a threat during work, they do believe them to be intrinsically dangerous.

Nonetheless there were also times when the women praised the soldiers. For example, Mariko, who had stated earlier that "it would be better if there were no bases," explained that soldiers do work that "is not safe" and that is "what our work is for." She interpreted her role on the bases as follows:

> I cook with the intention of protecting the soldiers, because food is important. I believe it would be better if there were no bases, but it cannot be helped; we live in a world where you need weapons to protect peace. [...] These people are risking their lives, and they are doing it for their country. Their feelings are different from [those of] Japanese people.

> Their way of thinking too is completely different. [When] people in Okinawa work [on base], they are doing it because they get money and some days off, but the soldiers are in fact risking their lives inside the bases; that is why [we are] encouraging them. Not encouraging, helping them; I do not think that is wrong.[7]

In other words, Mariko believes that waging war is life-threatening (masculine) work, and her daily (feminine) work ("cooking") is supporting that.

Upon listening to Mariko's words, Yoko agreed and added, "I respect [the soldiers]." Even though both of them were critical of the military, with Mariko saying that "it would be better without bases or weapons" and Yoko saying "there are too many bases now, we do not need so many," they also emphasized that they did not feel it was wrong to help the soldiers with their (masculine) military task.

3. An Okinawa without Bases: Fears and Hopes

How did these women who were more dependent on the military bases than other parts of Okinawan society feel about an Okinawa without bases? Yoshiko acknowledged that the bases also had a negative impact on the economy ("the bases are a big burden"), but still thought that having them was more of an advantage than not.

> There are many—ten thousand—people working (on base) and there is no private company that could substitute that. [...] Because, even if there are companies here, their owner will most likely be from mainland Japan. In the end the money will go to the mainland. Therefore, having the bases means that the money is still getting directly to Okinawa to some extent.

Yoshiko's statement implies that given a choice between the two, depending on the United States was still more beneficial to Okinawa than depending on (mainland) Japan.

In Setsuko's opinion, if the American military left Okinawa, it would be "trouble [and] Okinawa would become even poorer." She was critical of policies attempting to replace the military economy with tourism because in that economy there would be "nothing but part-time jobs" for someone like her. She said, "I would have to go back to working part-time. How am I supposed to make a living?"

As we can see from this example, policies aimed at reducing the American military in Okinawa need to seriously consider how people's everyday lives are interwoven with the bases, the ways in which the military is able to fulfill some people's special needs, its role in Okinawan society, and what replacement might offer similar solutions.

Hatsuko also agreed with Yoshiko's and Setsuko's sentiment. "If there were no more [bases], there would really be nothing left in Okinawa. What are we supposed to do for a living? There is no work."

However, the women were not always completely supportive of the American bases' existence. Therefore, we want to talk about another small act of resistance these women took upon themselves: talking about and hoping for an Okinawa without bases.

For example, both Kazuko and Mitsuko talked about districts that used to be military

[7] This statement was made some time after the one quoted on page 9 but during the same interview.

places and were now thriving, using those examples as a way to assert that it was going to "work out somehow" (Mitsuko). Kazuko pointed at a new large-scale shopping mall that had been built on former base land to show her view of the future:

> There is nothing you can do but go with the flow. [...] I do not think there is anything to fear. There is nothing to fear about returning base land [back to Okinawa]. "Don't worry about it."

Like Setsuko, Mitsuko was critical about replacing the military-base economy with tourism. Still, she insisted that if the military were to leave Okinawa, she would simply have to search for a new position.

> I have made my peace with it. If they are no longer here, then that is all right with me, too. Don't you think it is better that way? Rather than passing them on to our children, it is better to cut it off somewhere.

IV. *Conclusion*

This study focuses on Okinawan women working on American military bases to lead independent lives in the middle of Okinawan society's militarized and unequal gender structures.

In the first section, we covered the social and financial status of Okinawan women as well as their historical relationship with the military bases and related the survey data as well as methodology used.

In the second section, we shed light on the ways these women's everyday lives in Okinawan society were entwined with the American bases. We disclosed the special position the bases held in the Okinawan labor market by exploring the women's motivations to work on base. The clearly defined working hours for base positions allowed women in their 20s and 30s to balance their careers with childcare, empowering them domestically. Women in their 40s or 50s, whose children had grown up, were given the opportunity to become full-time employees, and this enabled them to approach their retirements with stability. Divorced women and single mothers were able to make a living by themselves because of the relatively high pay and stability offered by base employment. Inside the unequal gender structures of Okinawan society, the American military bases responded better to these women's needs than private companies. As a result of this unique position the military bases held in the Okinawan labor market, base workers continued their employment even when they had doubts about the military as an organization. The women countered the inner conflicts that arose from this by distancing themselves from the military. They did so through depoliticizing their choice to work on base by stating that they were only trying their best to earn a living or by emphasizing the feminine nature of their work.

Nonetheless, these women were not only working on base for financial reasons; by engaging with the American military, they were also attempting to raise their social standing. However, there were also aspects of this relationship that endangered the women's positions: during the interviews, they emphasized that there was no longer much blatant discrimination against women dating American soldiers, but they were also careful to distance themselves

from women who "messed" with soldiers. In doing so, they were themselves reflecting the social stigma surrounding women engaging with the bases, effectively adding to and affirming the reproduction of militarized and gendered structures.

In the third section, we focused even more on the daily actions of resistance and submission performed by the women working on base. First, we began by examining the ways in which the interactions on base were organized through a racial hierarchy. In this system, Americans were accorded the highest status in Okinawa; this was also reflected in the high social status accorded to base workers, who were permitted to enter the American Zone to which Okinawan people could usually only gain access on special occasions. It was also shown by their use of English in daily life. Indeed, the women working on base themselves made remarks about what they perceived to be their superior (to other Okinawans) status. Yet, the very same structures of American superiority that they reproduced outside the bases put the women's status at risk *inside* the bases. Nevertheless, the base workers also attempted to preserve their social standing by verbally disparaging the quality of American labor or by reassuring each other of the indispensability of their own roles. Enhancing their own value and impugning that of Americans was an act of subverting the racialized hierarchies they encountered inside the bases.

Next, we examined the ambivalent attitude toward American soldiers the women revealed throughout the interviews. The women chose to work on base to secure their living but ended up choosing their actions carefully to avoid physical harm. They effectively exchanged financial insecurity for physical insecurity. Nonetheless, they also expressed respect toward the soldiers, making it difficult to contain their relationship to just one emotion. In their search for independence in Okinawan society, these women chose to depend on the highly masculinized structures of the American military.

Finally, we paid attention to the complex emotions the women held toward the idea of an Okinawa without bases. They felt that the current policies concerned with a demilitarization of Okinawa did not sufficiently take into account or address the needs of Okinawans like them, the ones who were dependent on the military bases. Nonetheless, these women were not always giving in to the dependence on the bases. In their own way, they were protesting the military bases by imagining an Okinawa without them.

To conclude our findings, the women living with the bases were not simply passive victims of militarized gendered structures. The female base workers were subjects who continued to strive to better their social standing and financial situation and who occasionally performed small acts of resistance. Situated in the unequal gender structures of Okinawan society, they sought empowerment and, therefore, chose to cooperate with the American military bases. In doing so, however, they also reinforced militarized and gendered structures.

Base workers are in a difficult position, being under the surveillance of both the American military and Okinawan society. The fact that these ten women were willing to partake in these interviews must be highly valued.

Just as the words "the personal is international" state, the multifaceted emotions these women displayed—their admiration for and dissatisfaction with the bases, the status and stigma attached to women working on the bases, the fear and respect they felt toward the soldiers, and their fears and hopes for an Okinawan without bases—were reflective of the ambivalent relationship between Okinawa and the American military. The narratives of women living with the bases can tell us much about the complexity of militarization as a gendered process.

However, to more fully understand the gendering of militarization, it is necessary to collect the narratives of many more base workers.

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