

---

Copyright © 2016 Ikue Kina. All rights reserved. This work may be used, with this notice included, for noncommercial purposes. No copies of this work may be distributed, electronically or otherwise, in whole or in part, without permission from the author.

## Postwar US Presence in Okinawa and Border Imagination: Stories of Eiki Matayoshi and Tami Sakiyama

*Ikue KINA\**

### INTRODUCTION

Twenty-seven years of military occupation by the United States made Okinawa's postwar experience significantly different from that of the rest of Japan. As soon as US forces landed on the Kerama Islands in 1945, Fleet Adm. Chester W. Nimitz issued the so-called Nimitz Declaration "suspending all the political rights of the Japanese Imperial Government and declar[ing] the Nansei Islands under the jurisdiction of the United States Navy."<sup>1</sup> Thus began the postwar US occupation of Okinawa during which Okinawa was jurisdictionally and administratively separated from Japan to be territorialized and militarized by the United States, which was anticipating conflicts with Communist countries in Asia. In the fierce Battle of Okinawa from April to June 1945, the lives of more than 200,000 human beings from Okinawa, Japan, the United States, Korea, and other countries had been wiped out. Soon, "about 320,000 Okinawan civilians and veterans and more than 170,000 Okinawan repatriates who had lived overseas" began their postwar life "in civilian internment camps located in several places on the island, where they were housed in shabby tents and mobilized by the US military as labor to construct their base facilities and where they earned

---

\*Professor, University of the Ryukyus

rations in a hand-to-mouth existence.”<sup>2</sup>

Postwar life in Okinawa also included the beginning of local resistance against US colonialism. Confiscation of land by the United States for military use began as soon as World War II ended. In the case of Yomitan, a village located in the central part of Okinawa, by the time the villagers were allowed to return from the internment camps to their homes, 90 percent of the village had been “requisitioned by the US military.”<sup>3</sup> Military intervention and land confiscation intensified further between 1953 and 1955 as the United States built additional military facilities on Okinawa Island to reinforce their foothold in the Asian-Pacific region.<sup>4</sup> The increasing number of crimes committed by US personnel combined with the extraterritoriality that released the perpetrators without sentencing also fueled local discontent with the American-dominated reality that was devoid of justice and security for Okinawans. Losing both their land ownership and the legislative right to seek justice, enraged Okinawans in this period engaged in political resistance against the violence of US colonialism and finally moved toward reversion—or re-annexation, if considering Okinawan history in a larger perspective—to Japan in 1972. The “Koza uprising,” which took place in Koza in 1970, is considered to be one of the most powerful protests by Okinawan civilians against the US Armed Forces. Ethnic studies scholar Wesley Iwao Ueunten in his research on the civil resistance in postwar Okinawa deliberately chooses to use the term *Koza uprising*—*Koza hōki* in Japanese—for the event, which has historically been called the *Koza bōdō*, translated as the *Koza riot* in English.<sup>5</sup> Ueunten’s less common descriptive term is significant because it recognizes that the volitional revolt was not merely a chaotic riot but a revolutionary civil act reflecting Okinawans’ pent-up “discontent” that “lay just below the surface of the forced civility that Okinawans had to display toward American military personnel in order to survive as their service providers and entertainers.”<sup>6</sup>

Postwar Okinawan literature also arises as a postcolonial discourse challenging the harsh reality of military occupation in which the basic human rights of the Okinawan people were constantly violated and the lives of the local residents, after barely surviving the horrifying battle, were still threatened. Tatsuhiro Oshiro’s novel *The Cocktail Party*, for which he was awarded the Akutagawa Prize in 1967, is a good example of a narrative expressing the postcolonial struggles in Okinawa. Published when Okinawa was going through political struggle against the US military, the novel presented a sharp criticism of the military institution that, in the guise of being a lenient occupier that was willing to put the occupied in an equal

position through what they called a “cultural exchange,” actually manipulated the occupied people. The novel discloses that what appeared to be friendship between the occupier and the occupied turned out to be deceptive, as the narrator learns with bitterness when an American officer whom he believed was a friend does not support his pursuit of justice for his daughter who was raped by the protagonist’s American tenant, whom he had also believed was his friend. Ironically, the incident happened while the girl’s father was away from home at a cocktail party with military officers. The novel acutely uncovers the distinction between the personal and the political when a humane exchange involves inhumane institutional laws, a base of insuperable hypocrisy concealing the occupiers’ institutional motives.

While Oshiro’s narrative describes how institutions and politics interfered with equal relationships between Okinawans and Americans in postwar Okinawa, Okinawa’s encounter with the United States was presumably far more complex than what is merely defined with such terms as “political” and “institutional,” since organizational order and hierarchy could be often disrupted by irrational moments of human needs, such as the emotional responses, hunger, and sexual desire. This colonial space that embraces human subjects coexisting in contact in an unequal power relationship resonates with what the Chicana writer and critic Gloria Anzaldúa calls a “borderland,” the colonial space she envisions at the US-Mexico international border:

The U.S.-Mexican border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture. Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition.<sup>7</sup>

Okinawa or, more specifically, the base towns such as Koza and Kin, populated with Americans, can be regarded as a borderland where local Okinawans’ postwar history and culture constituted a “lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country,” especially given the “emotional residue” from the irrational moments in their relationship with Americans not only as US soldiers but also as human subjects.

In comparing Okinawa to the borderland that Anzaldúa delineates in her theory, I wish to illuminate the US presence in postwar Okinawan literature through exploring the kind of colonial space and the image of American colonizers that writers from Okinawa created in their literature as they reconstructed their place and community in a new living reality that required of them a new literary imagination to accommodate strange “others.” To illustrate this point, I first examine Okinawan writer Eiki Matayoshi’s 1977 story “The Wild Boar That George Gunned Down” as it exemplifies a unique narrative that subverts the hierarchical positions of the occupier and the occupied. Matayoshi’s imagination of the psyche of the other creates what I would call a *border character* whose consciousness and actions embody the complexity of his/her position located between the dominating and the dominated subjects.

I further explore the American presence—or absence—and the image of Okinawa as a borderland in Okinawan novelist Tami Sakiyama’s “Kuja stories,” a series of short stories written and published between 2006 and 2007. All the stories are set in the base town “Kuja,” which is fictional but evokes a strong connection with the actual base town Koza in central Okinawa, where, during the occupation, local establishments consisted largely of places of entertainment for US military personnel and the place Ueunten aptly defines as “a nexus of internal, external, and sexual colonialism.”<sup>8</sup> I shall discuss how the communal experience of Kuja, as a reminder of Koza and a “nexus” of Okinawans’ day-to-day encounter with Americans, exemplifies the postwar Okinawan experience.

#### THE DUAL PERSONA OF THE OCCUPIERS

While Okinawans found US militarism to be another colonizing agent that replaced Japanese imperialism and brought destruction to Okinawa, they also experienced a dual aspect of the American occupiers—they were not only intimidating invaders but also saviors who provided livelihood and met their desperate basic human needs in the aftermath of the devastating battle. Sekihō Ikemiyagi, an Okinawan writer and poet who was born in 1893 and died in 1951, imagined in his poem, written perhaps immediately after the Battle of Okinawa, “A Can of Food” an American other through a can of food, the material reality that sustained the lives of the Okinawan people:

Doesn't canned food from America taste good?  
 How splendid a can of turkey is!  
 The shape of sausage is funny.  
 What a smart idea a chicken-egg can is!  
 Looking at those cans of food,  
 I imagine the landscape of an American farm,  
 The pasture lush green,  
 where a fragrant eighteen-year-old maiden  
 with sweet eyes  
 strokes a cow.  
 After all the human labor,  
 the cows in the pasture  
 are turned into food in the cans,  
 which came all the way here passing from one horizon to another  
 singing to the rhythm of sailors' songs.  
 Eating canned food,  
 I smell the body of American mountains,  
 listen to the voice of seagulls gliding on the blue waves,  
 and look at the blue moonlight on the mast.  
 The cans,  
 having been through a long pilgrimage,  
 you will soon make my blood and flesh  
 and will go on the path of pilgrimage,  
 modestly and happily.  
 I will kiss you, the can,  
 now that I've survived starvation  
 and been baptized by the burning flame.  
 I truly learned the nobility of peace and life  
 and the happiness to say a blessing  
 even to a can of food.<sup>9</sup>

The poem exhibits that, in Okinawa, the United States, which was a destroyer, simultaneously rehabilitated the former battleground, thus making starving residents believe that the foreign occupiers were trustworthy.

The dual persona of American occupiers reflects the self-contradictory attitudes of Americans, both toward their role as ruler and in their faith in democracy. Etsujiro Miyagi, in his 1982 study of the US view of Okinawa in the US military's postwar public discourse, indicated US communication strategies for achieving better control over Okinawa in the 1950s. According

to Miyagi, there was a strategic process for US achieving their goal:

To begin with, the US military advertised the economic advantages to be gained from the new military facilities and pushed ahead with their construction, expecting to get full support from the local residents. The military then promoted economic reconstruction, as they had planned at the same time to educate local people about democracy. This policy involved optimistic slogans that convinced local people that the two completely contradictory ideals, “the Keystone of the Pacific” and “the Showcase of Democracy,” could be actualized in Okinawa with ease as if they represented a single set.<sup>10</sup>

Miyagi, just as Oshiro in *The Cocktail Party*, intuited the gap between the appearance and reality of the American occupiers who, on the one hand, professed support for democracy, while, on the other, often ruled through strong official measures.

Miyagi further points out that the United States condescendingly viewed the Okinawan people as needing to be “instructed, educated, and preserved.”<sup>11</sup> The Americans appeared to wish to model themselves as democratic Christians eager to help Okinawan war survivors start their postwar lives, as if they were fulfilling a foreign mission. To demonstrate their good intentions, the Americans abolished the military government and launched a civil government, the United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands (USCAR), in early 1950. Miyagi notes that the USCAR supported Okinawa in sustaining traditional Okinawan culture by such actions as constructing a museum to encourage Okinawans to increase their self-respect toward their own culture and cultural identity, which had been undervalued by the Japanese. And beginning in the 1950s, they constructed “cultural centers” at multiple locations in the Amami and Okinawa regions. They also published such magazines as *Konnichi no Ryukyu* (The Ryukyus today) and *Shurei no hikari* (The light in the land of courtesy) to actively promote cultural exchange between “Ryukyuan” and the United States as well as to pacify the anti-US sentiment that was driving Okinawan toward reversion (reannexation) of Okinawa to Japan as its 47th prefecture.<sup>12</sup>

At the same time, the United States enacted the other prong of its cultural policy of “restraints and prohibitions,” for example, by censoring the local media, literature, and films to prevent the spread of Communism and anti-US sentiment.<sup>13</sup> The USCAR, therefore, was both a pacifier and a surveillant, striving to put every Okinawan under its control. Masanori Nakahodo, a

critic of Okinawan literature, observes that the modern conveniences brought to the island by the Americans, such as automobiles, appear in the early works of postwar Okinawan novels. Lights, another modern convenience, including “all-night lamps,” “electric lights,” and “search lights,” are also recurrent literary motifs, creating a striking contrast between “the darkness covering the hamlets of local people” and the “the light picking out the military facilities.”<sup>14</sup> Nakahodo speculates that “fear” motivated the dominant group, who were well aware of their need to defend “the land, which was not theirs but that they confiscated by force,” and that they tried to “get rid of the darkness and create a world that does not have nights” as a way to overcome their fear.<sup>15</sup> In postwar Okinawa, the occupiers were required to negotiate between two contradictory personas: the powerful agent who has control over the new land and the powerless subject who confronts constant challenges and rebellion from the original landowners.

The contradictory aspects of the occupiers’ dual personas tell us about the paranoia of those who lived side by side with death in their line of duty. Although Japan and Okinawa under US military occupation played their roles of supporting the US wars against Korea and Vietnam, and both benefited economically from those conflicts in the process of post-World War II reconstruction, Okinawa’s experience as the occupied was different from that of Japan because Okinawa went through a higher intensity and longer duration of irrational interaction with the United States. The Okinawan historian and critic Osamu Yakabi, quoting from Okinawan historian Masaie Ishihara and Okinawan journalist Akira Amakawa, claims that one of the distinctive features of “the US rule over Okinawa” is that “the battlefield,” “the occupation,” and “the rehabilitation” “went on as a simultaneous and multilayered process,”<sup>16</sup> “[w]hereas the colonizer,” Yakabi adds, “comprehends these three events to happen one after another as if they always form a linear chronological trajectory.”<sup>17</sup> Okinawa after World War II went through a rehabilitation in which the Americans presented themselves as humane caregivers as well as violent combatants for whom the war had not ended. Okinawa remained a part of their battlefield, a place in which violence and death were as real as they were in Korea or Vietnam.

As mentioned, postwar Okinawa assisted the US military in fighting its subsequent wars. The Vietnam War, the war the United States waged to prevent Communism from taking over South Vietnam, was a traumatic experience for both US military personnel stationed in Okinawa and the Okinawan people. Thomas R. H. Havens states that Okinawa became “the jumping-off point for the first 15,000 American combat troops” to enter the

Vietnam War in 1965, and that “roughly 50,000 United States troops were stationed in the Ryukyus during the conflict, staffing ammunition depots, supply warehouses, training grounds, ports, air bases, missile sites, and communication centers.”<sup>18</sup> About three-quarters of the goods consumed each month by US forces in Vietnam were sent from Naha, and support activities “totaling more than a million flight operations during 1965–1973” took place at Kadena Air Base.<sup>19</sup>

Havens further states that the “jungles of Okinawa were training areas for as many as 9,000 United States Army Special Forces (Green Berets) at the peak of the war, and troops from South Vietnam, the Philippines, Thailand, Taiwan, and South Korea also underwent training there”<sup>20</sup> and that “Okinawa was a major storage ground for poison chemicals, a port for American nuclear submarines, and the site of thirty-two nuclear-tipped Mace B missiles in launch shelters beneath the ground.”<sup>21</sup> The Vietnam War resulted in unexpectedly high casualty rates for the United States and came to be known as “America’s longest war.”<sup>22</sup> After the first dispatch of US troops from Okinawa to Vietnam, the war bogged down, and more than 10,000 American deaths were recorded between 1967 and 1969, the highest number of all the years during the war from 1956 to 1975.<sup>23</sup>

“THE WILD BOAR THAT GEORGE GUNNED DOWN”:  
A REVERSE APPROPRIATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Eiki Matayoshi’s story “George ga shasatsu shita inoshishi” (The Wild Boar That George Gunned Down), was published in 1977 in Japanese and anthologized in an English translation in 2011.<sup>24</sup> The novel came out four years after the signing of the Paris Peace Accords in which the Democratic Republic of Vietnam “promised not to support subversion in the South and the United States pledged to withdraw all remaining American troops from Vietnam.”<sup>25</sup> The US intervention in the Vietnam War ended, but the war left deep scars in Okinawa, where American soldiers were stationed before being dispatched to Vietnam or after they returned. It is not surprising that those soldiers were insensitive in the degree of violence with which they treated the Okinawan people, especially in a jurisdictional environment in which they were rarely prosecuted. In “The Wild Boar That George Gunned Down,” the novel’s characters, such as the servicemen John, Wilde, and Washington, with whom the protagonist, George, reluctantly hangs out during the period of the Vietnam War, are depicted as immoral rapists and colonizers who assault local civilians with no hesitation or guilt and who



are seen as typical US servicemen by local Okinawan residents.

Matayoshi has George, however, play a different role from those violent soldier types: he is a border character. The story is told by a third-person limited narrator who speaks for George, a young American soldier who has “just arrived from the States.”<sup>26</sup> The story’s other characters are described solely from George’s point of view. In this way, George’s voice as an occupier is under the control of Matayoshi, the author, who belongs to the occupied. In other words, Matayoshi appropriates the voice that belongs to the colonizing power in creating George’s voice so that it reflects the author’s imagination of his consciousness. Considering that it is usually the occupier whose perceptions dominate, Matayoshi, an Okinawan, enacts a reverse appropriation of the colonizer’s voice by entrapping his internal reality in the subversive imagination of the colonized.

The story begins in one of the bars located in an entertainment district where local hostesses rake in money from American soldiers, especially those who have just returned from Vietnam:

Two days till payday. John and the others had long since run out of money, and George had no more to lend them. Hostesses at the bar no longer sat with and entertained them as they usually did. George noticed that the hostesses kept looking toward the entranceway, waiting for other customers to arrive. George wanted to leave but couldn’t say this to his companions. They seemed now to be feeling awkward themselves, after the berserk frenzy of a few moments before. Their bottle of whiskey had been emptied long ago. Requests for more were met with demands for “cash, cash” from the hostesses, who no longer let them touch their breasts and thighs.<sup>27</sup>

A real-life Okinawan rock musician, Yukio Kyan, who would perform for Americans nightly at entertainment establishments in Koza, reflected in his memoir on how American soldiers who were stationed in Okinawa during the period of the Vietnam War would pay an outrageous amount for a glass of liquor: “The foreigners would place 1,000 dollars or 2,000 dollars on their table . . . and the skilled hostesses would let them pay 1,000 dollars for all the glasses they drank up.”<sup>28</sup> According to Kyan, American soldiers would pay for cocktails called “ten-dollar, twenty-dollar, or even fifty-dollar zambi (zambini)” at a time when a general worker’s average monthly salary in Okinawa was thirty or forty dollars.<sup>29</sup> The American soldiers who returned from Vietnam, whom Kyan calls “yamagaeri (men back from the

mountains of Vietnam),”<sup>30</sup> appear in Matayoshi’s story as “*yama-otoko*” (“men back from the wilds”). They are “hardened by combat in numerous battles” and thus, George imagines, would never be “free from thoughts of war.”<sup>31</sup> George, at the beginning of the story, “looked down on these men,” whose minds, regardless of whether they were on or off duty, were “always in a state of battle readiness.”<sup>32</sup>

The bar where George hangs out with his fellow soldiers turns into a kind of extended battlefield where Okinawan women are the frequent targets of violence induced by the soldiers’ “state of battle readiness.” The story depicts George’s fellow soldiers getting drunk and eventually adopting the deviant behavior of sexually assaulting a hostess, the last one leaving their table to join a group of *yama-otoko* who would enable her to make more money. One of George’s companions, Washington, with his jackknife, gradually corners the woman, and when she manages to flee to the restroom, he follows her and rapes her inside it. Washington also cuts other hostesses while they attempt in vain to rescue their colleague. The bar owner is useless, too; he rushes to the scene only to find he can do nothing but “settle the matter with money” because he well understands that a local business that has “lost favor with the American authorities” and “ha[s] their A-sign licenses revoked” would “suffer bitterly as a result.”<sup>33</sup>

The A-sign license was a sign on which appeared a large red letter “A.” It indicated that the establishment had been certified by the USCAR, passing an administrative inspection to prove it had met the prescribed standards and was thus approved for patronage by US servicemen. Takashi Yamazaki explains that the official purpose of the A-sign system, which was in effect in Okinawa from the 1950s to 1972, “was more or less consistent”: “to grant a business license for patronage by US military personnel only to those establishments that met the architectural and hygienic standards prescribed by the civil administration, in order to protect the health and welfare of military personnel and their families from sex-related businesses or restaurants.”<sup>34</sup> The US military forced local businesses to submit to its authority by suspending those that failed to comply with its requirements or disobeyed its orders.

While George’s companions—John, Washington, and Wilde—are portrayed as violent, arrogant, and crazy colonizers who abuse their authority, George does not seem to fall into the same category, partly because of his physical inferiority—he describes himself as “short and skinny.” Because of this he feels his boss “hates” him.<sup>35</sup> He is an easy target for bullies who see him only as a good source of money to spend on women

and drinks. George naturally despises his companions, but he is equally disgusted with the victims, who forget about their maltreatment in order to continue to make money. He isolates himself from his surroundings and hates everyone around him. After a riot caused by the above mentioned rape incident, George “was getting edgy” because of his inability to “join in with the others,” and his internal monologue is filled with violent thoughts:

*This is like the rampage John and the guys went on a month ago. Not surprising that they did that. But I did nothing then, either. Also not surprising. A few days later the women in the bar were hanging all over John and the others. I sat there remembering every detail of what had happened, but not those stupid women. They're hopeless. Even Washington, now holed up in that restroom, won't be turned away next time he shows up at this bar. Tomorrow night will roll around and they'll pour his drinks for him and let him fondle their breasts as if nothing ever happened. I'd like to take his jackknife to that moustache he's so proud of, hack the dammed thing off, skin and all. And shoot every last one of the hostesses. They're all disgusting. Too bad I don't have my pistol with me. I should always carry it. Hearing the bullets shattering the whiskey bottles, the lights, the neon signs, the jukebox. Hearing everything getting busted, that'd be sweet. Firing slugs into the throats of all these repulsive people, laughing with their mouths wide open. That'd be good, huh?<sup>36</sup>*

George's impulse to kill the hostesses, the victims, may sound insane, but his insane thoughts may have been the sanest, considering that his fury was directed at the victims because they ignored their rage and pain for money. In fact, there were many Okinawan women who suffered from the indignity inflicted by rapists from the military. According to a record of cases of violence against Okinawan women by US military personnel, which was compiled by Okinawan women activists Suzuyo Takazato and Harumi Miyagi, the first rape case involving an Okinawan women happened as early as 1945, a few months after the landing of US forces on Zamami Island, and it was followed by other horrible cases, including the 1948 unbelievable incident in which a soldier raped a nine-month-old baby girl. The record they compiled lists sixty-six cases from 1945 to 1995—in most instances, the perpetrators were not sentenced and were often just deported—and the number has continued to increase up until the present time. Takazato and Miyagi note that in 1967 “the robbery and bar-hostess murder cases

committed by servicemen who had returned from Vietnam happened in succession, and it was said in those days that a woman going alone into the restroom at a bar for US servicemen was suicidal.”<sup>37</sup> They also quote from the November 1949 issue of *Time* magazine, which stated: “The US military stationed in Okinawa became a convenient dumping place for servicemen who were either useless or outcasts, and they committed a total of eighteen crimes in the six months prior to September.”<sup>38</sup>

What is unique about the narrative “The Wild Boar That George Gunned Down” is that George’s consciousness is imagined and created based on Matayoshi’s understanding of American soldiers. Though the islands were populated by a large number of US military personnel, communication between those soldiers and Okinawans was generally limited and superficial because most Okinawans, including Matayoshi, were unable to speak in English. Therefore, though the character George is one of the US soldiers who dominated the island community, he is nevertheless Matayoshi’s creation, and it is the creator’s choice to present this character as an ordinary American man who has not yet become fully militarized. Michael Molasky views the narrative as “a bold and ambitious strategy on Matayoshi’s part” because “few readers at the time were predisposed to view Americans as either weak or deserving of sympathy.”<sup>39</sup> Molasky further indicates that the story “begins to break down the stereotypical image of the distant and invincible occupier, and by doing so it stakes out a new, confident stance toward the United States—a stance that may only have been possible after America’s humiliating withdrawal from Vietnam.”<sup>40</sup> Whether Matayoshi’s narrative led to “a new, confident stance toward the United States” is uncertain, but Matayoshi does create a narrative space that enables both the colonizer and the colonized to share the feeling of injustice prevailing in each other’s context. George resists the reality in which both his fellow soldiers and their victims are numbed with violence, while the Okinawans in the 1960s resisted US colonization, which subjugated indigenous people and violated their basic human rights. The people living in the social reality of Okinawa during the period of the Vietnam War were just as frustrated as the story’s protagonist because of their inability to change the reality they were facing.

The majority of George’s narrative is his internal monologue, and thus George is represented as a character deprived of his voice, just as Okinawans were under US rule. George is unable to express himself to his companions because they never want to listen to him. Thus, the figure that George calls “Emily” becomes a pivotal element in the story, as she enables George to

distance himself from his nightmarish reality. “Emily” emerges in George’s thoughts whenever he is on the verge of losing his sanity. He escapes into her, although her identity, her relationship with George, and even whether or not she is real are never clearly disclosed in the story. Emily is his internal correspondent, whom he believes would listen to him and give him a voice. George wants to “write a letter to Emily” when he tries to reject John, Washington, and Wilde’s demands that he lend them money for drinking or when he is desperate to run away from the bar where hostesses are constantly trying to seduce him into a sexual relationship.<sup>41</sup> Emily seems to embody the ideal of womanhood, as opposed to the nonwhite prostitutes, women mainly from Okinawa and Japan, but it is also possible to interpret her as representing for George an innocent, decent, conscientious, and virtuous American person living in their homeland untouched by the disasters of battle.

George isolates himself from militaristic values; but he has nowhere, except for Emily, to run away to. He again speaks to himself: “Soldiers should be big and strong, [Lt. James] says. Why did they drag me into the military, if that’s the case? I haven’t the slightest desire to be here” (198). The identity of the agent “they” in this statement is not clear, but George gradually blames the unspecified “them” for confining him to this island. His internal voice of protest against “them” is finally expressed when an Okinawan prostitute complains to George because he refuses her sexual service: “All of you have an Emily back home and all of us are fools to be taken in by you. Your Emily’s [*sic*] are wrecking us Okinawan women.” When George responds to her that he “can’t stand being in a filthy hole like this,” the woman says, “Then why come?” George yells back at her:

“What else is there to do on this island? No woods to walk in, no open spaces to ride a horse in. Nothing. Just this tiny little island with its disease-filled nights, its disease-filled bars. There’s not one single thing, not a single person here for me. You being one example. Isn’t that right?” The alcohol seemed to have lubricated his throat, and as his words flowed out he felt an inexplicable pleasure in saying them. (199)

Following a broken silence and a humiliating assault by black soldiers in the black district (*kokujin gai*), a racially segregated area in the entertainment district, George breaks out of his confinement in the ultimate way: violence. He decides to bring down an old Okinawan man collecting scrap metal near

the military fence. George finds in the old man “the eyes of the enemy,” which are “greedy eyes, open wide with terror and malevolence” and “the eyes of the Vietnamese” (207), and is convinced that his “enemy is just such a person,” with the same skin color and physique as the old man. George pulls the trigger, telling himself that “that thing wasn’t a person” but “[a] wild boar come looking for food” (209). Molasky analyzes that “George eventually grows paranoid and believes that even the old Okinawan man . . . is mocking him.”<sup>42</sup> While it’s true that George believes this, I argue that it is also possible that the reason for George’s amplified fear, which could be more than “paranoia,” is his sense of being trapped in what he calls “a filthy hole like this” or “this crummy place,” which precisely means the island to which he is confined.<sup>43</sup> The impossibility of escaping from the place, from the strange others—Okinawans who are supposed to be the subordinate occupied but who somehow disable his superiority, and the blacks who are inferior to George in the United States but are afforded a superior position in Okinawa because of their presumed physical strength as soldiers, and from “them,” the dehumanizing military institution or the nation-state controlling it—drives him to shoot the old Okinawan man with perhaps a slight hope that he “won’t be sent to the front lines in Vietnam” and “maybe they’ll ship [him] back to the States” and he will “be able to see Emily.”<sup>44</sup> The moment George chooses to pull the trigger, the strange others, the invisible force he has been so eager to flee from, invade his consciousness and eventually collapse his selfhood, surging toward him from the other side of the border line, which was supposed to “distinguish us from them.”<sup>45</sup>

#### KUJA STORIES: TAKING AMERICAN OTHERS INTO THE MEMORY OF THE PLACE

Tami Sakiyama, an Okinawan woman writer who is Matayoshi’s contemporary, does not directly create the narrative voice of an American character as Matayoshi does; nevertheless, she does portray her hometown Koza as a narrative space in which US military personnel constitute part of the community and the communal memory. To be more accurate, Koza is not Sakiyama’s hometown, but, in the seven stories that she calls the “Kuja series,”<sup>46</sup> she expresses her attachment to “Kuja,” or the fictional version of Koza, a town that accommodates diverse kinds of people and that was “a nexus” of Okinawan’s postwar contact with Americans.<sup>47</sup> For Sakiyama, America exists in Koza, a place equivalent to what Anzaldúa terms a “border culture,” in a borderland or “a third country” where Okinawans and

Americans, as human subjects in a hierarchy, “merge” before “a scab forms” over the hemorrhaging wound from the contact between them as occupier and occupied.<sup>48</sup> Sakiyama’s stories manifest that, even after the 1972 reversion to Japan when the town changed its name from Koza to Okinawa City, as if the old name was abolished to overwrite the town’s historical experience as a red-light district, America continues to exist in Koza’s communal memory, or communal unconsciousness, if not consciousness.

The community that went through the often painful contact with the US military should not forget the pain of their people who died after experiencing sorrow and anger in that contact. People who happen to know they existed are responsible for remembering them as part of continuing communal memory; therefore, forgetfulness or historical amnesia deserves some kind of punishment in the Kuja stories. “Pingihira zaka yakō” (Nightly walk up Pingihira Hill Road), for instance, depicts an old woman who fails to remember the past and thus is driven to hang herself. She is a resident of “the town,” presumably Kuja, where most of the residents are not “native” but “strangers” who moved away from their hometowns because of “various complicated reasons” and settled in this town.<sup>49</sup> People who have lost all hope of living, even in this town, are destined to go to the place the residents call “Pingihira,” a hill with a small woods, and hang themselves “from the beefwood or *mokumao tree*, which is so large that it proudly presents itself as the tree most suitable for a person to hang himself” (67).

The story depicts an old woman, who not only sees but also hears things, walking up to Pingihira to offer a prayer to expel something that may be the cause of a “strange phenomena”: “a girl in a white dress” (68–69) witnessed by the townspeople in their neighborhood. The people in town all share the understanding that the girl in the white dress must be the six-year-old victim of a rape and murder that happened “in those days” (69). The townspeople feel the pain that the girl must have gone through and feel sorry that the girl “with her mouth clenched so tightly that her lower lip may be torn and her tiny fists” could do nothing else but wander from one corner of the town to another. The most sensitive residents start wandering at the start of the evening as if they are the girl, and wandering like her is “the only way to mourn over the sorrow of the girl who was raped and killed” (69). The members of the whole community are required to remember the girl as if she is part of their own selves.

The story also implies that there will be punishment if the memory is not properly preserved. Feeling a summoning power, the old woman walks up to Pingihira to meet the spirit of a dead young woman who tells her “she

was born in the town fifty years ago and killed herself in this wood” (75). The young woman speaks as if the old woman already knows who she is, but the old woman cannot remember her. To the old woman, the ghost says: “All you have to do is to remember. Ask yourself whether you and I are related. All you need to do is remember what you have in your mind. To remember is the most important thing to do” (76). As the old woman struggles to remember the girl, who appears to be of mixed race, what the old woman gradually remembers is her own past “when she engaged in the business of catering drinks and women to the hungry soldiers” (77) and raising two mixed-race girls—one Japanese/Caucasian and the other Japanese/African American—who were abandoned by her employees and whom she turned into prostitutes after she molested them verbally and physically every day. When the old woman still cannot remember who the ghost is and asks the spirit to tell her who she is, the young woman only replies, “Auntie, I am not supposed to tell it to you. If you, Auntie, don’t remember me, I will be nobody” (79). Eventually, with no confidence about whether the ghost in front of her is the woman she abused in the past and failing herself in remembering who the young woman is, the old woman realizes she “has failed in the prayer rite” (79) for communicating with the young girl’s dead spirit and hangs herself.

In the Kuja stories, a recurrent motif is that the main character or the first-person narrator is persistently and unreasonably pressured to remember the past of the town or place through ghostly voices from the past. In “*Pingihira zaka yakō*,” American characters are absent; however, their shadows or “emotional residue” are embodied in the presence of mixed-race girls as if they are physical evidence of the occupation left on the islands. The mixed-race Okinawan is a constant reminder of the community’s past, especially that of women whose existence and experience are buried in the memory of the town in silence and invisibility.

Sakiyama’s mixed-race characters are not always silent or invisible. In the story “*Kotōmu dūchiumuni*” (Monologue in a dream of a solitary island), the writer creates a powerful mixed-race character, Mariya Takaesu, who refuses to be silenced. The first-person narrator, a thirty-nine-year-old non-Okinawan photographer, falls in Kuja as he attempts to take a photograph of “the landscape of the edge,” which, to his mind, means “the place that exists between landscapes that do not match or the torn seam where all abandoned things hide themselves, in other words, the hole of the world, or the border that gazes back at the world.”<sup>50</sup> Looking for objects to photograph in Kuja, a place that may satisfy his expectations, he comes



across an ad for a theater performance by the Kuja Performing Group and decides to be one of the few audience members for the performance. It is a one-woman stage performance by Mariya Takaesu. Mariya begins the performance—her interaction with the audience—with her story, revealing that she is a “*Pinā*,” an Okinawan word for a Filipina:

Yes, as you see in your wide-open eyes, I am a *Pinā*. Do you know what a *Pinā* is? . . . Yes, *Pinā* means a *Filipina*. Look at my jet-black hair, big round eyes, and thick lips that are so sexy, that especially attract middle-aged guys. . . . And, because of the circumstances before I was born, which means, because of a reason I cannot be responsible for, I was born into how I look now, but, to tell you the truth, I was born and raised in this town—sorry for not being what you expected—yes, the town you are in now. Well, the town stays the same now and then, the town where Americans come and go incessantly, you know. (90)

Mariya continues her narrative by explaining that she is mixed race, born to an Okinawan mother and a Filipino American US serviceman, but simultaneously she challenges the understanding of the audience by telling them she is not what they may expect from how she looks; she even identifies herself as “Japanese” because she speaks Japanese, though she is skeptical about whether the idea of speaking Japanese is a good reason for being Japanese (93). She goes on with her performance, telling her story, which is at the same time the history of her hometown from her perspective:

In those days, every alley of this town was flooded with American soldiers coming and going between here and the battlefield. . . . The soldiers often caused troubles, fighting over one woman or just being edgy . . . . You wonder why do I know such things? Because I was a child living in a rental house behind an establishment that provided women for American soldiers. (92)

Then Mariya tells about her grandmother, who raised her affectionately after Mariya’s mother abandoned her. Mariya’s monologue reveals that mixed-race children are not relics from the past, buried in silence and invisibility, but border characters who are part of the present and keepers of the memories of the community and residing in that third perspective that emerges from a gap or borderland.

Locating mixed-race characters, not outside or at the margin of the

community but within the community, Sakiyama entrusts these characters with connecting the past and the present as well as cultures and races—Americans and Okinawans with their border consciousness. A mysterious young man in the story “Psugurukaji nu hukiba” (When a Psuguru wind blows),” Hiroshi, who appears to be black but speaks to the protagonist in “graceful Japanese,” is another border character who connects the past and the present, or what is about to be forgotten with what remains in people’s consciousness. Hiroshi brings the protagonist, a woman writer, to an old woman called Hide Uechi, who is his grandmother, so that the writer can hear her story. According to Hiroshi, Grandma Hide suddenly lost her voice thirty years earlier and hasn’t said anything comprehensible since, but he believes that Grandma Hide is desperately trying to tell her message, and he is willing to help recover her lost language.<sup>51</sup> It is, however, a strange request because Hiroshi also tells the writer that he is somehow able to comprehend what Grandma Hide articulates. Perplexed, the writer proposes to Hiroshi that he should listen to his grandmother’s story. Hiroshi replies, “The only thing I can do is to repeat what she says like a parrot. I can repeat her voice, but I cannot give its meaning, interpret, or paraphrase what she says . . . because, when I listen to grandma’s voice, I become her and she becomes me.”<sup>52</sup> While Mariya’s and Hiroshi’s mixed-race bodies are physical evidence of the US presence in postwar Okinawa, they are part of the place and its memory. Sakiyama presents mixed-race characters, with their border consciousness that encompasses both sides of the dividing line between different subjects, as sustainers of the memory of Okinawan communities that are filled with both pain and resilience.

## CONCLUSION

Although American influence is not as predominant as it used to be in Okinawa after it was annexed by Japan in 1972, it is still omnipresent in Okinawa’s communal memory. Postwar Okinawan literature attests to the violence committed by US military personnel; however, it also enables Okinawans to imagine the occupiers’ fears of insanity and concern to protect themselves from corruption. The works of two Okinawan writers, Eiki Matayoshi and Tami Sakiyama, make it clear that the postwar US presence in Okinawa and Okinawans’ contact with Americans affected Okinawan writers’ literary imagination in regard to the other. Contact, however, does not always happen within a situation of institutional restraint; nor does it necessarily refer to the contact of subjects who are in an unequal power

relationship. Matayoshi's and Sakiyama's stories portray border consciousness in both the characters and in the narrative voice, which are attuned to the weakness, fear, and insanity that commonly obsess both the colonizer and the colonized.

Though seventy years have passed since the end of the Battle of Okinawa, Okinawa still suffers from a colonial situation that has been supported by the US-Japan Status of Forces Agreement since 1960. Despite the bilateral establishment of the Special Action Committee on Okinawa in 1995, an agreement to reduce the burden on the people of Okinawa has not been fully implemented. As expressed in the stories by Matayoshi and Sakiyama, a borderland is not only a confining space that accommodates the experience of the socially marginalized and subordinated but is also a space that transforms voices into discourses that are resistive and subversive to the oppressive power. The Okinawan community can volitionally claim the position of borderland in order to urge the United States and Japan to reconsider what it means to be normal and to question the legitimacy of bilateral agreements that reveal nothing but insane colonialism toward Okinawan citizens in their uphill battle for decolonization.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Okinawa Prefectural Board of Education, "History of Okinawa," Ryukyu Cultural Archives, [http://rca.open.ed.jp/web\\_e/history/story/hisindex5.html](http://rca.open.ed.jp/web_e/history/story/hisindex5.html), accessed August 1, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Susumu Asato, Kurayoshi Takara, Masayuki Tana, Kazuyuki Tomiyama, Kikou Nishizato, and Fusaaki Maehira. *Okinawa ken no rekishi* [The history of Okinawa Prefecture] (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppan, 2004), 302. My translation.

<sup>3</sup> Eiko Asato. "Military Bases and the Destruction of Village Communities," in *Island of Discontent: Okinawan Responses to Japanese and American Power*, ed. Laura Hein and Mark Selden (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 230.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 303–4. To represent their rule over Okinawa as less militaristic, the United States shifted the military government to a civilian one, launching the United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands (USCAR) in 1950.

<sup>5</sup> Wesley Iwao Ueunten, "Rising Up from a Sea of Discontent: The 1970 Koza Uprising in US-Occupied Okinawa," in *Militarized Currents: Toward a Decolonized Future in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Setsu Shigematsu and Keith L. Camacho (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 110.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 2nd ed. (San

Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute, 1999), 25.

<sup>8</sup> Ueunten, “Rising Up,” 108.

<sup>9</sup> Etsu Miyazato, ed., *Okinawa, onna tachi no sengo: shōdo kara no shuppatsu* [Okinawa, women’s postwar life: Starting on the burned land] (Naha: Hirugi-sha, 1986), 29–30. My translation.

<sup>10</sup> Etsujiro Miyagi. *Senryōsha no me: Amerika-jin wa Okinawa wo dō mitaka* [The occupiers’ eyes: How did Americans see Okinawa?] (Naha: Naha Shuppan, 1982), 92–93. My translation.

<sup>11</sup> Etsujiro Miyagi. “Amerika bunka tono sōgū: Tai Okinawa bunkaseisaku to sono juyō ni kansuru shiron” [Encountering American culture: a thought on American cultural policy for Okinawa and Okinawa’s reception], *Shin-Okinawa Bungaku* [New Okinawan literature] 89 (1991), 15.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 15–19.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 17–18.

<sup>14</sup> Masanori Nakahodo, *Amerika no aru hūkei: Okinawabungaku no ichi ryōiki* [The landscape with America: A topic of Okinawan literature] (Naha: Nirai-sha, 2008), 160–61. My translation.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>16</sup> Osamu Yakabi. “Jūsōsuru senjō to senryō to hukkō” [The multilayered battlefield, occupation, and rehabilitation], in *Okinawa no senryō to nihon no hukkō: shokuminchishugi wa ikani keizoku shitaka* [The occupation of Okinawa and rehabilitation of Japan: How did colonialism continue?], ed. Toshio Nakano, Tsuneo Namihira, and Osamu Yakabi. (Tokyo: Seikyusha, 2006), 25. My translation.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Thomas R. H. Havens, *Fire across the Sea: The Vietnam War and Japan 1965–1975* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 87–88.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 87–88.

<sup>20</sup> In the training area located in the north of Okinawa Island, there was a so-called Vietnamese village (Vietnam mura), where the actual villagers from Takae were mobilized to act as targets for US soldiers drilling for guerrilla warfare in tropical jungles. See *Ryukyu Shimpo*, April 15, 2015, <http://ryukyushimpo.jp/news/storyid-241771-storytopic-1.html>, accessed July 1, 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Havens, *Fire across the Sea*, 88.

<sup>22</sup> Anthony Best, Jussi M. Hanhimäki, Joseph A. Maiolo, and Kirsten E. Schulze, *International History of the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 312.

<sup>23</sup> US National Archives, Statistical Information about Fatal Casualties of the Vietnam War, “DCAS Vietnam Conflict Extract File record counts by Incident or Death Date (Year) (as of April 29, 2008),” <http://www.archives.gov/research/military/vietnam-war/>

casualty-statistics.html, accessed July 1, 2015.

<sup>24</sup> Eiki Matayoshi, “The Wild Boar That George Gunned Down,” in *Living Spirit: Literature and Resurgence in Okinawa*, trans. David Fahy, ed. Frank Stewart and Katsunori Yamazato (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2011).

<sup>25</sup> Best, *International History*, 324.

<sup>26</sup> Matayoshi, “Wild Boar,” 188.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>28</sup> Okinawa City Office, *Rokku to Koza* [Rock and Koza] (Naha: Naha Shuppan, 1998), 150–51. My translation.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Matayoshi, “Wild Boar,” 188.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 191. Bars and restaurants had to be licensed if they were to receive an A-sign.

<sup>34</sup> Takashi Yamazaki, “USCAR bunsho kara mita A-sain seido to baishun, seibyō kisei: 1970 nen zengo no beigun fuukitorishimariinkaigijiroku no kentō kara” [Examining the A-sign system and the control of prostitution and sexually transmitted diseases in USCAR documents: a reading of the minutes book of the Vice Control Committee in 1970], *Okinawa kōbunshokan kenkyū kiyō* (Journal of Okinawa prefectural archives) 10 (2008), 40. My translation.

<sup>35</sup> Matayoshi, “Wild Boar,” 198.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>37</sup> Kichi guntai wo yurusanai kōdōsuru onnatachi [Women activists never accepting bases and military], “Beiheiniyoru sengo Okinawa no josei ni taisuru hanzaï” [The crimes committed against women by US servicemen in postwar Okinawa], data compiled by Suzuyo Takazato, Harumi Miyagi, and Kichi guntai wo yurusanai kōdōsuru onnatachi, <http://www.jca.apc.org/~uratchan/gbmarines/henji/jyoseino Higai.htm>, accessed July 1, 2015. My translation. See also Ueunten, “Rising Up,” 105–8.

<sup>38</sup> Women activists, “Crimes committed against women.”

<sup>39</sup> Michael S Molasky, *The American Occupation of Japan and Okinawa: Literature and Memory*. (New York: Routledge, 1999), 179.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Matayoshi, “Wild Boar,” 194.

<sup>42</sup> Molasky, *American Occupation*, 179.

<sup>43</sup> Matayoshi, “Wild Boar,” 209.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>45</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 25.

<sup>46</sup> Telephone conversation with Tami Sakiyama on March 18, 2007.

<sup>47</sup> Ueunten, “Rising Up,” 110.

<sup>48</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 25.

<sup>49</sup> Tami Sakiyama, “Pingihira zaka yakō” [Nightly walk up Pingihira Hill Road], *Subaru* 29, no. 1 (2007), 66. My translation.

<sup>50</sup> Tami Sakiyama. “Kotōmu dūchumuni” [Monologue in a dream of a solitary island], *Subaru* 28, no. 1 (2006), 86. My translation.

<sup>51</sup> Tami Sakiyama. “Psugurukaji nu hukiba” [When the Psuguru wind blows], *Subaru* 29, no. 5 (2007), 147. My translation.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.