

INTRODUCTION

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Okinawa's Three Dispositions as Three Moments of Primitive Accumulation

Marxist theoretician, activist, and documentary filmmaker Kawada Yō wrote in the early 1970s that Okinawa's impending reversion to Japanese rule following two decades under American occupation was neither a joyous moment of liberation nor a time of profound despair over the region's continued subjugation by external powers. Kawada predicted that reversion would simply inaugurate a new phase of the region's expropriation by capital. As many in Okinawa and Japan celebrated or bemoaned the impending transfer of political power as part of a longer trajectory of national unification, he placed the political changes that disrupted his present within a cycle of conflict that began centuries earlier: the current moment was nothing more than the third disposition that the region had experienced in three and a half centuries.¹ Invoking a repetitive rather than linear history, Kawada argued that each disposition inaugurated a struggle among local power holders, invaders from outside the region, and small producers that gave no signs of abating.² He warned his readers that the biggest gift that 1972 would bring to the people of Okinawa was a new round of enclosures, whose negative consequences would far outweigh any positive aspects of liberation from formal occupation.³

Kawada's measured stance toward reversion stemmed from his approach to Okinawa's dispositions—the first in 1609, the second in 1879, and the third in his present—as distinct moments in capital's so-called primitive accumulation process.⁴ He approached each shift in Okinawa's political status as coinciding with and inaugurating a radical reconfiguration of the region's material and social relations within a broader conjuncture of transformations in capital's organic composition. For example, the first disposition began

when the feudal lord of the Satsuma domain, Shimazu Iehisa, invaded what was then the Ryūkyū kingdom and started a reorganization of agrarian village economies in a way that expanded the economic and political authority of wealthy peasants.⁵ The resulting differentiation in the villages forced many self-sufficient cultivators to become serfs who worked the property of a new cadre of large landowners.⁶ Similarly, Kawada read the second disposition of 1879 as an event that transformed small peasantry (*shōnō*) who did remain in the kingdom's villages as self-sufficient producers into creators of surplus value to fuel Japan's nascent capitalist development.⁷ This was yet another round of dispossession that destroyed the communal resources and practices that those small cultivators needed to sustain their household economies. He predicted that the transfer of rule to the Japanese state in 1972 would be accompanied by another major reconfiguration of property relations in Okinawa that would result in parasitic landlordism becoming a significant part of its landscape for the first time in its history.⁸ As Kawada's designation of three distinct moments of the transfer of political authority as key events in the history of capitalist development in Okinawa shows, he understood the political and economic spheres as inextricably linked in the region's transformation into a distinct social space.

Kawada knew where power resided, but he also knew that Okinawa's workers and cultivators had struggled against their dispossession at every turn and would continue to fight tooth and nail against their expulsion after reversion. One of his main goals as a documentary filmmaker was to give voice to small producers and record their struggles. He knew that the discourse of national reunification, whether celebratory or despairing, would overwhelm and expunge these actors from the grand theater of Okinawa's modern history if left unchallenged. The stories that intrigued him pit the extreme power of capital backed by the state against the persistent, intense struggles of small producers against their expropriation and enclosure. He was committed to documenting the numerous confrontations between producers as bearers of living labor and capitalists aiming to increase the proportion of dead labor in the production process as a struggle over the valorization of surplus value.⁹ What distinguished Kawada from other Marxists writing about Okinawa in the moment of reversion was that he understood these contests to be immanent to the development of Okinawan society and productive in the construction of revolutionary subjectivities. These struggles were central, rather than mere footnotes to more dramatic processes of unification or colonization.¹⁰

This study takes Kawada's view of violent confrontations between producers, capitalists, and political power holders as immanent to processes of disposition as its entry point. It focuses on the period between 1879 and the reconfiguration of global capitalism in the early 1930s, decades in which the Japanese nation-state qua empire consolidated and expanded. Specifically, it clarifies the relations of power among the Japanese state, Okinawan leaders, and small producers within the prefecture as it became a frontier of the Japanese empire and traces the way that a merely coincidental and historically traceable peripheralization in the economic sphere quickly became evidence of collective difference in a cultural, racial, or ethnic sense.¹¹

The Japanese nation-state incorporated Okinawa during the late nineteenth century differently from territories that had previously existed in the Tokugawa regime as feudal domains. Nine years after the Meiji Restoration, the disposition of Ryūkyū was enacted in a manner that left the former kingdom without the necessary foundations for capitalist relations of production. As in the northern territory of Hokkaido, the Meiji state restaged old systems, relations, and hierarchies to fulfill the needs of the nation-state, itself in the early stages of formation.¹² It masked its own strategic maintenance of the forms and practices of the kingdom with a benevolent-sounding term, the Preservation of Old Customs Policy (*Kyūkan Onzon Seisaku*; hereafter, Preservation Policy), and claimed that inclusion of Okinawa in this manner would benefit the local people as a whole. At the same time, it granted concessions to a select few inhabitants of the prefecture whose cooperation was necessary for a smooth takeover of control.

Such measures reveal the lack of uniformity in state policies in the early years of consolidation and signal a need to reexamine the degree to which Meiji leaders pursued a uniform project of nation building during the years immediately after the Restoration. The idea that national consolidation was pursued through policies of differentiation is unusual in theories of nation-state formation. However, it is entirely consistent with Marxist theories of imperialism that argue that late developers like Japan and Germany, which began capitalist development in the so-called imperialist stage, did not have to completely dismantle previous societies to achieve modernization. Theorists ranging from Uno Kōzō to Antonio Negri have argued that in such cases "extraction can occur while production continues to function through non-capitalist relations."¹³ In Okinawa, the state decided to maintain the former kingdom's core economic and administrative systems even as it insisted that the people of Okinawa were Japanese subjects; this set the stage

for the transformation of the region into a cultural, economic, and political periphery of the nation-state whose difference from the empire's formal colonies was not entirely clear to observers or policy makers from mainland Japan.

The ambiguous position Okinawa seemed to occupy as both inside and outside of the national community intrigued scholars of various stripes and disciplines. Linguists, economists, archaeologists, legal scholars, and many others flocked to the region to study its customs, systems, language, and people decades before the so-called Okinawa fever famously brought Yanagita Kunio and Orikuchi Shinobu to the islands in the 1920s.¹⁴ The violence of 1879, the struggles of small producers in response, and the discursive battles that local intellectuals and politicians waged in order to appropriate or quell these struggles ensured that even though Okinawa was a prefecture rather than a colony of the Japanese empire, visitors approached the region like a culturally distinct space that they need to introduce, explicate, or extol to their readers in mainland Japan. Okinawa's exoticization was well under way by the end of the Meiji period.¹⁵

One of Japan's early Marxists and an economics professor at Kyoto University, Kawakami Hajime arrived in the islands in the spring of 1911. It was less than a decade after the state had established private property in Okinawa, and the islands were in the midst of the final round of land redistribution (*jiwari*)—a practice that the state preserved in the prefecture as part of the Preservation Policy.¹⁶ Kawakami's university had sent him to examine the impact of this redistribution on the social composition of agrarian villages.¹⁷ Early in his visit, he gave a speech called "A New Era Is Approaching" ("Shinjidai Kitaru") to a group of Okinawa's educators and politicians, in which he extolled the lack of nationalism he observed in the prefecture while the rest of the country was drunk with imperialist sentiment.¹⁸ His audience, most of whom were working hard to inculcate this very spirit into their pupils, was incensed by Kawakami's enthusiastic declaration that Okinawans were deficient in their devotion to the Japanese empire. There was a further uproar when the local newspaper published a transcript of his speech. Kawakami quietly left the prefecture without completing his scheduled two-week itinerary of travel and investigation.¹⁹

Despite the negative reception and the brevity of his visit, Kawakami was intrigued with what he encountered in the islands. He published an article titled "Individualistic Families of Ryūkyū's Itoman" ("Ryūkyū Itoman no Kojinshugiteki Kazoku") in the *Kyoto Law Review* (*Kyoto Hōgakkai Zasshi*). In the article, he completely left out the original intent of his visit,

excitedly discussing instead the “extreme individualism” that he discovered in Itoman, a fishing community located at the southern tip of Okinawa’s main island.²⁰ Noting his desire to return to the prefecture for further studies of this community, Kawakami went on to describe the distinctive family economy that he discovered in the sleepy village.

In retrospect, what piqued Kawakami’s curiosity in Itoman may have been the very thing that got him in trouble with the leaders of Okinawa’s political and educational establishment. Itoman’s resident fishing families observed a strict division of labor between men who went off to fish in groups of two or three on small canoe-type vessels and women who raced to the market in Naha—over seven miles away—on foot to sell the day’s catch in its freshest condition. On their long trek home, their pockets full of the rewards of their hard work at the market, the women collectively decided the price at which they would retroactively purchase that day’s haul from the fishermen. Once arriving home, each woman settled her accounts accordingly with her suppliers—her husband, brother, or both. They effectively controlled their own income and that of the men in the community as Itoman’s petty merchant capitalists. What intrigued Kawakami was that this gendered division of labor seemed to have produced a very distinct type of household economy. He observed that residents of Itoman valued their individual assets and preferred making loans to giving cash gifts, even to their closest family members. Women had more opportunities to accumulate savings, for example, but these did not accrue to the household. Rather, it was common for husbands to borrow funds from their wives if they wanted to build a new boat or make significant repairs to their current one. Kawakami quoted a local saying—“we do not even give money away to our own brothers”—to emphasize the degree to which this was true.²¹

Kawakami celebrated the practices of these fishing families as expressions of “extreme individualism,” evidence of progress that had yet to arrive in the prefecture’s largest city, Naha, or even mainland Japan’s agrarian communities. Their individualism was the primary reason for Itoman’s prosperity (he noted that people there ate meals of rice and meat three times a day, while most Okinawans battled constant hunger as they subsisted on meager diets of sweet potato and tofu). In contrast to the patriarchal large family system, which he said bred stagnation and promoted dependency, the individualism of the Itoman families’ economy promoted exploration and movement beyond a single locale. Although state actors in the first decade of the twentieth century also encouraged the movement of people from their hometowns as part of a broader strategy of territorial expansion, cultivation

of new markets, and expulsion of agrarian crisis outside the nation-state, Kawakami celebrated mobility for a completely different reason. He saw in the spirit of exploration that developed from this “extreme individualism,” a powerful antidote to the state’s efforts to inculcate nationalist sentiments that were intimately linked to a belief in an organic community bound together by shared kinship relations or territorial boundaries.²²

Kawakami would have found much to confirm his theory that the logical outcome of the social relations he observed in Itoman was outward movement if he had spent more than one day in the village. In the years before his visit, a significant number of fishing families had already left their hometown in search of new seas to fish. Beginning in the Meiji period, some went to Yaeyama, an archipelago of thirty-two islands under the jurisdiction of Okinawa Prefecture but much closer to Taiwan. Between the 1880s and the start of the First Sino-Japanese War in 1894, 108 families (159 people) had moved from Itoman to Ishigaki, the second-largest island in the Yaeyama archipelago.²³ These families were instrumental in forming the island’s first fishery association in 1911, the year Kawakami arrived in Okinawa.²⁴

If Kawakami had extended his study to these fishing communities on Ishigaki, he would have been struck by the wide range of people with whom these transplanted people shared their lives: former noble families from Shuri who arrived in Yaeyama soon after Okinawa’s annexation to take advantage of state funds for groups interested in embarking on reclamation projects; mainland industrialists who impatiently waited for their investments in mining and sugar to bear fruit; local women who had gone to Taiwan when it was annexed by Japan in 1895 as maids, prostitutes, entertainers, and small merchants but who returned to Ishigaki after being ridiculed as “Japanese aborigines” for their tattoos; young men from impoverished agrarian villages on Okinawa island who had ventured southward seeking jobs as agricultural laborers and coal miners; eager small merchants from the mainland positioning themselves to take advantage of new trade routes that had opened up with the colonization of Taiwan and Korea; a small number of young educators who had wandered into the outer islands to teach at one of several new elementary and middle schools; budding poets like Iba Nantetsu, Ishigaki Yōkichi, and Yamanokuchi Baku, who searched for words to express the changes that the expansion of the Japanese empire had brought to their hometowns; and, of course, local men and women of various stripes who looked on with a mixture of curiosity and worry as they detected the subtle transformations in the most intimate of their everyday relations with crops, animals, land, neighbors, and families.²⁵ This diverse

mix of people on Ishigaki—a condition that led to the naming of the island chain of which it was a central part, the Republic of Yaeyama (*Yaeyama Gasshūkoku*)—would have provided Kawakami with further confirmation that Okinawa was a region that was too much in flux to respond uniformly or positively to state efforts to inculcate a nationalist spirit.²⁶

The shallowness of the Okinawan peoples' identification with the nation elated Kawakami but confounded those who associated the impoverishment of the prefecture with their failure to inculcate a strong sense of nationalism in the islands. Their disappointment was the reverse of Kawakami's overly optimistic evaluation of mobility. Both views reflected a failure to understand that state policies toward Okinawa since annexation had created the very conditions that they either lamented or extolled. Fishing families' decisions to move to the Yaeyama archipelago in search of new markets and small cultivators' abandonment of their fields in search of alternative methods of survival were two sides of the same coin.²⁷ These and other paths that people took after the second disposition were responses to the dispossession that accompanied Okinawa's incorporation into Japanese capitalist society as a single administrative unit. The language of disposition effaced this process of dispossession and masked Okinawa's violent incorporation into a particular type of smooth space for the operation of capital—a national space—as opposed to a colonial space occupied by regions like Taiwan and Korea. By Kawakami's time, 1879 was just a distant memory that had been rewritten as a moment of (peaceful) national unification. Okinawa's difference was explained away as the result of the cultural deficiencies of the local population and their inability to handle the requirements of the new age, rather than the outcome of specific policies of dispossession enacted by the early Meiji state in order to facilitate capital accumulation.²⁸ This narrative led Kawakami, a materialist, to seek culturalist explanations for Okinawans' lack of nationalism.

By the 1930s, Okinawa Prefecture had been part of Japanese capitalist society for over half a century, but local intellectuals and observers from the mainland alike continued to believe, like Kawakami, that the region occupied a distinct time-space from the rest of Japan. The Okinawan people were seen as comprising a natural community, which to some, meant that they were marked with an original sin (they were not truly Japanese) that the state could alleviate to some extent through assimilationist policies but could never completely erase.²⁹ A variety of discursive and nondiscursive practices produced and reproduced this belief in Okinawa's original sin, which concealed the constant struggles between living and dead labor that took place each day.³⁰

Japanese Masks, Unruly Labor, and Okinawan Community

Okinawa's own leaders played the preeminent role in translating the uneven capitalist development of the prefecture into a story of the Okinawan community's cultural difference from the rest of Japan.³¹ As they critiqued state policies that promoted Okinawa's development in a manner that seemed overly focused on providing competitive advantages and profits to mainland capital at the expense of the well-being of the local people, they articulated a discourse called *Okinawa-shugi* that was predicated on their belief in an organic Okinawan community whose members were also part of the Japanese nation-state.³² In their capacity as local experts and technicians, they critiqued their prefecture's growing dependency on mainland markets and capital and called on their fellow Okinawans to organize alternative methods of production, consumption, financing, and selling in order to strengthen local autonomy (*chihō jichi*).

The difficulties that these intellectual, political, and economic leaders of the prefecture faced as they tried to build new associations based on the discourse of Okinawa-shugi pose an interesting dilemma. A close examination of their writings reveals that they had to contend not only with mainland capital's expropriative tactics but also—and just as significantly—with serious challenges to their legitimacy from within the community they claimed to represent and vowed to protect. Indeed, multiple axes of confrontation determined the articulation of community in the region. The dynamics among local leaders; representatives of the Japanese state and capital; and the prefecture's small producers, who made up the vast majority of Okinawa's population, must be untangled in order to gain a clear picture of the shifting terrains of antagonism that accompanied the region's second disposition in 1879.

These complicated and shifting dynamics are not unlike the conditions that anticolonial intellectuals like José Carlos Mariátegui and Frantz Fanon explored in Peru and Algeria, where hierarchies and class relations within a colonized people were crucially important to understanding how new social categories and relations between colonizer and colonized formed and transformed.³³ This book clarifies the relations of power that operated in the prefecture as it was transformed into a sliding frontier of the Japanese empire and focuses on the aggressive attempts of local intellectuals and leaders to win a contest that had serious economic and political repercussions. Like Fanon's anticolonial bourgeois intellectuals, Okinawa's self-appointed leaders wore many different masks. At times they were anticolonial activists,

invoking their right to make their own political and economic decisions in spite of a state that rejected the notion that Okinawans were prepared to handle this responsibility. At other times, they were social reformers who called on their people to shed their barbaric ways and even “sneeze as the Japanese do,” so that mainland observers would recognize them as full-fledged members of the national community.³⁴ They were also capitalists who fully believed in their right to capture the surplus value produced in their region by their people for personal profit. Okinawa’s self-appointed leaders, like local elites in colonized regions throughout the world in the age of imperialism, aspired to become and at the same time resisted that which dominated them.

As early as the 1890s, local leaders linked Okinawa’s fate to the Japanese nation-state—simultaneously their savior, oppressor, and ideal—and unwittingly constructed a logic in which Okinawa could never attain full equality with Japan. This, of course, did not stop them from trying. Equipped with the language of modernity that they acquired at the most prestigious institutions of higher learning in Japan, they identified the people as the biggest impediment to Okinawa’s liberation from colonized conditions. Their mothers, brothers, aunts, and cousins who insisted on clinging to their feudal practices, customs, and knowledge emerged as the main obstacles to prosperity, enlightenment, and acceptance. Local leaders constantly clashed with these barbaric people, whose customs, behaviors, and ways of life and work obstructed their visions of equality. They donned the mask of anticolonial nationalists to insist that these people transform themselves immediately into modern subjects to gain equality with the rest of the nation.

This abstract cause, which only barely concealed local leaders’ other mask as members of the petty bourgeoisie who aimed to become the primary exploiters of Okinawan labor power, lost out to the material realities of life in the prefecture. For, as Kawakami recognized during his short time in the prefecture in 1911, Okinawa’s cultivators, fishermen, merchants, and weavers were far from the feudal remnants that local leaders made them out to be. Many of Okinawa’s small producers transformed their practices or moved from their hometowns in response to the pressures that accompanied the penetration of Japanese capital into the prefecture and were unencumbered by the feelings of inferiority that plagued local leaders. They were concerned with protecting their ability to reproduce their household economies and refused to accept the practices and conditions that diminished their ability to do so. They were not willing to be abstracted by their spokesmen as free labor “in the process of capitalist valorization and the

production of surplus value” for capital, even if the capitalist wore an Okinawan mask.³⁵ Small producers often rejected their conversion into modern workers by bypassing modern financial organs that local bourgeoisie established in favor of community-based lending associations, purchasing frivolous commodities and paying large sums to female oracles instead of submitting their taxes in full, working in their small sugar huts rather than becoming cultivators for mechanized sugar factories, and so on. Far from being irrational, conservative, or ultimately fruitless responses to inevitable proletarianization, these behaviors were meaningful from the perspective of anticapitalist struggle because they were conscious acts that challenged capital’s ability to appropriate surplus value. Frustrated Okinawan leaders at times cautiously aligned themselves with Japanese capital in order to jump-start the process of converting these stubborn men and women into an industrial or agricultural proletariat. Their primary goal, however, was to mobilize the abstract Okinawan community to advance their project of building an autonomous economic space. This vision put members of the local bourgeoisie in a difficult position—caught between their desires for full political equality and complete economic autonomy vis-à-vis the Japanese nation-state.

Instead of labeling Okinawa’s leading intellectuals and politicians as either pure collaborators or resisters, this study draws attention to the multiple masks that Okinawa’s intellectuals and politicians wore. It argues that the Okinawan community gained its fullness from the clashes that took place between local leaders, who believed themselves to be the most authentic spokesmen for a region that was in constant danger of being demoted to a colony, and Okinawa’s small producers, who rejected many of their leaders’ modernizing policies.³⁶ Small producers, like the nineteenth-century French worker-poets that Jacques Rancière celebrates in *The Nights of Labor*, preferred to speak for themselves and carry out their own visions rather than sacrifice their days and nights to protect an abstract Okinawa.³⁷ Their refusals posed significant challenges to both the stability of the category of Okinawa and the establishment of capitalist relations of production in the prefecture.

The Problem of Okinawan Victimization: A Historiography

Despite the existence of multiple actors that shaped Okinawa’s modern history, the dominant tendency in narratives about modern Okinawan history has been to prioritize the telling of a single story whose ending is determined from the start. The milestones that scholars have commonly used to

mark Okinawa's never-ending condition of subjugation to external forces confirm this tendency. Its occupation by the United States, during which the most fertile lands were expropriated for the construction of military bases; the violence perpetrated against women that accompanied the culture of those bases; political discrimination that continued long after the end of formal occupation in 1972; continuing high unemployment rates and impoverishment; and even representations of Okinawa as an island of peace and naiveté are common entry points into the study of Okinawa that confirm a foregone conclusion. The question "Why Okinawa?" informs such studies, as if a more equitable distribution of such acts of violence among other Japanese would lead to a more favorable outcome.³⁸

The recording of Okinawa's differential treatment by the Japanese state was an important task particularly in the years immediately after World War II, as local scholars responded to what appeared to be a double betrayal. As if the sacrifice of Okinawa Prefecture as a fortress against Allied attacks on Japan proper during the latter stages of the war were not bad enough, Emperor Hirohito had authorized a second betrayal of Okinawa that culminated in Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru's negotiation of the Ryūkyū and Ogasawara islands' continued occupation by the United States following mainland Japan's liberation.³⁹ In light of these historical developments, scholars committed to the study of modern Okinawa viewed the recording of the economic and political sufferings that the people had endured since 1879 as an urgent task whose performance was necessary for ending the cycle of betrayal. As the intellectual historian Yakabi Osamu traced, histories written by Okinawa's scholars in the 1950s and 1960s primarily explored the question of how the region was incorporated into the Japanese emperor system economically, politically, and culturally since the Meiji period.⁴⁰ Implicit in these investigations was the question of why, despite loyal service to the state, Okinawans had been sacrificed like pawns in exchange for the safety of a more important chess piece at the end of the war.

Methodologically, these works began implicitly or explicitly with the recognition that the Ryūkyū kingdom's incorporation into the Meiji state had been incomplete, in much the same way that Japanese Marxists emphasized the failure of the Meiji Restoration to bring about a true revolution as a way of explaining the rise of Japanese fascism. Just as Japanese capitalism was assumed to possess a unique character that had deviated in tragic ways from the English model, Okinawa's development in the modern era was measured against the trajectory of modernization in mainland Japan, and introspection was deemed necessary for understanding the true nature of

this distortion.⁴¹ The formulation of the problem began with the assumption that Okinawa as a single region had deviated from the path of modernity from the moment of its annexation, and local scholars working during the occupation period debated the question of who should be held accountable for their society's inability to enter the time-space of modernity.⁴²

A challenge to this approach came from people's history (*minshūshi*) scholars in the 1960s and 1970s. Authors in this field did not assume a fundamental difference between Okinawa and Japan or believe that complete assimilation was necessary for the resolution of the so-called national question; rather, they focused on the way that ordinary people resisted the exploitative practices of the Japanese state in their communities.⁴³ Hiyan Teruo, Ōsato Kōei, Aniya Masaaki, and Yoshihara Kōichirō celebrated the energy and courage of commoners who demanded political or economic reforms; as Japanese subjects, they had the right to make such demands on the state.⁴⁴ Their works also depicted mainland capital and local politicians as seeking to extract the surplus labor of peasants, workers, and activists and to expropriate their communal lands and rights. The rise of this approach made the establishment of oppositional binaries impossible, just as the rise of social history and historical materialism in Anglo-American scholarship forced scholars to revise or abandon the core-periphery framework of dependency theory that had provided a critical edge to analyses of the relationship between advanced capitalist countries and their peripheries.⁴⁵

These historians lauded the courageous efforts of the Okinawan people in the face of overwhelming power imbalances, but their celebratory remarks were limited by their shared belief that resistance had not been successful or powerful enough to completely rid the region of the state's despotism. They could not help but write historicist narratives in which the state suppressed or co-opted potentially transformative movements or events and in which commoners' efforts to resist exploitation constantly stopped just short of primitive or elementary forms of resistance.⁴⁶ These scholars were still awaiting a final moment of liberation from the American occupation, so it is understandable that they could present stories of struggle before the war only as examples of courageous attempts by the people to fulfill their desires for equality and autonomy that were crushed by the overwhelming power of states and global capital.⁴⁷ In many ways, these stories merely offered sparks of hope, fragments of a much larger picture that was still awaiting its triumphant completion.

More recent works on Okinawa have built on this perspective, employing both comparative and despatialized approaches that sought to explore

a hitherto neglected theme in modern Okinawa's history: the high volume of migration from the prefecture to mainland Japan's industrial centers, colonial possessions, and beyond. As we have seen, people such as fishermen, colonial bureaucrats, maids, farmers, merchants, singers, workers, and actors traveled across the vast spaces of Japan's expanding empire in the early decades of the twentieth century. By critically examining these inflows and outflows of Okinawan workers in light of the broader transformations of Japanese and global capitalism, scholars like Tomiyama Ichirō and Sugihara Tamae linked political economic analysis with a study of the material conditions of production and the transformation of subjectivities. They explored how people accepted or resisted their economically disadvantageous conditions or transformed themselves and their communities as they left the boundaries of their hometowns and sometimes returned.

In *Kindai Nihon Shakai to Okinawajin (Modern Japanese Society and the Okinawan People)*, Tomiyama examined the discursive and material practices through which Okinawan workers were installed in a discriminatory labor market that functioned to discipline Japanese workers at the height of labor unrest in industrial centers in mainland Japan. Okinawan workers served as examples of bad workers and, hence, bad Japanese. Anticipating a broader shift in colonial studies that emphasized the mutually constitutive relationship between colony and metropole, Tomiyama clarified the structural relationship between the creation of a discriminatory labor market in the mainland and the so-called agrarian question in Okinawa's villages.⁴⁸ He argued that the transformation of the agrarian population into an industrial reserve army for capital, not stagnant conditions in agriculture, constituted the agrarian question of Okinawa that required further dissection. Contra Kurima Yasuo, an agricultural economist of the Kōza faction who argued that Okinawa's agrarian villages did not develop capitalist relations, Tomiyama and the agricultural economist Mukai Kiyoshi asserted that the countryside experienced significant class differentiation and developed landlord-tenant relations characteristic of capitalist society.⁴⁹ Tomiyama's work therefore brought together an understanding like that of E. P. Thompson that saw proletarianization as a process and the Marxist theory of Uno Kōzō that approached the agrarian question after World War I as a global, rather than a national, problem.⁵⁰

Like Tomiyama, Sugihara brought a new perspective to Okinawan studies—in her case, through an analysis of family-style agriculture and its transformation in Kenya and Okinawa.⁵¹ Her comparative study took its cues from the French economic anthropologist and Africanist Claude Meillassoux,

who in 1975 critiqued dependency theory for neglecting the internal workings of the domestic economy.⁵² The dependency perspective argued that in preserving, using, or destroying small-scale agricultural households, the capitalist system stripped away the peasantry's capacity for autonomous development. In contrast, Sugihara granted the peasantry agency. She argued that farming families reorganized themselves and adjusted to changing conditions as they became enmeshed in the global capitalist system; illuminating their actions is crucial to understanding the process of development. Dependency theory told stories that confirmed Okinawa's subjugation, and people's history anticipated a revolutionary outcome in the future. In contrast, her analysis emphasized the daily struggles of peasants to make the productive and reproductive decisions that confronted them every day.

This study draws from both Tomiyama's and Sugiyama's approaches, integrating political economic analysis with studies of subjectivity.⁵³ Such an attempt counters the approaches outlined at the beginning of this section that were ultimately limited by the assumption of Okinawa's victimization at the hands of the Japanese state and capital. Leaving aside the objectification and homogenization of Japan that historicist approaches depend on, the problem with them is that the outcome is determined from the start. The only conclusion that can be reached from a history that begins with an understanding of Okinawa's past and present as one of subordination is to prove how this unfortunate result came about, and doing so unwittingly validates the discourse that state actors and capitalists used to enact policies that discriminated against the people of the region.⁵⁴ Although the political significance of earlier approaches that operated in the dark and cramped spaces of capitalist exploitation, Japanese discrimination and American imperialism must be acknowledged, a different reading of Okinawa's modern history is not only possible but imperative, if we are to mount any significant critique of the cynicism that comes from the "social subjection to capital."⁵⁵

The Antagonism of Living Labor and the Possibilities of a Nonapocalyptic History

The turbulent waves of organized and spontaneous struggle; natural and manmade disasters; economic crisis and resolution that Okinawa and the rest of the world have recently experienced provide us with new cramped spaces within which to maneuver. The last round of globalization brought devastation to vast segments of the population and the commons but has also elicited new challenges from activists, theoreticians, and ordinary

people who have rejected both neoliberal and neo-Marxist discourses insisting that calls for revolution were outdated and ineffectual because of the flexibility and overwhelming power of global capital.⁵⁶ The groundswell of anticapitalist and prodemocratic struggles around the world—including the Arab Spring, the Occupy movement, the rejection of austerity measures in the Euro zone, and antinuclear movements—reenergized skeptics and necessitated a recalibration of thought in order to keep pace with the energies and desires of the participants in these struggles.⁵⁷ The present study takes its inspiration from these struggles and the theoretical interventions that accompanied them. It is driven by a desire to seize hold of the current conjuncture that is always in danger of becoming subsumed into a narrative of ultimate defeat.⁵⁸ The historical task and challenge is to suspend each moment of collective action—the anger, elation, confusion, and camaraderie that characterize it—in full color through an antihistoricist style of storytelling that can counter narratives of failed struggle with those of ordinary people who came together in their differences, united in their desire to destroy the forces that threatened to mutilate their lives. Only by suspending these moments of collective action in service of a counterdiscourse of anticapitalist struggle can we work against the privatization of desire and belief that deems struggle ineffectual after all.

Such a project requires the rejection of methodologies that organize the multiplicity of struggles and subjectivities into a single story of resistance that constantly confronts the overwhelming power of the Japanese state or capital. In contrast, this work employs an approach to the writing of modern Okinawa's history offered by Gilles Deleuze and Elias Sanbar: "Against apocalyptic history, there is another sense of history that is only made with the possible, the multiplicity of the possible, the profusion of possibles at each moment."⁵⁹ This requires a slight reworking of Marx's famous assertion in *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* that "men make their own history . . . under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past."⁶⁰ In contrast to Marx's method in *Brumaire*, which separates the agents of history who operate in the present from the conditions that they inherit from the past, a nonapocalyptic history values the "contingency of the encounter," a concept enabled by a specific reading of Marx that depends on "a particular thought of causality in which every effect of the capitalist mode of production must also and at the same time be a cause."⁶¹ This particular Marxist understanding of transformation does not prioritize revolution per se but understands various revolutionary moments as causes and consequences of social transformation. The utterances,

organizational attempts, literary works, expressions of desire, and small movements that implicitly or explicitly challenged existing notions of propriety, assumptions of hierarchy, norms of ownership and usage of the means of production, conventions surrounding the pursuit of individual and collective desires, and restrictions against speech and performance—the *so-cius* rather than the mode of production narrowly conceived—constitute the stuff of Okinawa’s modern history rather than its collateral damage. As small producers, Okinawans took matters into their own hands and acted to reject and destroy the material relations that were the cause of their suffering, articulating visions of society that had nothing to do with the local leaders’ concept of an abstract Okinawan community. Understanding the significance of their actions requires a theoretical perspective that pushes against the economism and functionalism that has long been associated with classical and Western Marxism. In short, it requires a nonteleological understanding of capitalist development.⁶²

The autonomist tradition of Italian Marxism represented by theorists like Mario Tronti and Antonio Negri was a major addition to the Marxist canon.⁶³ Deep schisms had emerged in this school of thought by the early 1980s, but it remained a powerful project because of its insistence that a careful reading of Marx’s *Grundrisse* and *Capital* revealed the serious threat that working-class struggles, no matter how big or small, posed to capital’s valorization process.⁶⁴ These theorists’ insistence on the centrality of working-class struggle to the process of capitalist reproduction and on the identification of capital’s strategies—for example, factory rules, contracts, and social pressures on the state—to seize control of the behaviors and subjectivities of workers outside the factory gates highlighted both the power and vulnerability of capital vis-à-vis labor power, the only commodity it could not produce on its own.⁶⁵ The theorists focused on capital’s necessary reliance on increased cooperation from the workers as the organic composition of capital advanced. Although this revealed capital’s successful and more real subsumption of labor, they argued, the contours of conflict and antagonism also necessarily intensified because workers’ internalization of the logic of capital meant that their desires in society multiplied and became impossible for capital to fulfill.⁶⁶

The autonomists’ theoretical contribution is that “the capitalist mode of production cannot be critically grasped except as a production of subjectivity.”⁶⁷ They highlighted Marx’s concept of living labor as both condition and limit of capital’s valorization process. In so doing they took as their central text the *Grundrisse*, which exposed the antagonisms inherent in the process

of converting people's work into dead labor that could be plugged into machines, rather than *Capital*, which explicated capital's successful conversion of people's work into undifferentiated human labor power. They also linked the concept of living labor to the concept of necessary labor, which Marx elaborated in his chapter on absolute and relative surplus value.⁶⁸ Increasing the portion of the production cycle designated as necessary labor time was understood precisely as a struggle between living labor—that part of labor associated with the needs and desires of workers and producers—and dead labor, the uncreative and unproductive part of the organic composition of capital as the working class emerged as a self-conscious category. No matter how successful capital's indoctrination process is, living labor—or the “constituent side of surplus labor”—conducts struggles over wages as part of a broader struggle to “communicate and constitute new social relations.”⁶⁹ Thus, it is exceedingly difficult for capital to control. Resources that are beyond the normal boundaries of either the state or capital are required to harness these desires.⁷⁰ Recognizing the need for force to maintain the delicate balance between living and dead labor enables us to understand capitalist society as one in which a latent condition of violence—described by some as a “perennial civil war”—underlies all relations between capitalist and non-capitalist actors.⁷¹ Working-class subjectivities that emerge through the constant struggles to increase the proportion of necessary labor time are immanent to capitalism's reproduction process. Despite its inherently antagonistic relation to living labor, capital requires the production of subjectivities that have revolutionary effects on the way people relate to each other, their own bodies, and the world and is constantly forced to transform itself through its antagonistic confrontations with workers who have desires and needs of their own.⁷² It is this relationship that Kawada wanted to highlight through his writings and film-making activities in occupied Okinawa.

Conflicts, or moments of antagonism that arise as dead labor and living labor clash in the process of capitalist development constitute modern Okinawa's history.⁷³ Far from being futile acts of failed resistance, producers' refusals to transform themselves into dead labor formed the conditions and limits of capital as it extended its reach to the prefecture.⁷⁴ Furthermore, the strategic alliances that were forged and identities that were adopted through collective struggle operated as countersubjectivities to capitalist, nationalist, and Okinawan subjectivities. Such an understanding enables us to combine our examination of multiple, conflicting, and shifting subjectivities with a political economic analysis that can draw the study of modern Okinawa away from the apocalyptic narratives that remain dominant today.

This approach reminds those who are discouraged by the revolutionary moment that never comes that “practice does not come after the emplacement of the terms and their relations, but actively participates in the drawing of the lines.”⁷⁵ The anticapitalist struggles waged by Okinawa’s small peasantry since the 1879 disposition and the countersubjectivities that emerged in the process take center stage in our account.

The Revolutionary Possibilities of Noncapitalist Sectors

Although the autonomist perspective provides us with an alternative to apocalyptic narratives of modern Okinawan history, it assumes that capital is continuously moving to higher organic compositions through working-class struggles—that is, autonomists did not escape the stagism that has been another dominant tendency of Marxism after Marx.⁷⁶ Problems with this approach have been noted by scholars centered around the journal *The Commoner* and the new enclosures project. For example, George Caffentzis, Silvia Federici, Massimiliano Tomba, and Mariarosa Dalla Costa have argued since the early 1990s that the autonomists’ focus on working-class struggle leaves the struggles carried out by people who were not part of the most advanced sectors of capitalism or did not reside in parts of the world that were really subsumed by capital outside the scope of revolutionary struggle.⁷⁷ That is, autonomist theory does not enable scholars of the non-West, so-called late-developing countries, colonies, or other regions like agrarian villages that did not experience a clear-cut transformation in the technical process of production to view struggles that emerged from those societies as serious challenges to global capitalism. Instead, the people who resided in regions that were only incompletely subsumed into the capitalist mode of production have to wait for the revolutionary struggle to materialize through either their region’s transformation into industrial society or salvation from the vanguard who reside elsewhere.⁷⁸ Due to these theoretical shortcomings, ascribing revolutionary meaning to Okinawa’s prewar struggles that were waged primarily by small cultivators and producers requires us to go beyond the autonomists’ boundaries of worker-capital confrontation into a murkier site, particularly for the Marxist revolutionary tradition. It requires us to look beyond classical Marxist definitions of the small peasantry as a transitional form that did not yet possess the proper revolutionary credentials.

Though autonomists virtually neglected peasants as agents of revolutionary change under capitalism, a thin line connects Marx and later writers

who regarded small-scale cultivators as potential agents of enduring social transformation. Marx, through his encounters with Russian progressives in the late 1870s and early 1880s; Mariátegui, observing Peruvian society in the mid-1920s; and Mao Zedong, as he formulated revolutionary strategies in the 1930s, all broadened their focus beyond a narrowly defined proletariat as the true drivers of revolution and brought the agrarian population front and center as transformative agents in capitalist society.

Marx's encounter with the work of Russian populists like Nikolay Gavrilovich Chernyshevsky, who wrote about the Russian commune during the period of the great reforms in the 1860s, provided him with material for a comprehensive exploration of how the peasantry might serve as a revolutionary force without first becoming capitalist producers who only had their labor power to sell.⁷⁹ He began to see revolutionary possibility in the agrarian villages that had not fully undergone capitalist transformation while being incorporated into a capitalist state. Populists' writings, political activism, and direct provocations led Marx to clarify his views about the universality of capitalist development and, by extension, the protagonists of revolution.⁸⁰ Vera Zasulich of the Black Repartition (Cherny Peredel) group sent him a letter in February 1881, asking him for his thoughts about what role the Russian rural commune might play in revolutionary action. His draft letters to her reveal that he, more than his comrade Engels or his successors Kautsky or Lenin, saw the peasantry as a potentially revolutionary force.⁸¹ In these drafts, Marx left open the possibility that "the rural commune may appropriate all its positive achievements without undergoing its (terrible) frightening vicissitudes" precisely because it existed alongside capitalist production but had not yet become subjugated by a foreign power.⁸² As Haruki Wada and Teodor Shanin have argued, Marx seemed to agree that the agricultural commune as it existed in some parts of Russia could produce the destabilizing forces necessary to fuel revolutionary activity against the tsarist state.⁸³ He tempered these views by cautioning Zasulich that this was a temporary opening, but these letters indicate that Marx did not assume that there was just a single road to revolution by a single protagonist, as classical Marxism subsequently insisted.

In his mid-1920s writings on the so-called Indian problem in Peru, Mariátegui also considered the revolutionary possibility of peasants who resided in agrarian villages that had not fully undergone capitalist transformation while being incorporated into a capitalist state.⁸⁴ Like the Russian populists, Mariátegui and his allies who founded the journal *Amauta* saw this as the most pressing issue for Peruvian progressive intellectuals. Although

he did not exhibit the type of romanticism that some Russian populists felt about the commune and the figure of the peasant, Mariátegui shared the conviction that if the triad of the *garmonalismo*, latifundium, and large capital could be broken, indigenous farmers who comprised four-fifths of Peru's population could be released from their conditions of servitude.⁸⁵ Once that was accomplished, the Indian community and its elements of practical socialism could form the basis of a new Peruvian society. Like Marx in his draft responses to Zasulich's letter, Mariátegui contemplated the possibilities of using existing communal practices and relations to form the foundations of a future noncapitalist society.

More than Marx, the Russian progressives, or Mariátegui, Mao believed that the peasantry was not only a transient social element that would inevitably disappear with the development of capitalism. Mao lived, fought, and worked with revolutionary peasants and saw that they had a distinct culture, sense of solidarity, and economic potential that others had been less willing to celebrate.⁸⁶ Spontaneous organizational activity by peasants in the mid-1920s convinced Mao that they possessed the revolutionary consciousness that was necessary to accomplish the threefold task of overthrowing landlordism, opposing capitalism, and defeating imperialist forces.⁸⁷ In turn, the Chinese Communist Party's victory in 1949 inspired peasant-led anticolonial struggles throughout the world—which challenged scholars who had long relegated the peasantry to the background of development to reconsider their own characterizations of agrarian communities as veritable black holes of thought and activity.

Peasant studies and colonial studies were two interdisciplinary fields that developed in this context.⁸⁸ In its early years, the former was a radical field that organized itself in the 1960s with the goal of situating peasants firmly in the story of modernity as active agents of struggle. It established its first institutional voice in the Peasants Seminar and the *Journal of Peasant Studies* in the early 1970s and consisted of a diverse group of scholars with various intellectual orientations—who, despite their differences, sought to bring the study of peasantry to center stage in academia.⁸⁹ Though its participants were committed to a Marxist framework, they challenged orthodox Marxism that relegated peasants to the time of premodernity and their actions to the realm of the prepolitical. Scholars in the field also critiqued the dominant approach in anthropology that saw the peasant as an eternal cultural Other.⁹⁰ Through their collective efforts, they showed the peasantry to be capable of cohesive political action and highlighted the need to expand the definition of the political beyond state action.⁹¹

Furthermore, peasant studies scholars introduced a new problem for Marxist studies through their critical reading of the work of A. V. Chayanov, a 1920s Russian populist. Chayanov formulated a specific theory of the peasant mode of production and argued that peasant societies had a logic of their own that was separate from the logic of capital, even after they had become formally subsumed by capital.⁹² The reception of Chayanov's theory was mixed, but the translation of his work into English and the creation of peasant studies journals, study groups, and workshops focused on the peasant question as a question of modernity provided an intellectual community for scholars who wanted to understand peasant political action on their own terms.⁹³ This field produced many seminal works in the social sciences, including James Scott's *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*. The positive reception of this work fortified links between radical peasant studies, new work in economic and political anthropology, and New Left Marxism.⁹⁴ Scott's work also revealed the overlapping concerns of the peasant studies field with Marxist theories of class formation and new anthropological approaches that were concerned with tracking "pathways of power."⁹⁵

Scott and Sidney Mintz, whose ethnographic works focused on peasants' responses to colonial capital's attempts to install plantation labor in their communities, played major roles in the development of the field of colonial studies. Taking their studies as starting points, Dale Tomich and Michael Taussig analyzed the ways in which peasant communities manipulated colonial capital's attempts to draw them into plantation labor. These acts of subversion frustrated plantation owners' ability to accumulate capital.⁹⁶ This approach, which converged with contemporary anticolonial struggles, rewrote colonial history as one of constant tension, violence, and struggles over the valorization of the colonial subject's surplus labor.⁹⁷ These and other works that took a historical materialist approach to colonial studies combined cultural studies' critique of economic reductionism with the experience of peasants drawn into proletarian labor in plantations to make clear the political significance of seemingly irrational responses by peasants to new forms of exploitation.⁹⁸

Recent Marxist Challenges to Classical Marxism's Teleology

Thus a small number of prewar Marxists and a larger circle of postwar social scientists attempted to grant peasants and agrarian villages status as actors and sites through which meaningful anticapitalist struggles could be waged. They implicitly challenged the historical stagism and economism of

classical Marxism while avoiding the romanticism and nostalgia for an unchanging precapitalist space within the modern nation that plagued many scholars who took a populist or agrarianist stance.⁹⁹ Despite their vast differences, these theorists argued that the dominant version of Marxism was unable to escape the idealization of capitalist development in England. They aligned themselves with Marx, who insisted during the latter part of his life that the discussion of primitive accumulation that he unfolded in *Capital* should not be understood as a universal process.¹⁰⁰ In his late works on Russia, Marx concluded that there was no single developmental path that any single country could follow to revolution and insisted that development on a national scale would take place through a complex convergence of global and local struggles, accumulation, wars, and alliances.

The latest incarnation of these challenges to traditional Marxism's stagism and Eurocentrism has come from theorists and activists gathered around *The Commoner*. Theorists affiliated with this journal retained the autonomists' commitment to illuminating the struggles against capitalism's reproductive process as part of capitalism's accumulation process but critiqued their clear designation of the working class as the vanguard of revolutionary struggle. Their deep engagement with feminist theory pushed its members to highlight the importance of nonwaged work and the antagonism of nonwaged workers to capitalist reproduction.¹⁰¹ Engagement with postcolonial studies also led scholars like Caffentzis and Federici to focus on illuminating how capitalist accumulation could occur without dismantling old structures or relations (gender and class) and how at times it reinforced existing hierarchies of power.¹⁰² They located within the *Grundrisse* the existence of transitional forms and the coexistence of earlier modes of production in capitalist societies to show that the time-space of capital was not one-dimensional, nor did it produce homogeneity as it enclosed larger swaths of the planet. By rejecting the transition from formal to real subsumption as capital's proper evolutionary path and by highlighting the importance of nonwaged work to the process of capital accumulation, their approach allows us to consider the struggles by peasants, workers, and women as meaningful moments of constitutive action that limited capital's ability to extract surplus value from their labor. Tomba explains that this inherent unevenness makes primitive accumulation not simply an originary moment in the birth of capitalism but a permanent feature of capitalist society: "Primitive accumulation and large-scale industry do not represent the beginning and the end of an historical process; both are traversed by state violence that, even today, regulates them as co-present elements in the contemporane-

ity of diverse forms of accumulation. According to these considerations we must speak of *permanence of primitive accumulation* . . . ‘accumulation’ is the continuous driving-power of capitalism.”¹⁰³

This theoretical intervention allows us to reconsider dominant assumptions of historical stagism and epochal transformation that have been prerequisites to historical materialist analysis. It also reminds us that multiple temporalities; noncapitalist modes of production; and so-called feudal thought, sentiment, and customs persist in countries regarded as having been successfully incorporated into the capitalist order since the late nineteenth century. What Ernst Bloch called “living and newly revived nonsynchronisms” in the context of Germany in the 1930s gain theoretical sharpness with an understanding of capitalism that no longer presupposes a clean break from one mode of production to another in a single national context.¹⁰⁴ This study highlights the moments of anticapitalist struggle that emerged from within these nonsynchronisms in modern Okinawa.

The Becoming and Limits of Okinawan Community

With the exception of this introduction and the first chapter, each chapter of this book has a similar structure. Each first presents the long view of history, or the electrical charges that accumulated in the air in a particular region of Okinawa that set the stage for a struggle. The next section narrates the eruption of a confrontation between dead and living labor, understood as peasants’ and cultivators’ decision to separate from their old community and to construct a new one. In contrast to labor histories of Okinawa and Japan that conflate the moments of separation, creation, and absorption into a broader story about the development of a particular movement, this project treats each as a distinct moment to illuminate the attempts that various Okinawan political and cultural leaders made each time to resolve the crisis. I clarify the desires and demands of my protagonists through an examination of their songs and other cultural productions. Each chapter then examines how Okinawa’s intellectuals and politicians responded to resolve the conflict between small producers, local leaders, and capital. Typically, local leaders reformulated particular demands and problems into a more general Okinawan problem and attempted to reorganize production in a manner that alleviated some of the economic pressures but that did little to respond to broader demands made by producers and cultivators to win greater control over their own lives. Each chapter concludes by examining what escaped re-territorialization even as Okinawa’s leaders quelled particular struggles

through force or compromise. These excesses that persisted, often times as collective memories of struggle or continued refusals to fully accept the forms of community that left Okinawa's producers and cultivators in their place as dead labor, amount to a powerful alternative history of struggle in the region.

Specifically, the first chapter traces Okinawa Prefecture's inclusion in the Japanese nation-state qua empire beginning in the 1870s in a manner that established it as a periphery—simultaneously inside and outside the Japanese nation-state—in political, economic, and cultural terms via the Preservation Policy of 1879. Through this policy, the Meiji government transformed traditional overlords into its functionaries and put them in charge of maintaining its authority in their old communities, expecting the people of Okinawa to fulfill their traditional responsibilities to them. Incorporating the former Ryūkyū kingdom elites into the bureaucratic structure of the Meiji state exacerbated existing social tensions and prepared the ground for new conflicts that subsequent chapters will illuminate and trace.

The second chapter investigates the Miyako Island Peasantry Movement (Miyakojima Jintōzei Haishi Seigan Undō), which unfolded between 1893 and 1895 and forced the Japanese state to revise its Preservation Policy. I read the movement as an act of refusal that exposed how the discourse and policy of preserving old customs and structures rationalized the endocolonization that the Japanese state required in its peripheries during the initial stages of its own formation. Capitalist relations were established in Okinawa partly because of the Japanese capitalist state's demands but just as importantly because of Miyako peasants' demands for a fundamental transformation of old systems. Though Okinawa's policy makers used the conflict as an opportunity to conduct the reforms that they had already been planning in the prefecture as a whole, we should not dismiss the significance of this refusal, which was born out of the determination of a small group of cultivators to destroy the existing society that threatened their well-being and to articulate an alternative.

The third chapter examines the tensions that emerged between the first generation of Okinawa's intellectuals and female weavers soon after the Miyako Island Peasantry Movement. It focuses on the conflicts between local advocates of the Movement to Reform Old Customs (Fūzoku Kairyō Undō), a project designed to transform the hearts and minds of the Okinawan people in preparation for the establishment of capitalist relations of production in the prefecture, and Okinawa's female producers and merchants. Ōta Chōfu, a prominent local intellectual, and others urged the

Okinawan people to Japanize their habits and customs based on the belief that assimilatory policies were necessary for Okinawans' acceptance in Japan and for the successful establishment of capitalist relations in the prefecture. Intellectuals and entrepreneurs established quality-control mechanisms and marketing strategies to strengthen local industry and appealed to an Okinawan nationalism to encourage greater participation in their program. To their chagrin, they found that weaving women, who were also the main dyers and peddlers of cloth were not at all interested in conforming to Japanese or modern industrial standards. Ōta was particularly concerned that these women were focusing on their immediate and petty profits at the expense of the development of the industry as a whole. He and other local intellectuals couched the conflict between local advocates of reforming old customs and these women as a problem of the backwardness of Okinawan culture, but it was actually a fight over who had the right to control and manage the prefecture's human and material resources.

The fourth chapter examines the difficulty that large-scale mainland sugar capital, which entered the prefecture in 1910, had in keeping its factories operating at full capacity. The problem was that central Okinawa's sugar producers chose to manufacture their own lower-grade sugar using small-scale, labor-intensive, and communal methods instead of submitting the cane that they grew as raw material to newly established modern factories. After clarifying the state and large sugar's response to nonselling alliances that the peasants formed, this chapter will link those responses to a move away from assimilatory strategies that local intellectuals had advocated during much of the Meiji period. This chapter will focus on Ōta and Iha Fuyū's newfound focus on instilling pride in the Okinawan people through the promotion of history, arts, and culture as the only way to counter the state's proposal to transform Okinawa into a colony under Taiwan's jurisdiction.

The final chapter investigates two major instances of political mobilization that unfolded in the summer of 1931 in northern Okinawa, the Ōgimi Village Reform Movement (Ōgimi Sonsei Kakushin Undō) and the Arashiyama Incident (Arashiyama Jiken). It situates these movements within the internal tensions that were heightened by the collapse of Okinawa's economy following the recession after World War I and the establishment of Marxist organizations in the 1920s, which undermined the type of Okinawan solidarity that prominent local intellectuals like Ōta and Oyadomari Kōei thought necessary for the attainment of economic recovery and political equality vis-à-vis mainland Japan. Both struggles allow us to see that local residents and their supporters responded to their economic hardships

and the monopolization of political decision-making power by local elites in ways that could not have been anticipated by Okinawa's leading intellectuals, who advocated both economic nationalism and spiritual unity based on their belief in the existence of an organic community of Okinawans.

This study concludes with a reading of “Horobiyuku Ryūkyū Onna no Shoki” (“Memoirs of a Declining Ryūkyūan Woman”), published in 1932 by the Okinawan writer Kushi Fusako. This short story, which appeared in a major women's literary journal, was a bold attempt to tear down the existing boundaries of Okinawa—something that the participants of the Miyako Island Peasantry Movement, the weaving women who refused to sacrifice their own profits for the good of the prefecture's industry, the peasants of central Okinawa who engaged in nonselling alliances, and the participants in the Ōgimi Village Reform Movement and the Arashiyama Incident all did implicitly—by pointing out the hypocrisy of those who invoked the Okinawan community to establish their dominance over other Okinawans. Kushi's story highlighted an important problem that all people critical of the peripheralization of the Okinawan community had to grapple with: how to reaffirm the existence of Okinawa and Okinawans while believing it necessary to transcend their status as Okinawans in order to have some sort of value in Japanese society. The story showed that as long as the category of Okinawa depended on reference to Japan or an essentialized understanding of community, meaningful connections and alliances between Okinawans and other exploited populations within the empire could not be forged. Although Okinawa's self-professed leaders could not imagine a notion of community that was not wedded to the Japanese nation, through their rejection of the abstract category of Okinawa offered by these members of the local bourgeoisie, small producers, weaving women, sugar producers, and other groups in the prefecture formulated radically different notions of belonging, working, and playing that did not seek to rescue, strengthen, or construct the Okinawan community. The visions of the small producers and others, which emerged out of their collective anticapitalist struggles, reflected their refusal to allow others speak in their name. Finally, these visions revealed the impossibility of those in power locally to take control of the reproduction of Okinawa as capitalist society and as such, constituted the limit of the Okinawan community.