Individual Presentations: Military Bases (1)

U.S. Military Bases and Violence against Women. ‘Stand up for Women's Rights’
Yacine Mancastroppa Niang (Ca’ Foscari University of Venice)

This paper would like to tackle the problem of U.S. military presence in Okinawa from the end of the World War II up until nowadays and the impact of this presence on the women of Okinawa, who often suffer sexual abuse or become rape victims of American soldiers. Dealing with rape is, in general, a difficult issue; statistics regarding rape are always slippery because rarely do women report rapes, intimidated by the ensuing humiliation, lack of credibility, the widespread tendency to blame the victim and the potential retaliation of the rapist. The problem with regard to Okinawa is more complex, linked to the lack of data and the privileged status enjoyed by the American military, stationed on the island since 1945.

What’s Going on Behind Those Blue Eyes?
The Perception of Okinawan Women by US Military Personnel in Okinawa
Nika NASHIRO (MA student, University of Hawaii at Manoa)

How do the GIs stationed in Okinawa perceive Okinawa and Okinawan women? The vast majority of publications about the GIs in Okinawa are written from Okinawans’ perspectives, portraying the GIs as troublemakers who endanger local communities. However, the GIs’ perspectives in media and other sources are left obscure and the majority of Okinawan women lack knowledge of the GIs’ views, putting themselves in dangerous situations that result in clashes between individuals that may escalate into conflict between countries. This research investigated the GIs’ perceptions of Okinawa and Okinawan women at micro and macro levels.

Constructing Politics in Okinawa. Culture, Memory, and Identity
Gabriele Vogt (University of Hamburg)

In Okinawan local politics, a variety of schools on Okinawan cultural identity have long competed with each other. They range from an understanding of Okinawa’s role in Japan as a narrative of victim (with their followers striving for more independence from the nation state) to perceiving the relationship between Okinawa and Japan as an ideology of common cultural and historical origins (thereby stressing the necessity of close cooperation). By exploring evidence of the existence of these competing schools of thought through qualitative research methods, and tracing their respective political implications, this paper contributes a study to the intersection of the concepts of culture, memory, and identity in political science.