

Where is the Church to Stand?

Christian Responses in Okinawa to the Issue of Military Bases

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THE ABDUCTION AND rape of a twelve-year-old Okinawan girl by three U.S. Military personnel on September 4, 1995, and the subsequent outcry raised by Okinawan citizens has served to establish a new landmark in postwar Okinawa history. It is from this event that subsequent events and movements in Okinawan society, especially those related to U.S. military base presence in Okinawa, are chronicled. Other such landmarks include the Battle of Okinawa (April 1–June 23, 1945), the U.S. military occupation of Okinawa (1945–1952), the U.S. military administration of Okinawa (1952–1972), and the reversion of Okinawa to Japan (May 15, 1972), all of which serve to divide postwar Okinawa into distinct periods.

The 1995 act of brutal sexual violence also forced the Okinawa Christian world to address anew the issue of the church's position regarding the half-century foreign military presence in Okinawa, the significance of that presence in terms of Christian mission in Okinawa and how that mission is to be lived out by Christians on a daily basis.

CHRISTIAN MISSION IN OKINAWA

The independent Kingdom of the Ryukyus flourished as a Southeast Asian trading crossroads in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and had close diplomatic ties with China from 1372. Its invasion by the

southern Japanese clan of Satsuma in 1609 signaled the beginning of the gradual drawing of the Kingdom into the orbit of Japan. Tribute and taxes were paid to both China and Satsuma until the Ryukyu king was abducted and carried off to Japan, the Kingdom dissolved and the formerly independent Kingdom of the Ryukyus was made an integral part of Japan in 1879 as Okinawa Prefecture.

The Ryukyu Kingdom's first contact with Christianity occurred in 1624, when a Spanish Dominican missionary priest, Fr. Juan de Los Angeles Rueda, landed on Ishigaki Island in the southern part of the Kingdom archipelago as he was returning to Kyushu from Manila to continue his mission in Japan. Ishigaki Eisho, the administrative leader of Ishigaki Island, extended hospitality to Fr. Rueda, who introduced the Gospel to Ishigaki and his family members, and later baptized them. The edicts issued in Kyushu prohibiting all Christian activities extended to the Ryukyu Kingdom; thus, when the news of the baptisms was reported to Satsuma by Ryukyu Kingdom officials, Ishigaki Eisho was banished to the distant island of Tonakijima and Fr. Rueda to Agunijima (both small islands far from Ishigaki, located west of the main island of Okinawa). In 1629 Fr. Rueda was put to death offshore Agunijima and in 1634 Ishigaki Eisho was returned to Ishigaki to be burned at the stake.

In 1844 a French warship landed in Naha to demand trading privileges and left behind a French priest, Fr. Forcade, who was subsequently housed in a Buddhist temple where he was carefully watched by Ryukyu officials. He was later joined by two other French priests. In 1846 the British Loo-choo Naval Mission sent a Hungarian Jewish convert doctor, Bernard Bettelheim, with his wife and children, as the first Protestant missionary to the Ryukyu Kingdom. Neither the French priests nor the Protestant missionary were successful in making converts or establishing a church, and the priests left for Nagasaki in 1848, while the Bettelheims departed for the U.S. in 1854.

In 1887 Rev. J.C. Davidson, an American Methodist missionary working in Kyushu, conducted a five-day preaching mission in Naha. In 1891 Mr. Hara Michinosuke, a Baptist theological student in Kobe, affiliated with the American Baptist Church, was sent to Okinawa to begin a new ministry funded by a woman in Scotland. In 1892 the British Missionary Bishop in Japan, the Rev. Edward Bickersteth, visited Okinawa. The following year the Episcopal mission was established with the sending of a Japanese deacon, Ushijima Kotsutaro; this mission continued until 1907. Churches established during this early period continued to be involved in mission up until the Battle of Okinawa in 1945.

As was true of the Christian church's experience throughout Japan, so also in Okinawa, the buildup of Japanese militarism in the pre-World War II years exerted strong pressures upon churches and Christians to conform. Obedience to the State and loyalty to the emperor were demanded of all Okinawan people who sought in this period to overcome the stigma of discrimination suffered under Japanese rule in the hope of achieving total acceptance as "true Japanese" by becoming totally obedient children of the emperor and acquiescing to State demands.

In 1941, when all Protestant denominations in Japan were forced by the wartime Japanese government to become a part of one united church, the United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyōdan), Christians bodies in Okinawa, including Baptist, Methodist, Holiness and Presbyterian churches and the Salvation Army were arbitrarily grouped together into one subdistrict of the Kyōdan's Kyushu District. At the end of the war, when Okinawa was separated from Japan and placed under U.S. Occupation, the Okinawa churches, their buildings destroyed and their clergy and laity killed or scattered in the fierce two-and-one-half-month Battle of Okinawa, were unilaterally cut off from the Japanese church and left to rebuild on their own.

POSTWAR OKINAWAN CHURCH REBIRTH

A distinctive feature of the postwar Okinawa church was the key role played by lay Christians who gathered for worship amidst the ruins. Herded into detention camps set up at various locations throughout Okinawa at the end of the Battle, citizens underwent investigation and subsequent clearance before leaving the camps to begin rebuilding their lives and homes. When they returned to their former locations, many were forced to relocate to new areas after discovering that their land had been confiscated to build numerous U.S. military bases throughout Okinawa.

Postwar evangelism began in the detention camps, conducted by lay Christians with the support of U.S. military chaplains, in the absence of Okinawan clergy. With the gradual release of Okinawan citizens from the camps, lay evangelism continued in local communities wherever people settled. Many of today's churches were reopened or begun in tents or other public facilities by lay Christians, and were only later able to call ordained ministers as they returned to Okinawa or young ministers as they completed

their theological education and received their ministerial ordination or credentials.

OKINAWAN LOVE - HATE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S. MILITARY

In 1950 I saw an Okinawa that was proud but in total disarray. This 1950 Okinawa was remembering and was hostile. They were entirely dependent on this intruder for economic stability, educational means, social privileges. They were still dressed mostly in cast off G.I. clothing, they were still eating a meal at a time, poverty was everywhere, touching every aspect of daily life... You can shun it but it remains. You can ignore it but it persists. You can sabotage but it will be victorious. THE MILITARY. 1950: They are still here (Bell 1993).

Most Okinawan citizens believed that the extensive Japanese military fortification of Okinawa in preparation for the 1945 U.S. invasion of Okinawa was based on the Japanese government's intention to defend Okinawa. Once the Battle began, however, it became quite clear that Okinawan civilians were expendable and were, in fact, seen as obstacles to implementing the Japanese military strategy of using Okinawa as a tool to hold off the invasion of the Japanese mainland. Japanese troops were stationed throughout both the main island of Okinawa and outlying islands, sequestering public buildings and private dwellings for their use and requisitioning precious food from citizens' meager supplies. Japanese soldiers pushed Okinawans out of the natural caves where they had taken shelter, accused them of being spies and punished them severely or killed them for using Okinawan dialect, raped women and girls, and distributed hand grenades to Okinawan families with instructions for their use upon command. Thus Okinawans ceased viewing Japanese military personnel as the "friendly

troops" and as their protectors from the foreign invaders.

Having been thoroughly indoctrinated with Japanese wartime propaganda concerning the "blue-eyed, long-nosed foreign devils," and the dire consequences and shame of being captured, Okinawans did their best to resist capture, committing suicide as instructed, although suicide was foreign to Okinawan thinking, rather than submit to torture, rape and death at the hands of the enemy.

While there were exceptions, for the most part, to their great surprise, Okinawan civilians were treated with kindness by U.S. military personnel who captured and rounded them up in the civilian detention camps, where they received medical care, food and clothing from U.S. military supplies. Thus, the image of the victorious U.S. military troops soon changed from "savage" to "savior."

When the Okinawan people returned to their home areas, they discovered that their lush natural environment, their homes, public buildings and communities had been destroyed in the Battle. U.S. military officials requisitioned building supplies to reconstruct schools and other public buildings. In 1950 the U.S. military government was also instrumental in the establishment of the University of the Ryukyus, the first university in Okinawa.

Separated from the church in mainland Japan under the terms of the agreement concluded between the U.S. and Japan at the end of World War II, Okinawan Protestant Christians formed the Okinawa Christian Association in 1946, which was reorganized as the Church of Christ in Okinawa in 1950 and, subsequently, as the United Church of Christ in Okinawa in 1957.

MILITARY CHAPLAINS AND THE REBUILDING OF THE CHURCH

The Okinawans, and especially the Christian church, had a problem. These

invaders are really two people,—the soldier,—the person. The soldier was doing as commanded—the person, that human GI was not a bad fellow—generous—cooperative—wanting to share and help—wore a cross like mine—how do I identify with him? If I, as a Christian, worship the same God as he, am I not choosing him as my brother?

While they were off duty some of them visit our churches. What to do about Chaplains? Should we receive fellowship, aid and help from the enemy in our midst?

Naturally, one of the initial areas of discussion was the fellowship concerning the military. There were sharp divisions in opinion, sometimes even sharper debates. The youth took one stance, the elders another, very little common ground. The question is probably not yet resolved and we were no closer to an agreement in 1955 than we were in 1950 (Bell 1993).

Military chaplains played a significant role in the restoration of the prewar Okinawan churches, serving as the conduit for requisitioning building supplies and equipment to enable impoverished Okinawan Christians to rebuild their worshiping congregations. Chaplains also assisted in the securing of land and the building of new churches throughout Okinawa. They became the liaison for U.S. military on-base chapel Christians who made monetary and material offering to support the resumption of Christian mission in Okinawa. Additional U.S. military chapel assistance included scholarships for young Okinawans preparing for ministry as clergy, Christian education directors and workers in Christian institutions in Okinawa.

Military chapel support also went to social agencies established to meet the critical needs of war-torn Okinawan society, including the children's home established for children who had lost their families in the

Battle, children whose families were unable to care for them, and children born of U.S. military fathers and Okinawan mothers.

In these and many other ways, the Okinawan church became heavily dependent, both financially and emotionally, on the generosity of military chaplains and chapel Christians in the early postwar years.

Yet, the generosity of U.S. military personnel was not always received without question. One Okinawan pastor recalls the early postwar years, stating, "Military chapel communities helped to rebuild the churches on the island. World Day of Prayer, Christmas, etc., were times for fellowship, when Okinawan and U.S. military Christians would get together. The Okinawans were welcomed by the military people as fellow Christians. But there was no recognition of the inconvenience, harassment, suppression of information, and all the humiliating circumstances under which Okinawan people lived" (Okinawan Consultation 1980).

Soon, the U.S. mainline denominations that had been involved in support of mission in prewar Okinawa began to resume support of Christian mission in Okinawa, both financially and through the sending of missionary personnel to assist in the rebuilding of churches destroyed by the Battle, the establishing of new churches and the launching of new medical, agricultural, educational and social programs to meet the desperate needs of postwar Okinawan society. Additional support was received from the Kyōdan for Christian mission in Okinawa. The strong bond of dependence the Okinawan church developed with the U.S. military chapels in Okinawa and U.S. denominational bodies was not seen as problematic until the 1960s.

Nevertheless, it is true that many non-Christian Okinawan people have found it very difficult to draw a distinction between the U.S. military in general, military chaplains and chapel Christians, the U.S. church

and American missionaries in Okinawa. This no doubt hindered postwar Christian mission in Okinawa. The first postwar missionary to arrive in Okinawa, Otis Bell, describes this confusion, saying, "I think that there were many Okinawans, especially the non-Christian people, that never really understood that we [missionaries] were not spies, we were not supported by the military, we were not an extension of the military. I think the church people themselves did not have this problem" (Bell 1993).

CRACKS IN THE KYÖDAN

In 1952 the trustees of the Kyōdan in Okinawa decided to pool and register all church properties belonging to the prewar denominations in Okinawa as a juridical foundation with the Government of the Ryukyus. This decision was opposed by two trustees, resulting in the Baptist pastors withdrawing the Baptist group of churches from the Kyōdan in 1953. They stated that the decision to consolidate denominational property under the centralized control of the Kyōdan represented a doctrine of church and church government which emphasized centralized authority over local church autonomy, a doctrine with which they were not comfortable. Their withdrawal brought an end to the hope of achieving a united Protestant Christian witness in Okinawa. This was further hampered by the arrival of the Independent Disciples of Christ, the Episcopal and the Seventh Day Adventist missions. In addition the Roman Catholic Church had already begun its mission involvement in Okinawa in 1947.

The hope of achieving organic unity was replaced by the subsequent formation of such ecumenical bodies as the Okinawa Christian Council in 1958, the Okinawa Christian Peacemakers in 1965 and the Okinawa Christian Heiwa (Peace) Center in 1983, each of which addressed the issue of U.S. military presence in various ways.

Creedal Dispute

Under pressure from the Kyōdan, the Inter-board Committee in New York (the North American body through which postwar cooperation for mission in Okinawa was channeled) and the World Council of Churches, the Christian Church in Okinawa hastily approved a Creed drafted by one of its pastors in 1954 without adequate study or discussion by the church. The missionaries related to the Church of Christ in Okinawa issued a statement the following year protesting the content of the Creed on the basis of its strong Swedenborgian theological influence, stating that they could not cooperate with a church holding such a creed. After a period of study, the trustees of the Okinawan church made the decision to reject the Creed and, in its place, adopt the Creed of the United Church of Christ in Japan.

Military Land Appropriations Dispute and the Church

During the period of the Korean War (1950–1953), Okinawa became a primary launching point to the battlefield of bombers, personnel and supplies, as well as the location to which wounded U.S. military personnel were transported to receive medical treatment. It also served as a primary "R & R" (rest and recreation) site, the place to which battle-shocked troops returned, their pockets bulging with battlefield pay, to release their pent-up stress on Okinawan women working in bars and brothels as well as women living in nearby local communities, before they were redeployed to the battlefield for the next round of fighting. Okinawan citizens were led to believe that such entertainment areas served as breakwaters containing sexual violence, making it safe for "ordinary" Okinawan women living in surrounding communities.

The Okinawan economy was fueled by all the military activity taking place during this

period, and large numbers of Okinawans gained their livelihood from jobs within the military bases. Additional citizen land was confiscated during this period to enlarge existing military bases or construct new bases. This resulted both in new construction jobs and additional space being provided for conducting heightened levels of military drills for military personnel prior to being dispatched to the battlefield.

The continued confiscation of Okinawa land, the sites of ancestral homes, extended family graves, important cultural assets, and the source of livelihood, became one of the first major sources of contention between the U.S. military command and Okinawa citizens. In the early 1950s, briefed by Okinawan church leaders, newly arrived missionaries soon began to raise questions about the unilateral way in which U.S. military forces employed bayonets and bulldozers to seize Okinawan citizens' land without adequate remuneration. This concern is clearly stated by the words of Otis Bell, Methodist and first postwar missionary to arrive in Okinawa, in his appeal "Play Fair with Okinawans!" which appeared in the January 20, 1954 issue of *Christian Century*.

On Saturday, December 5, 1953, the armed troops of the U.S. Army were called out to suppress what was supposedly called a Communist uprising but which in reality was a defenseless unarmed group of Okinawans [in Oroku, Naha City] who were protesting the use of their land without agreement and without payment by the Occupation Forces on Okinawa....

Since the Army has started to use the Okinawans' land these people have received one small payment. This was a small token payment, not required, to the Okinawans, for use of land from July 1, 1950 to April 28, 1952 (date of the Peace Treaty). This payment was not for

any agreed price of a past, present, or a future use of the land in question. The gift when it reached the individual land owner was so small as to the amount and value of the land used that it appeared insignificant....

From April 28, 1952, the land had been used without agreement or payment. On August 12, 1953, the government of the Ryukyus Islands ceased trying to get leases from the Army because they were unable to get agreements with the people....

If we are going to have a long term right relationship with the Ryukyuan people then something must be done to get a right foundation. No one believes that the Army has laid that foundation, even their civilian employees....

The Ryukyans are a peaceful people and they have shown a right spirit during these trying times but even the meekest of men sometimes rise to defend their rights. This has happened on Okinawa. We won the Battle of Okinawa but we are fast losing the respect of the people. It is the general consensus of opinion that the fault lies in a military occupation, that there should be a change to a civilian administration. Whatever the answer may be it must come soon or we will occupy a rebellious Okinawa for years to come.

In his "Translator's Introduction" to the book *The Island Where People Live: A Photo Documentary of the Troubled Land of Iejima, Okinawa Islands* by Ahagon Shoko, revered leader of the non-violent Iejima citizens' land struggle, Harold Rickard, early postwar Methodist missionary in Okinawa, writes:

On March 11, 1955, it happened in Iejima. Ten years after the end of World War II, and only a few years after the people had finally succeeded in rebuilding their simple homes and farm buildings from

war's destruction, the U.S. military came ashore to take the land of the farmers of Maja at gunpoint....

In mid-May I learned of this new incident from Rev. Nakazato Chosho. On May 18, I went with Mario Barberi, our agricultural missionary, to see the situation. It was as if another battle had occurred. Houses and livestock sheds were demolished. People were living in tents under the searing sun. We visited a little six-year-old girl who had been injured by rifle fire from U.S. soldiers....

Upon returning to Okinawa, we requested an appointment with General James E. Moore, the U.S. High Commissioner....

On June 15 we revisited Iejima to talk with Mayor Oshiro and report our meetings with the U.S. military officers. That visit was followed by a number of letters written to the English Language *Okinawa Morning Star*, to our church headquarters in New York City, and to the *Christian Century*.

On July 19, 1955, I personally witnessed the village of Isahama [in central Okinawa] taken at gunpoint and destroyed. The people's productive rice fields were filled by heavy equipment and turned into a U.S. military area. I felt ashamed to be an American.

During three days in October, 1955, the Price Committee [named for its chairperson, U.S. Congressman Melvin Price] conducted an on-site investigation and hearings. I attended the hearings along with Rev. Yoshio Higa [Okinawan church leader] and Rev. Darley Downs. The latter was a highly respected missionary to Japan who, representing the National Council of Churches in the U.S.A., spoke on behalf of the Okinawan landowners. Those hearings at least gave some publicity to the situation on Okinawa and accomplished the return of many acres of valuable land.... (Ahagon 1989, viii-ix).

Too Little — Too Late

Thus, while some individual Okinawan Christian leaders, church members and missionaries clearly sought to lend their support to the Okinawan citizens' land struggle in the 1950s, the words of Rev. Taira Osamu, Okinawan church leader and peace activist, in his "Preface" to the English translation of *The Island Where People Live*, seem to accurately portray the reality that, as a whole, the Christian Church in Okinawa did not perceive its mission to be the church's involvement in the land struggle:

When the land of Iejima was taken by the bayonets and bulldozers of the U.S. military, Mr. Ahagon and his friends visited the leaders of Okinawa, appealing to them to work to stop the plunder of the land. They called their movement "The Beggars' March." They also visited Christian churches and proposed a joint struggle. However, the churches did nothing. Then, after many years, at the installation ceremony of U.S. High Commissioner Unger [in 1966], when I shocked Okinawa, both without and within, by praying, 'May this new High Commissioner be the last High Commissioner [sent to Okinawa],' Mr. Ahagon said, 'Mr. Taira was too late. He should have acted earlier' (Ahagon 1989, v).

The "Koza Riot" and Protest by an Okinawan Church Leader

On December 20, 1970 the pent-up fury of Okinawan citizens regarding the oppressive U.S. military presence exploded in a riot outside a gate of Kadena Air Base, the igniting spark being a traffic accident caused by a U.S. Air Force personnel. Over 5,000 Okinawan citizens gathered to overturn and set fire to some 70 U.S. military vehicles and buildings within Kadena Base. The following day U.S. military officials responded with

the announcement of the dismissal of some 3,000 Okinawan military base employees. The base employees' labor union subsequently protested this unilateral action in their annual spring labor offensive negotiations.

A written protest was lodged with the U.S. Military High Commissioner by the Kyōdan's Okinawa District Moderator, Rev. Kinjo Shigeaki, in which he observed that the riot was a natural outcome of the Ryukyu government's policy of granting preferential treatment to the U.S. military forces in Okinawa. He reminded the High Commissioner of the concerns expressed on the occasion of the High Commissioner's installation, which included a call for the improvement in the welfare of Okinawan citizens, stating that the riot pointed out clearly the very fine line that Okinawans were forced to tread between living truly human lives and the grim reality of Okinawa's economic dependence on the bases. He declared that the riot represented Okinawans' cry for the restoration of their true humanity. He also directed a severe criticism at the High Commissioner, charging that he had not achieved a policy of fairness toward the two very different peoples which he governed by the systematic use of military power. Rev. Kinjo's appeal closed by referring to Japan's mistaken wartime policy, also based on military power and war. As one who felt deeply repentant for his participation in that policy, Rev. Kinjo stated that he was now raising his voice to protest such a policy, appealing for liberation from such a policy of military power, and issuing a prayer that it be replaced by a policy of peace and the affirmation that all people might live together in peace.

The Ecumenical Ministry to Military Personnel in Okinawa

In the 1950s, the necessity of off-post recreation facilities for thousands of Amer-

ican servicemen on Okinawa became evident to many Okinawan and American Christians....Accordingly, an organization known as the Committee on 'The Ministry to Service Personnel' was formed, composed of members of Okinawa Christian churches, Okinawa businessmen, missionaries, American lay Christians and Armed Forces Chaplains...In 1958, the Methodist Church in the USA send the Rev. and Mrs. George Huber to Okinawa to work with this group (from "The Ishikawa Servicemen's Center History and Purpose of the Ministry to Service Personnel on Okinawa").

Land was rented in Ishikawa (in northern Okinawa) in the names of the Okinawa Christian Council and the Ministry to Service Personnel, and a one-story building was completed in 1960, with a second-story being added in 1962. The ecumenical program of the Ishikawa Servicemen's Center was reported to have served 8,000-10,000 military personnel a month, although monthly statistical reports issued in 1968 and 1969 note the actual number at 2,000-3,000. In 1966, the Presbyterian Church appointed Rev. and Mrs. Warren Bost as the second directors of the Center. The Center program featured recreational, cultural, religious, language and community exchange programs. The Center was one of five such projects throughout Asia related to the Ministry to Service Personnel Overseas of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., but similar centers were also established by denominational groups around the U.S. bases in Okinawa.

The Vietnam War was a tumultuous period for Okinawa, just as the Korean War period had been, with Okinawa serving as a major site for launching to the battlefield, treating U.S. military personnel wounded in battle and providing "R & R" for returning warriors before they headed back into battle. As had been true throughout the entire postwar period, during this period as well

and up until Okinawa's reversion to mainland Japan to become Okinawa Prefecture in 1972, Okinawans had no recourse by which to appeal concerning the injuries and damage they suffered from U.S. military accidents, crimes and violence.

An Okinawan pastor describes the dilemma the Okinawan church faced in this period:

As the Vietnam War heated up, the anti-war movement helped to distance some clergy from the military chaplains. The Church of Christ in Okinawa was asked to accord missionary status to the director of the [Ishikawa] Servicemen's Center. But Okinawan clergy became more and more uncomfortable as they realized that the Center was there to help men who were on their way to fight in Vietnam. For many Okinawans were very much opposed to American's war in Indo-China. Okinawan clergy felt that the Center was a 'base outside the base.' Indeed, this was the strong impression of many Okinawan Christians.

During this period a small number of clergy and laity in Okinawa became involved in counseling military personnel who sought to declare their opposition to being sent to fight in Vietnam by seeking conscientious objector status.

At the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s questions and doubts about the U.S. involvement in Vietnam were being raised in Okinawa just as in other parts of Japan and the U.S. They were accompanied by doubts about the ecumenical church's role in ministering to U.S. military personnel stationed overseas with little concern and responsibility for the effects of the U.S. military presence on persons in local communities. This concern resulted in the 1980 "Okinawan Consultation on Military Bases and the Okinawan and U.S. Churches" and other meetings held to address this issue.

At the 1980 Consultation, Okinawan Christians shared their bitter experience of living under a foreign military presence in a frank way, making the U.S. participants keenly aware of how little U.S. churches knew about Okinawa.

The Baptist convention has three English-speaking churches and the presence of these churches has caused problems and challenges. There have been ways in which service personnel have helped the churches, including financial aid for local congregations and programs that enable seminarians to go to the [Japanese] mainland for study. But those with the strongest financial contributions exercise control. We have to make sacrifices and prostitute ourselves to live. I was pained deeply by a man who commented, 'How can Okinawans receive so much from Americans so uncritically.' Painful problems include an instance in which people wanted to protest the rape of a young woman but because of the presence of Americans they were intimidated and could not (Baptist pastor).

Heretofore, a taboo topic for churches in Okinawa, this is the very first time this subject has been on the agenda of a public church meeting....The Korean War brought a fundamental shift in the atmosphere on Okinawa. A U.S. human rights activist asked a Japanese human rights organization to investigate [the situation in Okinawa], which they did, and the results were published in the *Asahi Shimbun*. But after some years of discussion, many in the Church concluded that the preempting of land by the U.S. Armed Forces was not an appropriate matter for the Churches to address (United Church pastor).

Sometimes we feel as though the whole island was fenced in and that Okinawans are permitted only to live

between the fences. However, without the bases, we might be in the same situation as the Afghans, the Cambodians or the Vietnamese.... Indeed, we can hold this consultation only because the United States is protecting Okinawa (Episcopal priest).

When a missionary asked an Okinawan what he thought of the churches and the military bases he said, 'Do you want to get me in trouble? Are you trying to get me killed?' When I first came I tried to disassociate myself from the U.S. military. When people came to my church from the base, I went into hiding! We have not wanted to respond to the challenge of the bases. Indeed we have not responded (Roman Catholic missionary priest).

The program of the Ishikawa Servicemen's Center was closed, the property and building were disposed of in 1981, and the interest on the major portion of the proceeds of the sale were set aside for the use of a peace and justice ministry in Okinawa.

CHRISTIAN MISSION AND MILITARY BASES IN OKINAWA TODAY

According to the *Okinawa Church Survey*, a report published in 1992 by the Okinawa Church Growth Committee, there were 180 churches (2.5% of the national total) serving the 1,241,387 population of Okinawa Prefecture (1.0% of the national total). The 180 churches included 38 denominations, having a total membership of 11,573 (2.2% of the national total) and an average attendance per church of 38 (national total at 35). Interdenominational organizations affiliated with various churches included the Okinawa Christian Council, the Okinawa Evangelistic Mission Society, the Okinawa Evangelical Fellowship, the Okinawa Pentecostal Fellowship, and the International Christian Women's Club. In addition, there were eleven

interdenominational pastors' groups that met on a regular basis.

A unique feature of the Christian population in Okinawa, compared with other parts of Japan, is the presence of 20 off-military-base English-speaking churches, having a total attendance of 2,600. These denominational-based churches, usually located directly adjacent to military bases, operate quite separately from the U.S. military non-denominational on-base chapel programs. They minister to U.S. military personnel and their families who wish to affiliate with a church related to one particular denomination.

Thus 20 of the total number of 200 churches in Okinawa, or 10%, are English-speaking congregations established primarily to serve the military community, although some of them also offer programs in Japanese, Spanish and other languages to accommodate spouses and other non-English-speaking persons.

It would follow, then, that churches serving the U.S. military community, as well as denominations in which one or more local congregations serve primarily that community, would find it difficult to adopt a critical position toward the U.S. military presence in Okinawa. On the contrary, these denominations would be more likely to maintain a cooperative relationship with the U.S. military presence, participating in various exchange and fellowship programs.

Another factor that influences the position of the church regarding its stance on U.S. military presence is the strength of the ties to a U.S. denomination and that denomination's position regarding military power, that is, whether that U.S. denomination unilaterally supports U.S. military force.

A third factor is the degree of dependence of the Okinawan denomination or churches on the overseas "parent" denomination, whether it be financial, personnel or emotional dependence. If the Okinawan denomination or churches are highly depen-

dent on overseas church bodies, and the missionaries sent by those overseas bodies continue to maintain strong leadership positions in the Okinawan church, it is very difficult for the Okinawan denomination or churches to adopt a position on the U.S. military presence that differs from the position of the overseas "parent" church body. In many cases, this means the Okinawan church's hands are tied in terms of raising a critical voice in such ways as organizing or participating in protest activities critical of the U.S. military presence. This does not mean that individual clergy and laity may not participate in such activities on an individual basis.

CHRISTIAN INVOLVEMENT IN PROTEST OF MILITARY PRESENCE

A wide spectrum exists among churches in Okinawa in regard to their positions on military presence. Churches occupying one end of the spectrum include the Korean Christian Church in Japan, Okinawa Church, of which the vast majority of members are wives of U.S. military personnel stationed in Okinawa; thus, the church is totally dependent on U.S. military presence for its very existence, not to mention its financial backing. The same is true for individual congregations in other denominations. At the other end of the spectrum lies the United Church of Christ in Japan, Okinawa District, which since the period of the Vietnam War has chosen not to have any relationship with the U.S. military, military chaplains or military personnel and their families. This position was arrived at after concluding that not only does the U.S. military presence represent a threat to the creation of peace and a system of violence imposed upon local communities, both in Okinawa and throughout Asia and the Pacific Region, but also that in the 50-year-period the U.S. military had used the Okinawan churches and Christians for its own purposes. The

position of the vast number of other churches in Okinawa lies somewhere between these two extreme points on the spectrum.

However, it must be noted that even within these two churches' positions, as within most other churches in Okinawa, a variety of individual positions exist regarding the U.S. military presence as well as the much smaller Japan Self-Defense Forces presence.

Some of the factors that determine the different positions include the following:

- 1) *Church members employed on military bases.* In almost every church, particularly those located in central and northern Okinawa where most of the U.S. bases are located, there are church members who either have been or are currently employed within the military bases, and who are, therefore, totally dependent for their livelihood on the military base presence.
- 2) *Church members who are military base landowners.* Some elderly church members who had their land confiscated at the end of the war for the use of U.S. military bases continue to lease their land for U.S. base use and receive income from the Japanese government for the use of that land, and they pass down that land and its lease to their children.
- 3) *Church members whose livelihood depends on base presence.* Some church members are employed by construction companies, businesses and shops around the bases.
- 4) *Church members whose family members are married to active-duty U.S. military or retired military personnel.* In the early postwar years, especially, many young Okinawan women married U.S. military personnel, among them church members, their daughters and sisters.
- 5) *Church members who are Japan Self-Defense Forces personnel or their family members.* Some church members are

Japan Self-Defense Forces personnel who have come to Okinawa from mainland Japan in that capacity. In addition, due to the difficulty in finding employment in Okinawa, some children of church members have joined the Japan Self-Defense Forces in search of employment and vocational training, despite the strong distrust of Okinawan people toward all military power.

The situations described above make it difficult for pastors and other church members to adopt a strongly critical position toward U.S. or Japanese military presence out of consideration for the feeling of those church members who have some relation with either the U.S. or Japanese military presence in Okinawa. This also creates a delicate issue in terms of church finances.

Forms of Protest by Christians

1) FORMATION OF CHRISTIAN GROUPS

The Okinawa Christian Peacemakers, an ecumenical group of Christians including clergy, laity and missionaries from the Kyōdan, the Baptist Church and the Roman Catholic Church, was established in 1968, the founding purpose being to oppose war and military buildup and their effect on human life, the natural environment, society and the use of resources; to uphold human rights; to work for Okinawa's return to mainland Japan, and to achieve the elimination of nuclear weapons bases from Okinawa. Their activities included issuing demands and protest statements; holding rallies, hunger strikes and demonstrations; and participating in the activities of other organizations having similar purposes.

The Okinawa Christian Heiwa (Peace) Center, an ecumenical group of Christians, including clergy, laity and missionaries from the Kyōdan, the Baptist Church, the Catholic Church, the Episcopal Church and the Fel-

lowship of Reconciliation, was established in 1983. Taking the Christian Gospel as its foundation, the Center seeks to promote peace, uphold human rights and forge networks with Christians throughout the world, especially those in Asia and the Pacific Region. The Center's activities have included receiving two U.S. mission interns and one from the Philippines; organizing, coordinating and hosting international conferences; conducting exposure programs for visitors to Okinawa from other parts of Japan and overseas; publicizing and coordinating Christian participation in the four Human Chain protest actions formed around U.S. military bases (1987, 1990 - Kadena Base; 1995, 1998 - Futenma Base); publicizing and encouraging Christian participation in the annual International Peace Rally held on the occasion of the Battle of Okinawa Memorial Day, June 23; and participating in the planning and carrying out of other Okinawan citizen peace activities.

2) PARTICIPATION IN OKINAWAN CITIZEN PEACE ACTIVITIES

The four Human Chain protest actions around military bases and the annual Memorial Day International Peace Rally have provided Okinawan Christians the opportunity to join with non-Christian Okinawans to express their deep yearnings for peace. (In addition, denominational groups and local churches also hold their own annual Memorial Day programs, including the Episcopal Church Service of Prayer and Reflection and the Catholic Church Peace Prayer Procession from downtown Naha City to the southern tip of Okinawa Island). Other such opportunities in which many Christians have participated include frequent public rallies, demonstrations, hunger strikes, signature campaigns and sit-ins to protest military violence and accidents, and calls for an immediate reduction and ultimate removal of U.S. military presence in Okinawa.

Okinawan Christians have also helped organize and lead delegations to Tokyo, the U.S. and other Asian countries to appeal to ordinary citizens, churches and government officials regarding their concerns over U.S. military presence and its effects on both Okinawa and the countries of Asia and the Pacific Region.

The 1991 Persian Gulf War was a very traumatic time for Christians as well as for all Okinawan citizens. Just at the time that the War broke out, an International Christian Peace Conference was underway in Okinawa. One-third of the active duty U.S. military personnel in Okinawa, many fighter planes and supplies were dispatched to the Persian Gulf region. Other U.S. military personnel were brought from the U.S. for rapid update training and subsequent deployment. Planes and helicopters roared overhead night and day, until all of Okinawa seemed to be embroiled in the war. Okinawan citizens were shocked by a newspaper article appearing in a local newspaper the Monday after the War broke out, reporting that American military Christians in Okinawa had prayed at their Sunday worship service for U.S. victory in the Persian Gulf and for the safe return of U.S. military personnel to Okinawa. During this period, a daily morning prayer service was held by Okinawan Kyōdan members who prayed that peace would soon be restored to the Persian Gulf region. As had been predicted, when U.S. military personnel returned to Okinawa, the rate of military crime and violence, including sexual violence against women, escalated. Growing out of this experience a small ecumenical group of Christian women gathered to discuss ways to support the Philippine women brought to Okinawa since the 1980s to work in clubs and bars around the bases. Their concern resulted in the organization of a monthly meeting for fellowship with and support for Filipinos near the military base having the largest number of mil-

itary personnel and the largest entertainment district adjacent to the base.

The year 1995, being the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II and the Battle of Okinawa, was a significant year for all Okinawan citizens, Christians among them. Local church and denominations held special prayer and worship services and issued statements as a way of reflecting on the Okinawan wartime and postwar experience, and declaring a new commitment of the church to become a community engaged in peacemaking. On this occasion, the All Saints Episcopal Church held a special two-and-a-half-month program, the length of the Battle of Okinawa, remembering each of the over 200,000 victims of the Battle by reading their names aloud.

The 1995 rape of the twelve-year-old girl also galvanized Okinawan citizens to take action. Okinawan women, Christian women often leading the way, assumed strong leadership in many of the activities, including the first press conference protesting the rape, subsequent women's and children's rallies, and a large participation by Christians, women especially, at the 90,000-person October 21 Okinawan Citizens' Rally, the establishment of the Rape Emergency Intervention Counseling Center-Okinawa (REICO) on October 25 and the organization in November of the activist women's group, "Okinawa Women Act Against Military Violence." This group has continued to address U.S. military violence in Okinawa, especially that directed at women and girls. It sent a 25-woman delegation to Tokyo in November 1995 to appeal to the Japanese government and a twelve-woman delegation to the U.S. on a Women's Peace Tour in February 1996 to appeal to U.S. citizens, churches and government officials. This group has continued to uncover and publish statistics on U.S. military sexual violence against women and girls, to call for the removal of U.S. bases and personnel from Okinawa and to build an active women's

peace network both within Japan and overseas.

The current issue of concern in Okinawa related to U.S. military base presence is the U.S.-Japan joint proposal to build a new off-shore Marine heliport base in northern Okinawa as a replacement for U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma Base, located in a densely populated area in the central Okinawan community of Ginowan City. Okinawan Christians have joined other citizens in protesting the dangers to human life and environment, as well as the buildup of U.S.-military-presence that the proposed construction of the new military base represents. Christians, not only from northern Okinawa but also from all over Okinawa, have supported local citizens in their campaign for a citizens' referendum on the issue and have participated in rallies and signature campaigns held in Okinawa, mainland Japan and the U.S. to protest the U.S. and Japanese governments' attempt to impose an additional military burden on Okinawa.

Okinawan Christians Appeal to U.S. Denominational Bodies

A recent movement among Okinawan Christians is the directing of appeals to U.S. denominational national assemblies concerning the heavy U.S. military presence in Okinawa. They have worked with concerned U.S. church partners to submit resolutions calling for reduction and removal of U.S. military presence in Okinawa. Such resolutions have been approved by the United Methodist Church General Conference in 1996, the 21st General Synod of the United Church of Christ-USA in 1997 and the Episcopal Church-USA General Convention in 1997. In each case the approved resolutions were forwarded to the U.S. and Japanese governments. Similar statements have been approved by denominational and ecumeni-

cal bodies in Japan and ecumenical bodies in the U.S.

CONCLUSION

The people of Okinawa have a long tradition of peace, going back to the period of the Ryukyu Kingdom, when they were a people without weapons. Suffering the invasion, discrimination and military oppression by Japan, the devastation of the Battle of Okinawa and the subsequent 50 years of massive U.S. military presence has resulted in the strong conviction that weapons and military power do not bring peace or security. On the basis of this experience, all Okinawans long for true peace to be restored to Okinawa. Okinawan Christians are no different in yearning for peace, believing that God is the true source of peace and that, as faithful children of God, they are called upon to pray and labor to realize that peace. On that point, all Christians are in agreement. The point of divergence among Christians, even within such a small geographical area and close-knit society as Okinawa, is the difference in understanding about the meaning of "true peace" and how Christians are to go about ushering in that peace for which all pray and yearn to experience. For some Okinawan Christians and churches, it means focussing on proclaiming the Gospel and building up the church. For some Christians and churches, it means concentrating on Bible study and prayer in the belief that in their weakness they can do nothing and that only God is able to bring about true peace. For some Christians and churches, it means examining systems in society that seem to subvert and block the achievement of true peace as envisioned by God and seeking to challenge, change or remove such systems from Okinawa in order to realize true peace. As is true of all Okinawans, while the Okinawan Christian community has been unable to reach a clear consensus on how to go about restoring

peace to Okinawa, Christians are committed to continuing the ongoing struggle to realize God's vision of peace for Okinawa.

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