

“Paradise in a war zone”: The U.S. Military and Tourism in Okinawa, 1945–1972

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War and tourism exist in a complicated relationship in Okinawa. One manifestation of this is the fact that, despite their heavy presence on Okinawa’s main island, U.S. military bases and their personnel are often excluded from discussions about Okinawa’s tourism, which the prefecture has targeted as an area of major economic investment and expected growth. Yet American military personnel were some of the earliest tourists in Okinawa in the immediate postwar, consumers of a tourist landscape that the U.S. military was instrumental in producing for its personnel. In addition, tourism offers a rich window into some of the workings of the twenty-seven-year U.S. Occupation of Okinawa. This paper explores how tourism as a mode of engagement figured in both the imagining and operating of Occupation authorities’ rule of the islands, and how military personnel on the ground negotiated and understood their time there.

Keywords: Okinawa, American Occupation, military bases, military personnel and dependents, tourists, beach resort, People-to-People program

Introduction: Okinawa’s Tourism Industry and the Military Presence

It is clear that war and tourism share the same space in Okinawa when one considers the dominant images associated with the region in the Japanese imagination. On the one hand, Okinawa is regarded as “Japan’s Hawai‘i” in the popular media, and is a popular tourist destination for domestic tourists, famous for its beaches, tropical climate, and natural environment.¹ For many Japanese tourists—who make up the majority of tourists to the prefecture—vacationing in Okinawa offers a brief but tantalizing slice of a tropical paradise. On the other hand, Okinawa frequently appears in the mainland news media in relation to the presence of U.S. bases there, the direct result of America’s twenty-seven-year military Occupation of Okinawa (1945–1972) following the end of World War II.²

1 Tada 2015.

2 Okinawa prefecture has long protested the heavy burden of U.S. military bases that it bears. Though comprising only 0.6 percent of Japan’s total land area, Okinawa hosts 70.6 percent of U.S. military installations by land area. For concise and useful statistics, see “Base-related Data” on the website of the Okinawa Prefectural Government’s Washington D.C. office (Okinawa Prefectural Government Washington D.C. Office).

Many Okinawans oppose the presence of bases. They are angered by crimes committed by military personnel and their dependents, and lament that the protections afforded by the current Status of Forces Agreement make it difficult for Japanese authorities to prosecute perpetrators of those crimes. Okinawans are also troubled by the threat that the bases pose in terms of safety and noise because facilities like Kadena 嘉手納 and Futenma 普天間 are in densely populated areas; they are also more generally concerned that Okinawa remains a military target for attack by other powers because of the bases.

Alongside the political opposition to their presence, American military bases are, with increasing frequency in some discussions, explicitly identified as obstacles to the prefecture's economic development because they occupy prime pieces of real estate that could be repurposed for the tourist and other nonmilitary industries.³ In contrast, tourism is identified as a leading economic industry which is becoming increasingly prominent in the prefecture's economic vision for its future.⁴ The fact that income from tourism now constitutes more than twice the income from bases, or that the potential for economic reform of base lands is calculated to far exceed economic potential prior to their return, features often in these discussions, and adds to popular antagonism towards the bases.⁵

The antagonism towards the bases takes the shape of a resolute silence regarding their presence in the prefecture's tourism policy. The prefecture's current 10-year Basic Plan for Tourism Promotion (Okinawa-ken Kankō Shinkō Kihon Keikaku 沖縄県観光振興基本計画) aims to transform Okinawa into a "world-class tourist and resort destination" (defined as "Okinawa being equipped with basic qualities as a sophisticated tourist destination"), promoting its natural and cultural resources to create a "diverse" tourism, and increasing the number of visitors to Okinawa to 10 million by 2021.⁶ Reflecting this, the prefecture's current "Be. Okinawa" tourism campaign's promotional literature highlights Okinawa's beaches, nature, cultural sites, karate, and food, but makes no reference to the presence of U.S. military installations, which occupy 18 percent of the land on Okinawa's main island.⁷

U.S. military bases have not always been excluded from the prefecture's vision for its tourism industry. A 1962 report by the Okinawa Tourist Association (Okinawa Kankō Kyōkai 沖縄観光協会) noted:

Frankly speaking, the most obvious and most unexpectedly felt thing about Okinawa is the military facilities and the landscape of the bases. The mainland also had its

3 Okinawa's Washington D.C. office is unequivocal about this: "On the economic front, the existence of U.S. bases is now the biggest obstacle to the economic development of Okinawa." See Okinawa Prefectural Government Washington D.C. Office.

4 Okinawa-ken 2017

5 See Tomikawa 2009. In 1972, the proportion of the prefecture's income that came from base-related income and tourism income was 15.5% and 6.5% respectively; in 2012, the proportions were 5.4% and 10%. See Okinawa-ken Keikakubu Tōkeika 2016.

6 This comprises the twin goals of countering the decline of domestic tourists, who constitute 90% of visitors to Okinawa, by attracting both first-time visitors and repeat visitors, and increasing the number of foreign tourists. Okinawa-ken 2012, pp. 25–30.

7 The campaign makes no mention of the presence of bases in its various paraphernalia, even when its various suggested itinerary brings tourists into areas where it is highly likely they would encounter them. For example, Aaha beach in Central Okinawa is in a straight line less than 500 meters from the outer fence of MCAS Futenma. (Okinawa Prefectural Government. "Be. Okinawa." Available at <http://beokinawa.jp/> (Accessed 6 August 2018); Okinawa Prefectural Government. "Live Nuchigusui." Available at <http://beokinawa.jp/nuchigusui/> (Accessed 6 August 2018)).

period of occupation by American forces and there are still many military facilities today, but [when visitors] come to Okinawa, they learn for the first time about the bases’ strategic role, how large in scale they are and how far they spread. Regardless of whether one likes it or not, “Okinawa tourism” is also base tourism. Rather than not referencing [the bases] and leaving them alone as is done now, it would be more natural for Okinawa if visits to the bases are included as part of tourism, if even for the purposes of deepening mutual understanding.⁸

As this passage shows, bases were held up as an integral part of the Okinawan landscape at the time, and something that was difficult, if not impossible, to ignore. The report proposes that including American bases in the tourist circuit could serve the pedagogical purpose of teaching mainland Japanese tourists about the expansive nature of the American Occupation in Okinawa. A 1961 Japanese-language guidebook for Japanese tourists took a different tack. It suggested that base housing reflects “authentic America,” and that the facilities at Futenma, Rycom ライカム, and Zukeran 瑞慶覧 bases were examples of “housing areas just as [one would find] in Hawai’i and America. Seeing these is the same as going overseas.”⁹ For the authors of this guidebook, bases were fragments of “America” transplanted onto Okinawan soil, and they were legitimate slices of the American life that Japanese visitors to Okinawa could also enjoy as part of their time there.

The silence about U.S. military bases in the prefecture’s official tourist campaigns also does not fit with the reality of how tourism plays out on the ground in Okinawa. Gerald Figal has shown that there is a robust unofficial tourist circuit around American military sites and military paraphernalia patronized by both domestic and international tourists to the prefecture.¹⁰ The *Okinawa Times* recently reported on how mainland Chinese tourists are turning the “Michi no eki Kadena” 道の駅かでな rest area in Yara 屋良 into a major tourist attraction, reportedly exceeding the popularity of Ao no dōkutsu 青の洞窟 (“Blue Cave,” a famous dive spot) in Onna 恩納. The rest area’s popularity stems from the vantage point it offers of the entirety of Kadena air base, and Chinese tourists relish the opportunity to observe American military prowess first hand.¹¹

There are good reasons for the prefecture to leave bases out of its official tourist literature. As physical embodiments of a continuing regime of neocolonial domination by American military power which the Japanese government is complicit in supporting, the bases are politically difficult to deploy. Acknowledging them in Okinawa’s tourism plans would accord the bases a role to play in Okinawa’s economy, which would undermine the principles of an economic vision that imagines, and is predicated on, a decreasing place for the bases in the life of the islands.

Richard Butler and Wantanee Suntikul, in their edited book on war and tourism, challenge the notion that war and tourism are antithetical, and argue that tourism can not only persist in times of war, it may even benefit from conflict in some instances.¹² Indeed, Okinawa’s silence about the bases in its tourism policy is only one aspect of a larger and

8 Senge 1962, p. 25

9 Okinawa Kōshinjo 1961, p. 9.

10 Figal 2012, pp. 175–202.

11 *Okinawa Times* 2018.

12 Butler and Suntikul 2013, pp. 1–11.

more complicated relationship that a study of the prefecture reveals about the history of war and its uses in the present.¹³ Teresia Teaiwa's much-deployed concept of militourism—which identifies the collusion of the tourist industry and the military to support and develop tourism while obfuscating the reality of the military's presence and role in the process—is a provocative lens through which to view Okinawa as well.¹⁴ Her point that the tourist industry “capitalizes on the military histories of the islands” is an apt description, for example, of the “peace tours” that are a staple of the Japanese school excursion circuit.¹⁵

At the same time however, the peace tours and other war-related sites that enjoy official endorsement (such as the bunker headquarters of the 32nd Imperial Army which were tunneled under Shuri 首里 Castle) also suggest that there is a particular kind of narrative about the war that Okinawa's official tourism circuit employs and by which it is disciplined: one that emphasizes the brutal cost of the war for Okinawans and calls for peace. This narrative has little use for U.S. military bases, since—as some fear—they are the very installations that could cause the islands and its inhabitants to be victimized by war again. And while it is conceivable for the bases to be deployed as “negative attractions”—that is, as reminders and remainders of one of the parties who inflicted war on Okinawans, and as objects that pose an ongoing threat to peace in the islands—this negativity would interfere with the positive, healthy, life-affirming image of Okinawa that the prefecture's official tourism campaigns are investing considerable resources to promote.

The academic study of tourism in Okinawa mirrors the silence about U.S. bases in official tourism policy. It pays relatively little attention to the relationship between the U.S. military occupation of Okinawa and tourism, despite the work by Gerald Figal and others who point to the significance of this issue in Okinawa, and the robust body of literature on the relationship between the tourism and the military, especially the U.S. military, in enabling, legitimizing, and consolidating military occupation of foreign lands.¹⁶ Taking a hint from this literature, as well as from the editors of a recent special issue on tourism who point to “a radical approach to unpacking tourism” that “highlights how tourism, as a form of paradigmatic modern encounter, bleeds into diplomacy, militarism, and empire building,” this essay explores some of the ways that tourism was implicated and imbricated in the twenty-seven years of U.S. Occupation of the islands.¹⁷ American military personnel and their dependents were some of the prefecture's first postwar tourists as they sought out, and as military authorities provided, opportunities for rest and recreation, pleasure, and enjoyment during their tours of duty. But tourism also offers a rich window into the U.S. Occupation of Okinawa that illustrates how Occupation authorities imagined

13 Gerald Figal's comprehensive analysis of Okinawa's postwar tourism emphasizes its inseparability from the island's history of war. Figal 2012.

14 Teaiwa 1999.

15 For the peace tours, see Figal 2001. There may also be productive comparisons to be made with the tours at the “World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument” at Pearl Harbor. A provocative analysis is found in Gonzalez 2017.

16 Scholars have examined this relationship from a variety of angles, producing seminal texts (for example, Enloe 2014), provocative concepts (for example, Teresia Teaiwa's “militourism” mentioned earlier in Teaiwa 1999), and sustained interrogation (for example, Gonzalez 2013; Gonzalez and Lipman 2016; Buchanan 2016).

17 Figal 2012; Alvah 2007; Bender, Fabian, Ruiz, and Walkowitz 2017, p. 2.

and operationalized their rule of the islands, and how military personnel on the ground negotiated and understood their time there.

Before War’s End: Imaginations of Paradise

The tourist mode of the U.S. military’s engagement with Okinawa began even before the conclusion of the Battle of Okinawa at the end of June 1945. The May 1945 issue of the *National Geographic* magazine featured an article titled “Peacetime Rambles in the Ryukyus” that contrasts strongly with the reports of the increasingly ferocious battle on Okinawa that was unfolding in the pages of major American newspapers at the time.¹⁸ True to its title, the article is a long reminiscence by William Leonard Schwartz, a professor of romance languages at Stanford University, of his prewar visit to Okinawa and the exotic and unusual sights and sounds he encountered there.¹⁹ The article would have been a typical record of a touristic encounter with a foreign place were it not for the fact that it was framed through the American invasion of the Ryukyu islands that was happening at the very moment that the article was published. The article opened by noting that “American landing forces, closing in on the Ryukyu Archipelago, which stretches in an arc for 700 miles between Japan and Formosa, have invaded an island group few foreigners have ever visited.”²⁰ The article’s narrative focus on prewar travel not only reinforced this combination of “invasion” and “visit,” which linked the ongoing and intensifying American assault of Okinawa to a sense of travel to an unknown land, but the motif of travel also served, in turn, to reframe the ongoing invasion.

By sharing his own experiences of visiting the islands, Schwartz—whether intentionally or not—became himself one of those “few foreigners” to have visited Okinawa, and took on the guise of a reliable guide. Into this small group of travelers to the islands, Schwartz introduces Commodore Matthew Perry who stopped in the Ryukyu islands on his way to Edo Bay to demand that the Tokugawa shogun open Japanese ports in 1853. Schwartz notes that Perry’s expedition was intertwined with American strategic and military agendas, given Perry’s desire for the U.S. “to occupy the chief ports of the Ryukyus” and the expedition’s surveying work of the seas and land, opening a way for a parallel to be drawn between Perry’s expedition and the U.S. military invasion at that time. However, by associating Perry with missionaries, naturalists, or explorers who visited the kingdom for a variety of outwardly nonmilitary purposes, the text paradoxically dilutes the military dimension of Perry’s actions, something that could be extrapolated to the then-current U.S. invasion of the islands, mitigating ideas about its violent nature.²¹

This connection between “tourism” and “militarism” that informs the beginning of the essay resurfaces in other ways in the text as well. Schwartz’s essay includes several photographs of Okinawa’s prewar environment to give a visual sense of a place that seemed

18 Schwartz 1945. Schwartz’s father had been a Methodist missionary in Okinawa from 1907–1955. *New York Times* 1945a; *New York Times* 1945b; Rae 1945; *Washington Post* 1945.

19 While specializing in romance languages, Schwartz maintained a scholarly interest in Okinawa and Japan. In 1919, he lectured on the 1914 eruption of Sakurajima in Kyushu, and edited for publication in 1946 parts of Bettelheim’s dairy entries about Commodore Perry’s visit to the Ryukyu Kingdom.

20 Schwartz 1945, p. 543.

21 This echoes with George H. Kerr’s 1945 essay, “Sovereignty of the Liu Chiu Islands.” For a discussion of this essay, see Loo 2014, pp. 150–51.

to be “not Japanese [but] almost Hawaiian.”²² The photos provide visual details of an exotic place with exotic things—large tombs, an awamori liquor distillery, scenes of unmechanized agricultural life, Naha’s narrow streets—but they are prefaced by three aerial photographs of the islands’ landscape taken by American military reconnaissance aircraft. These photographs are arresting visual texts that capture and showcase the intricate geometry of the island’s physical terrain; there is little to hint at military invasion within the frame of these images, but their captions betray the ominous presence of war. Further, while these captions make explicit the violence that was either about to occur or that had occurred already, and in which the photos are implicated, they also include descriptions that turn away from war. In the first photo, the text explains that the area in the frame is a “Target for American bombs,” before returning to a non-war related description of Okinawa’s geography, noting that “virtually the entire island has similar terrain—mountainous and rocky, except for a narrow fringe of lowland and the coastal plain on which Naha, the capital, stands.”²³ Similarly, the photo titled “Winging over Okinawa, an Army ‘Recon’ made this revealing picture” comments that the “checkboard patterns [in the image] are villages with walled houses,” but then immediately informs the reader that “carrier-based planes from the U.S. Third Fleet [...] bombed Okinawa in January, February, and March.”

The text thus creates two spaces within itself: a space of exotic travel in a past time, and a space of U.S. military invasion in the present. This simultaneity of two realities and two temporal frames spills over into the essay, again in its description of Naha and Okinawan architecture:

Red-tiled Naha city has—or *had*—a fair proportion of two-storied Japanese dwellings with open store fronts [...]. Okinawan town houses—or *those that remain*—are one-storied and secluded behind walls of coral as high as the eaves, to shelter them from gales.²⁴

With the simple insertion of past tense (“had”) and speculation (“or those that remain”), Schwartz introduced the time of his present—that is, a time of war—into his account of travels in an Okinawa of the past. What would otherwise have been simple descriptions of particular features of Okinawan architecture become suggestions and reminders of the destruction that Okinawa was at the very moment experiencing without directly referencing the war.

Two months after Japan’s surrender, *National Geographic* again featured Okinawa in a short essay by the well-known war photographer, David Duncan.²⁵ This article was a variation on the rhetorical strategy found in Schwartz’s piece. In this case, Duncan highlighted Okinawa’s high military wartime value—“a base for the knockout of Japan”—as a preamble to a discussion of postwar, peacetime Okinawa. The essay was also a kind of travelogue, one which attempted to provide a sense of the radical changes that Okinawa was undergoing after the war, with Duncan observing how, for example,

22 Schwartz, p. 549.

23 Schwartz 1945, p. 546.

24 Schwartz 1945, p. 552. Emphasis mine.

25 Duncan 1945.

Bulldozers, steam shovels, scrapers, and other equipment were lifting the face of Okinawa, scratching airfields across its surface. Seabees and Army engineers were blasting and bulldozing four-lane highways the length and breadth of the island. Not a day went by but there was some drastic alteration in the countryside. Frequently Marines returning from the front lines got lost in places where they had known every hut, lane, and tree.²⁶

The sense of thorough and dramatic transformation to the land is unmistakable. The language of construction casts these changes as necessary progress, their rapidity captured in the predicament faced by battle-hardened soldiers temporarily disoriented in once-familiar surroundings. But told from the perspective of the American military, the text gives little sense of what these changes—ones that were turning Okinawa into what Yamanouchi Baku called an “unsinkable aircraft carrier”—would have meant to Okinawan people. There is no sense of how this process of “lifting the face of Okinawa” may have looked to Okinawa people, many of whom lost their lands in the forced requisitions carried out for the construction of those airfields being “scratched” into Okinawa’s surface.

Duncan’s text is accompanied by sixteen pages of attractive full-color photographs that gave it the feeling of tourist paraphernalia, but their effect is not dissimilar from the photographs in Schwartz’s essay. On the surface, the photos appear to be snapshots of a charming landscape and smiling, friendly Okinawans, images of the exotic captured by a visitor to the islands. On closer inspection, however, the images are a photographic record of the effects and consequences of the U.S. invasion on Okinawa and its inhabitants. American armored vehicles “wiping out Japs [sic],” marines scavenging at the wreck of a Japanese aircraft for trophies (“Marines seek Jap [sic] name plates and scrap for bracelets”), and Okinawans walking towards camps to house those who had lost or fled their homes. Yet the actual violence of the acts captured in the photographs is placed at arm’s length through the images’ glossy composition. American military vehicles move through a landscape that is still verdant and lush *despite* the reports of destruction; soldiers are shown at rest with the air of a group of campers; and Okinawans who are walking to refugee camps are carrying their belongings and moving in a seemingly unhurried manner, some with smiles on their faces and without suggestion of the crises and emotional toll of wartime and its aftermath.²⁷

Tourism has an explicit presence in the essay. Praising the island’s beauty, Duncan felt certain that “Okinawa is the most scenic island with the finest climate of any the United States has taken in the Pacific war,” and he was confident that “eventually, my bet is that Okinawa will remain one of our mightiest Far East bases and become a vacationland” comparable to the resorts of Palm Beach and Miami. Furthermore, Okinawa’s tourist potential had a personal dimension for Duncan too. Into his description of “freshly raked and immaculate” farms and friendly Okinawans, Duncan added:

26 Duncan 1945, p. 411.

27 David Spurr argues that *National Geographic* and its photographs are examples of the rhetorical trope of aestheticization, one of several that is deployed in Western colonial writing about non-Western people and places. It is a trope that “neutralizes the disturbing aspects” of power relations in the encounter between the colonizer and colonized by skillfully making the objects of the essays or the photos beautiful, and minimizing the importance of power relations in creating the conditions under which colonized people live. Spurr 1993, pp. 50–52.

My favorite spot on Okinawa is Hedo Zaki [*Hedo Misaki* 辺戸岬 or Cape Hedo], the northern tip of the island. Penny-sized fields of wheat creep right out onto the cliffs that knife up from the sea. Scrub palms border each garden. The heart of Hedo Zaki is a jagged, heavily timbered, cloud-capped pinnacle—formidable but beautiful as a lonely pagan land. Here is where I'd like to build a home after the war. Perched on the crest, its windows would open over the Pacific on one side and face the evening sun sinking into the East China Sea on the other. Of all the places I have seen, Hedo Zaki is the most romantic.²⁸

This appreciation of Okinawa's beauty calls to mind the desire that visitors to a place, enchanted by their surroundings into imagining an extended stay, sometimes express. But this articulation is worth noting for how Okinawa shifts from being a battlefield to a kind of paradise.²⁹ It is a particular kind of paradise, too. The landscape is void of human beings without being devoid of the human labor that made the land habitable and productive, thus suggesting a variation on the fantasy of *terra nullius* that writes out the existence of the people who live there, but not the products of their labor. And in its description of the land's "paganism," there is a suggestion of undeveloped nature, justifying the intervention of civilizing and modernizing forces.³⁰ Importantly, this description of Okinawa as paradise gives no inkling of the terrible brutality of the conflict that had just ended, or the reality of American military colonial rule that had just been inaugurated. Okinawa's transformation into tourist paradise did not entail an overcoming of the recent history of fighting, nor a disavowal of the islands' current and ongoing militarization. At work was an imagination that saw little contradiction between Okinawa as "vacationland" and as "one of our mightiest Far East bases."

During the Occupation: Creating Paradise

The U.S. military's interactions with Okinawa in the tourist mode continued after hostilities ended and the American Occupation of the islands began. Scholars have shown how the U.S. military cast overseas tours of duty as an opportunity to "see the world" and to experience new cultures that would ordinarily be financially out of reach, and the American

28 Duncan 1945, p. 411.

29 "Our Marines, battling on the edges of Naha, have nothing but a ruined city to take when they take it." *New York Times* 1945b. "The terrain on which we fight on Okinawa may not be naturally so difficult as warfare in a thick jungle, but the use the Jap [sic] has made of these high ridges to place his artillery so that he is constantly 'looking down the throats' of the Tenth Army and the Marines has made the southern part of this island more difficult to conquer than any other Pacific territory." *New York Times* 1945c.

30 Many scholars note the central role that the concept of paradise plays in Euro-American colonial imagination and its role in both enabling and legitimizing the military domination of these areas. Vernadette Vicuña Gonzalez's study notes the relationship between militarism and tourism in Hawai'i and the Philippines which are sites of "fantastical imaginings and military occupations" by the U.S. (Gonzalez 2013, p. 9). Gonzalez offers a powerful reminder that images of tropical paradise used to attract U.S. soldiers to tours of duty in these far-flung colonial possessions also informed their expectations of eroticized interactions with local populations who had been feminized within the framework of "rest and recreation," and in turn returned their "particularly sexualized vision of the tropics-as-paradise into the American national consciousness" (p. 13).

Occupation of Okinawa, like its Occupation of Japan, was no exception.³¹ The Department of Defense’s 1954 *Pocket Guide to Japan* pitched a similar idea of overseas duty as tourism overseas at the government’s expense:

To travel as a tourist to the Far East is expensive, but those who have made the trip say it is well worth the cost. As a member of the United States Armed Forces you become a world traveler at no cost to yourself, not only seeing but also working with the people and institutions of foreign lands.³²

Overseas military service in Japan was expressed as a valuable opportunity to become a “world traveler,” and the rewards were further amplified by how soldierly duties were cast in the manner of a “working holiday.” The pleasures of overseas travel were given additional significance for participants who were offered the experience of cultural interaction and exchange by working with people from other countries.

This message that overseas assignment involved, at least in part, opportunities for tourism and enrichment was similarly present in the Department of Defense *Pocket Guide to Okinawa* (1961). However, the *Pocket Guide to Okinawa* was careful to calibrate soldiers’ expectations, cautioning that, “It would be a mistake, in an essentially rural and village country such as the Ryukyus, to expect dazzling attractions found in Tokyo, London, or Paris.”³³ Indeed, the guidebooks provided by the Department of Defense or by Ryukyu Command early in the Occupation painted a rather bleak picture of tourist-related and leisure activities in Okinawa at the time. For example, a 1951 guidebook by Ryukyu Command for new personnel to the islands contained a brief section on “entertainment facilities” that was little more than a list of on-base libraries, clubs, movie theaters, and sports, with few options off base.³⁴ The shortage of opportunities for sightseeing and leisure on Okinawa appeared to be a sentiment widely shared by personnel on the ground at the beginning of the Occupation. In a 1947 article in the newspaper *Stars and Stripes* about Okinawa’s prospects for tourism, the author noted wryly that “we now pause—sympathetically—to allow readers stationed on the “Rock” time to turn to the comics,” in a knowing nod to the service people on Okinawa who considered this an outlandish suggestion given the conditions at the time.³⁵

The lack of tourist sites/sights or other diversions for American service personnel in postwar Okinawa was in part the result of the destruction that the islands suffered in the Battle of Okinawa. Photographs of the Naha and Shuri areas from immediately after the

31 Lisle refers to an example of a recruitment poster from 1919 that targeted “soldier sightseers,” and Buchanan shows how guidebooks to Italy promised “soldier tourists” the “great chance to do now, major expenses paid, what would cost you a lot of your own money after the war.” Lisle 2000, p. 111; Buchanan 2016, p. 596.

32 United States Department of the Air Force 1954, p. 6. Pocket guides were distributed to individuals serving overseas as part of their preparation. See, for example, “Preparing individual replacements for overseas movement (POR) and U.S. Army overseas replacement station processing procedure” (AR612-2, August 1969).

33 United States Office of Armed Forces Information and Education 1961, p. 1.

34 Headquarters Ryukyu Command 1951.

35 *Stars and Stripes* 8.4.1947. A letter to the editor from a soldier suggests that he would have agreed with this assessment: “I’m wondering if this is the relaxation, recreation, and education program we were promised as soon as the war was over” (*Stars and Stripes* 11.10.1945).

war are pictures of utter devastation. Okinawa's famous Shuri Castle—designated a national treasure in 1924 and a staple of the prewar Okinawan tourist circuit—was completely razed to the ground. Okinawans who had fled their homes to caves and mountains to escape the fighting were put into refugee camps after the cessation of hostilities. After release, many Okinawans returned home to find that their lands had been requisitioned for the construction of U.S. military bases. The Okinawan economy was also in shambles. Conditions for both Okinawan civilians and U.S. Occupation forces remained poor even four years later due in large part to the U.S. military's neglect of the islands. Okinawans lived in "hapless poverty" with few prospects, and one observer noted that the U.S. treated them with "less generosity in occupation than the Japanese did." American military personnel, who were in terms of morale and discipline "probably worse than that of any U.S. forces in the world," also lived in poor conditions in "Quonset communities that look like hobo camps" or "hovels."³⁶ Okinawa—the land, its people, and its occupiers—was simply in no condition to develop tourist sites in the years immediately after the war.

However, conditions started to change slowly in late 1949 when Major General Josef R. Sheetz was appointed military governor, and given a broad mandate to improve conditions in Okinawa economically and politically.³⁷ The development of tourist sites counted among those improvements when, for example, the "commanding general" made known that he was "desirous of having the Nakagusuku Castle 中城城 area maintained for sightseers, recreational activities, etc."³⁸ Nakagusuku Castle is a site of great significance in Okinawan history associated with Gosamaru 護佐丸, a fifteenth-century lord popularly regarded as a paragon of loyalty. The military government found that "the subject site is desirable as a point of vantage to view many of the historical and picturesque places on Okinawa and that the ruins themselves are photogenic," and thus had selected it as a "principal stop on Special Service sightseeing tours for transient ship's passengers."³⁹ The military government saw much potential for the site to develop lucrative sightseeing and souvenir businesses that would be operated by "industrious and imaginative Okinawans," therefore also promoting economic development in the local community. These businesses could be guaranteed a steady flow of customers by ensuring regular tour services to transport military personnel to the park at least every weekend. On 6 December 1949, the military government told the Okinawa Civilian Administration of its intention to turn the castle park into a "national park," and directed the local government to "study this matter" and furnish a budget for the project. By 28 December, the mayor was preparing to present his plan for the castle park's development, and construction was underway by February the following year.

The Nakagusuku project was to serve the twin purposes of creating a tourist attraction and providing an economic opportunity for the local community, but the military

36 Gibney 1949.

37 Sheetz served as Military Governor from October 1949 to July 1950. The *Chicago Tribune* called this the end to "do nothing days." *Chicago Tribune* 1950. See also Eldridge 2013, pp. 231–33; Fisch 1988, pp. 121–52.

38 "Nakagusuku Castle Project and Historical Point of Interest" 1949.

39 "Nakagusuku Castle Project and Historical Point of Interest" 1949. In the fifteenth century, Gosamaru moved from his base at Zakimijō 座喜味城 castle to Nakagusuku under royal orders to keep watch over Amawari 阿摩和利, a lord who commanded the well-placed Katsuren Castle 勝連城 on the peninsula northwest of Nakagusuku. A common rendition of the history tells of Amawari's ability to convince the Ryukyuan king with false stories of Gosamaru's treachery and his attack on Nakagusuku under royal orders. In an act of loyalty to the king at Shuri, Gosamaru took his own life rather than fight the forces of his king.

government also had other intentions. Authorities wanted to build a park that would “have all facilities,” including the sale of Coca-Cola, that “is primarily for the convenience of Occupation personnel.” Two hundred Okinawan laborers worked on the project and even local schoolchildren were mobilized to turn this historically significant Okinawan site into a place of recreation for U.S. military personnel. But the attempt to appropriate Nakagusuku was not entirely without pushback. A military government official felt the need to comment, midway through construction, that while the park “is designed primarily to give additional recreational facilities to Occupation personnel, it is not restricted to any group.” It is unclear what motivated the official to make this clarification, but it is not hard to imagine it as a response to a query about why a place of significance to Okinawan history, which was being prepared by Okinawan labor and with local Okinawan planning, had the appearance of a site off-limits to them.⁴⁰

Despite moments like this to cushion the Occupation’s use of Okinawan land, the reconfiguration of the main island’s landscape to serve its needs extended to other locales as well. The transformation of central Okinawa was significant enough that a guidebook suggested that the porch of the Fort Bruckner Officer’s Club offered an aerial view of the “American scene on Okinawa” that included shopping areas, theaters, U.S. army facilities, radio towers—the trappings of an American town engulfing spaces of local Okinawan life.⁴¹ If the Nakagusuku park project was an instance in which Occupation authorities were unable to monopolize the site, the beach resorts at Yaka 屋嘉 and Okuma 奥間 were examples of the opposite. Touted as “a chance to ‘get away from it all’ on the island,” these beach resorts were “some of the most beautiful in the Far East” and gave military personnel and dependents access to Edenic “stretches of sandy beaches fading into the crystal blue-green waters of either the Pacific Ocean or the East China Sea.”⁴² In an article about the Women’s Army Corp (WAC) which arrived in Okinawa in May 1951, service members were shown in bathing suits relaxing near coral reefs or in beach chairs at Yaka. There, they enjoyed swimming, tennis, and miniature golf while staying in cabanas with spacious double rooms that were “comfortably and attractively decorated.”⁴³ The Okuma Rest Center in the northern part of Okinawa island catered to officers and their families; it offered a restaurant (“where you can order anything from a hamburger to a New York steak, or if you prefer, pizza to sukiyaki”) and a double horseshoe-shaped bar, miniature golf and other activities that transported guests away from their everyday life in Okinawa as members of an Occupation force.⁴⁴

In addition to monopolizing space for Occupation personnel to spend their leisure time, the creation of the Yaka and Okuma Rest Centers was symptomatic of how Okinawa was becoming—as Duncan had foreseen earlier—associated with beach resorts within military circles. When “R&R” programs were opened in Okinawa in April 1955 for military personnel stationed in Korea, lodging at the Yaka Rest Area where they could enjoy swimming, sun-bathing, and fishing was touted as the program’s attraction.⁴⁵ By 1964, *Stars*

40 “Nakagusuku Castle Project and Historical Point of Interest” 1949.

41 Fuchaku, Higa, and Toyama 1969, p. 87.

42 Headquarters Ryukyu Command 1951; United States Army Ryukyu Islands (USARYIS) b, p. 21.

43 *Stars and Stripes* 1.5.1952.

44 United States Army Ryukyu Islands (USARYIS). “Okuma Rest Center” (n.d.). Okinawa Prefectural Archive.

45 *Stars and Stripes* 6.4.1955.

and *Stripes* called Okinawa “the Bermuda of the Pacific,” and extolled its attractiveness as an all-year beach resort.⁴⁶ The association of Okinawa with the motif of a paradisaical “beach resort” was not limited to temporary diversions available to military personnel. It became a more generalized motif through which Occupation personnel and their dependents represented their everyday life in the islands. In remembering her move to new base housing, one individual noted that she was loath to leave her family’s home on Awashi Hill because it “seemed like a perpetual summer resort. The wind murmured through the pines by night, and Bruckner Bay was always at the foot of the hill for a swim by day.”⁴⁷

During the Occupation: Engaging with Paradise

Local Okinawan efforts in the early postwar to develop the tourism industry as a way to rebuild the island’s economy identified American war veterans as a potential market. As early as 1947, calls were made for Okinawa to be developed into a tourist destination for American “veterans of the Battle of Okinawa and their families on their trips to the Orient [...] to stop over [in Okinawa] to visit the graves of their buddies or to revisit battlefields.”⁴⁸ The article’s author wrote approvingly of this because, as he noted, the Ryukyu Islands and sites like “Suicide Cliff” had become “part of our American heritage as Bunker Hill, the Alamo, Bull Run and Gettysburg” for those veterans.

Efforts to deploy tourism to revitalize Okinawa’s economy continued after the establishment in 1952 of the Government of the Ryukyus (GRI), which gave Okinawans a higher degree of self-government. The GRI opted to develop more than just battle sites to attract other kinds of tourists. In 1963, the GRI reported expecting 46,000 visitors by the end of the year, which represented a 25 percent increase from the previous year. Seventy percent of these visitors were expected to be from Japan, and the rest from the U.S., Taiwan, the Philippines, and other Asian countries, and this new group of tourists-consumers raised the need to diversify Okinawa’s tourist attractions.⁴⁹ A 1962 study of Okinawa’s tourist industry identified not only Okinawa’s battlefields, but also its cultural heritage sites, natural environment, “tourist cities” (referring to Naha, Koza コザ, and Nago 名護), and different customs and culture as “resources” (*shigen* 資源) that could be used to develop Okinawa’s tourism industry.⁵⁰ A year after the report, Nago opened Nago Castle (*Nan’gusuku* 名護城) as a tourist attraction, its inaugural festivities coinciding with a three-day cherry blossom festival at which the 3rd Marine Division Band played.⁵¹ The Nago Castle Park was part of the ten-year plan to develop the town into a “modern city” with modern infrastructure, seaside resorts, and amusement facilities that aimed “to give a maximum [sic] service to all residents of the town and also to make it a clear attractive tourist center.”⁵² The increasing availability of tourist sites like Nago Castle was reflected in Occupation tourist guidebooks too. Compared to early guidebooks that could offer mostly on-base entertainments, later

46 *Stars and Stripes* 6.12.1957.

47 Diffenderfer 1955, p. 284.

48 *Stars and Stripes* 8.4.1947.

49 *Stars and Stripes* 19.11.1963.

50 Senge 1962, pp. 16–21.

51 *Stars and Stripes* 5.2.1963.

52 *Stars and Stripes* 12.12.1963.

publications introduced radically expanded options and itineraries for touring in Okinawa, resulting in an expansion in the touristic gaze of Occupation personnel.⁵³

The increasing availability of more parts of Okinawa for tourist consumption coincided with the emergence of the U.S. military’s “People-to-People” program in which the military began to regard its personnel serving overseas as “unofficial ambassadors,” who played key roles in how local communities formed opinions of the U.S. military and the U.S. government and its policies. The “People to People” program began in 1956, and it aimed to give “the people of other countries a better understanding of the American way of life, our customs and traditions, our peaceful aspirations, and our devotion to freedom,” and to “generate among our own people a broader understanding of the people of other lands.”⁵⁴ The program applied to both military personnel and their dependents, with the hope that “our peaceful objectives and principles will be better understood throughout the world.” In a bid to make these interactions seem natural, the program was cast as “nothing more than the overseas version of the old American idea of being a good neighbor,” and comprised several straightforward and commonsensical components that centered around engaging with local people.

In calling on service people and their dependents to undertake these efforts, the military seemed concerned with persuading them to go beyond mere tourism. For instance, it was suggested that:

Sightseeing is fine, museums, castles and cathedrals all have their fascinations for what they tell us about the past [...] wherever the serviceman goes abroad he can enter a wonderland of new sights and sounds that will stay with him for years after he returns home. [But] Spain for him can be more than Segovia’s magnificently forbidding Alcazar; it can be the hospitable Spaniards who took him to his first bullfight and invited him home to sample *cocido* or *paella* washed down with delicious *manzanilla*.⁵⁵

The argument seemed to be that while sightseeing was an enriching activity, there was a different kind of experience to be had from more personal and sustained engagement with host cultures and communities, if one “gets out into the country and mingles” with local people. This was, in a sense, a recalibration of how the U.S. military used tourism. While tourism had been used to attract individuals to join the military and participate in tours of duty overseas, conventional tourism was no longer sufficient:

Although a holiday in Paris is a “must” for every serviceman in Europe, there is so much to France and the French beyond the City of Light. He’ll better understand and appreciate their sturdy individualism when he gets out into the country and mingles with Normans, Bretons, Alsatians, and Provençals, all imbued with *joi de vivre*.⁵⁶

53 For example, see United States Office of Armed Forces Information and Education 1961. The guidebook’s introduction to Okinawa’s capital city Naha included mention of Naminoue Shrine 波上宮 and the old capital at Shuri as well as to places further afield: from Itoman 糸満 and Kudaka Island 久高島 in the south, to Futenma, Koza (present-day Okinawa city), Kin 金武 in central Okinawa, and Nago in the north.

54 *Yank* 1960.

55 *Yank* 1960, p. 4.

56 *Yank* 1960, p. 4.

For the People-to-People program to work, the military needed to persuade its soldiers to be less like tourists, and to go beyond merely visiting and consuming local sights to engage and learn from local communities.

However, even though a recalibration of soldiers as tourists was being demanded, tourism could contribute to this endeavor. Beginning in 1960, for example, Occupation authorities in Okinawa organized “orientation tours” that targeted dependents of U.S. military personnel and members of women’s clubs to provide “knowledge of the Ryukyu islands and the culture of the Ryukyu people,” and as a way for members of women’s organizations to “acquaint themselves with the interesting area in which they will spend a few years of their lives.”⁵⁷ There were soon eight themed tours—culture, social welfare agencies, industrial, educational, governmental, arts and handicrafts, newspapers, radio and television facilities, and religion—with plans for more. The “Cultural Tour” offered “a glimpse of the traditions and cultural development of the Ryukyu people,” and included stops at the Shuri Museum, the “grounds of the former Shuri temple” (which likely referred to the Enkakuji temple 円覚寺), a bingata (traditional resist dye) fabric factory, and a potter’s factory in Tsuboya, while the “Religion Tour” took participants to Buddhist temples, Shinto shrines, and Christian churches on the island. Tourism was no longer only for entertainment and leisure, but now had a strong pedagogical component in which service people and their dependents would learn about Okinawa’s history and culture and show themselves to be respectful, informed visitors, and so encourage Okinawans to form positive opinions about the U.S. military presence. At the same time, these tours—especially tours of industrial installations—also functioned to showcase the benefits that the U.S. Occupation brought to the material and economic life of the islands, serving to legitimize the American presence on Okinawa to these newly arrived personnel and their dependents.⁵⁸

Official guidebooks also shared in this pedagogical function. As they became more comprehensive and offered a larger itinerary for travel, they also provided more detailed information about each place that would give readers the kind of background information to Okinawan’s history and culture intended by the People-to-People program. For example, the Army Service Club’s guidebook *Tours of Okinawa* provided an extensive list of tourist sites that began in the south of the island. Moving north, the guidebook introduced a startling variety of historical sites, religious sites, scenic overlooks, beaches, tunnels, and villages along with substantial information about them.⁵⁹ At the same time, texts like these were nodes of production of particular kinds of knowledge about Okinawa that, in this case, normalized the U.S. military presence by extolling the benefits of U.S. rule.

For example, in the section on Koza in central Okinawa, the text proclaims that Koza is the island’s second largest and newest city, a “postwar boom town which is growing

57 Office of Public Affairs, HICOM 1963. About the “social welfare agencies tour,” organizers noted that women’s club members “will have a particular interest in the welfare institutions of the Ryukyu Islands because they help support many of them. This tour will provide a view of a representative cross section of different kinds of welfare problems and the institutions that try to provide solutions” (p. 4). For women’s involvement in the People-to-People program, see Koikari 2017, pp. 22–64; Alvah 2007.

58 The “Industrial Tour” took participants to see “the new industrial enterprises which are changing the face of Okinawa,” and underscored that “much of this development has been due to United States economic assistance and spending by United States military organizations, military personnel, and their dependents.” Office of Public Affairs, HICOM 1963, p. 5.

59 Fuchaku, Higa, and Toyama 1969.

rapidly” thanks to the “American military bases nearby and the resultant spending of U.S. servicemen.”⁶⁰ The town, the text asserts, is well aware that it owes its prosperity to the American military presence: “No one knows better the benefits of the American servicemen’s business than do the individual citizens of Koza whose daily bread they supply.” Koza’s prosperity—“most of the citizens of Koza are making money, real money”—and the prevalence of well-painted houses with tiled roofs (instead of thatch) is offered as proof of this. Furthermore, the text also painted Koza as a gateway to a wider, American, cultural and economic sphere. Not only do people from “all over the world” come to Koza for work, “some of Koza’s leading businessmen returned to Okinawa after living and working in the United States for many years.” The implication is that Koza’s connection with the U.S. via the bases made it a place of possible connection to an outside (American) world and the favorable outcomes that those kinds of connections would bring. The message here is a clear one about the benefits of the American military presence, whose removal would doom the city to “crumble into dust in the classical American frontier manner.”

Individual Experiences: Living in Paradise

If tourism offers a window into some aspects of how the American Occupation of Okinawa was operationalized and normalized, tourism is also a window into how American military personnel understood their time there. They too engaged with Okinawa in the “tourist mode,” producing guidebooks and souvenir books as records of their time.

To commemorate their tour of duty in Okinawa, the personnel of the Naval Supply Depot at Tengan 天願 in central Okinawa compiled a souvenir book which was titled *Okinawa Memories*, and comprised mainly photographs of sites of interest and natural scenery.⁶¹ Some of these photographs echo those taken by soldiers in Italy that Buchanan analyzed, in that the reality of the war is excluded from the frame even as the images capture the destruction wrought by the war.⁶² They also mirror the photos in *National Geographic* articles, in that Okinawan people are absent from some of the landscapes that are captured in the photographs; where they appear, they too show few signs of the recent war or ongoing Occupation. The volume includes a section titled “The Girls” which was made up of images of young girls and women, the products of a male gaze that does not hesitate to appropriate and objectify female bodies.⁶³ Here, “Okinawan women,” like tourist sites, were exposed to touristic consumption as souvenirs to “refresh your Okinawan memories, good and bad, when we have all returned to our normal manner for living—the American way.”⁶⁴

The souvenir book opens with a survey of Okinawan history that suggests that the narrative of Okinawa’s history in guidebooks and official publications—for example, the *Civil Affairs Handbook*, *The Okinawans of the Loo Choo Islands*, and *Ryukyu: Kingdom and Province before 1945*, which underscore the strength and persistence of Okinawan identity—was absorbed by personnel on the ground, constituting a lens through which

60 Fuchaku, Higa, and Toyama 1969, pp. 99–102.

61 Naval Supply Depot, n.d.

62 Buchanan 2016, p. 608.

63 On the important issue of the gendered power relations that infuse the militarization of Okinawa in particular, see Ginoza 2016. The artist Yamashiro Chikako’s work is especially provocative. See Takemoto 2016 for an introduction to Yamashiro’s “I like Okinawa Sweet.”

64 See Naval Supply Depot.

they perceived their environment. The souvenir book demonstrates a degree of nuance in its treatment of the Ryukyu Kingdom's position as a small polity caught between two larger powers who sought to impose their will on the kingdom from time to time, but which nevertheless experienced "independent Okinawan development." In stressing the persistence of Okinawan identity, the narrative is part of a larger Occupational strategy which hoped that a celebration of Okinawan difference would temper local calls for reversion to Japanese control.⁶⁵

But the souvenir book also revealed unexpected moments of ambivalence. As a representation of their authors' experience in Okinawa, the volume demonstrates how even though they understood themselves as "tourists," they did not only peddle the motif of paradise or represent their memories as time spent in an unspoiled Eden. War was not entirely absent from the pages of their souvenir book, as some of the photographs captured a devastated landscape. The back cover of the volume features a hand-drawn map of Okinawa that has labels of important locations on the island like Naha, Shuri, and Futenma. Buried among these labels, however, are traces of the U.S. military's control of Okinawa's space: the bay of Nakagusuku-wan 中城湾 is also marked with its "American" name, Buckner Bay, as is Sugar Loaf Hill, the hill south of Shuri which saw fierce fighting in the Battle of Okinawa. Its strongest connection to the war is gestured at by the map's subtitle, "Showing the trip of the Japanese Peace Mission From Tokyo to Ie Shima to Manila," referring to the journey that the Japanese delegation made to Manila to discuss the details of Japan's surrender which stopped at the island of Ie Shima 伊江島. Indeed, the top left of the map features an arc that enters the frame from the horizon and ends in Ie Shima that marks the flight path of the aircraft carrying the delegation from Tokyo. In a sense then, this volume containing the memories of military personnel of their time in Okinawa was, at least for them, irrevocably tied to the war and the moment of American victory.

Another self-produced "souvenir tourist hint" guidebook, *The Ryukyuan Way*, also provides a window into how military personnel engaged with Okinawa and the kinds of negotiations that entailed.⁶⁶ The guidebook takes the form of an introduction to the different holidays that were celebrated in Okinawa. The holidays are arranged by months—which, like the names of the holidays, are given in both English and their Japanese or Okinawan pronunciation—and include the islands' legal holidays, customary or community celebrations, as well as American holidays (Mother's Day). The treatment of Okinawa's holidays here appears respectful of difference, and takes care to introduce their significance to the communities that celebrate them.

Interspersed within the text are sections about tourist sites around the island and musings about life in Okinawa. Importantly, Okinawan people are not absent from this text. The guide is not immune to the racist tropes which characterized American propaganda representations of Japanese people during the war, as can be seen in its caricature of

65 See Kano 1987, pp. 3–112.

66 *The Ryukyuan Way: Things to Do! Places to Go! Why Not? Did You Ever? A Souvenir Tourist Hint*. The authorship of the pamphlet is unclear; there is only an illegible signature on the first page but several things in the pamphlet point to an individual who is at least associated with the U.S. military. These include what is intended to be a tongue-in-cheek chart explaining local family structure using the language and hierarchy of military government as well as a limerick/poem titled "G.I. Blues" about being stationed at Futenma (see *The Ryukyuan Way*).

professional thieves in Okinawa as “stealie boy,” replete with buck teeth, round spectacles, “small shifty eyes,” and large ears.⁶⁷ But by and large, the guidebook portrays Okinawan people as generous, mild, warmly tolerant of and willing to “break the language barrier with the giant Americans.” They are hard-working people (“everyone works”) who labor in a myriad of ways to support their families; the Okinawan people who are employed by the military are “conscientious and competent workers” who perform a range of duties from the complicated to the quotidian. The author is highly complementary and appreciative of his family’s domestic helper’s invitation to her home for a meal, and talks of the adventure of taking the local bus up to Nago as he mingles with local people.

The text also demonstrates a degree of awareness of and reflexivity about the asymmetrical relations—limited though they may be—and American privilege upon which the U.S. military Occupation in Okinawa rested, and which enveloped all relations between military personnel in Okinawa and local communities. His references to the many women who work in the sex industry catering to U.S. military personnel, his account of an Okinawan woman and her daughter being badly injured by an American on a motorcycle, as well as his comment that Okinawans’ average wage is “below yours,” are all examples of the “dark side of life” in Okinawa related to the U.S. military presence.⁶⁸ The text also does not shy away from mentioning World War II and the heavy cost that *both* sides bore in the conflict; and its recognition that the changes Okinawa experienced since the end of the war are not neutral transformations but rather “Americanization not known a few years before” suggests a certain ambivalence about the American military presence in Okinawa.⁶⁹ The awareness also extends to reflections about the author’s place in Okinawa. A section titled “Things ARE different” offers a list of things about everyday life in Okinawa that acknowledges examples of American privilege and power (“having a maid,” “having a seamstress,” “the Oriental wife”), but uses that to highlight the dissonance and disjuncture that infused daily life for Occupation forces in Okinawa.⁷⁰ The author ends his list with the sardonic query, “Sounds like paradise in the war zone, doesn’t it?,” a gesture at the kinds of negotiations that individual military personnel undertook as they navigated life in Okinawa.

Conclusion

Butler and Suntikul are right when they argue that casting war and tourism as antithetical is an oversimplification of a complex relationship between two kinds of human activity. For American service personnel stationed in Okinawa in the immediate postwar period, the islands were simultaneously a space of war and of tourism; the former stemming from the American invasion during the Battle of Okinawa and its Occupation of the islands in the context of the Cold War, and the latter deriving from the quotidian desire for leisure. However, the relationship between the U.S. military and tourism in Okinawa was not limited to military personnel’s consumption of Okinawa’s tourist sites. Instead, this essay has explored how “tourism” also provides a useful means of examining the mechanics of the U.S. Occupation of the islands. Not only did tourist tropes inflect imaginations of Okinawa

67 *The Ryukyuan Way*, p. 7.

68 *The Ryukyuan Way*, pp. 15, 20.

69 *The Ryukyuan Way*, p. 19.

70 *The Ryukyuan Way*, p. 20.

before the end of hostilities, the image of Okinawa as a beach paradise in American military circles was strengthened further during the Occupation. Through tourism, Occupation authorities encouraged military personnel and their dependents to learn about Okinawa and demonstrate the benefits that American rule brought to the islands; and the language of tourism was used by American military personnel to represent their experiences in Okinawa. But tourism was not only a way in which Occupation authorities and personnel made Okinawa legible to themselves. Rather, the coexistence of the trope of “touristic paradise” and its nuances of pleasure with the realities of war was another example of the contradictions that inhered in everyday life in occupied Okinawa.

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