

SYNÆSTHESIA

COMMUNICATION ACROSS CULTURES

Communications Journal
ISSN 1883-5953

Hideki Yoshikawa
Translator A. David Ulvog
book review
Spring 2018
pp. 6 – 7

published by



Information concerning announcements
and services can be found at:

- scholarly journal: www.synaesthesiajournal.com
- contact editors: editors.synaesthesia@gmail.com

This work is published under a Creative Commons [license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).
Permission is granted to forward electronically to others and
to post Journal texts for non-commercial purposes following
Open Source guidelines, provided they are reproduced intact
and the source indicated and linked. To publish SCAS Journal
text in electronic, print and/or other forms, contact the editors.

Critically Examining Okinawa's Base Issues:
A Review of 'Okinawa under Occupation' (2017)¹

*Okinawa under Occupation: McDonaldization and Resistance to Neoliberal Propaganda*² is a late 2017 book authored by Miyume Tanji, a political scientist residing in Australia, and linguist Daniel Broudy, a professor at Okinawa Christian University. This book, written in English (and featuring occasional interpretations of Japanese propaganda) aims naturally to garner the attention of audiences hailing from English-speaking countries as well as audiences across the larger international community.

Through a thoughtful presentation of post-WWII history and contemporary events, the authors describe and critically examine ongoing issues of the U.S. military base presence in Okinawa from an original perspective and within a novel analytical framework. The questions that arise from their wide-ranging in-depth analysis, however, are directed toward us Okinawans and should engender serious engagement.

Tanji and Broudy analyze structural discrimination³ signified, mostly evidently, in the inordinate number of U.S. bases garrisoned in Okinawa as a means of maintaining state hegemony within expanding globalization under the direction of neoliberal doctrine. This situation, they argue, necessitates various forms of propaganda. As a way of describing the appearance and use of neoliberal propaganda in Okinawa today, the authors adopt George Ritzer's sociological model of McDonaldization⁴ and expand on it in order to explain "actually existing neoliberalism"⁵ as it now appears in Okinawa Main Island.

The authors superimpose onto Okinawa this sociological perspective, critically assessing globalization and its effects on social relations. They work within the tradition of critical discourse analysis⁶ (CDA) to reveal and make sense of the sophisticated propaganda generated by the governments of Japan and the United States as well as through corporate media and educational systems, all of which make possible the safeguarding of the status quo typified in the vast U.S. base presence.

In addition, as they deftly employ these perspectives, the authors convey both a veiled sense of indignation at the current state of affairs and the attendant injustices that befall Okinawa as well as their understanding and support for Okinawa's long island-wide struggle. Underlying their approach is the clear sense of mission the authors maintain as researchers and as citizens who seek to communicate accurately to as wide an audience as possible Okinawa's precarious position.

What the authors depict from this perspective and analytical framework is not just an Okinawa captured in a perpetual state of victimhood. It is an Okinawa that has transformed itself in a way that internalizes the plans of the

military-industrial complex with its 72-year postwar presence.

It is an Okinawa where those who gladly welcome further militarization and those who still recall U.S. military land seizures during the military administration (USCAR) and vigorously oppose the dictates of militarization today try to make sense of life as they co-exist side-by-side.

Tanji and Broudy suggest that at least two kinds of harm emerge from various incantations disseminated by official sources and their clients: "the current concentration of bases is a geopolitical necessity," "Okinawa is economically dependent upon the bases," and "even if a base is built at Henoko, there will be no environmental impact." The monotonous propaganda produces a sort of mental and physical suffering. Those who accept such messages conform with plans to do physical harm to the natural landscape. Those who resist the propaganda in local government, media organizations, and educational systems suffer the mental anguish of being unable to effectively resist those plans.

In the book's preface, the author's acknowledge their own limitations as relative outsiders interested in studies of "language and history" and keen to observe how "sign, symbol, and image are used by ... centers of power to fortify systems of social and economic inequality."⁷ Indeed, they admit that their work is meant to "raise wider awareness of these conditions and to disclose their scarcely perceptible truths."⁸

Their book causes me, as an Okinawan, to wonder why the land and sea and air are still effectively "under occupation" by the U.S. military even after reversion in 1972. What does our inability to use English to negotiate directly with the United States or its military say about our power to speak?

We must not avert our eyes from these aspects of the problems we all face in Okinawa. How should Okinawa change? And how will we develop the strength to resolve the problems we all contend with? I hope that many concerned citizens who live in Okinawa will read and discuss this book, and come together to act.

Reviewer Bio: Hideki Yoshikawa is an anthropologist and Adjunct Lecturer at the University of the Ryukyus, Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts, and Meio University. He is a regular contributor to *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* and has published articles in *TruthOut*. He is the International Director of the Save the Dugong Campaign Center and Director of the Okinawa Environmental Justice Project.

Translator Bio: A. David Ulvog is Associate Professor in Modern Languages at Okinawa Christian University and a specialist in Japanese Constitutional Law.

Notes and Bibliography

¹ Hideki Yoshikawa's review appeared initially in *The Okinawa Times* newspaper on April 12, 2018. This English translation of his review conforms to principles of direct grammatical translation from the original Japanese publication as well as, wherever further context and clarification warrants, principles of pragmatic and semantic interpretation. The results appearing in this English language book review have been shared with and approved by the original author before publication in this journal.

² Miyume Tanji and Daniel Broudy, *Okinawa Under Occupation: McDonaldization and Resistance to Neoliberal Propaganda*, Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

³ Author unknown, "Critics of 'indigenous people' designation must recognize history of annexation and oppression," *Ryukyu Shimpo*, April 29, 2016.

⁴ George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society: New Century Edition*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2000.

⁵ Op cit. 2017, 40-41.

⁶ Teun A. van Dijk outlines the goals of this tradition in "Aims of Critical Discourse Analysis," (1995) *Japanese Discourse* vol. 1, pp. 17-27.

⁷ Op cit. 2017, ix.

⁸ Ibid, ix.