1 Re-thinking gender and militarism in Cold War Okinawa

On March 3, 1960, Brigadier General John Ondrick gave a speech titled "Why Are We Here?" at a women's symposium in US-occupied Okinawa. Speaking to an audience of American and Okinawan women, Ondrick painted a startling picture of Cold War struggles. With its plan for "aggressive conquest of Asia," the forces of communism had already achieved some success, pulling China into its bloc and building "formidable military forces dedicated to the purpose of the ultimate enslavement of the people of Asia." The only reason the communist forces had not yet achieved global domination was "the superior military power of the United States" that had been fending off the danger engulfing the world. Given the precarious nature of the post-war international situation, the answer to the question "Why are we [the Americans] here?" was obvious: to wage a heroic battle against communism that was threatening the free world.

While emphasizing the significance of the fight *against* communism, Ondrick also felt it necessary to explain what the US was fighting *for*. In post-war Okinawa, US military forces had been tirelessly working with the local population to "devise and implement plans leading to the upgrading of the Ryukyuan economy and to achieve a progressive rise in the standard of living." The list of projects pursued under US guidance included development of new industries, improvement of public health, and expansion of education. The occupation of Okinawa was about improving the lives of the local population. Given the humanitarian objectives pursued by the Americans, Ondrick argued, an allegation that the occupation was a case of colonialism was groundless. While "the purpose of colonizing a foreign area is to make profits," the US did "not receive a profit from the islands." Rather, Okinawa was "a source of great expense," indeed a "burden," which Americans were willing to bear for the sake of world peace.

Defining the occupation as a humanitarian endeavor, Ondrick went on to emphasize the central role women could play in American operations in Okinawa. The success of the occupation critically hinged on "the degree that understanding and willing cooperation exist between us [the US and Okinawa]," and women, he said, could "assist significantly in identifying ways in which we can achieve a higher degree of mutual understanding, of tolerance of each other's

way, and of dedicated cooperation leading to the attainment of these mutually beneficial goals." A gathering such as a women's symposium was an ideal occasion for cultivating mutual sympathy and affinity, since "the more we see each other, the more we talk to teach other, the more understanding we will have between us." Advocating women's involvement in the occupation, however, Ondrick immediately characterized their participation as non-political: "I only ask this splendid group of women, and the women you represent, that you do not become involved in politics and that you will look at all issues squarely and intuitively as women normally do for the single and sole purpose of making this world a better place to live in."[1]

Ondrick was not to be disappointed. American and Okinawan women turned out to be more than eager to participate. Against the backdrop of Okinawa's violent transformation into the "Keystone of the Pacific," which entailed forced confiscation of land and relocation of people, pervasive destruction of nature and environment, intense build-up of military bases and facilities, as well as countless military accidents and crimes against the local population, American and Okinawan women engaged in a series of feminine and domestic activities to cultivate mutual affinity and affiliation (see Figure 1.1). Wives of American occupiers organized themselves into clubs and pursued a variety of activities ranging from cooking demonstrations to tea and coffee parties to fashion shows in order to generate "mutual understanding" and "dedicated cooperation" between the occupiers and the occupied. Home economists were dispatched from Michigan State University (MSU) in order to train Okinawan home economists in American "domestic science" and disseminate knowledge and technologies of "modern" homemaking among local mothers and housewives. With the help of US military vehicles and helicopters, these home economists reached women in rural communities and on the outer islands to spread the gospel of new domesticity even further. Not content with staying in Okinawa, they soon began to work with other home economists in Taiwan, the Philippines, and Hawaii, creating a transnational network of "female scientists" across Asia and the Pacific amidst the region's increasing militarization under American rule.

Okinawan women were no less enthusiastic in their responses and reactions to Cold War domestic mobilization. At the University of the Ryukyus (UR), Okinawan home economists developed new curricula and pursued a series of studies on nutrition, hygiene, clothes design, and home management in collaboration with American home economists, showcasing the occupation as an instance of cross-cultural endeavors focused on female science education

[1] John G. Ondrick, "Why Are We Here?," March 3, 1920, File Number: 835, USCAR Administrative Office, Miscellaneous Publication, 1959–1965, Okinawa Prefecture Archives (hereafter OPA), Haebaru, Okinawa.

Figure 1.1 Cold War feminine affinity and affiliation
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and community empowerment. At local high schools, the Zen Okinawa Kōtō Gakkō Katei Kurabu, or Future Homemakers of Okinawa (FHO), was established, recruiting young women into the project of modern homemaking and creating a new generation of domestic experts who would contribute to Okinawa's reconstruction and development pursued under the direction of the US military authority. At city halls and cultural centers, local wives and mothers flocked to workshops and lectures to acquire up-to-date domestic techniques from American and Okinawan home economists and bring new methods of cooking, cleaning, and sewing back to their own homes to practice. Not only did they learn how to cook with luncheon meat and other types of military ration food that poured into post-war Okinawa; they acquired a new set of sewing skills with which they created women's jackets out of discarded military uniforms and wedding dresses out of military parachutes. Cold War domestic mobilization even provided some women with opportunities to go abroad. Traveling to the US, Okinawan women leaders not only experienced American domesticity and femininity at first hand, but also engaged in numerous grassroots exchanges with American women in the various cities and towns they visited. During the US occupation of Okinawa, women's domestic activism flourished,

subsuming the violent contour of foreign military domination into relentless talks and practices centered on the home and homemaking, and recasting the occupation as a moment of feminized transnational encounter where mutual affinity and affiliation would be cultivated among women across racial and national differences.

Re-thinking women, home, and empire in the US occupation of Okinawa

Since the 1995 assault and rape of a twelve-year-old girl by three US servicemen in Okinawa, a trope of masculine domination and feminine subjugation has centrally informed discussions concerning post-Second World War US–Okinawa relations. Such gendered analysis has offered a powerful tool of critique, revealing the staggering scale of sexual violence against Okinawan women by US military personnel, galvanizing large-scale local, national, and international feminist protest mobilization, and generating a series of academic and non-academic writings that highlight the centrality of rape as a metaphor and a reality in Okinawa's encounter with the US. However, American dominance in Okinawa since 1945 has entailed not only violence and coercion but other kinds of dynamics that have also had to do with women and gender. As seen in Ondrick's speech, post-war US rule in Okinawa centrally targeted women as key agents of the occupation, deploying a multitude of strategies involving gender, race, and nation and enticing women to participate in Cold War US expansionism in Asia and the Pacific. Domesticity constituted a central arena in this mobilization process, in which women pursued a series of discourses and activities related to homes and homemaking and cultivated mutual affinity and affiliation between the occupiers and the occupied. Far from being mere victims of US military domination, Okinawan women actively participated in the occupation, generating an extraordinarily dynamic picture of women, the home, and empire in the Cold War context. The current emphasis on the violent, coercive, and *masculine* nature of American military domination in Okinawa thus elides the significance of other, more *feminine* and *domestic* dynamics that also informed the occupation, leaving a lacuna in the critical understanding of women, power, and hegemony in Cold War American nation- and empire-building.

Cold War Encounters in US-Occupied Okinawa: Women, Militarized Domesticity, and Transnationalism in East Asia intervenes in the existing discussion of gender and power in the US occupation of Okinawa by examining a crucial yet hitherto understudied link between domesticity and militarism. Tracing women's sentiments, discourses, and practices concerning homes and homemaking in the densely militarized zone called Okinawa, this study illuminates how the occupation mobilized women as feminized agents of Cold War

expansionism and turned their homes into a focal site of imperial politics. Notwithstanding John Ondrick's insistence at the depoliticized nature of women's involvement in the occupation, Cold War deployment of women was deeply political, as it forged an unlikely yet crucial link between their feminine and domestic activities and the American military and militarism. Re-imagining the boundaries between the private, feminized domain of homemaking and the public, masculinized domain of nation- and empire-building as less distinct and more permeable than previously understood, this study re-casts Okinawan domesticity as a deeply entrenched site of Cold War politics, where women engaged in a multitude of active, heterogeneous negotiations with the dominant structure of power with complex results.

Drawing on insights offered by gender studies, Cold War studies, and Japanese and Okinawan studies, *Cold War Encounters* presents three interrelated arguments, as it critically retraces the interplay between home, i.e., the depoliticized sphere of things feminine and domestic, and military, i.e., the politicized sphere of things masculine and violent, in the US occupation of Okinawa. First and foremost, this study draws on feminist discussions of gender and empire to argue that domesticity constituted the "engine of empire," facilitating American militarism and imperialism in post-war Okinawa in a deeply gendered and gendering manner. The centrality of "home" in US expansionism has been emphasized repeatedly by scholars on gender and empire. As Victoria de Grazia states, for example, the US was an "irresistible empire," whose consumer goods, habits, and practices crossed the Atlantic to reach, invade, and conquer twentieth-century Europe to establish American hegemony in gendered, cultural terms.[2] As Kristine Hoganson states, in another example, the turn-of-the-twentieth-century American home constituted a "contact zone," where exotic objects, artifacts, and practices would arrive from abroad to fill the interior space of household and create "consumers' imperium" as well as "emporium."[3] Whether articulating the empire's outward thrust into the world or its inward trajectory back home, domesticity was at the center of American nation- and empire-building.

The significance of domesticity becomes even more salient when one examines those cases of empire-building where acts of conquering, domesticating, and possessing the racial and national others were not only figurative but quite literal. As Jane Simonsen shows, colonization of North America involved a process whereby indigenous girls and women were forced to acquire white domestic sensibilities, habits, and practices so as to become "assimilated" and

[2] Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through 20th-century Europe* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 4–5.
[3] Kristin Hoganson, *Consumers' Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 8.

therefore "civilized."[4] With the Anglo-Saxon Christian home as the model, white women reformers played a crucial role in facilitating such gendered and racialized dynamics of colonization, as they drew upon "the power of a well-ordered home to influence individuals' moral character and upon women's crucial role in transforming architectural space into 'home' through their industry, refinement, and taste" to regulate, discipline and transform the conquered and subjugated.[5] It was not only the indigenous population in North America, however, who were subjected to such gendered mechanism of assimilation and domestication. As the US extended its borders and boundaries through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, other racial and national groups also came to be schooled in white domesticity. While Native Americans, African Americans, and European immigrants constituted the earlier subjects of white American women's reformist zeal, Native Hawaiians, Filipinos, Chinese, as well as Asian immigrants arriving in Hawaii and the US West Coast became its targets toward the late nineteenth century.[6]

The nexus between the home and empire is succinctly articulated by Amy Kaplan. Observing the ways in which the discourse of "manifest destiny" circulated in tandem with the "cult of domesticity" in mid-nineteenth century America, Kaplan proposes the term "manifest domesticity" to highlight the domesticating nature of empire and the expansionist dynamics of domesticity. Examples are numerous. The American colonial war with Mexico (1846–1848) was described as a necessary intervention in a "disorderly home" (i.e., Mexico) and its colonial conquest a matter of "good housekeeping."[7] "The empire of the Home" was intoned as "the most important of all empires, the pivot of all empires and emperors."[8] Women were to play a central role in the project of homemaking *cum* empire-building. In *A Treatise on Domestic Economy*, Catherine Beecher, the leading domestic pedagogue at the time, exhorted American women to extend their moral responsibility beyond the home and even beyond the nation: "to American women, more than to any others

[4] Jane Simonsen, "'Object Lessons': Domesticity and Display in Native American Assimilation," *American Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 1, 2002, 80.
[5] *Ibid*., 77.
[6] For Hawaii, Patricia Grimshaw, *Path of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989); for the Philippines, Vicente Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); for China, Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); for Japanese immigrants in Hawaii and on the US West Coast, Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (Oxford University Press, 2005); for Chinese immigrants on the US West Coast, Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).
[7] Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 27.
[8] *Ibid.*, 28.

on earth, is committed the exalted privilege of extending over the world those blessed influences, that are to renovate degraded man, and 'clothe all climes with beauty.'"[9] Noting that such "extension of female sympathy across social classes worked to uphold the very racial and class [and national] hierarchies that sentimentality claims to dissolve," Kaplan argues that domesticity was a device of central significance in US nation- and empire-building.[10]

As Kaplan argues, the working of "manifest domesticity" is complex and even paradoxical: "If, on the one hand, domesticity draws strict boundaries between the home and the world of men, on the other hand, it becomes the engine of national expansion, the site from which the nation reaches beyond itself through the emanation of woman's moral influence."[11] Yet, it is this contradictory movement of contraction and expansion that makes domesticity a powerful tool of national and imperial expansion: "by withdrawing from direct agency in the male arena of commerce and politics, woman's sphere can be represented by both women and men as a more potent agent for national expansion," as its seemingly non-political and benign façade would help disguise and legitimize colonial violence and destruction.[12] Such dynamics were not limited to *antebellum* America, the context of Kaplan's discussions, but also observed in other regions of the world where the US was attempting to extend its influence. Analyzing American missionary movements throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Jane Hunter states that "[t]he power of women's sphere to redeem expansionism depended on women's innocence and ignorance of aggressive intent," the latter being associated with the male sphere of politics and violence.[13]

Intertwined with the movement of empire, domesticity was extraordinarily mobile. Examining American women's involvement in the Philippines at the end of the nineteenth century, Vicente Rafael shows how women's homemaking activities followed the borders and boundaries of an expanding American empire. Dispatched to colonial outposts in Asia, American women replaced the wild and unknown with the orderly and familiar as they created and maintained their homes, thereby "subsuming the Philippines into something already known" so as to feel "at home" and claim the place as their own. In the context of American nation- and empire-building, Rafael argues, domesticity functioned as "a movable entity positioned on the edge of a mobile frontier" and "a relay point in the construction of empire."[14]

[9] *Ibid*., 29. [10] *Ibid*., 24. [11] *Ibid*., 29. [12] *Ibid*., 29.
[13] Jane Hunter, "Women's Mission in Historical Perspective: American Identity and Christian Internationalism," in *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812–1960*, eds. Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Connie Shemo (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 25.
[14] Rafael, *White Love*, 62.

As I argue in this book, the US occupation of Okinawa constitutes one of the primary examples where the working of "manifest domesticity" informed the contours and contents of post-war US empire-building in Asia and the Pacific. Okinawa was considered a new, wild "frontier" situated on the edge of a Cold War American empire, a place where American women would step in to tame, claim, and transform through their homemaking activities. As seen in John Ondrick's speech, Okinawan and American women were expected to cultivate "mutual understanding" and "dedicated cooperation" through exchanges of feminine sympathy and affinity. Needless to say, the objective was political, as it aimed to contain Okinawan resistance to foreign military occupation and sustain US rule over the islands. Notwithstanding the political nature of the task assigned to women, Ondrick immediately depoliticized women's involvement as feminine, domestic, and outside the purview of power, thereby re-drawing the boundary between the masculine sphere of empire-building and the feminine sphere of friendship making.

Women were more than willing to participate in and reinforce such convoluted movements of contraction and expansion that animated "manifest domesticity." Repeatedly insisting on the "informal" nature of their involvement, American military wives proceeded to cultivate grassroots friendships with Okinawan women, as they pursued numerous charity activities of giving food, clothing, books, scholarships, and even sewing machines and washing machines to the "unfortunate islanders," whose misfortune had much to do with being displaced from their homes and land by the US military build-up across the islands. Okinawan elite women joined American women at tea parties, luncheons, and cooking and sewing demonstrations, creating a picture of the occupation as an occasion of feminine affinity and affiliation and thereby feminizing and indeed domesticating the violent nature of foreign military occupation. During the US occupation of Okinawa, domesticity played a central role as the "engine of empire," facilitating women's involvement in Cold War expansionist dynamics while also depoliticizing and concealing their very involvement in the dominant operation of power.

Second, *Cold War Encounters* analyzes how the US occupation of Okinawa was informed not only by nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century dynamics of gender and empire, but also by a set of Cold War discourses and practices that emerged following the Second World War. Here John Ondrick's speech is once again crucial, as it highlights a number of dynamics unique to the Cold War that informed the US occupation of Okinawa. Most obviously, the speech shows how the occupation was informed by the logic and logistics of the Cold War where bi-polar struggles between the US and the USSR constituted the defining feature of post-war geopolitics. As I argue, however, the significance of Ondrick's speech as an artifact of the Cold War is found not so much in its predictable pronouncement of anti-communist sentiment but

rather in its articulations of other post-war dynamics involving gender, race, and empire.

Among studies that examine Cold War culture, Christina Klein's work is especially useful in identifying and appreciating a number of strands of post-war cultural dynamics that informed Ondrick's speech specifically and the US occupation of Okinawa more generally. According to Klein, in the US during the Cold War, two discourses – "a global imaginary of containment" and "a global imaginary of integration" – emerged to inform American imaginations and interventions abroad. The containment discourse envisioned the world in a binary manner, in which the forces of democracy (i.e., the US) struggled against that of totalitarianism (i.e., the USSR). While such anti-communist narrative held sway for a while, defining the US role exclusively in negative terms (i.e., what the US was *against*) soon proved limited in its effectiveness. Equally necessary was a narrative that would articulate what the US would stand *for*. "A global imaginary of integration" or "Cold War Orientalism" emerged to answer this need, envisioning the post-war world where the US would enter into an interdependent relation with non-white and non-Western others through mutual affinity and affiliation. "Getting to know you" became an important agenda in the Cold War US, enticing Americans to reach out to and become acquainted with strange and unfamiliar peoples and cultures abroad. Gender played a central role in this Cold War integrationist politics, as post-war US expansionism was imagined to be no longer about masculine imperial domination driven by racial-national violence but rather about feminine multicultural encounter guided by mutual affinity and sentimental bonding among people of different racial and national backgrounds.[15] Ondrick's speech was a salient example of this Cold War integrationist dynamic, as it articulated not only what the US was *against* but what the US was *for*, and enlisted women to the task of cultivating and sustaining mutual affinity and affiliation between the occupiers and the occupied despite – because of – vast differences and indeed inequalities between the two.[16]

Cold War integrationist dynamics turned out to be exceptionally productive, generating a series of new discourses and practices that quickly spread across the US and beyond. Conspicuous among them was the post-war project of international technical and educational exchange and interchange. Following

[15] Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945–1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

[16] For the ways in which US domestic politics of race were informed by and in turn informed its international politics of race and empire in the Cold War world, see Penny Von Eschen, *Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anti-Colonialism, 1937–1957* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Right: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton University Press, 2000); Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).

Harry Truman's 1949 announcement of the "Point Four Program," a project of overseas technical outreach in agriculture, engineering, home economics, and so on became a crucial part of anti-communist strategies. Showcasing "what the US global leadership was *for*," it enlisted American land-grant colleges and universities as its chief agents to promote community development and economic modernization in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Pacific, and to facilitate America's multicultural and transnational encounters with the non-white and non-Western others around the globe. Home economics constituted a feminized field of this post-war technical and educational endeavor, whereby American women would be dispatched to various "frontiers" of Cold War struggles to propagate female science and technical education and to initiate cross-cultural encounters with the strange and unfamiliar others.

The Cold War nexus between domesticity and technology was indeed crucial, which was amply demonstrated in the famous "kitchen debate" in 1959. At the American National Exhibit in Moscow, US Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev each insisted on his country's political, military, and economic superiority over the other as they compared and contrasted "American" and "Soviet" kitchens and housewives. Turning "home" into a site of ideological struggle between the two opposing systems, Nixon and Khrushchev not only highlighted the deeply politicized and politicizing nature of domesticity, but also demonstrated the Cold War linkage between domesticity and technology.[17] As the Soviet's successful launch of Sputnik in 1957 escalated tensions and competitions between the US and the USSR, the connection between science, technology, and domesticity became repeatedly articulated at more than one site or place. Not only were American domestic technologies and appliances exhibited in various regions of the world to express American technical strength and thus national prowess.[18] American policy makers and educational leaders, including those involved in the US occupation of Okinawa, often discussed "domestic science" and "nuclear science" as equally significant and inter-related topics in their speeches and writings.

As the subsequent chapters will show, US-occupied Okinawa became a dense site of Cold War politics where the dynamics described above came to be performed repeatedly by women. Far from insisting on their racial and national superiority, American women embraced the Cold War integrationist politics, emphasizing the "egalitarian" nature of their encounters with Okinawan women

[17] Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1999); Laura McEnaney, *Civil Defense Begins at Home: Militarization Meets Everyday Life in the Fifties* (Princeton University Press, 2000); Robert Haddow, *Pavilions of Plenty: Exhibiting American Culture Abroad in the 1950s* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997); Ruth Oldenziel and Karin Zachmann, eds., *Cold War Kitchen: Americanization, Technology, and European Users* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009).

[18] Haddow, *Pavilions of Plenty*.