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978-1-107-07950-2 - Cold War Encounters in US-Occupied Okinawa: Women, Militarized Domesticity, and Transnationalism in East Asia

Mire Koikari

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Cold War Encounters in US-Occupied Okinawa

In this innovative and engaging study, Mire Koikari recasts the US occupation of Okinawa as a startling example of Cold War cultural formation, in which women's grassroots activities involving homes and homemaking played a pivotal role in reshaping the contours of US and Japanese imperialisms. Drawing on insights from studies of gender, Asia, America, and post-colonialism, the book analyzes how the occupation sparked domestic education movements in Okinawa, mobilizing an assortment of women – home economists, military wives, club women, university students, homemakers – from the US, Okinawa, and mainland Japan who went on to pursue a series of activities to promote “modern domesticity” and build “multicultural friendship” amidst intense militarization on the islands. As these women took their commitment to domesticity and multiculturalism onto the larger terrain of the Pacific, they came to articulate the complex intertwinement among women, race, domesticity, empire, and transnationality in the Cold War.

MIRE KOIKARI is Associate Professor of Women's Studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

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*Women, Militarized Domesticity, and
Transnationalism in East Asia*

Mire Koikari

University of Hawaii at Manoa



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Retracing the varied and often surprising trajectories of domestic scientists, military wives, club women, and housewives who travelled across the Pacific in the decades following the Second World War has turned out to be a truly transnational endeavor. My research project has taken me to locations across North America, the Pacific, and Asia, giving me not only access to rare and often forgotten historical documents and mementos but also opportunities to experience the kind of trepidation as well as excitement these women must have felt more than half a century ago as they stepped into the world of Cold War homemaking. In the course of my cross-border journeys, I have accumulated debts to many individuals and institutions, without whose support I could not have completed this project.

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viii Acknowledgments

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Note on Japanese names

Japanese names are presented in the conventional Japanese fashion, family names first and given names second. For the Japanese authors who have published in English, their names appear in the Western convention in which given names precede family names. In US-occupied Okinawa where the ruler’s language predominated, many Okinawans, including home economists, frequently produced English-language materials with their names written in Western order. For the sake of readability, Okinawan names appear in the Japanese order. Macrons are used to indicate long vowels. All translations from Japanese-language sources are mine unless otherwise indicated.

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