

Mutual  
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ISSUE 5

AUTUMN 2018



POLITICS, ARTS AND POP CULTURE OF JAPAN IN  
LOCAL AND GLOBAL CONTEXTS

MUTUAL IMAGES

ISSUE 5 – AUTUMN 2018

# MUTUAL IMAGES

## A TRANSCULTURAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

FOUNDED BY

AUORE YAMAGATA-MONTOYA, MAXIME DANESIN & MARCO PELLITTERI

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POLITICS, ARTS AND POP CULTURE OF JAPAN IN  
LOCAL AND GLOBAL CONTEXTS

EDITED BY  
MARCO PELLITTERI & HERB L. FONDEVILLA

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# MUTUAL IMAGES

## A TRANSCULTURAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

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# Art and Remembrance: Gima Hiroshi, the Marukis, and the representations of the Battle of Okinawa

Eriko TOMIZAWA-KAY | University of East Anglia, UK

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## ABSTRACT

*The battle of Okinawa in 1945 was one of the bloodiest battles of the Asia Pacific War: nearly a quarter of the Okinawan civil population perished. Yet whilst the battle itself has been exhaustively researched, the relatively few artistic representations of the subject have been largely passed over in silence. Okinawan artists themselves, keen to avoid conflict with the U.S. authorities once the region had fallen under the control of the U.S. administration in 1945, were reluctant to address the subject head-on. Their reticence was only compounded by Japan's own failure to acknowledge its complicity in the 1945 massacre of Okinawan citizens. Thus, through the insidious mechanisms of self-censorship, an event that had decimated the region's population and left an indelible scar on its landscape, remained almost invisible in contemporary cultural production.*

*It was only in the decades following the battle that artists began to develop idioms that allowed them to express, through the brutalized landscape or female anguish, the suffering of the Okinawan people. These works served as powerful expressions of communal trauma. They also contested the gradual objectification of Okinawa in the mainland imaginary. Within two decades of the war, the region had been newly identified as a tourist destination, marketed in visual media as an exotic paradise. For Okinawans themselves, the conscious branding of their land carried the painful consequence of erasing the memory of loss and destruction that fundamentally informed their experience of it. Art, that is, became a means of rectification: of countering the power of silence and the myth of the exotic with the trauma of history.*

*This paper focuses on visual descriptions of the Battle of Okinawa both as (semi-covert) expressions of communal trauma and as a means of communicating to mainland Japanese audiences the pain, the suffering, and the struggle of its recent history. A key figure in this discussion is the artist Gima Hiroshi (1923–2017), an Okinawan born on Tinian Island who subsequently moved to Ōsaka, who over a period of three decades used a combination of media – oil painting, woodblock prints, albums, children's books and collaborations with Okinawan poets – to bring into the open an event that defined the lives of the Okinawan people. These works played a crucial role in recasting Okinawa in the mainland imaginary, of retrieving its pain from the margins of nation and history.*

## KEYWORDS

Battle of Okinawa; Gima Hiroshi; Maruki Toshi; Maruki Iri; Kyō Machiko; Censorship; Remembrance; Okinawan modern art.

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## Introduction

It was not until almost thirty years after the Battle of Okinawa in 1945 that artists began to wrestle with the problem of how to convey, in images, the slaughter and the devastation of war. Yet representations of war – celebrations of martial valour and dare 'n' do – had been an enduring part of the Japanese artistic tradition since at least the late 13<sup>th</sup> century.

Painted screens and hand scrolls of the Genpei civil war, which rent the land in the late twelfth century, had served to reinforce for mediaeval audiences models of loyalty and courage.<sup>1</sup> During the long peace of the early modern period, Genpei heroes, now tokens of a fantasy world of martial valour, would populate illustrated books for children and single sheet prints. The same celebration of daredevil courage would inform contemporary prints of the Satsuma rebellion in the early years of Meiji; whilst over the next thirty years, lavishly-coloured woodblock prints of military feats would rally a people behind Japanese offensives in both East Asia and Russia.<sup>2</sup> During the Pacific War of 1941–1945, western style painting (*yōga*) artists such as Fujita Tsuguharu (1886–1968) and Tsuruta Gorō (1890–1960) would once more use their craft to embellish the war effort: Fujita's *Battle of Nomohan* (1941) would celebrate the slaughter of American troops at the hand of the Japanese, whilst Tsuruta's *Divine Soldiers Descend on Palembang* (1942) depicted a mass of Japanese parachutes descending from the sky like plum blossom. For centuries, that is, audiences had been deliberately beguiled by the glamour of war (Ikeda 2009).

It was only in the aftermath of Japan's defeat in the Second World War that artists would begin to express, through images of death and destruction not the glamour of war but the wreckage and trauma. Representations of the Battle of Okinawa – the only ground battle fought on Japanese soil – would provide some of the most compelling accounts of its tragedy. Yet during the twenty–seven years of U.S. military occupation that followed, visual depictions of the battle were silently foreclosed through a process of tacit yet nonetheless effective censorship. Within Japan itself, reluctance to take responsibility for the betrayal of Okinawans during the battle, combined with intense sensitivities to defeat, similarly discouraged representations of the realities of war. The most egregious example of Japanese censorship has been the refusal to rewrite the history of the Battle of Okinawa to include accounts of Okinawan citizens forced to commit group-suicide rather than surrender (Ikeda 2009, 20). Efforts to recast Okinawa as a tourist paradise, moreover, had the pernicious effect of erasing from memory the trauma that had fundamentally defined the lives of generations of Okinawans.

It is against this background of censorship and erasure that the present paper will attempt to reconsider not just the complexity but the seminal significance of Okinawan

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Suntory Museum of Art (2002) *Genpei no bigaku: Heike monogatari no jidai*. Tōkyō: Suntory Museum of Art.

<sup>2</sup> The Sin- Japanese war took place in 1894–1895 and the Russo–Japanese War in 1904–1905.

war imagery. Through a visual analysis of the small corpus of existing paintings of the battle, together with the testimonies of war artists, it will argue that the visual arts have been at the vanguard of efforts to overturn the silence in which the battle has been shrouded. It will further argue that it is through the visual arts that we can still, today, understand the legacy of devastation and trauma that irrevocably altered the lives of the whole Okinawan community. The works discussed are the only works dealing with the battle that I have been able to discover thus far. They include the painting of the Battle of Okinawa by Yamada Shinzan, currently the only recognised work by an Okinawan who witnessed the battle in 1945; and the works of Gima Hiroshi and the Marukis, which remain rarely discussed in Japanese Art History.

### **The Battle of Okinawa and its legacy**

During three months of ground battles (1 April 1945 – 22 June 1945) the Battle of Okinawa devastated the island and decimated the Okinawan population (Maehira 2013, 17). Following the victory of the United States, the U.S. military occupation swiftly demonstrated territorial control by requisitioning land from Okinawans for bases that would form a frontline for subsequent hostilities in Southeast and East Asia, notably the Korean (1950–1953) and Vietnam wars (1955–1975). It was not until 1972 that Okinawa reverted (*henkan*) to full Japanese sovereignty, yet despite its re-integration into Japan as an independent prefecture, significant social and economic discrepancies between Okinawa and mainland Japan continue to drive a wedge between the two (Hook and Siddle 2002; Mason 2016).

Despite Okinawa's troubled history, ever since its assimilation in 1879 by Japan under the Meiji government, the island has become for many Japanese little more than a popular holiday destination, a package of exotic beaches, beautiful landscapes, traditional architecture, and local foods.<sup>3</sup> As a result, whilst under the U.S. administration (1945–1972), and the subsequent reversion, Okinawans became trapped between two subordinate identities, defined on the one hand by the demands of the Japanese tourist

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<sup>3</sup> From as early as 1923, the Ōsaka Commercial Ship Company (*Ōsaka Shōsen*) launched a route from Ōsaka to Naha that would transform Okinawa into a popular tourist destination. This boom was predicted by the Okinawan Tourist Bureau which expected to dramatically enhance the economic situation in Okinawa (The National Museum of Modern Art, Tōkyō 2008, 32). Also, refer to Tomizawa-Kay (forthcoming 2019).

economy and on the other by the U.S. military strategy (Hook and Siddle 2002, 7).<sup>4</sup> These twin poles of subordination fail lamentably to embrace Okinawans' own experience of their history, their home, and their culture. This paper will argue that it is in this context of contested identity that visual depictions of the Battle of Okinawa and its aftermath play a crucial role in articulating the complexity of Okinawans' experience of war, loss, occupation, and, through tourism, objectification.

Subordination has been a constant factor in Okinawa's history. The largest of a group of islands collectively known as the Ryūkyū Islands, it became part of the Ryūkyū kingdom (itself a Chinese tributary state) in the early fifteenth century. In 1609, following an invasion by forces of the Japanese feudal domain of Satsuma (present-day Kagoshima Prefecture) the kingdom came under the joint suzerainty of Japan and would remain under dual subjugation until its annexation by the Japanese Meiji government in 1879. Yet Japan's subsequent aggressive assimilation policy – which included the prohibition of local languages, the compulsory adoption of Japanese culture and social systems, together with financial exploitation (including the so-called 'Palm Tree Hell' (*sotestu jigoku*) which barred the populace from picking fruit from any tree but the poisonous palm) – proved the most systematic assault on Okinawan identity yet; to the extent that since 2008, the United Nations has repeatedly classified Okinawa as a Japanese colony (Matsushima 2012, 153).

Okinawa remained under Japanese control until the end of the Second World War when, in April 1945, as part of a final offensive on Japan, U.S. forces launched on the island in what was the largest amphibious attack of the Pacific War. The next three months would witness one of the bloodiest battles in the Pacific, resulting in a total of some 200,656 dead. Of these, 188,136 were Japanese, of whom a massive 122,228 were Okinawans – nearly quarter of the pre-war local population – who were either killed, committed suicide, or went missing (Okinawa prefectural Peace Memorial Museum 2018). Following the fall of Okinawa three months later in June 1945, the U.S. established a military occupation and began the process of extricating Okinawa from Japanese authority, a move it justified on grounds that Okinawa, historically part of the Ryūkyū Kingdom, had been illegally colonised by Japan.

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<sup>4</sup> Today, over 70 percent of U.S. military bases in Japan are located in Okinawa. (Okinawa Prefecture 2017, 32).

### **The Battle of Okinawa: its indirect depiction by Okinawans based in Okinawa**

The U.S. would subsequently enact a number of soft measures aimed at recreating the distinctive Okinawan cultural identity that decades of Japanese assimilation had sought to erase, in an effort to drive a deep ethnic wedge between the island and the mainland. These measures, aimed at assisting the establishment of democratic government in Okinawa, included societies for the promotion of cultural activities and for the protection of the island's artistic heritage (Office of the Chief of Naval Operations Navy Department 1944; Ogawa 2014). In 1946, the Okinawa Civilian Administration established a Department of Art and Culture that employed in its Art Division a number of Okinawan artists who were tasked with organising art exhibitions. Yet the art division would serve on the one hand as a mechanism of censorship, and on the other as a propaganda machine. For whilst it provided a source of income for Okinawan artists, it foreclosed the possibility of works that addressed the war or were in any other way critical of America. Meanwhile, the same year that it was founded, Okinawan artists were tasked with the production of 20,000 Christmas cards depicting the beauties of the Okinawan landscape for U.S. military personnel to send home. They were similarly employed to paint portraits of American soldiers and to provide souvenir paintings for sale in gift shops (Kawashima 2015, 7–8).

Not surprisingly, strains began to emerge between the U.S. administration and Okinawan artists, and in spring 1948, the Department of Art and Culture was closed down. It was quickly replaced, however, by an artists' colony in Nishimui village. Set up independently by artists, the colony retained some financial support from the administration (which funded the construction of studios, etc.); it would also produce paintings for U.S. military officers for whom it would provide art education. It succeeded in attracting a number of young *yōga* painters, such as Adaniya Masayoshi (1921–1969), Ashimine Kanemasa (1916–1993), and Tamanaha Seikichi (1918–1984), all of whom would subsequently become professors at the University of the Ryūkyūs founded by the U.S. administration in 1950, the first university in Okinawa. These artists would play a defining role in formulating a 'new' Okinawan art that explored historical, social and cultural issues central to the construction of Okinawan identity.

Unofficially charged with constructing an 'Okinawan' idiom that cast the U.S. administration in a flattering light, however, artists grappled with the private need to express their own experience as witnesses of a war that had destroyed their homeland. Self- or internalized-censorship – the need to avoid critical allusions to the U.S. or Japan

– became an integral factor in their works. There is little or no trace of the mechanisms of this censorship, although the U.S. introduced a number of constraints on newspapers and on the publication of literary works.<sup>5</sup> The fact that it was only after the reversion of the islands to Japan that artists began in earnest to openly depict the battle is nonetheless telling. Moreover, there were a handful of moving exceptions. One powerful example is an image from Adaniya Masayoshi's 1958 series 'Tower', which depicts the tall vertical form of a tower in a U.S. base built on bulldozed farm land requisitioned from Okinawans. On the one hand this was a documentation of U.S. presence; on the other, a trenchant symbol of the loss of Okinawan cultural heritage, the forced seizure of land, and the brutalisation of the native landscape (Tomizawa–Kay forthcoming 2019).

In a similar vein, Ashimine Kanemasa's early oil painting *I'm tired* (1950) depicts a female figure, her red lipstick indicating a sex-worker servicing the U.S. military: a powerful criticism of U.S. sexual abuse of Okinawan women both during the battle and after, and an iconic symbol of Okinawan suffering under a foreign régime. Another artist, Tamanaha Seikichi depicted traditional funerary urns – symbols of Okinawan culture, and at the same time metaphors of loss – and dark red–brown abstract paintings of shipwrecks in Okinawan waters, powerful statements of the bloodying of the sea. He subsequently replaced the dark red–brown background with deep ultramarine blue, which critics have read as an invocation of the Okinawan spiritual world and a requiem for the souls of the victims of the battles in Okinawa (Okinawa Prefectural Museum and Art Museum 2015, 68). Tacitly barred from making references to Okinawa's troubled past and the slaughter of so many at the hands of the U.S. army, artists developed carefully 'nuanced strategies' (Ikeda 2018, 2) that rendered their meaning available to the intended viewer yet largely invisible to the U.S. authorities. Rhetorical strategies, such as the depiction of a brutalized landscape, or mourning women, allowed them to indirectly reference their experience of war. These paintings were displayed publicly at exhibitions in Okinawa, such as the Five People exhibition (*gonin-ten*) organised by young painters such as Adaniya Masayoshi, Tamanaha Seikichi, Ashimine Kanemasa, Gushiken Itoku, and Kinjō Yasutarō (Tomizawa–Kay forthcoming 2019).

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<sup>5</sup> There is no clear evidence of censorship of the visual arts under U.S. occupation, although it is known that there was censorship of other media such as newspapers, film, theatre plays, and photography (Yoshimoto 2015, 247).



Not all Okinawan artists were able, in their works, to revisit issues relating to the massacre of war: those, in particular, who had taken part in the fighting were often incapable of treating the theme. One exception is Yamada Shinzan (1885–1977), an acclaimed Okinawan *nihonga* (Japanese-style) painter who had studied at the Tōkyō School of the Arts under both the renowned sculptor Takamura Kōun (1852–1934) and the pro-war *nihonga* painter Kobori Tomoto (1864–1931).<sup>6</sup> In many ways, Yamada embodied the conflicting political demands under which Okinawan artists struggled. In 1924, twenty years before the U.S. occupation, he had produced a painting entitled *The Establishment of the Ryūkyū Domain*, depicting the 1872 abolition of the Ryūkyū Kingdom by the new Meiji government and its (brief) integration as a feudal domain within the Japanese nation state.<sup>7</sup> The work was made as part of a series of paintings designed as a mural for the Shōtoku Meiji Shrine Memorial Art Museum in Tōkyō, in honour of the Meiji Emperor and Empress. This was the first of Yamada's works to take up an Okinawan theme; yet at this moment, far from advocating Okinawan independence, it shows him complicit in Japanese annexation of the island. His political allegiance lay squarely with the mainland.

Twenty years later, however, his *Battle of Okinawa* (1947) would be the earliest known work to chart the devastation of the battle (Figure 1). A long line of figures occupies the centre of the picture plane: these are civilians being evacuated from their homes, their faces distorted through suffering. In the background, a hill is being bombed; in the foreground a half-naked mother flees the battlefield carrying a baby on her back and holding the hands of two children. The work represented the suffering of a people. But at the same time, it was a powerful expression of Yamada's own grief, for he lost both of his sons in the battle.

A decade later, in 1959, the artist dedicated a Peace Prayer Statue, cast in the traditional lacquer technique known as *tsuikin*, to the Okinawa Peace Memorial Hall (*Heiwa Kinendo*) (Kobayashi 2018, 104). The statue clearly represented a prayer for those who died in the Battle of Okinawa.

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<sup>6</sup> Yamada Shinzan came from Yaeyama Islands. When he was 14, he met mainland carpenter Ono Hanjirō who persuaded him to go to the mainland to develop his art. Ono would subsequently adopt Shinzan (Kobayashi 2018, 18). For Kobori Tomoto see Emi (2009, 29–62).

<sup>7</sup> In 1879 its status would change once again, to become the prefecture of Okinawa.



**Fig. 1.** Photograph by Shimazaki Ken of Yamada Shinzan's *Battle of Okinawa* (1947). **Courtesy of the Okinawa Prefectural Museum and Art Museum. Published in *The Passion* (Okinawa Prefectural Museum and Art Museum, 2008), p. 13.**

Yamada's painting was never publicly displayed, and it is assumed to have been destroyed. The only testament to its existence is a photograph taken by the artist's friend, Shimazaki Ken, at the time an interpreter for the U.S. military on Okinawa. Shimazaki subsequently wrote that it would have been impossible for Yamada to have survived as a painter in Okinawa (at the time he was working in the U.S. Okinawa Advisory Council and Art Division) if he had insisted on making the painting public (Okinawan Prefectural Museum and Art Museum 2008, 12).<sup>8</sup> Shimazaki's statement is a rare allusion to the censorship under which the artist laboured. Nor were Shimazaki's photographs published, and their enduring sensitivity is amply demonstrated by the fact that they were displayed, for the first time, at the Okinawa Prefectural Museum, only in 2008.

Nearly all major Okinawan artists under the U.S. administration worked in U.S.-sponsored academic institutions and like Yamada, they were obliged to exclude from their public art any mention of the battle. Yet the battle not only defined contemporary Okinawans' understanding of themselves; it stood as the bloody event on which U.S.

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<sup>8</sup> The original painting is missing, but a photocopy was displayed at the exhibition, *Jōnetsu to Sensō no hazamade* [The Passion: Mugon-kan, Okinawa, Artists] at the Okinawan Prefectural Museum and Art Museum in 2008.

occupation was premised. In a cruel irony, much of Yamada's career would be spent creating illustrations to accompany discussions of Okinawan history and customs in an English-language newspaper, the *Daily Okinawa* (Kobayashi 2018, 104), produced for the U.S. troops. Unable to discuss the present, artists were often forced to express their sense of identity and belonging by turning to a distant, if ambivalent, past.

### **The Battle of Okinawa by Diaspora Artists: Gima Hiroshi (1923-2017)**

Okinawan artists were often forced to express their criticism of the régime through functional ambiguity (such as through the landscape, or portraits of women) or abstraction, those living in mainland Japan had more freedom to express their thoughts. Gima Hiroshi was one such artist. Born in 1923 in Kume village – an area largely populated by Chinese immigrants within Naha city (Gima 1982, 26), he left Okinawa in 1940 at the age of 17 against the wishes of his father (who deplored his son's decision to occupy himself with art during the wartime emergency) in objection to the colonising policies of Imperial Japan.<sup>9</sup> Resettling on Tinian Island, Gima studied art briefly under the influential sculptor Sugiura Sasuke (1897–1944) (Okaya 2008, 11), whose works would exert a profound influence on his own art. He also began working at the local theatre on the nearby Mariana Islands.<sup>10</sup> This experience was seminal in triggering his interest in Okinawan folk culture.

In 1943, Gima left Tinian for the Japanese mainland, on the urging of his teacher, who feared, correctly, that Tinian would shortly become a battlefield. Unable to return to Okinawa during the war, he served in the Japanese Navy in Yokosuka, in the present Kanagawa Prefecture; still unable to return following Japan's defeat and the subsequent U.S. military occupation, he eventually settled in Ōsaka where he began to study oil painting under the influential Suda Kunitarō (1891–1961) and woodblock printing under Ueno Makoto (1909–1980) at Ōsaka City Art Institute (Tomiyama 2008, 139).<sup>11</sup> It was only after his first return visit to Okinawa in 1956 that Gima began to focus seriously on Okinawa's political plight. He was shocked at both the ravaged landscape and the

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<sup>9</sup> Gima's abandonment of Okinawa was part of a larger exodus post 1879 when the island became a Japanese prefecture. This was triggered by lack of employment opportunities and poverty (Tanji 2012, 107).

<sup>10</sup> The islands of Saipan, Tinian, Palau, and the Yapp Islands in Micronesia—collectively referred to as the South Sea Islands—were occupied by Japan immediately after the outbreak of the First World War, and were recognised by the League of Nations as coming under Japanese mandatory administration. These islands later became the centre for severe battles during the Second World War.

<sup>11</sup> This was part of the Ōsaka City Museum of Art from 1946 to 1952.

economic situation of the Okinawan people. Severe economic restrictions imposed by the U.S. military administration, combined with little or no aid from the mainland, had left Okinawans deeply impoverished. During this two-month visit, he created what would become some of his most iconic works, based both on his own research and on the testimony of those who had witnessed the battle (Gima 1982, 11).

*Tsuboya* (Pottery Workshop) (1957) (Figure 2) is representative of his oil paintings during this period. It depicts a masculine-looking Okinawan woman with sturdy legs and large feet, her imposing presence intended as a symbol of a new class of women left after the battle as the sole support of families whose men had been lost during the war.



**Fig. 2.** Gima Hiroshi, *Tsuboya* (Pottery Workshop), 1957. Oil on canvas, 128.0 × 94.7 cm.  
© Okinawa Prefectural Museum and Art Museum.

Here, the figure is placed poignantly in front of a traditional cobalt blue palace-shaped funerary urn (*udun-gata zushi*). The elaborately designed form of its lid depicts a Ryūkyūan *shachihoko*, an imaginary creature with the head of a tiger and body of a fish believed to ward off evil. The creature's mouth is open as if in a scream, its prominent fangs suggesting the impotent anger of the dead. The vessel on the one hand

gestures to traditional ritual wares. On the other, it represents the silent scream of the dead and the enduring agony of the present.

Stylistically, the work – executed in dark brown and ochre hues with strong black lines that evoke the grain of the wood block print – may have been intended as a homage to the Micronesian-inspired wooden sculptures of his early master Sugiura Sasuke. Yet it seems likely there were other influences. It was over these years that the artist would come into contact with the Mexican masters Diego Rivera (1886–1957), David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896–1974), and José Clemente Orozco (1883–1944), whose works were represented at the International Exhibition held in Tōkyō around 1960. It was from Rivera that Gima learned the use of monumental figures and the raw energy to be harnessed from indigenous art forms; from Siqueiros he learned the revolutionary power of art. These encounters would spur him to explore indigenous Okinawan motifs not as a celebration of tradition but as an innately powerful medium for the expression of political criticism (Gima 1982, 63). The artist would return repeatedly to the depiction of monumental Okinawan women, and the widow would become a powerful icon of the loss that informed the reality of post-war Okinawa. Yet, the monumentality of these figures was also intended as a celebration of a ‘strong Okinawa which stands up again and again like a weed’ through decades of political suffering (Gima 1982, 12).

### **Depicting the Battle of Okinawa**

In May 1956, Gima organised a solo painting exhibition at the Daiichi Sōgō Ginkō Bank hall in Okinawa. At this point, the island was still in its ‘dark’ post-war period, struggling under tight U.S. military control and increasing political turmoil. The exhibition, consisting of twelve paintings and ten sheets of decorated paper (*shikishi*) depicting not just traditional Okinawan costumes but also the new landscape of occupation, was a major success. In particular, the artist’s visual expression of his concern for Okinawa, evidenced in his depiction of U.S. bases, and the lives of local people spent in the shadows of the bases, was seen as ground-breaking by university students – themselves striving to find a medium to express their social and political realities. The poet and journalist Arakawa Akira, then a student, recalled that it was following the exhibition that he and his friends would begin publishing political essays in the coterie magazine *Literature of the University of Ryūkyūs* (Arakawa 1994, 6) and embark seriously on study of the history of the battle

itself. It was at this time, moreover, that Gima himself would first read the battle records compiled in the *Okinawa Prefectural History* and his subsequent treatment of Okinawan themes would go on to be deeply informed by close research.<sup>12</sup> Arakawa later wrote that Gima understood his own works both as prayers for those killed in the battle and anger at the war itself (Arakawa 2018, 4).

It was only following the 1972 reversion of Okinawa to Japanese rule that Gima would be able to openly engage with the Battle of Okinawa and its aftermath: notably, many of these works would be in print. This was a conscious decision. ‘Oil painting’, Gima wrote, ‘is only seen at exhibitions and galleries, or sold to collectors. I was dissatisfied with this, and found that since print was cheaper, it could be disseminated more easily and effectively. It was my intention to reveal the realities of Okinawan life by publishing picture and poetry books, which I produced at my own expense’ (Gima 1982, 86). Three works in particular, the product of careful study of accounts of the battle together with interviews with survivors, stand out. Published between 1979 and 1995, they would subsequently be regarded as a trilogy. The first, ‘The War came to Okinawa: Prints on the Battle of Okinawa’ (*Sensō ga yattekita – Okinawasen hanga shū*) was an album of images accompanying a text written by the Okinawa-born poet and cultural activist Nakayama Yoshihiko, published in 1979. The second, ‘Okinawan Lament’ (*Okinawa no hikoku*), an illustrated album with poems by the Okinawan poet Makiminato Tokuzō, was published in 1982; the third, ‘Battle of Okinawa: Korean Military Labour and Comfort Women’ (*Okinawa sen – Chōsen gunpu to jūgun ianfu*), an album with pictures and letters by Gima, was published in 1995.

The significance of these works needs to be placed in context. More than thirty years after the war, there was no memorial, no statue, not even a public painting of the Battle of Okinawa. The event was shrouded in silence. Gima’s works were the very first step toward commemorating the dead. The artist himself noted that the first book, ‘The War came to Okinawa: Prints on the Battle of Okinawa’, published by the prestigious Tōkyō Shūeisha, was a huge publishing success. A vindication of Gima’s decision to shift from the medium of painting, with its relatively restricted audience, to print, suggested at the same time a readiness on the part of the reading public to come to terms with the significance of the battle (Gima 1982, 87).

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<sup>12</sup> See Okinawa kyōiku iinkai, (Ed.) (1973). *Okinawa kenshi. dai 10 kan, kakuron hen 9, Okinawa sen kiroku* 2. Naha: Okinawa kyōiku iinkai (digital collection, the National Diet Library).

Gima also published four children's books with the battle as their theme: 'Ryūko's White Flag' (*Ryūko no shiroi hata*) – illustrations by Gima to a letter by Arakawa (1985); 'Tsuru and Takeshi in Miyako Island' (*Tsuru to Takeshi*) (2005); 'Ishigaki Island and the Struggles of the Minokasa Brigade' (*Minokasa-tai funtō-ki*) (2006); and 'Tinian Island at a Glance: War Stories in the Southern Island' (*Nanyō ikusa monogatari – Tenian no hitomi*) (2008). Once again, this was a demonstration of Gima's determination to educate even young audiences on the brutal war that had devastated a people: an effort to compel those who came later to carry the mantle of remembrance.

It was following the reversion of Okinawa that Gima would also produce some of the first and most powerful evocations of the battle. The 1979 *Mō takusan da* (It's too much) (Figure 3), a single sheet woodblock print, depicts the head and shoulders of a woman weeping, her hand held to her face in a gesture of despair.



**Fig. 3.** Gima Hiroshi, *Mō takusan da* (It's Too Much), 1979. Woodblock print, 53.8 x 171.3 cm.  
© Kyōto Museum for World Peace, Ritsumeikan University.

Behind her to the right and occupying the full height of the picture space is a pile of dead bodies and skeletons. These are the unburied dead: compressed into the narrow space of the image, they stand as a metaphor – thirty years after the massacre – of a community denied the right to honour its dead and to mourn. The image was a moving representation of the repressed trauma of a whole people, its powerful momentum from right to left charting a landscape of death and its legacy – in the weeping woman – of despair.



**Fig. 4.** Gima Hiroshi, *Tombo* (Dragonfly), 1979. Woodblock Print, 63.8 x 96.4 cm.  
© Okinawa Prefectural Museum and Art Museum.

A piece from the same period, *Tombo* (Dragonfly) (Figure 4) depicts not the legacy but the terror of war. The conflagration of the air raid is suggested in the harsh palette of red and yellow: a man, a woman with a child on her back, and another child – the civilian community – flee before a monstrous dragonfly that follows in inexorable pursuit. The cropped forms suggest the figures are trapped by the confines of the picture space itself. The child to the left looks out beseechingly towards the viewer: there is literally no way out. The dragonfly clearly symbolises a fighter plane (literal depictions of other planes can be seen in the sky behind it). Yet the image leaves it unclear whether it is a U.S. or a Japanese plane, all the more so because the ‘land of the dragonfly’ (*Akizushima*) was an ancient term dating back to the eighth century *Kojiki* (Records of Ancient Matters) for Japan itself.<sup>13</sup>

This ambiguity permits an allusion to one of the most contentious issues of the war: the loss of Okinawan life at the hands of the Japanese themselves. The poet Makiminato Kōzō, who had collaborated with Gima on ‘Okinawan Lament’ (*Okinawa no hikoku*), would describe the Battle of Okinawa as ‘the war [that] was neither the Pacific War,

<sup>13</sup> ‘*Akitsu*’ is an archaic term for ‘*tombo*’, dragonfly, found in ancient texts such as the *Kojiki*, the *Nihonshoki* and the *Man’yōshū*.



nor even the Second World War: it was simply the Battle of Okinawa'. He continued: 'The Battle of Okinawa was a battle with multiple enemies: U.S. troops, Japanese troops, starvation, especially among the elderly and infants: it was the fight to retain our lives, our culture, and our traditions' (Gima and Makiminato 1982, 108–111).

### **Art and controversy**

Gima's implicit criticism of Japan in works such as *Tombo* – whose visceral monstrosity gestured powerfully to the betrayal of Okinawans by their own country – appears to have provoked a backlash amongst certain Japanese. The artist maintained that his work, documenting both Japanese and U.S. attacks on civilian Okinawans, was based on historical fact (Gima 1982, 91). He would repeatedly insist on portraying the war from the point of view of the citizen, giving voice to decades of silent suffering that a régime of implicit censorship – from both the U.S. and Japan – had sought to conceal. 'My work documents exclusively the experience of Okinawan civilians', he wrote, 'The war from the view of the Okinawan people. The Americans could be brutal; they could also be humane. The same for the Japanese' (Gima 1982, 91). Gima would deal graphically with the murder of Okinawans at the hands of U.S. soldiers, he would also vehemently criticise the Japanese betrayal of Okinawans. A moving image from *Sensō ga yattekita – Okinawasen hanga shū* entitled 'Come Out! Come Out!' (*Dete koi, dete koi*) – shows the huddled figures of civilians hiding from the conflict in caves, their hands pressing against the picture plane in an effort to escape. The title is a reference to U.S. soldiers who, repeatedly, called to refugees to come out from the caves following the end of the battle. Japanese soldiers, by contrast, had urged them to commit group-suicide rather than surrender. Gima would in fact prove a relentless critic of Japanese atrocities during the battle. 'In an effort to save their own lives', he wrote, 'Japanese soldiers chased civilians from their hiding places behind the gravestones and mounds of their ancestors and killed them. They sacrificed the lives of people they were meant to protect: for whom were they fighting? Was it the civilians that were now their enemy?' (Gima 1982, 91) He would go further, laying the blame for the behaviour of Japanese soldiers squarely with the emperor (Hirohito) himself. 'Yet this', he wrote, 'is a matter extremely hard to express in paint' (Gima 1982, 91).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> There is still a sense of taboo about using images of the Japanese emperor, in particular Hirohito, in connection with WWII and Article Nine (Okinawa kenritsu bijutsukan ken'etsu kōgi no kai, 2011).

These were not the only controversial issues that Gima sought to bring finally into the light. His third battle book, 'The Battle of Okinawa: Korean Military labour and Comfort Women' (*Okinawa sen: Chōsen gunpu to jūgun ianfu*) – the product of a series of posters he created for the documentary film *Song of Arirang* (1991) (Figure 5) – dealt with the highly sensitive subject of the use of Korean forced labour and comfort women, housed in buildings specifically constructed in Japanese military bases on the island, by both Japan and the U.S. The eponymous Arirang is the name of a Korean folk song. The image depicts a young Korean woman calling out to the heavens, her cry seemingly blocked by a ragged band of red, the only colour in the image. But the eloquence of the image lies in the design of her clothes, which depict on the bodice a screaming face, below that and taking up almost the whole of the garment, a U.S. soldier forcefully abducting a Korean woman, and in the background an image of a forced Korean labourer.



**Fig. 5.** Gima Hiroshi, *Ariran no uta* (Song of Arirang), 1991. Woodblock print, 97.4x 62.0 cm.  
© Okinawa Prefectural Museum and Art Museum.

The horrific discrimination against Koreans was not just at the hands of the Japanese. Gima was shocked to hear from a Korean woman that 'Koreans initially had sympathy

for the Okinawans, since like us, they have been oppressed by the Japanese. We felt a sense of fellowship. But some of them were abusive and treated us as filth, just as the Japanese treated them as worms.' 'Okinawa', Gima wrote, 'was both victim and assailant. Whenever we discuss the Pacific War and reflect on Japan's conduct during the war, we should acknowledge our own remorse toward other East Asian countries involved in the war, and accept that we Okinawans too are also guilty of the abuse of those labourers and comfort women. In the absence of this, we can never grasp the true horror of the war' (Gima 1995, 32).

### **The relationship between Gima Hiroshi and Okinawan artists**

Okinawan discrimination toward other ethnicities – even toward those from remoter 'secondary' islands of the archipelago – was a subject of intense sensitivity in Okinawa. A sense of inferiority toward mainland Japan was mirrored, ironically, by a sense of superiority toward Taiwanese and Koreans subject to Japanese colonisation. These internalised ethnic hierarchies were further complicated by firm class divisions – determined largely by family lineage – within Okinawa itself (Matsumura 2015). A further wedge in this fractured sense of communal identity was the war, whether or not someone had actually experienced the Battle of Okinawa or been subject to the trauma of its consequences. It was on these grounds that Gima's artistic interventions were increasingly challenged by Okinawan artists who had remained on the island and both witnessed and experienced first-hand – rather than through objective research – the battle and its impact, both historic and present on islanders.

In fact, Gima repeatedly took Okinawan artists to task for failing to address important issues in their works. Objecting to his suggestion that Okinawan painters simply patted each other on the back without taking a political stand, the Okinawan *yōga* painter Adaniya Masayoshi responded by casting doubt on whether Gima – as an outsider now living in Ōsaka – was entitled to judge those who continued to experience the Okinawan socio-political situation first-hand. Other Okinawan artists were similarly dismayed by Gima's criticisms. Yet Adaniya seemed to accept that Okinawan artists shied away from overt criticism not simply of U.S. and Japanese atrocities committed during the Battle of Okinawa, but also of the continued U.S. occupation and Japan's failure to provide much-needed financial assistance to the islands (Adaniya 2011, 164). Gima defended himself on grounds that he could 'perhaps see something that Okinawans cannot see objectively. I know what

mainlanders do not know and what they want to know. By keeping a distance from Okinawa, I don't have to depict something that only Okinawans can understand. Because I am on the mainland, I can be a bridge between the mainland and Okinawa' (Gima 1982, 40). He was not trying to appropriate the experience of Okinawans but to cast an objective mirror to the damaged history of Okinawa through the twentieth century. To do this, he would often turn to the most accessible of media – children's books and mass-produced woodblock prints. Writing in 1994, the novelist Ōe Kenzaburō (b. 1935) would describe Gima as a 'genuine Okinawan painter and relentless advocate of Okinawan resistance to the U.S. occupation'. For Gima, he wrote, 'Okinawa was not a U.S. outpost: it was a country at war, one that had perpetually contested the U.S. occupation ever since the Battle of Okinawa' (Ōe 1994, 93). Gima, he suggested, had done for Okinawa what its own artists had been unable to do.

### **Representations of the Battle of Okinawa by Maruki Iri and Maruki Toshi**

Over the course of the twentieth century, few non-Okinawans turned to the difficult subject of the Battle of Okinawa. Concern over whether or not they were entitled to engage with a subject that they had not experienced at first hand – to appropriate through art another's grief (Young 2010) – or whether as mainlanders they were unwittingly complicit in Japan's colonisation of the island, deterred many from representing what nonetheless remains one of the most traumatic events of the war. Meanwhile, for Okinawan artists who had experienced the trauma of the battle and its legacy themselves, the subject typically remained too painful to engage with artistically.

As political sensitivities eased, however, a number of contemporary artists, regardless of ethnicity, began to engage rigorously with anti-war campaigns and other socio-political issues. A case in point is a collaborative work of Maruki Iri (1901–1995) and his wife Maruki Toshi (1912–2000) entitled *Battle of Okinawa* (1983–1987), a series of 14 canvases (measuring up to 400 x 850 cm each) executed in *sumi* ink and colour on paper (Figure 6). Like Gima's, the work was the product of rigorous research (the Marukis read over 160 books on the subject) and numerous interviews with eye witnesses and survivors. This was the first work to directly engage with the enduring responsibility of the Japanese people to acknowledge culpability for the war. Its seminal importance for Okinawans was demonstrated by the fact that in 1994, after negotiations with both Japanese and U.S. authorities, Sakima Michio (a friend of the Marukis) raised funds to

build a museum on a piece of land that had belonged to his family for generations right next to the Futenma U.S. military base (Sakima 2014) to house the series.



**Fig. 6.** Maruki Iri and Toshi, *Okinawa sen no zu (Battle of Okinawa)*. Colour on paper, 400 x 850 cm. 1984. © Sakima Art Museum.

The Marukis' series effectively transformed the Battle of Okinawa into a powerful protest against war everywhere, creating a space where people, regardless of ethnicity, can witness the horror of war and come together to mourn the horrific cost to human life and the devastation of a people and their land. But more than this, it was also a powerful acknowledgement of Japanese complicity in the war, and a condemnation of the silence that had subsequently sought to erase it. 'The Battle of Okinawa' represented not only an emotional engagement with the battle itself but, perhaps most importantly, an attempt to apologise for the atrocities (Eubanks 2009, 1623).

It was a gesture of atonement: in some respects, a profoundly religious work (both Marukis belonged to the Pure Land Buddhism or *jōdo shinshū* sect). Maruki Iri in fact told Sakima, 'I will go to hell after I die because I was already an adult at the time [of the Battle] and I could not stop the war. I must go to hell for my sin' (Sakima 2014, 32). The Marukis' willingness to accept their own involuntary complicity in the war that had devastated the lives of so many Okinawans led to the work's acceptance by Okinawans both as a monument to their communal loss and as a profound protest against war.

The Marukis' 'Battle of Okinawa' was structured around a series of collages assembled in a narrative sequence representing the war exclusively from the point of

view of the victim. Scenes included people hiding in *gama* caves together with the dead and dying, the brutal murder of civilians, and forced group-suicides. The artists told Sakima that the reason why they had depicted the Battle of Okinawa was that,

since the Meiji era, Japan has repeatedly aggressed other nations. The destruction of Tokyo by the U.S. in the Second World War in a relentless series of air raids was in some ways retribution for its actions. Yet, as a result of this experience, the Japanese have come to understand war only as victims of bombardment by a hostile nation: they still fail to acknowledge the horrific acts of their own soldiers and they know nothing of the gruesome reality of war on the ground. As long as it is unprepared to acknowledge its own responsibilities, Japan is capable of starting a war again. It is crucial that the Japanese people be made aware of the suffering of those who experienced the Battle of Okinawa, the only ground battle of World War II to be fought on the Japanese archipelago: and it is for this reason that we painted the Battle of Okinawa series. (Sakima 2014, 33)

When a survivor asked how a mainlander could presume to depict the battle, Sakima Michio replied that the work, crucially, demonstrated the artists' objectivity: the fact that they could 'neither fake nor beautify it' (Sakima Art Museum 2006, 27).

The Marukis produced a number of paintings that dealt with the victims both of war (in particular the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) and of environmental pollution, such as the mercury poisoning disaster Minamata (Ozawa and Ogura 2011, 291). Between 1950 and 1970, they produced a number of seminal anti-war works, detailing both Japanese (the Nanking Massacre) and Western atrocities. The 1950 'Hiroshima Panels', depicting the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, were intended in part as a protest against U.S. censorship of references to nuclear war during the Occupation (Ozawa and Ogura 2011, 288). U.S. dismay at the work would be demonstrated by the fact that when the panels were displayed in Okinawa, a group of students who organised a seminar to discuss the work were kicked out of University of the Ryūkyūs (Ozawa and Ogura 2011, 292). Like Gima, the Marukis also used popular media such as children's picture books to convey their anti-war and pro-peace messages. The 1980 'Atomic Bomb in Hiroshima' (*Hiroshima no pika*) and the 1984 'Voice of Okinawa' (*Okinawa no koe*) are two examples. They also produced a number of documentary films recording not only the artistic processes behind their works, but also performances, rallies and other events by anti-war activists and symposia. Some critics would accuse them of creating a platform for anti-war activists. This was something the Marukis both accepted and promoted: their aim, they said, was to create a forum in which the 'experience of war' could, somehow, be shared (Ozawa 2011, 288–289).

### **Manga as war art: Kyō Machiko (b. 1980)**

Even amongst artists born after the 1972 reversion of Okinawa to Japan, there are some who continue to grapple both with the wounds left by the battle and the continued presence of U.S. bases in Okinawa. One post-reversion artist is Yamashiro Chikako (b. 1976), a photographer and video artist whose works document the civilian casualties of the Second World War and the ongoing conflicts surrounding the U.S. military presence in Okinawa. In her video, *'Your voice came out through my throat'* (2009), we see the face of a man who survived the 1944 Battle of Saipan overlapped with the artist's own face, and speaking through her voice, a visual metaphor of both the need to pass on the experience of war and the difficulties it entails to subsequent generations. Like other artists, Yamashiro's work is intended to recreate the horror of war in order to provide a forum where audiences can experience at a bodily level both the terror and the revulsion of its violence. Despite efforts on the part of these artists, younger generations demonstrate both a lack of knowledge of, and interest in, the Okinawan war. Unwilling or unable to discuss the ongoing consequences of the war, they have also shed feelings of their shared (Japanese) culpability. It is in the face of this apathy that manga artists have begun to turn to the Battle of Okinawa in an effort to keep alive its memory amongst younger generations. Already from the 1970s, the manga artist Mizuki Shigeru (1922–2015) – who lost his left arm in the Pacific War– was producing works such as *'Fallen Petals of Okinawa: an Elegy for the Himeyuri Girls Brigade'* (*Okinawa ni chiru – Himeyuri butai aika*). Re-issued in 2017, the work depicted the tragic death of the Himeyuri (Princess Lily) Girls Brigade,<sup>15</sup> a group of high school girls and their teachers who were drafted as a nursing unit for the Japanese Army. By the end of the three-month battle many were living in caves with injured and dead soldiers: approximately 80% of the girls and their teachers perished, some committing suicide to avoid rape by U.S. soldiers.

Mizuki's work would form the inspiration for Kyō Machiko's work *Cocoon* (2010). Kyō, who has become known as a war manga artist (*sensō manga-ka*) frequently uses her works to examine the fate of women and particularly girls caught in war. *Cocoon* itself is a circular work in which a girl, having read about the battle in the postscript to a (fictional) manga entitled *Cocoon*, subsequently dreams of the Himeyuri Brigade (Kyō 2010). This

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<sup>15</sup> This *manga* was originally published on 25 August 1971 by Shukan Asahi zōkan. It was reprinted in 2013 in *Muzuki Shigeru Manga Zenshū: Senki tanpenshū, Yūrei Kanchō hoka*. Tōkyō: Kōdansha.

was Kyō's first war-themed *manga* – up until then she had avoided the subject on account of her lack of personal experience – and it came about in response to an impassioned request from one of her female editors in Okinawa, to write about the Himeyuri brigade from the girls' point of view (Kyō 2013, 57). As a result, the fictional characters are deliberately portrayed in terms such as romance, friendships, and fashion, with which young readers can easily identify, allowing them to become emotionally invested in the girls' fate. Kyō has said that, in this respect, she was inspired by Mizuki Shigeru's ability to express the reality of war both through personal experience, and the humanity and humour of his protagonists. (Kyō 2017). Her girls, for example, are not heroines but normal adolescents, sometimes selfish, sometimes rude, sometimes unkind, a far cry from the idealised figures of innocent teenage girls devoted to nursing Japanese soldiers, and later committing suicide, as portrayed in Imai Tadashi's 1953 propaganda film and box-office hit *Tower of Princess Lilies (Himeyuri no Tō)*, which in-turn was based on a 1949 novel by Ishino Keiichirō.

For Kyō, it was important that the readers 'understand the story as their own story, identify with the lives of the Okinawan girls as women'. 'I want to convey, through manga, the message that girls in the past also lived and died with the same preoccupations as girls today. They worried about the same types of things, they laughed at the same types of things. I wanted to convey the sense that there are no clear cut-offs between past and present' (Kyō 2017).

One of the most striking features of *Cocoon* is the almost oneiric depiction of the brutalities of war. Soldiers are depicted like white shadows; in a moment of tragic irony the main protagonist Mayu tells her friend San that men are only white shadows; she has nothing to fear.<sup>16</sup> It is these white shadows, projections of what Kyō has suggested to be an innate female fear of men, which came to destroy the girls. In a postscript to *Cocoon* she noted that the reason she depicted soldiers as white shadows came from her childhood when a phobia toward men led her to pretend that there were no men in the world (Kyō 2010, 209). Similarly, the caves where the girls live together with dead and dying soldiers are depicted as phantom-like forms which, rather than dramatising the war, present it as

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<sup>16</sup> Kyō explained in the postscript of *Cocoon* that the reason she depicted all soldiers as white shadows came from her childhood memory, when she had pretended that there were no men in the world because of her fastidiousness and a phobia toward men (Kyō 2010, 209).



a silent, shapeless terror: a metaphor of the trauma of the past that had informed Okinawan lives for decades.

Even after the huge success of the work, Kyō continued to feel a responsibility for it. Not being native to Okinawa, and having never experienced the war, she felt open to accusations that she had appropriated the grief of others (Natsume 2013, 73). Yet, unlike Gima, whose attempts to portray the battle objectively had been so heavily criticised, Kyō avoided much of the backlash on account of the work's fictionality, and perhaps more importantly, the fact that its ultimate message – much like the Marukis' – was that those who have not experienced war are responsible for not forgetting it: the cocoon of remembrance. Using this most popular of media, Kyō was endeavouring to re-animate memories of the war not simply as a part of Okinawa's troubled history but as a part of Japan's).

### **Conclusion**

For many Okinawans, the Battle of Okinawa has become a token of communal identity, yet its representation remains a source of contention. The sheer difficulty of giving visual expression to the battle has been overwhelming. For decades following the surrender of Japanese forces, the bloody trauma of the war silenced Okinawan artists still unable to face up to its horror. Attempts that were made – such as those of Adaniya Masayoshi and Yamada Shinzan – were crushed by an unspoken yet insidious U.S. censorship that denied Okinawans their past. In the face of this silence, artists based on the mainland such as Gima Hiroshi, who were not subject to U.S. censorship, took on the mantle of protest, exposing not simply U.S. aggression toward Okinawans during the battle, but Japanese aggression toward its own people. Works such as *Tombo* (Dragonfly), which gestured to the slaughter of Okinawan citizens by Japanese fighter planes, forcing Japanese audiences to confront their own culpability in the war were, not surprisingly, sometimes criticised by segments of the Japanese population (Gima 1982, 91). Yet, at the same time, Gima's works were resented by Okinawan audiences for what was perceived to be an appropriation, by an outsider, of their experience (Tomiya 2018, 15). Controversially, Gima would go on to disrupt common perceptions of the polarity of the war by exploring Okinawans' own culpability as aggressors toward what were perceived as secondary communities, in particular Korean comfort women.

Subsequent artists, like the Marukis, would radically transform the significance of the battle. On the one hand, by representing the atrocities of war, they created a space where viewers could come together to mourn victims of war everywhere. On the other, they also used their work to openly acknowledge Japan's culpability in the war. Thus, while Gima's work was often rejected by Okinawan audiences, the Marukis work, an expression not just of Okinawan suffering but of the enduring complicity of the Japanese in this suffering, came to represent, for Okinawans, an act of remorse. Now housed in the Sakima Art Museum, it offers a space not just for communal grief, but an acknowledgement of that grief.

One of the most distinctive aspects of representations of the battle is the use of children's books, posters, and other widely disseminated media to bring the horrors of war to the attention of wider audiences. Children's books, have in fact been a powerful medium for promoting the anti-war message, particularly amongst younger generations who have had no first-hand experience of war. In this regard, the battle of Okinawa – the only ground-battle to be fought on Japanese soil – has become a compelling reminder of its horrors. It is in the face of growing apathy toward issues of war that manga artists such as Kyō Machiko have begun to use their works to educate the young: to remind them, at the very least, of their responsibility not to forget. By creating characters with which younger audiences can identify, and through their powerful visual rhetoric, it is manga that today may enable young audiences to at least imagine the horrors of a war that decimated a population. In the midst of silence, it is visual art that has assumed the duty of remembrance.

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