

Women's Worlds 2005
June 22, 2005
Panel on "Health, Family Planning"

The Politics of "Family Planning" and Gender in Okinawa under U.S. Military
Occupation, 1945-1972

Kayo SAWADA
JSPS Research Fellow, Ochanomizu University
e-mail: kotokayo@hotmail.com

The 'family planning' in Okinawa became widespread in the mid-1960s during the fertility transition under U.S. military occupation, where the U.S. Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands (USCAR) and the Government of Ryukyu Islands (GRI) were interested in controlling the population of Okinawa in terms of both quantity and quality. In mainland Japan, the Eugenic Protection Law was passed in 1948 (revised in 1949 and 1952) when the GHQ and the Japanese government drew keen concern about post-war "overpopulation" and "deterioration of Japanese race". The Law made induced abortion substantially legalized and "family planning" as national policy promoted. Meanwhile, the Law had never been enforced in Okinawa before its reversion to Japanese administration. The GRI, more properly, enacted the Eugenic Protection bill, but the USCAR issued the Ordinance of "rescission" of the Law in 1956. Induced abortion and contraception as a means of "family planning" had been illegal in post-war Okinawa under U.S. military control.

How the 'family planning' in Okinawa could become widely used in the circumstances? This paper explores the politics of "family planning" in Okinawa from 1950s to 1960s under U.S. military occupation. It mainly highlights the following two points from the perspective of gender: (1) the diverse "population problems" in post-war Okinawa for the USCAR and the GRI, which describes the legislation/"rescission" of the Eugenic Protection Law, and (2) the process from "undesirable" birth control to "desirable family planning", focusing on the interested actors on the side of Okinawa, U.S., and Japan, their own aims, and then the meaning and significance of 1960s for each of them.

I analyze the oral/life-histories of the GRI officials, Okinawan midwives and obstetricians, and Japanese family planners at the time as well as the archival documents, which provide a clear picture of the politics of Okinawan women's reproduction hidden behind the national and international systematization of "family planning" program.