

DISSERTATION DEFENSE

TILL THE SOIL AND FILL THE SOUL: INDIGENOUS RESURGENCE AND EVERYDAY PRACTICES OF FARMING IN OKINAWA

By

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This dissertation examines Okinawan Indigeneity through analyses of *Uchinaanchu's* various actions and reconceptualizations of land. I examine everyday acts of Okinawans making Indigenous space and making the land a more livable place, despite having long been dominated and militarily occupied. More specifically, this dissertation pays attention to and explores the correlation between land-based practices of farming and (a)political activism in the community.

I argue that the everyday act of farming, while perhaps seemingly apolitical and personal, has been and becomes a form of sociopolitical action that not only acts to resist settler-colonial space but also to sustain firmly and to call forth resurgent Okinawan Indigeneity from the ground. In chapters that focus specifically on land use, Indigenous languages, tacit farming, commercial farming, and landscape restoration, I argue that these constitute specific instances and an overall movement of Indigenous resurgence in Okinawa.

The methodology comprises ethnographic research in Okinawa, including participant observations, and formal and semi-formal interviews, and data collection from archival materials. Recognizing the everyday agency of Okinawan villagers in sculpting their own self-determination, I highlight stories of people engaged in active Indigenous resurgence, whom I have termed "resurgents." These resurgents do not necessarily identify themselves as Indigenous rights activists to resist settler-colonial and settler-military structures; however, stories shared by these resurgents show they are doing more than resisting settler domination. They are (re)emerging from rooted Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies. Overall, this dissertation demonstrates how narratives and practices of Indigenous resurgents in Okinawa create and envision more sustainable and inclusive space from various directions while remaining firmly rooted in ancestral land. My transdisciplinary and trans-Indigenous approach to land politics in Okinawa contribute to more fully understanding the concept of Indigeneity and its usage.

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