Reviving Machigwaa: How Okinawan Inhabitants Try to Join Their Past and Future in the Face of Neoliberalizing Commercial Sphere

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The Neoliberalization of Okinawa and its Implications
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Summaries

The neoliberalization of commercial sphere in present-day Okinawa coincides with the rise in consciousness among Okinawan inhabitants to attain their ethnic sovereignty against what may be regarded as the pervasion of their lifeworld by the market logic of Japanese capitalism. The vast inflow of Japanese tourists and settlers alongside the influx of Japanese capital is provoking concerns among the native people of Okinawa, adding a new dimension of identity politics onto the long-standing ethnic struggle against Japanese colonialism and its postcolonial outcomes. While more and more Okinawan activists are inclined to demonstrate their anger and hostility toward what they regard as the “ongoing exploitation of Lewchew Islands by Japanese exploiters,” residents with greater serenity are developing a sphere of cooperative production with incoming settlers.

To map out the manner in which the natives of present-day Okinawa are carving a new social sphere under neoliberal influences, the current investigation will concentrate on a small municipal marketplace or machigwaa in the town of Terusato (a pseudonym), which is located in the northern woodland of Okinawa’s main island called Yanbaru (Figure 1). Here, the local commercial landscape is being transformed by the expansion of convenient stores, franchised shopping centers, and resort towns in its vicinity. The dynamic of cultural legislation found in Terusato Marketplace is augmented by the efforts of local residents to revive old business districts against what they consider to be the “degradation of

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their lifeworld” by means of coopting Japanese settlers as sources of insight and empower-
ment – rather than rejecting these newcomers as invaders. In so doing, a way in which lo-
cally perceived cultural heritage is mediated alongside the sense of possible collective fu-

Figure 1. Terusato Marketplace: scenes from present day (upper 4 photos by the author) and 1950s～
60s (lower 4 courtesies of informants)
ture will be highlighted.

In what follows, the author will refer to the inhabitants of Terusato Marketplace and its vicinity as “T─natives,” and settlers from mainland Japan as “J─settlers” in order to specify two distinct groups of relevant informants. Pseudonyms are applied to all individuals who appear in the following discussion as my informants of Terusato Marketplace, whereas real names are kept for public figures and places.

The Neoliberalization of Okinawa and its Implications

The generally friendly attitude of T─natives toward J─settlers is enabling the natives to seek co─ventures and thereby socioeconomically activate Terusato Marketplace, altering the area from an increasingly depopulated marketplace, alias “shuttered shopping street,” to a renovated commercial contact zone. The local governing body of Terusato happily supports such a transformation as a part of the District’s economic development project.

“Shuttered shopping street” signifies the decline of shopping district due to the outflow of customers in correspondence with the opening of large scale shopping malls, supermarkets and franchised convenient stores along highways and city outskirts. The phenomena, which is by now nationwide in Japan, resulted from American pressures to open up the Japanese retail market in late 1980s. For many postwar years, the Large Scale Retail Store Law, issued in 1974 as the government’s response to a series of demands from powerful unions of small retailers, prevented large retailers from developing their commercial outlets. The law required large retailers to notify local shopkeepers of their establishment plans and obtain agreements before opening an outlet in the area. The law also illegalized the development of new stores in the 500 square meter vicinity of any shopping district.

This law was abolished in June 2000 in order to promote importing business, and it allowed large Japanese retailers to open up their outlets wherever they could.† In Okinawa, this legal uplifting was immediately followed by the 26th G8 Summit that took place in the outskirt of Nago City in July. This international economy─promoting event triggered the Japanese government to spend more than 75 billion yen to develop Okinawa’s infrastructure, most notably the 57 kilometer freeway called Okinawa Expressway that connected the northern urban center of Nago City to the southern capital city of Naha, and issue the 2,000 yen bank note on which the image of Shureimon (the symbolic main gate of Shrui

† For details regarding this law and its revision, one may refer to an online article, ‘Selling to the Japanese Market’ in Drupal Seven Developer Guide URL (http://luhman.org/japanese-reports/sell-to-japan/040-the-japanese-large-scale-retail-store-law).
Castle in Naha) was printed in order to commemorate Okinawa’s new prefectural role as Japan’s gateway to global economy. The summit also provided investors in Okinawa (i.e., not necessarily Okinawan investors) with opportunities to cultivate resort towns along Highway 58, which functioned as the major transportation route before—and even after—Okinawa Expressway came into being. The Okinawa born Japanese pop diva Namie Amuro released the summit’s image song titled *Never End*, and its smash hit contributed to the nationwide celebration of Okinawa as a new hot spot in the national territory of Japan.‡

For anti-Japanese critics, skeptics and social activists, the 26th G8 summit and its socioeconomic outcomes are all parts of Japan’s ongoing exploitation of Okinawa ever since the Lewchew Kingdom was subjugated to the Tokugawa Shogunate in early 1600s. The Japanese annexation of Lewchew Islands includes abolition of the Kingdom by the Meiji government, which turned Lewchew Kingdom into Okinawa Prefecture in 1872, enforcement of military conscription laws in 1898 that aimed to suppress anti-Japanese campaigns by Okinawan activists, establishment of militaristic systems by the Japanese wartime government and corresponding implantation of Japanese national spirit in 1938, prohibition of Okinawan language in 1940, the raid of Okinawa by U.S. military forces in 1945, which devastated Okinawa’s main island and killed thousands of Okinawans for the sake of war initiated by the Japanese, and the issuing of a U.S.-Japan joint declaration in 1969 that promised the revert of Okinawan Islands to Japan in 1972 but completely neglected the sovereignty of the Okinawan people. Added to this is the ongoing presence of U.S. military forces, which continues to provoke controversies with respect to life-threatening accidents and noise pollutions that are caused by military aircrafts, impacts of military exercise on human and natural environments, and occasional cases of violence directed toward Okinawan residents by U.S. soldiers.§

The postwar incorporation of Okinawa into Japan’s socioeconomic order began with the “return of Okinawa to Japan” on May 15, 1972 after attaining independence from nearly three decades of U.S. military occupation since the end of the Second World War. The return is considered to have pushed Okinawa toward industrialization, transforming the ecologically-based lives of the Okinawan people into lives that rely heavily on market economy. Corresponding in particular to the proposition made by Prime Minister Kakuei

‡ For details regarding the popularity of *Never End*, one may refer to the relevant Wikipedia URL at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Never_End_(song).
§ Approximately 75% of all military bases in Japan are located in Okinawa, which is 0.6% of Japan’s total geographic territory. One may refer to Anpo-Osk homepage (http://www.anpo-osk.jp/kiti/okinawa/okinawa.htm) for greater details.
Tanaka and his cabinet to develop Japan’s rural areas as well as to build transportation and telecommunication network throughout Japan. Okinawa’s statesmen under the guidance of Japan’s Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI, now Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry [METI]) exercised a series of campaigns toward the latter half of 1970s and into the ’80s and ’90s that praised economic progress and thereby develop industrial zones. For native critics, these events are all attributes of Okinawa’s colonial history in which the Japanese played –and continues to play– a dominating role (e.g., Nakandakari 1998, Teruya 2003, Asato 2003). From this perspective, Okinawa in the post-G8 summit era marks a new stage of socioeconomic subordination wherein Okinawa is tamed into a globally recognized attraction site for curious tourists and immigrants.

According to Yasukatsu Matsushima, a native scholar of Lewchew studies and one of the leading proponents of Lewchew independence movement today, the neoliberalization of Okinawa is precisely the “post-reversion economic aggression” of Okinawa by the Japanese in which the “development” has been designed and executed under Japanese guidance, and to which Japanese logic, methods and regulations has been directly applied to Okinawa. As Matsushima elaborates:

The Okinawan labor market is known for low wage jobs in which employees are easily dismissed.** The stimulation and development plan of the government was intended to narrow the economic gap between Japanese and Okinawans, but since Japanese enterprises claimed leadership rights in terms of conception and execution, the gap has rather widened. The government’s development plan was linked to the consolidation of American military bases in Okinawa. The Okinawans, who had been made dependent on the development plan, were persuaded by the aid money. …In this way, Japanese authorities destroyed the harmony of local communities. The colonial logic of “divide and rule” continues to be applied to Okinawa in this 21st century (Matsushima 2010:190).

Matsushima also contends that the recent Okinawa boom, which multiplied Okinawa–loving Japanese, only contributes to the mystification of existens structura segregatiónis for

** Matsushima elaborates this line with good examples: “Japanese enterprises economically dominate the construction, media and communication industries, among others. The proliferation of call-centers is remarkable. About 90% of employees are female. They lead an insecure, underpaid and overworked existence under upper echelon bosses from Japan. The tourist industry is similarly structured. Many Okinawans work as seasonal workers in factories in Japan” (Matsushima 2010:190).
the people of Okinawa. Matsushima states:

In this age of democracy and heightened consciousness of human rights, discrimination cannot be practiced openly. To pretend to understand Okinawans and to sympathize with them has become a general trend of this “masked” discrimination. Okinawa is a favorite tourist destination. Okinawan performers and athletes have made names for themselves. Okinawa is also known as the “Islands of relaxed healing” and a “longed-for land.” …Will discrimination of Okinawa end if the numbers of such people multiply? The power structure of those who understand and those who are made to understand has been unchangeably reproduced since the days we were forced to “humbly make a pilgrimage up to Edo.” Knowledge and understanding of Okinawa have continued to be abused as a means for dominating the islands (2010: 191).

From such a critical standpoint, the neoliberalization of Okinawa’s cultural sphere is not an issue of “shift” from the politics of authoritarianism and democratization to pervasion by the market logic of deepening capitalism. Rather, the matter is the “mystification” of the former politics of colonial domination by the latter logic of politico-economic domination.

One pro-independence informant of mine (female university student in her mid-20s from Naha) regarded the current culture sphere of Okinawa as a “plasticated social domain” in which Okinawan cultural properties, traditions and identities are all being decontextualized and remolded into “curious commodities” for tourists by the forces of neoliberalization in which Japanese agents play key roles (Figure 2). My dialogue with her, based on the shared understanding that acts of consumption in an increasingly globalizing world

Figure 2. Examples of “plasticated” Okinawa: shiisaa lion amulets turned into souvenirs for tourists at a roadside station (photos by the author, 2013)
serves as a means for local people to create and recreate an identity space that is can-
alyzed by negotiations between the redefinition of local self and the array of possibilities of-
fered by the global market (Friedman 1990:314; see also Friedman 1994, Wilk 1995). Revealed that business-minded Okinawans themselves tend to decontextualize, dis-
authenticate, or reinvent their cultural properties in any way they could as long as values and appearances of these properties appeal to the outside world.

For natives with greater tranquility, seeking ways to collaborate with Japanese visitors is more important than trying to drive them away since it admits the people of Okinawa to keep up with the rest of their world. As a member of the Terusato Town Office (male in his early 30s) stated in my interview with him:

I would not mind independence movement taking a life of its own since it may eventually create a better environment in which rights and abilities of the people of Okinawa to self-determination is respected and protected, but my peers and I are more concerned about making Terusato an attractive place for all people –visitors and residents alike! We must activate ourselves toward realizing and demonstrating our own capacities to take initiatives in determining what we need and want to do at our local level!

Such a welcoming attitude toward Japanese visitors was similarly observed among the total of 17 native Terusato residents to whom I talked, making the area more “open and susceptible to outside influences” from the perspective of Okinawan natives such as my wife (a 35 year old research assistant) who came from a more conservative village community.

Terusato Marketplace as a New Commercial Contact Zone

Typical types of J-settlers found in Terusato Marketplace consist of liberals, artists, adventurers, and retirees. My interviews with 9 of these settlers thus far revealed that they commonly fell in love with Okinawa for what they perceived as its beautiful landscape, relaxed atmosphere, and tender-hearted people, and that they all found Terusato to be their perfect match since the area encompassed all three of these attractive elements. Of these informants, 6 perceived their lives back home to be too fast-paced and stressful to bear; and 2 retirees felt that they were gladly seeking their second life after being liberated from the tidy lifestyle of industrialized Japan.

These J-settlers have taken part in Terusato Marketplace Project, which was started
by a small group of T–natives in 2008 in order to activate Terusato’s shuttered shopping streets and thereby prevent Terusato Town Office from clearing out the area for highway expansion. The Town Office ruled in favor of the project, and persuaded the Small and Medium Enterprise Agency of Japan’s Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) to acknowledge the project as a part of Terusato town development program. The project was thus granted a catchy official title ‘Let’s Prosper Town Project’ as of March 2008, permitting T–natives to receive guidelines for neatening the shopping street environment, and hold a series of study sessions in which directionality and procedure to activate the market were discussed among participants. Questionnaires were distributed among project participants in order to cumulate ideas for reformulating emptied shopping spaces, and newsletters named Terusato Times were issued every two months in order to report conditions of development and advertise upcoming events.

A central gathering plaza called yuukuidokoro was established in September 2008, enabling shop–owners to open workshops, children to hang out and do their homework after school, community members to chat, or visitors to relax and enjoy looking through notifications on bulletin boards ever since. Starting from February 2009, the Business and Industrial Committee of Terusato Town Office held selection meetings from time to time in order to offer Terusato’s emptied shop–spaces to local residents who may be interested in opening an attractive shop. In the first of these meetings, held on February 17, 2009, nine applicants underwent interviews in which their motives, commitments, and creative plans were heard, and out of which two new owners were finally chosen. Terusato Marketplace is currently filled with approximately 50 shops, including 10 shops that are owned by J–settlers: the amount appears to be sufficient in making the marketplace reasonably lively.

Fests such as Terusato Handicraft Bazar, Terusato Free Market, and Marketplace Lantern Festival are held on monthly bases, where two– to three dozen local shops and individuals set up their booths in an open market area next to shopping streets (Figure 3). Participating J–settlers display their crafts and artworks, while T–natives demonstrate their local specialties including locally grown fruits and vegetables such as shima garlies and tankan oranges, locally processed foods such as squeezed acerola juice and dried bonito sticks as well as flakes, and locally produced arts such as Aizen clothing and yachimun earthenwares. In effect, these fairs function as a watering hole wherein fresh ideas, classy features and foppery representations of J–settlers mingle with nostalgic representations and local expressions of T–natives to create a bohemian atmosphere. According to a native farmer (62 year old female) who regularly comes to these events in order to sell home–grown vegetables, the marketplace functioned as a crucial outlet to retail self–pro-
duced vegetables that were disregarded by supermarkets:

I grow vegetables organically on my farm, and many of these vegetables do not sell in contracted supermarkets because they are considered “not good enough” with respect to their marketing standards. These unqualified vegetables may be unshapely, or they may have some scratches. I can bring them here and sell them without any problem whatsoever. Buyers come here knowing that they can obtain these products less expensively than purchasing them elsewhere, and we can negotiate the price. My vegetables sell well, and I am very happy about what I can do here!

Thus, the social value of Terusato Marketplace as an alternative outlet for marketing was demonstrated.

In fall 2011, the apparent revival of Terusato Marketplace through festivals was acknowledged first by Okinawa’s major newspaper company Okinawa Times (Times Regional Contribution Award, awarded on 20th October, 2011), and subsequently by the prefectural government (Special Prize of the Okinawa Regional Development Award, 2011).

Figure 3. Scenes from free markets held in Terusato (photos by the author, 2013)
awarded on 4th November, 2011). Active M-native members represented Terusato Marketplace in receiving these awards, and the Marketplace became a focus of media attention in and outside of Okinawa. These outcomes contributed to the attraction of a greater number of tourists and immigrants than ever before.

In the 30th June, 2009 issue of Terusato Times, the editor signified Terusato Free Market as a generous sphere of interpersonal contentment:

Hopefully, Our Terusato Marketplace can be the place where people can come together to build rapports. This marketplace was once crowded with people, and I look forward to seeing more and more people eventually returning here and enjoying the atmosphere as in the old days!

Thus, the editor found Terusato Marketplace and associated events to be socially reviving.

For Masayuki Kishimoto (34 year old male), one of the native leaders of Terusato Marketplace Project and the owner of a famed local café called Flânerie, Terusato Marketplace was not likely to resume its original form and intensity, but it could evolve into a new sphere of social interaction that may partially resemble the kind of prosperity people enjoyed before it became a shuttered shopping district. As he elaborated his reasoning in my interview:

What was once lost will never return, but we can newly create something similar as long as we are willing to do so. One may question the traditional propriety of this Terusato Marketplace, but that is not exactly what we intend to demonstrate publicly. I believe that “tradition” is never so fixed, or has to be so rigidly defined. People may inventively coat an old nutshell with fresh representations, or reformulate original style of things using left over elements, and this is what I believe we are experiencing here. New values are mixed together with old ones to postulate a hybrid social space, and such a creative reformulation is “traditionally Okinawan” in and of itself—as we say in Okinawa that we are so good in chanpuruu or “cultural mixing.” Historically speaking, we kept amalgamating domestic and foreign cultures to create the culture of our own, and this has been an important part of our lifeway, or our wisdom to survive.

Statement such as this corresponded with my own observation of nearly one dozen J-settlers who gathered together in yukuidokoro on the 15th of June in order to assist T-natives in making Handicraft Bazaar to be held the following day possible: these settlers ac-
tively and considerately received directions from Shousaku as well as two other M-native leaders in cleaning up and decorating the marketplace, as well as setting up tables on which their handicrafts were to be displayed.

Yuria Kishimoto, the wife of Masayuki (in her early 30s) who together played a leading role in Terusato Marketplace Project, appreciated the role played by J-settlers in bringing inspirations that contributed to the refreshment of Terusato Marketplace. Part of her comment along this line of thought can be described as follows:

Most of the J-settlers who live around here have good senses of art, and they are diligent. Such liveliness that we could achieve here in Terusato Marketplace would not have been possible without the talent and commitment of these settlers. T-natives are often too indecisive or unambitious to start up anything, and J-settlers inspired us to work harder toward the sustainable development of our own community. Our marketplace became the crossroad of cultures resultantly, and I am grateful for such a turnout so far.

When I inquired Yuria about the ever-mightier presence of J-settlers in Okinawa at large, implying that this trend may be considered to be an index of post-colonial invasion in which the living space of Okinawan people are being absorbed and exploited by the Japanese, she replied that such a view was not in the way of her interest. As she explained:

Provided that the people of Okinawa have been “invaded” by the Japanese for several hundred years by now, and that such an “invasion” is likely to not perish overnight, what we could accomplish with J-settlers here in Terusato Marketplace is undoubtedly meaningful to me in terms of sustaining our precious community without having have to engage in an unnecessary dispute with anyone. However different J-settlers are from us at the level of ethnicity or lifestyle, I appreciate their role in preventing Terusato Marketplace from decaying or being wiped out. I see J-settlers here functioning as agents of inspiration for the native people of Okinawa rather than agents of cultural exploitation. I also think that there are Japanese of different types and attitudes, just as there are Okinawans of different types and perceptions.

Thus, Yuria demonstrated the social meaning of Terusato Marketplace –as a counter-neoliberal sphere that cultivates dialogues between natives and newcomers: i.e., dialogues that can nurture heritage.
My independent conversation with a female J-settler (age and all other personal information not to be revealed on request) who assisted a miscellaneous apparel and accessory shop in Terusato Marketplace highlighted her appreciation towards the interactive value of Terusato Marketplace, and her thought on the mode of participation which is adopted by a settler:

I came to Okinawa in search for a new life, and found myself accepted here. As a Japanese immigrant, I am aware of the fact that I can threaten the lives of the first inhabitants, so I try hard to behave well and be of help to the people of this town. …I strongly oppose the current influx of large franchised corporations, let alone tourist resorts, into Okinawa –however inevitable such an influx may be in this global era of ours. I feel bad that the living environment of the first inhabitants in Okinawa is stirred up by these corporate influences. So, I feel that I am obliged to be a part of Terusato Revival Project. However minute my contribution may be, I feel happy to confirm that I have a role to play here. I also hope that this Terusato Marketplace can be the model that sheds a new light into Japan’s shuttered shopping districts –many of which are left alone to decay.

This statement characterized Terusato Marketplace Project as a counterhegemonic means for determined participants of different social origins to interactively construct a new sphere that can stand immune to the neoliberal influences of corporate domination.

**Machigwaa as a Point of Neo-Premodern Artistry**

While conducting my field research of Terusato Handicraft Bazar on March 17, 2013, I met Takashi Kouri (43 year old male), an emergent local artist from Terusato’s neighboring region, Nakijin, who held a booth to display and sell his artworks. After working as a salary-man as well as a part-timer in Okinawa and Japan, Kouri returned to his homeland in 2007 in order to make drawing his profession. He loved to draw since the early stage of his childhood, but his interest in incorporating ethnic and eco-conscious motifs which related to his homeland grew after 2007.

Kouri’s works typically depicted rustic sceneries, native plants and animals, as well as mythical characters, which signified Yanbaru –in which Terusato and Nakijin were both located. For this reason, Kouri identified himself as *Yanbaru eekachaa* or a “drawer from/of Yanbaru.” With the help of his Nakijin-based promoter Kimio Yamashiro, Kouri was
earning regional recognition in northern Okinawa, and his works were being displayed and marketed in several cafés, offices, and hotels which were located in Yanbaru.

Kouri’s involvement in Terusato Marketplace Project began in 2009 as he was invited by one of the co-developers of the Project to paint a mural on the sidewall of public lavatory, which was built next to the free market area of Terusato Marketplace. Kouri vividly illustrated an image of the large blue earth in which a whale shark, dolphin, two tortoises, three bonitos, and a manta swam gently (Figure 4). Kouri used this mural painting assignment as the opportunity to determine and publicly pronounce his style of drawing, which he described to me in a very recent interview as follows:

My participation in the Terusato Revival Project gave me a chance to establish my own style of drawing. The occasion enabled me to envision my cultural identity, and become more conscious than ever before about this naturally- and culturally rich region of our world called Yanbaru to which I belong. From this moment on, I decided to make full use of primary colors to illustrate original sceneries and fantastic worlds that signify Yanbaru that can provoke senses of nostalgia in the heart of their beholders: I mean senses that can heal those stressed-out souls of urban dwellers, and enlighten these souls with motifs that represent life or human nature. …Technically speaking, I try to highlight my objects by using primary colors and emphasizing contrasts. In so doing, I try to make my motifs visibly attractive in the eyes of their viewers.

Figure 4. The image of Kouri’s sidewall illustration (photo by the author, 2013)
Thus, Terusato Marketplace inspired Kouri to set up his goal in life, and his mission as well as style in artistry.

All of the people to whom I spoke in Terusato Marketplace (the total of nearly two dozen natives, settlers and visitors) felt that Kouri’s mural enhanced the marketplace atmosphere by making the atmosphere “enlighteningly avant-garde” to borrow from the expression of one visitor (a self-employed male photographer in his 40s). Such a positive recognition Kouri earned in Terusato Marketplace led him to receive orders from the associate of National Terusato Expo Park to design a T-shirt logo, and from a local NGO to illustrate a regional map. His drawings were also adopted in the official magazine of the Okinawa National Health Insurance Association. One may say on the basis of these turnouts that Kouri’s inventive style of art based in Yanbaru, which portrays the importance of unindustrialized state of being or the eco-conscious way of life, began to develop platforms of self-reflection for the occupants of our neoliberalized world.

Through our conversation which took place in yukuidokoro on the 14th of June, Kouri, his promoter Yamashiro and I co-postulated a new genre of art which we decided to label “neo-premodern style of art.” We agreed to characterize Kouri’s style of artistry using

Figure 5. The author at work with key informants (Summer 2013)
this alternative label so as to signify his stance to take his arts beyond modernity and even post-modernity: to newly and inventively return to the presumable state of human innocence, or envision the simple, pre-industrialized state of being in the context of our highly informed and stressful world that is saturated by neoliberal transactions. Kouri found Terusato Marketplace to be one such place where he could enjoy seeking, re-discovering and/or re-positioning himself in the “neo-premodern mode of existence” — wherein the quest for personal contentment through cooperative creation based on communal ties stood out to be much more important than the quest for profit as well as materially-convenient lifestyle. We agreed in perceiving the potentiality of Terusato Marketplace as the model for those who are involved in shuttered shopping districts to mirror their neoliberalized consciousness and transform their social spheres before giving up hopes.

**Summaries**

Though the current investigation of “neo-premodern” social space in Terusato, Okinawa, I tried to illustrate how some native people of Okinawa reacted to the neoliberalization of their social sphere (Figure 5). My native informants of Terusato Marketplace openly collaborated with Japanese settlers to attain their sovereignty against what may be regarded as the pervasion of their local lifeworld by the market logic of Japanese capitalism.

In a subaltern Asian locale called Terusato, the neoliberalization of lifeworld through the incursion of Japanese capital, followed by the inflow of Japanese tourists and settlers, surely provoked concerns among the native people. Yet, these people managed to alter those external influences into momentums that enabled them to revive their depopulated and decaying community. The combination of native wills to re-/empower lifeworld and supports provided by newcomers toward this re-/empowerment made possible the transformation of Terusato Marketplace from a shuttered commercial district that was about to be wiped out to a joyful commercial contact zone — the value of which became (and is becoming) acknowledged by the wider public.

To say that the sociocultural sphere of Asia’s New Industrial Economies had shifted from being marked by the politics of authoritarianism and democratization to being pervaded by the market logic of deepening capitalism may imply that the political division between those who authorize, dominate, invade and/or exploit and those who are subjected to democratization, being dominated, invaded, and/or exploited can no longer be perceived as clear-cut. Such an implication was evident in Terusato Marketplace with respect to the
relationship between Okinawan natives and Japanese settlers—regardless of what angry activists who wish to attain Lewchew independence may say in reference to the clear, unrecoverable line of ethnic—qua—national division they continually wish to draw between the Japanese—who are regarded as exploiters altogether—and the natives of Lewchew Islands including the people of Okinawa—who remain to be exploited by the Japanese unless their independence is accomplished.

As a postscript to the perspective I have laid out in this presentation on what is happening in Okinawa beyond the culture industry nowadays, allow me to offer the following citation from one of Masayuki Kishimoto's comments on facebook (dated 19th of March, 2013):

People of various nationalities visit my small shop in Terusato. When there are things to share, there shouldn’t be any room for accusations based on national conflict. What we may not attain through international relations may be attained through interpersonal ties. I hope that these ties will continue to develop around here!

If any extra–industrial significance is to be inferred from such a lyrical statement by one of the leading cultivator of social sphere in present–day Okinawa, it would relate to his emphasis on interpersonal ties as a means to overcome the dehumanizing aspect of national domination: i.e., domination, invasion, and exploitation of interpersonally constructed life-world by corporate forces which operate in the name of national interests, national politics, national economy, national management and/or national empowerment. The suggested division is not so much between Okinawans and the Japanese as it is between those who buy into the neoliberal classification of life and those who try to act against such a hegemonic annexation of human existence.

We live in a world today where the increasingly global impact of capitalism stimulates more people in more areas to adopt comparable lifestyles and share similar values through the consumption of widely distributed commodities. The study of marketplace in this context entails the understanding of the interplay between regional and local manifestations of capitalism. This requires analyzing the various intercultural links through an examination of their consequences within a particular site (Miller 1997:12), or investigating the impact of deterritorialization on the imaginative resources of lived, local experiences (Appadurai 1991:196, see also 1996). The overall aim of this chapter has been to contribute to such a study by emphasizing the role played by the inhabitants of Okinawa's local commercial district as mediators between the collective senses of past and future in their
manifestation of their present.

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