

The negotiating process around 'homeland level status' reversion between Japan and Okinawa

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Abstract

This article explores the negotiations between Japan and Okinawa to clarify the latter's role in this process. I focus on visits to Tokyo by Chobyō Yara, Chief Executive of the Government of the Ryukyu Islands, to meet with Japanese Government officials, including Prime Minister Eisaku Sato and Foreign Minister Kiichi Aichi. In particular, I consider 'homeland level status', a term used in these discussions to define the conditions for Okinawa's reversion to Japan.

1 Introduction

In international relations and diplomatic history research, there is appreciable accumulated knowledge of Japan–US negotiations on the reversion of Okinawa to Japan (Miyazato, 1981, 2000; Kono, 1994; Gabe, 2000, 2007; Nakashima, 2012a; Taira, 2012). Furthermore, there is a multitude

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of related research in the field of Okinawan modern history (Arasaki, 1976, 2005; Aketagawa, 2008). International relations research, however, focuses mainly on Japan–US relations, neglecting to consider the Government of the Ryukyu Islands, the self-government of native Okinawans under US occupation. Okinawan modern history also mainly describes the Japanese and US governments’ interactions and grassroots movements in Okinawa. Thus, previous studies have paid insufficient attention to the Government of the Ryukyu Islands or the negotiations between Japan and Okinawa. This is attributable to the Okinawan reversion being typically discussed in relation to Japan’s national security policy (Kono, 2010, p. 144), Japan and the United States having authority over the Okinawa reversion decision, and the lack of published resources enabling analysis of the negotiations between Japan and Okinawa. Only in some journalistic works have Japan–Okinawa negotiations been given equivalent emphasis to Japan–US dealings (Shiota and Sato, 1996; Miki, 2000).

However, the failure of prior works to emphasize the negotiations between Japan and Okinawa does not mean the latter is not a subjective actor in the negotiating process over the reversion. Previous studies revealed that the 1968 electoral triumph of the Chief Executive of the Ryukyu government by Chobyō Yara, a left-wing candidate who promised ‘immediate, unconditional and total’ reversion, impacted both Japan and the United States, spurring the Okinawa reversion (Miyazato, 2000, pp. 288–290; Nakashima, 2012a, pp. 114–117). Seigen Miyazato (2000, p. 1) observed that previous research tended to understate Okinawa, recognizing that the US military base problem in Okinawa after World War II was a result of interactions among the United States, Japan, and Okinawa.

Okinawa is one of 47 prefectures, but its history is unique compared to the others. Until it became a prefecture in 1879, while under the control of the Satsuma domain, it maintained a tributary relation with Qing as the Ryukyu Kingdom. During World War II, Okinawa was the site of a grueling ground battle. During the next 27-year US military occupation, a number of bases were constructed, with forcible takeover of land, with the US offering very little money for rent. Most of them currently remain, and Okinawa remains a military keystone for the US–Japan security system. Okinawan people’s anti-base feeling is deep-rooted, and the Okinawa Prefecture is strongly opposed to the construction of a new

US military base in Henoko, located on northern Okinawa Island; such a base is currently being constructed by the governments of Japan and the United States.

One of the origins of the so-called ‘Okinawa problem’ is Okinawa’s reversion. This article examines the negotiation on the reversion between Japan and Okinawa focusing on the Government of the Ryukyu Islands, especially Chief Executive Chobyō Yara. In short, the article’s main purpose is to examine, mainly from the Ryukyu government’s perspective, what kind of negotiations unfolded between the Ryukyu and Japanese governments when Okinawa was reunified with Japan.

Chobyō Yara was born in Okinawa in 1902. He was a physics teacher in Taiwan until World War II. After the end of the war, he returned to Okinawa and decided the only way for Okinawa to recover from the devastation and acquire autonomy was through reversion to Japan. He led the reversion movement as chairman of the Okinawa Teachers’ Association (*Okinawa Kyoshokuinkai*) and of the Council for Okinawa Prefecture Reversion to Japan (*Okinawaken Sokoku Fukki Kyogikai*). After assuming the position of Chief Executive in 1968, he consistently promoted the reversion to Japan.

The Ryukyu Government (established in 1952) was an autonomous government under the United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands (USCAR); it was a military government established by the United States, with administrative rights over Okinawa. The Ryukyu government nominally had the three powers of judicial, legislative, and administrative authority, but they were largely restricted by the United States. However, Okinawan residents continued their campaign to seek expansion of autonomy, and in 1968, Okinawa held an election for Chief Executive, which had up previously been an appointed position.

Regarding the diplomatic rights of the Ryukyu Government, it was stipulated that no foreign affairs could occur except through the USCAR (USCAR, 1952). In fact, however, successive Chief Executives had activities abroad: testifying at the House Committee on Armed Services in 1955; meeting with Chiang Kai-shek in 1963; visiting the United States and requesting that the US president return Okinawa to Japan in 1967. Meetings between the Chief Executive and the Japanese Prime Minister began in 1960 and continued almost yearly (Okinawa Prefecture, 1980). The Ryukyu Government had the characteristic of an international actor in terms of externally displaying the Okinawans’ interests.

To analyze negotiations between Japan and Okinawa over the Okinawan reversion, this research considers Yara's meetings with Japanese Government officials in Tokyo from 1968 to 1969. Within approximately one year of his electoral victory in November 1968 to the November 1969 Japan–US summit, where 'nuclear-free and homeland level status reversion' of Okinawa in 1972 was announced, Yara visited Tokyo eight times, meeting Prime Minister Eisaku Sato and Foreign Minister Kiichi Aichi. The year 1969 was when Japan and the United States began a full-scale process for Okinawan reversion negotiations, following Richard Nixon's election as US president, and the joint US–Japan communique in November of that year rapidly achieved the decision to revert Okinawa to Japan. As is well known, Sato and Nixon signed a secret agreement to allow the United States to bring nuclear weapons into Okinawa in case of emergency.

This article concentrates on the debate about 'homeland level status' in analyzing the process of negotiation between Japan and Okinawa. Between the two sides, the meaning of 'homeland level status' was an important agenda, and it was under the glare of media attention at that time. The term 'homeland level status' was also mentioned regarding Okinawa's participation in national elections and financial expenditure by the Japanese government, though the 'homeland level status' of the US military bases in Okinawa became particularly problematic. In brief, the controversy concerned whether the operational procedures of the US–Japan Security Treaty would apply equally to US military bases in Okinawa as to those in homeland Japan, or whether the size and density of military bases in Okinawa would conform with those of the military bases in homeland Japan. How did the Government of Japan, pressured by the United States to maintain the US military bases function, including nuclear weapons, in Okinawa, explain the condition of 'homeland level status' of the US military bases to the Okinawans?

To analyze the Japan–Okinawa negotiations, this study mainly uses 'Chobyō Yara's Diary'¹ as its Okinawan information source and the 'Diplomatic record on the Reversion of Okinawa' as its Japanese

1 'Chobyō Yara's Diary' comprises his 'Diary' and 'Memos'. His 'Diary' contains the names of visitors and Yara's impressions, while 'Memos' record talks with dignitaries and others. In the quotations cited in this article, 023-025 corresponds to 'Diary', and the rest correspond to 'Memos' (see the References section for these numbers). In addition, in

information source. Both became available to the public from 2010, and include meeting records and memoranda between the Government of Japan and the Government of Ryukyu. Through these resources, I expect to obtain more correct and detailed information about the negotiations than has previously been available through secondary sources, such as press releases and personal memoirs.

Section 2 reviews the first four meetings following Yara's electoral triumph. Section 3 considers the fifth and sixth meetings that discussed 'homeland level status', including a preliminary discussion between Yara and his expert advisers before he visited Tokyo. Section 4 considers meetings held by Sato before and after visiting the United States. Finally, I summarize the obtained findings and discuss the implications for Japan–Okinawa relations.

Before discussing the article's central issue, I consider how the idea of 'homeland level status' was shaped in the Government of Japan and the Ryukyu Government by the 1968 election for the Chief Executive of the Government of the Ryukyu Islands. In August 1967, Prime Minister Sato formed a private advisory body for Okinawan reversion (*Okinawa Mondaitou Kondankai*). The body's role was to formulate a plan for Okinawa's reversion, including addressing the US base problems. Tadao Hisasumi, a member of the advisory body, suggested that the US military bases should be given 'homeland level status' in September 1967, though this suggestion was not included in the draft interim report following consultation with the Foreign Ministry's North America Bureau. Chairman Nobumoto Ohama criticized the draft and wholly rewrote it, expressing the idea that 'homeland level status should be an eventual goal' on bases in Okinawa. We find that the Government of Japan, especially advisors to the prime minister, already had an idea of 'homeland level status' by 1967 (Kono, 1994, pp. 243–249). Though the Foreign Ministry was skeptical, Foreign Minister Takeo Miki and Chief Cabinet Secretary Toshio Kimura supported the idea of 'homeland level status' in May 1968 (Nakashima, 2012a, pp. 110–111). Sato, himself, had to agree to offer 'homeland level status' by the end of 1968, in response to debates in the election for president of the Liberal Democratic Party and the result of the

consideration of readability, words and phrases have been supplemented as necessary when translating citations.

election for the Chief Executive of the Ryukyu government. Therefore, Sato announced ‘homeland level status’ in March 1969 (Nakashima, 2012a, p. 145).

On the other hand, in Okinawa, ‘homeland level status’ was a campaign pledge of Junji Nishime, who was a candidate of the Okinawa Liberal Democratic Party for the Chief Executive of the Ryukyu government. As against left-wing Yara’s demand for ‘immediate, unconditional and total reversion’,² conservative Nishime sought unification with the homeland, i.e., gradual reversion to Japan (*Okinawa Times*, 21 October 1968). He explained that ‘homeland level status’ was a goal for US military bases in Okinawa. Yara won the election by a margin of ~30,000, with the ways to address the US bases and reversion policy being a large point of contention. Consequently, a big gap arose between Sato, who adopted ‘homeland level status’ reversion, and Yara, who defeated the LDP candidate by targeting ‘homeland level status’ by ‘immediate, unconditional and total reversion’. Negotiations between Japan and Okinawa began with this gap.

2 Shimoda statement and the 2.4 general strike (1st–4th meetings)

2.1 The first meeting

On 1 December 1968, Yara delivered his official inauguration address at a press conference and expressed his intention to visit Tokyo to meet Prime Minister Sato, seeking to claim early reversion to Japan (*Okinawa Times*, 2 December 1968).

On December 9, while visiting Foreign Minister Aichi, Yara requested an early realization of reversion, removal of Boeing B-52 Stratofortresses (hereafter, B-52) from Okinawa, and national elections, among other demands. On the reversion, Aichi declared, ‘I cannot help but recall the historical fact that Japan decided to conclude the San Francisco Peace

2 The unified platform of three left-wing parties, who had been leading the reversion movement, was originally ‘Remove Base’ and ‘Disposal of the Security Treaty’, but Yara declared ‘Removal’ and ‘Disposal’ as ‘Protest’. According to Yara, ‘Protest Bases’ included ‘gradual removal of the bases’ to make the pledge more realistic (Yara, 1969i, p. 21, 1977, p. 102).

Treaty despite the debate over whether it should be overall peace, including all communist countries, or major peace excluding the communist countries; subsequent problems were gradually solved, with the achievement of present prosperity and stability'. The transcript of this meeting was briefed to the press, but the First North America Division Director Kazuo Chiba deleted the part mentioning the peace treaty and added that Aichi and Yara were old acquaintances (MOFA, 1968).³

Yara went from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Office of the Prime Minister to meet Sato, from whom he requested early reversion, the same 'homeland level status financial expenditure' as other prefectures, and 'homeland level status participation in national elections', giving Okinawa an official representative (*Asahi Shimbun*, 10 December 1968). At the meeting, Sato showed his determination to realize early reversion of Okinawa and recorded his views on Yara, in his diary entry for that day, as follows: 'Mr. Yara from Okinawa came to greet me for the first time. His personality is good; the conservative camp maybe made a mistake in selecting a candidate for the Chief Executive election' (Sato, 1998, p. 359). Meanwhile, Yara did not request total removal or 'homeland level status' concerning the military bases at this meeting. As this first meeting came immediately after Yara's accession, a friendly relationship was emphasized between the Chief Executive from the left-wing camp and the LDP government.

2.2 The second meeting

Yara's second visit to Tokyo was on 5 January 1969. He faced two major concerns: the 2.4 general strike and the statement by Ambassador to the United States, Takezo Shimoda that 'nuclear-free and homeland level status reversion was difficult'.

The 2.4 general strike was planned by the Prefectural United Front for Defending Lives (*Inochi wo Mamoru Kenmin Kyoto*), which comprised 139 associations, including labor unions, in response to the B-52 crash at Kadena Air Base. The purpose of the general strike was not the removal of the base, but rather was limited to the withdrawal of B-52, and, additionally, made the organization bipartisan. All Okinawa

3 The record of the meeting was reported to the Department of State from the US Embassy in Tokyo (Embassy of the United States in Tokyo, 1968, pp. 131–135).

Military Employees Trade Union (*Zengunro*) was also supposed to participate; if the general strike had been implemented, it would have been inevitable that Okinawa's social infrastructure would stop functioning, which would have caused a major obstacle to the function of the base. Among left-wing parties, though the Okinawa People's Party and Social Democratic Party of Okinawa agreed with the general strike, the Okinawa Social Mass Party sought to avoid the general strike, and the directors of the Ryukyu government shared their view. While Yara also targeted avoidance of the general strike, to achieve this, he had to obtain and announce a firm date for the removal of B-52s. Therefore, Yara called on the Government of Japan to encourage the United States to remove its B-52s (Yara, 1977, p. 112). However, at this point, Prime Minister Sato and Foreign Minister Aichi 'said they would make an effort. They didn't make a commitment yet' (Yara, 1969a, January 7).

On January 13, eight days after his meeting with Yara, Sato met with Washington's Ambassador to Tokyo, Ural Alexis Johnson, to discuss the Okinawa problem. Sato said, 'Okinawan residents have unusual feelings; I (as prime minister) am trying to persuade Yara and calm down their feelings, but I suffer inability to sufficiently control Yara supported by left-wing parties' (MOFA, 1969a). Sato did not call for the withdrawal of B-52s as Yara had requested, but instead explained to the United States his efforts to calm the Okinawan people.

On the other hand, it was publicized that Ambassador Shimoda presented to Sato his view on the US response that it was difficult to revert Okinawa to Japan with 'homeland level status' US military bases; he also told Sato it was irresponsible to negotiate 'homeland level status' reversion with the United States on 6 January, during Shimoda's temporary return from the United States (*Asahi Shimbun*, 7 January 1969). Yara criticized Shimoda's statement after Yara met with Sato on January 7: Yara's point was that Japanese nationals and Okinawan residents did not agree with the denial of 'homeland level status' (*Asahi Shimbun*, 8 January 1969). The key point to note is that the meaning of 'homeland level status' for Shimoda was formal, involving the adoption of prior consultation and banning the entry of nuclear weapons, without regard to the size and density of US military bases.

On January 9, Shimoda accepted Yara's offer to meet (Miki, 2000, p. 49). In this meeting, Shimoda said that Yara's position was similar to that of former Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida, and that Okinawa's

reversion was his mission, knowing the pain endured by Yoshida to achieve recognition of residual sovereignty through the Peace Treaty. In contrast, Yara consistently demanded the removal of bases and immediate reversion as the consensus of the Okinawan people (*Ryukyu Shimpo*, 10 January 1969). First North America Division Director Chiba, sitting in on their meeting, recorded ‘the two were civilized; furthermore, they nobly discussed their opinion with each other; it struck me as a nationalist debate in the Meiji early period’ (Miki, 2000, p. 53). However, the 30-minute meeting ultimately yielded no progress, and Yara simply recorded in this diary ‘I and Ambassador Shimoda only told our positions and opinions to each other’ (Yara, 1969a, January 9).

2.3 *The third meeting*

The third visit to Tokyo was on January 28, about three weeks after the previous meeting. The purpose of this visit was not to negotiate removal of the bases or ‘homeland level status’ but, rather, to pursue avoidance of the general strike; therefore, Yara had to obtain a forecast of the date on which removal of the B-52s would be ordered by the Japanese government.

On January 28, representatives of each association involved in planning the strike assembled at Naha Airport, where the representatives made a motivational speech before Yara’s departure. Yara referred to the associations as ‘supervision to make me confront the situation with courage, and not to be persuaded by the government guys’ (Yara, 1969a, January 28). On the morning of January 29, Yara met the Director General of the Office of the Prime Minister, Tokuji Tokonami, the Foreign Minister Aichi, but was unable to achieve any commitment: ‘It was expressed that America was increasing its momentum toward B-52 withdrawal and it seemed the United States was contemplating this withdrawal at an early date. I could not draw any assurance of the withdrawal date from both ministers.’ He then met with Prime Minister Sato at the Office of the Prime Minister from 5 pm; however, ‘we talked for about one hour but nothing came out. Sato said nothing except that he would negotiate by presenting the will of the prefectural citizens’. Reflecting on this day’s meetings, Yara revealed his distrust of the Japanese government: ‘I was disappointed that I did not get anything

and it was a miscalculation. No one had any words to persuade me but repeated that there should be no demonstration or strike. After all, even though they told me to prevent it, I cannot do anything unless the conditions were met. They seem not to feel responsibility for it' (Yara, 1969a, January 29). Subsequently, through the mediation of a Kyodo News Service reporter with whom Yara dined, Yara went, the next morning, to the house of Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Kimura.

On January 30, Yara visited Kimura's house in Setagaya, despite the snow. Yara recorded, 'Mr. Kimura talked for about one hour. The airport in Thailand will be built; through Paris peace talks, the Vietnam War will be finished in July at the latest. So, his view is that the B-52 base will be removed in June or July at the latest. I feel I've advanced a little. Mr. Kimura seemed to be fairly confident in his view' (Yara, 1969a, January 30). Here, the Government of Japan official suggested a specific view about removal of the B-52s for the first time.

However, according to Kimura in later years, he simply made an optimistic projection matching Yara's wish, and Yara had feigned 'political misperception' (Yara, 1977, p. 117). That night, Yara stated he felt that the B-52s would be removed by July (*Asahi Shimbun*, 31 January 1969); the following day, he officially requested 'Prefectural United Front for Defending Lives' to cancel the general strike, to which they agreed.⁴

2.4 The fourth meeting

The fourth visit to Tokyo was on April 7; its purpose was to attend a cherry blossom viewing party hosted by Sato and to negotiate with the Japanese government. Yara's most important demand continued to be the removal of the B-52s. At 4:30 pm on April 8, Yara met Aichi; however, as Yara recorded, 'I strongly urged the removal, but I just received the response that it was a very difficult problem but they would continue negotiating. On the removal in June or July, I got nothing. I will be in trouble when I go back to Naha' (Yara, 1969b, April 8). On January 11, Yara met Kimura, but 'He said his view on the B-52s was not changed yet', and so there was no progress.

4 The other cause of the cancellation of the general strike was the retreat of the All Okinawa Military Employees Trade Union at the last minute (Taira, 2012, p. 257).

The B-52s were actually withdrawn from Okinawa in September 1970.⁵ Avoidance of the general strike was recognized as the collapse of a mass movement (Arasaki, 1976, p. 327), and it was said that Yara had engaged in a ‘beautiful misperception’. It remains uncertain whether there truly was a ‘beautiful and political misperception’ between Yara and the Government of Japan. However, Yara was finally able to trust the government and avoid a crucial conflict with Japan. After avoiding the general strike, the Okinawan reversion negotiation gained momentum between Japan and the United States.

3 Debate on ‘homeland level status’ (5th–6th meetings)

3.1 *The fifth meeting*

The purpose of the fifth visit was to attend an imperial garden party on May 16 and to present requests to the Government of Japan. Yara met Aichi on May 15, submitting a document named ‘The requests on Okinawan Reversion Negotiation’ (MOFA, 1969b; Embassy of the United States in Tokyo, 1969a). The document aimed to clarify Ryukyu’s demands before Aichi’s visit to the United States in early June. These comprised: (i) ‘immediate, unconditional and total reversion’ and ‘make all systems the same as in the homeland’; (ii) complete disagreement with free use of the bases and with nuclear weapons; (iii) regarding ‘homeland level status’ military bases, ‘we cannot state our opinion unless that actual condition is made explicit’; (iv) separate the Okinawa problem from the Security Treaty. By way of reasons for the requests, the following were added: in respect of (iii), ‘because there was significant difference in reality, such as density and function of military bases’; in respect of (iv), ‘because Okinawa will depend on the Security Treaty’. We can interpret from these points the Ryukyu government’s attitude that ‘homeland level status’ could not be subject to debate unless its contents were consistently made explicit.

5 The withdrawal of B-52 from Okinawa was due to the utilization of the U-Tapao airbase in Thailand, a cost-reduction policy, and consideration of the Okinawa residents by the United States (*Asahi Shimbun*, 25 September 1970).

Aichi responded to this written request as follows: ‘the Security Treaty will be applied to Okinawa, after the reversion, at the same level as that of the homeland. Immediately, the Constitution and the Security Treaty and so on will be fully applied to Okinawa’. He explained that ‘homeland level status’ was just formal and operational, and warned that ‘we have trouble if you think that all bases will be removed with Okinawa reversion to the homeland. Such a view is too unrealistic by half’. Yara emphasized that ‘there is a difference of level in the density and function of bases between the mainland and Okinawa’. However, the ‘immediate, unconditional and total’ reversion requested by the Ryukyu government in this meeting was excluded by the Government of Japan before the US–Japan foreign ministerial conference began.

Regarding the negotiation situation between Japan and the United States, the Director-General of the North American Affairs Bureau, Fumihiko Togo, visited the United States on April 28 for preliminary negotiations, having already presented the United States with Japan’s request for the application of the Security Treaty and prior consultation to Okinawa after the reversion, that is to say, formal ‘homeland level status’. The United States responded that it was difficult to limit the free use of the bases (Miki, 2000, pp. 127–128; Miyazato, 2000, p. 310). On June 2, Aichi visited the United States, meeting with President Nixon and Secretary of State William Pierce Rogers. They confirmed that they would discuss the prospect of Okinawan reversion by the Japan–US summit in November. Regarding free use of the bases, seeking to avoid imposing unwarranted restrictions, they left open the option of what was termed flexible operation of prior consultation (*Asahi Shimbun*, 6 June 1969; Miyazato, 2000, p. 312). This represented greater appeasement of the United States than Aichi had informed Yara he would accept. Speaking to the press on the outcome of the Japan–US foreign ministerial conference, Yara commented, ‘It was far from our request’; however, he wrote in his diary, ‘the result was expected but the Okinawa problem is heading largely for a resolution. It will be clear in November’, demonstrating that he regarded the situation clinically (Yara, 1969b, January 6).

3.2 *The sixth meeting*

The sixth visit to Tokyo to negotiate with the Government of Japan was on 14 August, arranged to coincide with attendance of the National Memorial Service for War Dead. The 7th US–Japan Joint Committee on Trade and Economic Problems was held on July 30, at which Aichi and Rogers discussed the unrestricted use of bases. This meeting, coming three months before Sato’s planned visit to the United States, was a precious opportunity to convey Okinawa’s requests; hence, Yara made careful preparations.

On August 9, Yara held consultations with his expert advisers, comprising Matsusho Miyazato (personal advisor and lawyer), Shinei Kyan (Chairman of Okinawa Teachers’ Association), Hiroaki Fukuchi (Director-General of Okinawan Prefecture Education Development Association), and Kokichi Kameko (Chairman of Okinawan Prefecture Federation of Labor Unions) (Yara, 1969d, August 9). This meeting discussed the meaning of ‘homeland level status’. Miyazato asserted, ‘What it means is that the Japan-US agreement centered on the Security Treaty will be applied to Okinawa. Will the United States simply disclaim an administrative right and will it not mean equal treatment at homeland level for social life and social facts?’ He pointed out that the ‘homeland level status’ mentioned by the Government of Japan had the potential to only formally apply to Okinawa. Kameko reasoned, ‘Those who have no authority to decide cannot make an alternative choice by entangling the return of administrative rights with military bases’. He accepted that Japan and the United States had the right to decide on Okinawa’s reversion: ‘Should we seek to stop the Japan-US negotiation if nuclear weapons deployment and free use of bases will happen? We should not seek to stop the negotiation. We have no choice but to demand Sato’s resignation. Alternatively, we have nothing left except to go to the people’ to discuss demanding the resignation of Sato’s cabinet or a snap general election if nuclear weapons deployment and free use of bases would be permitted.

On August 12, Yara held a meeting with the ‘professors of the University of the Ryukyus’. It seems that the individual identified as ‘Prof. Miyazato’ was Seigen Miyazato (Yara, 1969d, August 12). Miyazato advised, ‘You should consider both sides of function and size’ on ‘homeland level status’, and he rejected nuclear weapons and

free use of bases as ‘regarding the function of the bases, nuclear weapons and free use should never be allowed’. Regarding the flexible operation of prior consultation, Miyazato stated, ‘I suspect it is deception that it could be yes or no [...] it can be the status quo’, reflecting concern that the actual status that allowed unrestricted use of the bases would not be changed.

On August 14, the day of his visit to Tokyo, Yara exchanged views with Tsumichiyo Asato, Chairman of Okinawa Social Mass Party (Yara, 1969d, August 14). Asato stated, ‘homeland level status is reasonable from the words themselves. Although I have a big question. [...] There is a big gap of premise between homeland bases and Okinawan bases and they are never equal. The size and density of bases are beyond comparison. There is no reason to deny if the bases truly will be reduced to the same size as the homeland. [...] so as to consolidate the bases as same size as homeland, it is probably necessary to decrease by 80–90%’. Asato perceived acceptable ‘homeland level status’ as the situation in which the size of the bases would be absolutely equal with those in the homeland. He then warned Yara that the prior consultation had the potential to be watered-down in Okinawa, as ‘it could be a blanket prior acceptance for prior consultation’. Yara recorded that Asato’s views were of some help (Yara, 1969c, August 14).

Following these thorough preparations, Yara approached his talks with the Government of Japan. His meeting with Sato began at 3:40 pm on August 15. Yara asked Sato about his resolve and prospects on the reversion; Sato responded, ‘I think I have to end the negotiation but it depends on the standpoint. I am disappointed that some are seeking to stop me from negotiating. That is never a solution’. He, thus, expressed concern over the movement to stop Sato visiting the United States. Additionally, on the nuclear submarine calling at Naha port⁶ in Okinawa, Sato stated, ‘I have a responsibility to relieve Okinawan concern, but you have it too’; Yara responded, ‘ultimately,

6 In 1968, Ryukyu and the US military jointly investigated the seabed soil of Naha Port, where the nuclear submarine was anchored. They announced that cobalt 60 was detected, but only a very small amount. However, an antinuclear civil group independently investigated and detected a large amount of cobalt 60. This triggered a situation wherein the anchoring of a nuclear submarine in Okinawan ports was considered a problem (*Asahi Shimbun*, 7 September 1968).

I think the Prime Minister has the responsibility'. Their discussion was, thus divided about the locus of responsibility.

Yara subsequently met Kimura on August 18. Kimura's statement about 'homeland level status' is presented below (Yara, 1969e, August 18):

About homeland level status of bases

1. No entry of nuclear weapons.
2. Okinawa has strategic value that is different from the homeland because of topological objectivity. However, we cannot permit any distinction in dealing with Okinawa.
3. No discrimination between Okinawa and the homeland within the framework of the Security Treaty.
4. After reversion, bases will be consolidated. However, this is impossible until reversion.
5. In theory, the homeland could be in the same situation as Okinawa, but we prevent it.
6. In the homeland 20 years ago, there were 15 times more US military bases than at present, but they were gradually consolidated. Therefore, while it is impossible, in reality, until 1972, after the reversion, the bases will be consolidated. The United States seems to be thinking about it.

As a key point of Kimura's explanation of 'homeland level status', he first explains it as treating the US military bases in Okinawa as equivalent to those in the homeland within the framework of the Security Treaty; furthermore, the size of the bases would be scaled down after the reversion.⁷ To support this argument, he adduced the fact that, following the Peace Treaty, US military bases in the homeland were extensively scaled down. The analogy of Japanese sovereignty recovery, which Foreign Minister Aichi and Ambassador Shimoda had previously mentioned, was used here. On prior consultations, Kimura explained that Japan would not allow emergency departures only for US military bases in Okinawa, and that if an emergency arose on the

⁷ In fact, 84% of the US military base area in the Japanese homeland had been returned by 1970 compared to 1952, and about 96% had been returned by 2011. However, following the Okinawan reversion, the reduction of US military bases in Okinawa was limited to ~33.8% by 2017; today, ~70.6% of US military bases (exclusive use) in Japan are located in Okinawa (Defense Agency, 1986; Okinawa Prefecture, 2013; *Asahi Shinbun*, 26 December 2016; Minister of Defense, 2017).

Korean Peninsula, Japan would have to agree to US requests. On this meeting, Yara wrote in his diary that ‘I heard a talk that is very helpful’ (Yara, 1969c, August 18).

The following day, Yara met with newspaper reporters and discussed ‘homeland level status’ (Yara, 1969e, August 19). Regarding the meaning of ‘homeland level status’, the reporters stated that ‘in terms of quantity and quality, both must be the same’, but ‘there is concern that the homeland level status indicated by the government will remain at the level of formality’, so ‘as Chief Executive, you should never say that you agree with the homeland level status of bases’.

On August 20, Yara had talks with Aichi, who had been requested in the document Yara submitted at the last meeting to clarify the contents of ‘homeland level status’. According to Yara’s diary, Aichi explained the ‘homeland level status’ as follows (Yara, 1969e, August 20):

On the logistics of the homeland level bases:

1. It is premised on the Security Treaty. We will decrease the function, size, and density within the framework of the Security Treaty.
2. We cannot undertake base-free reversion. We will make base densities and functions similar to the homeland. The Security Treaty is necessary and it assumes the existence of bases.

On the consolidation of bases:

1. The number and area of homeland bases has been decreasing in comparison with 19 years ago when the Security Treaty was concluded; after the reversion, the same will occur regarding the bases in Okinawa.
2. After the reversion, the number and area of the bases will be reduced as in the homeland. This will be an agenda at the Japan–US Joint Committee, and they will be reduced to the same level as those in the homeland by eliminating unnecessary bases.

Here, as explained by Deputy Secretary Kimura, Aichi went beyond mentioning the reduction of US military bases by stating that the Okinawan bases would be reduced to ‘homeland level status’.⁸ He based this experience of reduced US military bases in Japan after the

8 In his memoir, Yara suggested that similar explanations were also made at other meetings (Yara, 1985, p. 86).

Peace Treaty, and asserted that it would be the agenda of the Japan–US Joint Committee.

However, what must be recalled here is that some of the US forces who withdrew from Japan after the Peace Treaty moved to Okinawa. For example, the Third Marine Division relocated from the United States to the Japanese homeland in 1953, and was stationed in Gifu, Nara, and Otsu, before then moving to Okinawa from 1955 to 1957 (Toriyama, 2010). In that sense, the reduction of the US military bases in the Japanese homeland in the 1950s and the Okinawan resistance movement to construction of bases, known as The Island-Wide Protest (*Shima Gurumi Toso*) must be understood as two sides of the same coin. However, as ‘The Island-Wide Protest’ later developed into the Japan reversion movement, it can be said that there was some kind of inconsistency in the movement aiming for removal of the bases through the reversion.

Aichi’s comments in this talk were reported in the following terms: ‘regarding homeland level status, I want to resolve various problems surrounding bases one by one, taking time, under the Security Treaty, the Japan-U.S. Status-of-Forces Agreement, and through institutions based on these’ (*Asahi Shimbun*, August 20). Furthermore, in the MOFA’s accompanying materials, in which the only record of these talks between Aichi and Yara is the briefing published in ‘General information’ number 191, there was simply an explanation that ‘regarding homeland level status, related agreements such as Japan-U.S. Status-of-Forces Agreement are applied under the Security Treaty; it also falls within the scope of the Japan-U.S. Joint Committee, so it will tackle the problems of these bases in the long term’ (MOFA, 1969c). Neither the newspaper article nor MOFA’s record mentioned the size and density of the bases in relation to ‘homeland level status’.

Thus, at the sixth meeting in Tokyo, for which Yara made careful preparations, he drew out from the Japanese government not only that ‘homeland level status’ would be a mere formality but also that the scale and density of Okinawan bases would be equivalent to those of the homeland bases. These findings contradict the information temporarily released to reporters. When Yara next visited Tokyo, he would have a final opportunity to appeal to Sato before the prime minister’s visit to the United States.

4 Before and after Sato's visit to the United States (7th–8th meetings)

4.1 *The seventh meeting*

The seventh visit to Tokyo began on November 7, with Prime Minister Sato's visit to the United States scheduled for 10 days later. Talks between Aichi and Rogers were held on September 11 before this visit to Tokyo, and First North America Division Director Chiba visited Okinawa to report the contents (Yara, 1969f, September 19 and 21).

After receiving reports that the US–Japan negotiations were progressing steadily, Yara decided to prepare a written request for Sato just before his visit to America, to project the voice of Okinawan citizens. Traveling to Tokyo with the written request Yara first met with Foreign Minister Aichi on November 8 (Yara, 1969g, November 8). Asking about the outlook for nuclear-free bases and 'homeland level status', Yara also reiterated the meaning of 'immediate, unconditional and total reversion', namely that Okinawa was unable to tolerate the bases and, therefore, had to protest the Security Treaty. In response, Aichi explained Japan could ensure 'nuclear-free and homeland level status', and there were no special agreements. He then indicated he understood the Okinawan people's feelings in not accepting US bases, and predicted that the bases would eventually be removed from Okinawa.

On November 10, during his meeting with Sato, Yara stood before Sato and read aloud the written request titled 'Appeal to Prime Minister Sato', which had been written after consulting with professors of the University of the Ryukyus and his expert advisers for one week (Yara, 1969c, November 3 and 7). As Yara related, the Okinawan citizens 'groaned and struggled under the control of a different race'; while 'fulfilling ethnic fidelity'⁹ as Japanese citizens, we have been desperately aspired to return to my homeland'. He appealed again that

9 Nationalistic rhetoric by Yara is also common in his books. For example, 'During 23 years after the war, one million Okinawan citizens did not succumb to rule by a different race and continued to clamor with blood for the reversion to the homeland and removal of the bases, despite gasping in the valley of Japan and the United States, wishing to return to the Mother Country; unite the nation and build the happy democratic state; and have a rich life in both material and spiritual terms' (Yara, 1969j, p. 168).

the citizens' requested "immediate, unconditional and total reversion" to restore their status as Japanese citizens under the democratic peace constitution'. From the standpoint of not accepting the bases of Okinawa, he also declared his opposition to the Japan–US Security Treaty. In addition, if the Japanese government's basic policy for 'homeland level status', in negotiating the Okinawan reversion, meant simply that the homeland legal system would be applied equivalently to Okinawa, this could not be accepted. Yara also sought the rebuilding of the Okinawan economy, the appropriate treatment of US assets in Okinawa, and the realization of 'homeland level' participation in governmental affairs (*The Government of Ryukyu Islands*, 1969).

In response to Yara's requests, Sato replied, 'It is troubling that the Chief Executive opposes against the Security Treaty', and Chief Cabinet Secretary Shigeru Hori stressed that 'Japan is prospering under the Security Treaty. We will welcome Okinawa in it'. Furthermore, Sato remarked, 'I feel uneasy until the end, but I think we can almost realize what we think [...] Tell Okinawan citizens that I don't think Okinawa's request will be realized word-for-word, but as an outline it seems that a satisfactory solution will be possible and I will do my best in good faith' (Yara, 1969c, November 10). Sato, himself, broached the important issue that, following the reversion, he wished to realize the Okinawan participation in governmental affairs that was particularly requested. Sato was 'smiling and relaxed' in the meeting with Yara, and finally, as Yara recorded, 'we ended up with two firm handshakes, committing to work in close collaboration' (Yara, 1969g, November 10). In addition, Sato wrote in his diary: 'It's been only half an hour with Mr. Chobyō Yara. He seems to have become completely quiet recently; it has become easier. We talked about participation in governmental affairs and the establishment of the Okinawa Development Agency, etc' (Sato, 1998, p. 530).¹⁰

Here, it is necessary to consider progress on the nonpublic agreement on nuclear imports and prior consultation between Japan and the United States, as handled by Kyoto Sangyo University Professor, Kei

10 The US Embassy in Tokyo reported the contents of the meeting to the State Department as follows: 'Yara, in his last appearance in Tokyo before Sato's departure, played his expected role as chief elected representative of [the] Ryukyuan appealing to [the] Japanese not to forget [the] Okinawan desire' (*Embassy of the United States in Tokyo*, 1969b, pp. 98–99).

Wakaizumi, as a confidential agent. Wakaizumi, who was given this mission by Sato, was conducting direct negotiations with the White House through Presidential Assistant Henry Kissinger. In Washington on 21 July 1969, Wakaizumi was consulted by Kissinger on the possibility of a secret understanding about nuclear entry (Wakaizumi, 2002, p. 111), but Sato originally opposed such a secret agreement (Wakaizumi, 2002, p. 120). However, on September 30, Kissinger proposed to Wakaizumi a secret agreement on documents for emergency nuclear entry (Wakaizumi, 2002, pp. 164–167). On the morning of November 6, as Wakaizumi prepared depart to Washington to finalize the negotiation with Kissinger, Sato informed him that a secret agreement allowing the United States to bring in nuclear weapons was, ultimately, unavoidable (Wakaizumi, 2002, pp. 196–197). Following his negotiations with Kissinger from November 10 to 12, Wakaizumi returned home on November 15 and reported the draft of the joint statement and secret agreement to Sato (Wakaizumi, 2002, pp. 238–239). In fact, on the day of Sato's talks with Yara (November 10), Wakaizumi and Kissinger were negotiating in Washington, and Sato recognized that there could well be a secret agreement on nuclear imports, depending on the outcome of those negotiations.

4.2 *The eighth meeting*

On November 22, Prime Minister Sato and President Nixon agreed 'nuclear-free, homeland level status and reversion in 1972', as announced by the US–Japan joint statement. Yara held a press conference at 5:00 am and read a prepared statement after confirming the contents of the joint statement. While valuing the reversion of Okinawa as a 'national accomplishment', he raised the following points: (i) questions remained on the removal of the nuclear base, the handling of the B-52s, and the application of prior consultation; (ii) he opposed the long-term continuation of the Security Treaty; (iii) doubt remained regarding 'homeland level status' in terms of maintaining the current status of military facilities (*Ryukyu Shimpo*, 22 November 1969).

On November 25, Yara traveled to Tokyo, planning to welcome Sato at Haneda Airport on his return from the United States and to raise questions on the agreement terms. However, the three left-wing parties

asked Yara to cancel these plans, as the Chief Executive welcoming Sato at Haneda would convey acceptance of the joint statement (*Ryukyu Shimpo*, 26 November 1969). After Yara considered the matter, ‘tossing and turning all night’, he decided not to take part in the welcome at Haneda Airport.

On November 27, Yara visited Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Kimura to request mediation for talks with Prime Minister Sato and Foreign Minister Aichi (Yara, 1985, p. 97). At that time, Kimura explained to Yara the contents of the joint statement. According to Kimura, the main point of the joint statement was to remove discrimination against Okinawa; even if the Government of Japan were criticized for ‘Okinawanization of Homeland’,¹¹ the homeland would be left to bear the burden of US military bases and would address consolidation of the military bases without waiting for 1972 (Yara, 1969h, November 27). Regarding the terms of prior consultation processes, consideration would be given to the US Congress and the American people, but Japan would absolutely reject the United States bringing in nuclear weapons. On the other hand, he also showed irritation regarding the attitude of the Okinawa side: ‘As you don’t trust anyone and wrapped yourself in suspicion, who do you trust for God’s sake? You never trust Russia. You need to think about it constructively, don’t you?’

On November 28, Yara’s request was met when he held talks with Aichi at 2:20 pm (Yara, 1969h, November 28). Aichi explained there was ‘no need to worry because freedom of takeoff, emergency nuclear weapons entry, B-52 takeoff and others will be homeland level status’. He continued, ‘It is clear that the US forces will gradually reduce their bases, as the US forces have clear plans on their bases; actually, it may be reduced more rapidly than our expectation’. On the other key issue, he stated, ‘Regarding nuclear, we have absolutely no secret or confidential agreement, whether oral or written’.¹²

Yara then met with Sato from 4:40 pm to 5:30 pm (Yara, 1969h, November 28). When Yara who explained the circumstances of

11 At that time, the term ‘Okinawanization of Homeland’ was frequently used to mean relocation of US military bases from Okinawa to the homeland.

12 According to Wakaizumi, on the Japanese side, only Sato and Wakaizumi himself knew the existence of a secret agreement (Wakaizumi, 2002, pp. 211, 218–219.)

cancelling his welcome at Haneda Airport, Sato replied, ‘I do not care at all and we each have large and small things’;¹³ at that time, Sato seemed to be ‘smiling’ and Yara was ‘impressed by Sato’s behavior as the Prime Minister’. Next, Yara sought certainty on the implications of the joint statement: ‘There is no doubt that Okinawa will be reverted in 1972. The nuclear bases will be removed in 1972. It is impossible for there to be free use of the bases; there is to be no launching, including of B-52s.’ If the Vietnam War were still continuing in 1972, Sato explained that any use by the US military of Okinawan bases would be preceded by the Japanese government consulting with the United States, which would never be allowed to bring in nuclear weapons or have unrestricted use of the bases, etc. On the US military bases in Okinawa, Sato conveyed his views as follows: ‘Regarding the essential value of the Okinawa bases under the Security Treaty, after reversion, first of all, the nuclear bases will disappear. Secondly, the United States cannot use them freely. Thirdly, their value will gradually decline as the bases are gradually reduced. Therefore, the quality of the Okinawa bases will be changed, their character will also change, their size will be reduced, and the density will decrease. It is easier to consolidate the bases without reversion.’ We, thus, find that Sato was optimistic about the prospect of reducing the bases because reversion had been decided.

In his diary entry for the day, Yara recorded, ‘It was a very fruitful meeting. I also said the things that I needed to say, appreciated the things for which thanks were warranted, asked for the things I needed to ask, questioned the points of doubt, listened to countermeasures, and confirmed what needed to be confirmed. [...] I have achieved my purpose completely’ (Yara, 1969c, November 28). This entry is full of relief at successfully holding the meeting after his earlier discourtesy of canceling the welcome of Sato at Haneda Airport. Sato wrote in his

13 In Yara’s memoir, this ‘large and small (大小)’ remark by Sato was recorded as: ‘Mr. Yara, you and I both are adults (大人). You don’t have to care because I understand you well. I have the same thing as you.’ Yara interpreted this as alluding to Sato having to fly in a helicopter from the office of the Prime Minister to Haneda Airport due to the campaign to stop the Prime Minister visiting the United States (Yara, 1977, p. 138). Hence, while it was written as ‘large and small’ (大小) in Yara’s diary, it was rewritten in his memoirs as ‘adults’ (大人). However, knowing, as we do today, the existence of the secret nuclear agreement, if Sato really said, ‘we each have large and small things’, Sato seemed to be implicitly alluding to the ‘dishonesty’ of never telling Yara about the secret agreement for nuclear weapons.

diary, 'I met Yara too. He wanted to welcome me at Haneda but members of the Social Democratic Party stopped him so he was unable to make up his mind, but in the end he decided to meet me' (Sato, 1998, p. 542).

5 Conclusion

Throughout their negotiations, the Ryukyu government made persistent claims for 'immediate, unconditional and total' reversion, in response to which the Japanese Government repeatedly answered that reversion would bring Okinawa to 'homeland level status'. These negotiations offered no room for maneuver to the Ryukyu government, which was powerless in decisions regarding the restoration of administrative rights to Okinawa. Yara, therefore, sought to justify the Okinawan peoples' demand for 'immediate, unconditional and total' reversion using three key arguments: politically, as Chief Executive, Yara represented the consensus of Okinawan opinion; nationally, Okinawa should be reunited with Japan; and Okinawa's aspiration for peace would be secured by the 'democratic and peaceful' Japanese Constitution. In addition, the Ryukyu government requested the Japanese government to give a concrete explanation on the meaning of 'homeland level status'. In the discussion on 'homeland level status' within the Ryukyu government, it was pointed out that, in reality, the bases would remain after reversion and that the prior consultation requirement would be watered-down. Therefore, Okinawa confirmed the necessity of rejecting the bases, and finally presented 'immediate, unconditional and total' reversion as Okinawa's minimum demands.

In response, the Japanese government clarified 'homeland level status' as 'formal homeland level status', which would bring operational aspects equivalent to those of the homeland, at least as far as it was made public. However, in response to the Ryukyu government's requests to clarify the meaning of 'homeland level status', the possibility of 'real homeland level status', whereby the scale and density of the bases would be equal to those of the homeland, was repeatedly indicated in actual negotiations.

Furthermore, Japanese officials frequently mentioned their expectation that the US military bases would be reduced and consolidated after Okinawa's reversion, just as military bases had been removed

following Japan's independence in 1952. This reveals an evident analogy between the restoration of Japanese sovereignty and the restoration of Okinawan administrative rights. However, the reality that several US military bases had simply moved from Japan to Okinawa, which came under US direct control, was ignored: a fact that reveals a significant flaw in the Japanese government's logic. The analogy between the Peace Treaty, under which Japan restored its sovereign status and returned to the international community, and the restoration of administrative rights when Okinawa was returned to Japan as a local government, was established in the sense of recovering Japanese sovereignty. However, since Okinawa's request for resolution of the situation of military bases, including prohibiting the reentry of nuclear weapons, was not realized, Okinawa's sovereignty was never recovered.

On the Okinawa side, the reversion movement is said to have developed from resistance to military occupation, and its aim was the complete removal of military bases. However, Okinawa had already been positioned as a keystone of the US military within the US–Japan Security Treaty structure before its reversion. By rebuilding after devastation, achieving high economic growth and moving into the ranks of developed countries, Japan recovered the national pride that had been hurt by defeat in war. For Japan, Okinawa's reversion was a means of further enhancing national pride by restoring lost territory. The United States, which was facing the Vietnam War, aimed to maintain the base functions in exchange for responding to the increasing demand from Japan and Okinawa for the reversion (Nakashima, 2012b). In this sense, it is logically doubtful that Okinawa's reversion to Japan could have led to the clearance of military bases. Hence, such an expectation of the reversion was contradictory.

There is no doubt that 'homeland level status' was a point of compromise, representing a realistic response in contrast to 'immediate, unconditional and total' reversion. However, the transition of its interpretation in the process of negotiation is clearly shown in this article. Regarding US military bases in Okinawa, there are variable factors, such as changes in the international security environment and the reversion negotiations. However, the 'real homeland level status' indicated by the Japanese government in the Japan–Okinawa talks has not been realized.

Following the Japan–US Joint Statement, negotiations between the Government of Japan and the Ryukyu government continued, concerning, for example, the Agreement between Japan and the United States of America concerning the Ryukyu Islands and the Daito Islands in 1971 and compensation for currency exchange gains due to the shift to a floating exchange rate system. Since the reversion, further negotiations between the Japanese government and Okinawa Prefecture have been conducted on several occasions in relation to problems arising from the US military bases.

To consider such Okinawan action, Okinawa should be regarded as not just a prefecture, but as a distinct political entity with a history of the Ryukyu Kingdom and the experience of diplomatic activities by the Ryukyu government as a pseudo-state. In addition, Okinawa's originality is based on its national identity. Yara publicly stated that the Okinawans are Japanese to insist on the reversion. However, the sentiments written in Yara's diary showed his identity as Okinawan rather than Japanese (Komatsu, 2015). Today, Okinawa is subordinated into the Japan–US security system and Japan's political economic structure, but it has been attempting to challenge and change its structure by means of political practice including popular participation, economic autonomy, and expression of Okinawan identity (Hook and Siddle, 2003, pp. 13–14). To understand the 'Okinawan Problem' as it exists today, it is necessary to consider the history of both Japan–US and Japan–Okinawa relations. To that end, it is critical to problematize Japan and Okinawa's historical relationship.

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