

Reflections on the Remaking of the Imperial Image in the Reiwa Era and Japanese Democracy

Medoruma Shun, Watanabe Osamu, Kihara Satoru and Satoko Oka Norimatsu

We introduce Medoruma Shun, an Akutagawa-Award winning Okinawan author, Watanabe Osamu, a constitutional scholar in Tokyo, Kihara Satoru, a freelance journalist in Fukuyama, Hiroshima, and Satoko Oka Norimatsu, an *Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* editor as rare voices of dissent over the media hype concerning the changeover of the Japanese emperor and adoption of the new era name Reiwa.



Even cats are disgusted by the media's support-the-emperor broadcasts, refusing to be moved by its brainwashing propaganda

Medoruma Shun

Translation by Steve Rabson

Day and night, over and over, the media repeats the same propaganda broadcasts about the emperor and the new reign name "Reiwa," No matter what TV channel you turn to, it shows the same images. This can only be called

brainwashing, the same method used by Aum Shinri-kyo and the Unification Church. It's unbearable!

Is there no other news worth reporting? How about the murder of a woman by an American soldier at Chatan? Or construction for the U.S. military that is destroying the ocean at Henoko and the forests at Takae? How about the way the government-declared ten-day holiday is resulting in staff shortages preventing urgent medical treatment in nursing homes? The media is ignoring all these issues.

I've said this before, but the Okinawan media has been grossly negligent. Koseki Shōichi has written about how Articles 1-8 in the Constitution, which outlines the emperor's status, and Article 9, which prohibits Japan from going to war or maintaining a military, are related to the concentration of U.S. bases in Okinawa. But today's reporters seem to lack such critical perspective.

The media declares, "Today Reiwa marks the beginning of a new era." What foolishness! What stupidity! When the ten-day holiday ends, new base construction will start again at Henoko, and at Miyako and Yaeyama where Self Defense Force bases are being forced on the residents. Nothing will change in Okinawa's buildup as a fortress to confront China; in its military colonization by the U.S. and Japan; or in the structural discrimination by Yamatu. So what the hell is new in the era of Reiwa?

The "Emperor's Message" in 1946 telling the U.S. it could keep Okinawa remains in effect

today. Only fools would be swayed by the media's support-the-emperor broadcasts. And it is they who will suffer in the end.

May 1, 2019

This is a translation of author Medoruma Shun's [blog entry on May 1, 2019](#).

Touting the emperor (system) day and night, the media turns ugly

Medoruma Shun

Translation by Steve Rabson

Day and night, the TV, the newspapers--all the media--slavishly report the imperial reign change. It reminds me of "support the emperor" propaganda issued daily by the wartime Japanese press--so disgusting it makes me puke!

The media in Okinawa seem to moon over Akihito and Michiko even more than in Yamato (Japan). The couple's all-too-frequent visits here are greeted with warm words of welcome and gratitude, pathetic effects of the psychological environment. We should have no illusions nowadays that the Okinawan media is somehow different from the Japanese media, though they used to be a little different three decades ago. Like everywhere else, salaried reporters here are obedient to the powers-that-be in what they write.

For a long time it's been said that people don't read newspapers any more, but I don't blame them. When I read them today, filled with emperor (system) support, I want to stop paying for a subscription. On the other hand, compared with the mass media's sycophantic coverage, far more varied opinion is available on the internet, including information about opposition to the emperor (system) that the mass media almost never reports.

Just how many people do you think would have any interest in the change of emperors if the media didn't make such a big fuss about it? It is the media, after all, that creates the illusion among Japanese that the times change with the changes in emperors and that the emperor's reign over space and time is what unifies Japan. Of course, the media also zealously promotes the emperor (system) to sell their products and make money.

A media that puts out "support the emperor" propaganda today could easily be co-opted, whenever the government decides there is a "national crisis," to become an official mouthpiece for controlling the population. Thus, it is none other than the media itself that is threatening freedom of the press.

April 29, 2019

This is a otranslation of author Medoruma Shun's [blog entry on April 29, 2019](#).

Questions surrounding the imperial reign change: The emperor system and Okinawa

Medoruma Shun

Translation by Steve Rabson

The new imperial reign name is announced on April Fool's Day, and the new emperor's enthronement comes on May Day. These timings seem like a joke until you remember that the consolidated local elections were held between those two dates on April 21. Then you understand the reason for choosing them.

For Prime Minister Abe it seemed essential to exploit the two events associated with the change of emperors in order to boost his government's approval rating and give his party an advantage in the elections. But as noted by former Vice Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Tsukada

Ichiro's gaffe over the allocation of funds for a major highway project, and by former Olympics Minister Sakurada Yoshitaka who said that "the election candidates matter more than the economic recovery of earthquake-affected areas," Abe's strategy failed (see note). In Okinawa the result of the election to fill a vacant seat in District 3 of the Lower House was defeat for Abe's candidate who supported "relocation" of the Futenma air base to Henoko.

However, the Abe administration's schemes to use the emperor (system) for boosting their popularity and serving their party's and their own self-interests are not limited to elections. Chief Cabinet Minister Suga Yoshihide's appearance at the April 1st announcement of "Reiwa" as the new reign name recalls the announcement thirty years ago of the new "Heisei" reign name by Obuchi Keizo who later became Prime Minister. Knowing this history, Suga must have been overjoyed to appear at the press conference. Now he is being called "Uncle Reiwa" as he leaps into the lead as a candidate for prime minister in the post-Abe era.

Abe too made sure to highlight himself at the press conference by changing the color of the stage curtain to red. In this crude attempt to put his mark on history, he revealed his true desire--to bolster his failing regime.

Fully supporting the Abe administration's politicization of the emperor (system), television, newspapers and magazines have been endlessly reporting the imperial couple's activities and issuing repetitive look-backs at the Heisei Era with "feature programs" and "special editions." This is nothing but the media's frantic scramble to use the emperor (system) to boost their audience ratings and increase circulation.

Many have sought to profit from the change in reign names. Politicians, media moguls, and merchandisers put on noisy celebrations claiming to honor the emperor, the empress,

and the imperial household when, in fact, they are promoting themselves and their businesses.

Claiming it would have a favorable effect on the economy, Prime Minister Abe hoped to boost his popularity by declaring a ten-day holiday around the new emperor's enthronement on May 1.

Yet the imperial household has long been the deadly enemy of socialists supporting the labor movement, as on "Bloody May Day" in 1952 when police clashed with demonstrators leaving one dead and hundreds injured. Thus, the choice of May Day for the enthronement seems to reflect Prime Minister Abe's malicious intent.

The new emperor and empress face grueling times ahead. Compared with her predecessor, Michiko, Masako as empress will be under enormous pressure. Throughout her time as crown princess she suffered from psychological instability that caused her to take lengthy leaves of absence from her official duties. If this happens again when she is empress, the media is likely to beat up on her mercilessly.



The new imperial couple won't be the only ones under pressure, which will also affect Crown Prince Akishino's family. His eldest daughter Mako's reputation was hurt by revelations publicized relentlessly on television and in weekly magazines that the mother of her fiancé, Komuro Kei, had failed to repay a four million yen (\$36,000) loan from an ex-boyfriend. And recently the weekly magazines have started beating up on Mako's younger sister Kako who has been defending Mako.

How despicable of the media to peddle this story when they should be joyfully celebrating the love between these two young people! This is also related to the fact that these days, with the imperial family's declining numbers, the

government is forced to grapple with the debate over allowing female members of the imperial family to keep the imperial status after marriage.

Nevertheless, even if the Imperial House Law is revised to permit female members to keep the imperial rank after marriage, maintaining the emperor system in these times imposes many difficulties. People born into the imperial family are denied privacy and the right to live freely; and, because of their special status, they lack many basic human rights guaranteed by the constitution. How much longer does the government intend to perpetuate this unnatural and foolish system?

Okinawa was forced into relations with the emperor when the Meiji government overthrew the Ryukyu Kingdom and annexed it in 1879. For Yamato (Japan) in the modern era, Okinawa was a new territory it colonized, and it is Japan's "tail of a lizard" to be sliced off when needed, as it was during the Battle of Okinawa and again after World War II. The recently abdicated Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko visited Okinawa many times, but never mentioned Emperor Showa's responsibility for the war or his notorious "emperor's message" to General MacArthur in 1947 advocating that Okinawa remain under U.S. military occupation. Far from being "memorial journeys," as they were billed, these visits sought to obscure the history of Emperor Showa's slicing off Okinawa.

These visits also effectively supported expansion of Japan's Self Defense Forces in Okinawa and their stationing in the prefecture's southern islands. On their final trip to Okinawa, they arranged to visit Okinawa Island on March 27, the anniversary of Japan's abolishment of the Ryukyu Kingdom in 1879, and Yonaguni Island on March 28, which was the second anniversary of the SDF deployment in 2016. This was how they carried out their "symbolic" functions as emperor and

empress in Okinawa.

"Reiwa" should be the last imperial reign, putting an end to the anachronistic emperor system without delay. Until then the official duties of the emperor, empress, and the rest of the imperial family should be greatly reduced with no more appearances as the nation's ceremonial leaders. Behind all the commotion with the changing imperial reign, the "emperor's message" still echoes today trampling the democratic will of the Okinawan people and forcing construction of the new base on them in Henoko.

This is a translation of Medoruma Shun, "Rieki mokuteki no omatsuri sawagi - Sodo no ura de shinkichi kensetsu kyoko," which appeared as Part I of the 3-part series "Daigawari wo tou - Tenno sei to Okinawa," on The Okinawa Times, May 1, 2019.

[Medoruma Shun](#)

[Steve Rabson](#)

Translator's note

For the two incidents for which the Abe government's cabinet members were forced to resign, see:

[Deputy land minister quits after using graft buzzword sontaku to describe his decision to fund project for Abe](#)

[Abe sacks gaffe-prone Olympics minister Sakurada after 3/11 remarks and gives predecessor job back](#)

The Contradiction between the symbolic emperor system and the Constitution has grown

Watanabe Osamu, Professor Emeritus, Hitotsubashi University

Translation by Lawrence Repeta

Just before the emperor's retirement and the change of era, the activities of the emperor and the imperial family suddenly came to life and the news media were overflowing with stories that struck a tone of veneration. Memorial visits to Okinawa, Saipan, and other battlegrounds and devastated sites and the people's reception of okotoba お言葉, or his message to the public (see note), created an atmosphere that embraced these actions by the emperor. Moreover, many pundits and constitutional scholars positively support the actions of this emperor, interpreting them as subtle criticisms of the current administration.

But we must stop and think about this carefully. For here we see a fundamental contradiction between the symbolic emperor system and democracy.

The Constitution of Japan made the emperor a symbol in reaction to the repeated pattern of colonization and wars of aggression that occurred under the Meiji Constitution, which placed all political power in the emperor. With hoyoku 輔翼 - literally, assisting wings, but meaning, in consultation with the military, the emperor pursued war with no check from the cabinet, much less the Diet. This led to the horrifying descent through disastrous battlefields that took the lives of approximately twenty million people across Asia, including Japan.

The present Constitution preserved the emperor, but based on this experience, removed all political power, limiting the emperor to the performance of ceremonies listed in the Constitution as "acts of state (kokuji koi 国事行為)," subject to the advice and consent of the cabinet.

Nonetheless, the existence of the emperor and

popular sovereignty within the Constitution is a great contradiction. Conservative governments have sought to use the immense authority held by the prewar emperor as a force for political stability and have pushed the emperor to perform acts that are not recognized in the Constitution. During the Heisei era the political acts initiated by the emperor expanded and the contradiction with the Constitution grew ever greater.

Two contradictions have increased during the Heisei era. The first is that political statements and actions by the unelected emperor have had a great impact on politics. Even though there is strong suspicion that the frequent and generally accepted messages (okotoba) and appearances (odemashi) of the present emperor are unconstitutional, they will be inherited by future emperors; we should expect that conservative administrations will take significant advantage of these fait accompli.

The second, a much more serious problem, is that by relying on the authority of the emperor, people will obscure their own awareness and responsibility as sovereigns and will continue to avoid addressing problems. Issues like war responsibility, the work of building a country that does not engage in war, nuclear power, and the military bases in Okinawa should be resolved by the people themselves.

Visits by the emperor and imperial family members and messages (okotoba) may offer a temporary reprieve, but they cannot solve problems, nor should they. If there are issues with the Abe administration, it should be the people themselves, not the emperor, who criticize them and change the regime.

So what should be done about the emperor system? First, we should move closer to the symbolic system stipulated in the Constitution. The emperor's public activities should be strictly limited to "acts of state." Official visits abroad described with such labels as "imperial diplomacy" (kōshitsu gaikō 皇室外交) should

be stopped. If the emperor absolutely wishes to travel abroad, he should do so as a citizen, in other words as a private person.

“Traditions” that conflict with human rights provisions of the Constitution, such as limiting attendance to males only at change of era ceremonies, limiting the emperorship to males, conducting religious ceremonies such as the Daijosai as “official acts,” should be reviewed immediately with the goal of embedding the emperor system within democratic society.

Regarding war responsibility and related issues, the people should not simply accept the emperor’s “visits” and “messages”; instead, the people should act as sovereigns, facing these issues squarely and building a politics to deal with them.

Even so, the contradiction between the emperor and democracy will remain, but the road to its resolution can only be found through these kinds of measures.

This is a translation of “Kenpo to no mujun hirogatta – Shochō tenno sei to minshu shugi,” a Kyodo News Agency article that appeared in Chugoku Shimbun, on April 19, 2019.

Watanabe Osamu, Professor of Social Sciences, Hitotsubashi University. His areas of expertise include political science and the Constitution.

Lawrence Repeta

Translator’s note

Various terms are used to describe deeds of the emperor, and *okotoba* is one of them. It is a combination of “kotoba,” meaning words, and “o”, an honorific, and together, *okotoba* has a connotation of “words from on high.”

Seven constitutional violations in the Japanese Emperor’s abdication and enthronement ceremonies

Kihara Satoru

Translation by Satoko Oka Norimatsu

The abdication ceremony for Emperor Akihito will be held tomorrow, the 30th of April, and the enthronement ceremony for Naruhito, the new emperor, will be held on the following day, the first of May. The TV stations and newspapers—all the mass media—will be jumping on the bandwagon of emperor glorification with special features and broadcasts.

All these “[acts in matters of state](#)” are clearly unconstitutional, as stipulated in Article 7 of the Constitution of Japan: the “Ceremony of the Abdication of His Majesty the Emperor at the Seiden [State Hall]” (Taiirei-Seiden-no-gi 退位礼正殿の儀) is to be held from 5 to 5:10 P.M. on the 30th of April; the “Ceremony for Inheriting the Imperial Regalia and Seals” (Kenji-to-Shokei-no-gi 剣璽等承継の儀) is from 10:30 to 10:40 A.M. on the first of May; and the “First Audience after the Accession to the Throne” (Sokui-go-Choken-no-gi 即位後朝見の儀), also on the first of May, will be from 11:10 to 11:20 A.M. (These are the [official translations from the Prime Minister’s Office](#)). Below I briefly lay out the what and why of each of the illegalities.

Abdication ceremony

1. “Abdicating while living” (Seizen tai 生前退位) is itself outside of the constitutional provisions. With regard to imperial succession, Article 2 of the Constitution says, “the Imperial Throne shall be dynastic and succeeded to in accordance with the Imperial House Law passed by the Diet.” [The Imperial House Law](#) Article 4 says “Upon the demise of the Emperor, the Imperial Heir shall

immediately accede to the Throne.” Akihito declared his intention to abdicate while living and Prime Minister Abe actually brought that intention to fruition, but this “abdication while living” was a violation of both the Constitution and Imperial House Law right from the start.

2. The main purpose of the abdication ceremony (Taiirei-Seiden-no-gi) is for the abdicating emperor Akihito to return two of the “Three Imperial Regalia” that he retains (i.e., the Sword and the Jewel or Magatama 勾玉. The mirror stays at Ise Shrine). And the purpose of the “Ceremony for Inheriting the Imperial Regalia and Seals” (Kenji-to-Shokei-no-gi) on the following day is to present them to Naruhito, the new emperor. These are obviously religious ceremonies, Imperial Household Shinto (皇室神道 Kōshitsu-Shintō), and to conduct them as “acts in the matters of state” violates Article 20 of the Constitution that stipulates the separation of church and state.
3. The abdication ceremony proceeds in the following fashion. The “Prime Minister steps forward (sanshin参進) in the imperial presence (gozen御前), presents a congratulatory message on behalf of the Nation,” and “the emperor bestows a message (okotobaお言葉)” in accordance with the “particulars of the ceremony” made public by the government. The ceremony is structured such that a “representative of the Nation” humbly submits a message of congratulations (hōshuku奉祝) to the emperor, then the emperor bestows a message to the “representative of the Nation,” violating the principle of popular sovereignty that is spelled out in the Constitution’s Preamble and in Article 1.
4. In the First Audience after the Accession to the Throne (Sokui-go-Choken-no-gi) the prime minister delivers his

congratulatory address for the new era as a “representative of the Nation” and the new emperor bestows his message (okotoba). This ceremony also violates the Preamble and Article 1.

The word “audience with the emperor” (choken) means that the “subjects” receive an audience with the emperor, so the very usage of that word upholds the idea that the emperor is the sovereign of the nation, just as in the Constitution of the Empire of Japan.

In the last First Audience (i.e., the First Audience with Akihito), the prime minister (i.e., Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu) was in a lower position looking up towards the emperor (where Emperor Akihito was looking down upon Prime Minister Kaifu), and criticism of this aspect of that First Audience was expressed. The respective positions of Emperor Naruhito and Prime Minister Abe during this First Audience will be scrutinized.

5. All of these ceremonies accompany (require) attendance of the heads of the three branches of government, i.e., the prime minister, the speakers of both the lower and upper house, and the supreme court chief justice, as well as all cabinet members and the heads of local government. This effectively places the emperor at the pinnacle of the “state,” violating Article 41 of the Constitution that stipulates, “The Diet shall be the highest organ of state power.”
6. The abdication ceremony, in which the return of the Imperial Regalia signifies abdication, and the “Ceremony for Inheriting the Imperial Regalia and Seals” (Kenji-to-Shokei-no-gi), in which the transfer of the Imperial Regalia signifies accession, are both based on the “imperial succession” (senso 践祚) belief that the Three Imperial Regalia are proof of emperorship. This belief does not only violate the principle of separation of

church and state, but also the principle of symbolic emperorship stipulated in Article 1 of the Constitution, which says that the emperor derives “his position from the will of the people with whom resides sovereign power.”

7. Exclusion of female members of the imperial family from the “Ceremony for Inheriting the Imperial Regalia and Seals” (Kenji-to-Shokei-no-gi) is clearly sex-based discrimination and drew much criticism, but the Abe government and the Imperial Household Agency did it anyway in disregard of the disapproval from society. This discriminatory act stems from Article 1 of the Imperial Household Law of 1947 which limits heirs to the throne to “a male offspring in the male line belonging to the Imperial Lineage,” excluding women from becoming successors to the Imperial Throne. It is an outright violation of the “guarantee of fundamental human rights” of Article 11, and the “equality under the law” of Article 14 of the Constitution.

These unequivocally unconstitutional ceremonies are openly held as national public events, involving the emperor at the head of the pack, with the heads of the three branches of government and the heads of local governments dragged in behind him, and drawing on the national treasury (i.e., the taxes paid by citizens). All the media do nothing but praise it, and the citizens follow suit. One must admit that this is a peculiar and abnormal scene. This is Japan the emperor-system state [i.e., the monarchy]. We absolutely cannot accept this, as we the people are the sovereigns of Japan, and we long for respect for human rights.

This is a translation of Kihara Satoru's blog “Ari no hitokoto,” [April 29, 2019 entry](#).

Kihara Satoru, born in Hiroshima in 1953, is a

freelance writer. He was a staff writer for the Japan Communist Party's newspaper Shimbun Akahata, an evening paper, and a local newspaper. He lives in Fukuyama City, Hiroshima.

[Satoko Oka Norimatsu](#)

“Imperial Era” frenzy - it is we, the people, who define our era

Satoko Oka Norimatsu

Translation by the author

Around this time 74 years ago, as the United States military rained bombs on them from above, many Okinawans were killed and forced into suicide or group suicide, as the Japanese military forbade them to surrender to the enemy. Today I think of the feelings of regret and the anger of those who were killed, and of the suffering of those who survived. And now, not only does the state of war continue in Okinawa with U.S. military bases that have been there ever since the Battle of Okinawa, the Japanese government rams through its militarization, ranging from reclamation work in Henoko, to the construction of new bases for the Ground Self-Defense Forces on the islands of Miyakojima and Amami-Oshima, to the commencement of similar construction on the Island of Ishigakijima. This is a grave state of affairs that cannot be tolerated.

Meanwhile, oblivious to this state of affairs, Japan as a whole is engaging in what I would call a “gengō frenzy” as the new gengō (imperial era name) was announced on the first of April. On television we saw people feverishly grabbing their copy of newspaper extras, shouting at the top of their lungs, “Give me one!” or falling down on the ground. I was wondering how I could possibly explain this spectacle to people outside of Japan. In the age of the Internet, what on earth could drive

people to panic in such a fashion over the printed edition of one newspaper extra?

Is an “era” something to be given from the authorities, let alone something to be defined by Japan’s imperial succession? The new gengō was decided behind closed doors by a handful of politicians who are charged with representing us and carrying out our mandate, and by civil servants whom we have hired with our tax money. But we the people, who are the sovereigns of the nation, were totally shut out of the process. The mass media fully embraced the undemocratic nature of the event with their reports. Sadly, the “gengō panic,” mentioned above, was a situation in which those sovereigns sang and danced to the tune of such mass media hype, instead of being outraged by it.

As far as I am concerned, it does not matter what the new gengō (or era name) is, but there is something worth noting here. It has been reported that the Abe administration, following its typical nationalistic inclinations, wished to use a phrase from Japanese literature (Kokusho) for the new era name, breaking from the tradition of quoting from Chinese literature. Abe took the word Reiwa from the Man’yōshū, an anthology of waka poems in the late 8th century. However, experts pointed out that that passage in the Man’yōshū actually comes from classical Chinese literature.¹ Considering that ancient Japanese civilization developed with influence from the continent, it is mere fantasy to expect that one could somehow extract a “pure Japan” from one of the classics of Japanese literature. The Abe administration should give up on this illusion of “inherent Japanese culture” and admit that one cannot talk about Japanese culture without an understanding of the profound history of the continent.

Prime Minister Abe also used the word “Japanese people” (Nipponjin) three times during the initial speech that he gave at the

press conference, after the announcement of the new era name on April 1: “...all Japanese will be able to make their own blossoms come into full bloom, together with their hopes for tomorrow,” “Era names are also integrated into the hearts and minds of the Japanese...” and “It is my sincere wish that this new era name will also be widely accepted by the public and take root deeply within the daily lives of the Japanese people.”²

Emperor Akihito himself, at the ceremony on the 24th of February to celebrate the 30th year of his emperorship, also used the phrase “the cultural level of this country which has been nurtured by Japanese people over many years, from the past to the present.”³

In Japan, there are about 2.7 million residents who are not “Japanese” by nationality. There are those who have Japanese citizenship but have identities other than “Japanese,” and there are, of course, those with mixed heritage. The people of Okinawa, which was annexed by Japan, may identify in a variety of ways. The prime minister, who represents the citizens of this country, and the emperor, who is the “symbol” of Japan, must pay due respect to those who, while not being “Japanese,” are legitimate members of this society.

April 1 was also the day when the revised Immigration Law came into effect, enabling admittance into Japan over the course of the next 5 years approximately 350,000 people to live and work there. But hate speech is still rampant on the streets and on the Internet, and the Foreign Trainees System has led to many human rights abuses.

Let us, the people of Japan, not get caught up in the gengō frenzy, have a clear awareness that Japan does not belong exclusively to the “Japanese,” and together create a society free of discrimination and exclusion. By doing so, we will create our own “era.”

This is the author’s translation of the 25th in

her series of articles entitled, “Norimatsu Satoko no me” (*From the Eyes of Satoko Norimatsu*) in Ryukyu Shimpo. The article’s original title was “Gengō kyoran: haijo naki

jidai tsukurō” (*Regnal Year Madness: Let’s Create an Era Free of Exclusion*). It appeared in The Ryukyu Shimpo on April 11, 2019.

Satoko Oka Norimatsu

Kihara Satoru, born in Hiroshima in 1953, is a freelance writer. He was a staff writer for the Japan Communist Party’s newspaper *Shimbun Akahata*, an evening paper, and a local newspaper. He lives in Fukuyama City, Hiroshima.

Medoruma Shun is a novelist and critic living in Nago City, Okinawa. Born in Okinawa, he graduated from the University of the Ryukyus. Medoruma is a novelist and a vocal and piercing critic of Japanese neo-nationalism, local pork-barrel politics, and the US military presence in Okinawa, particularly the plan to build a new marine airbase off the coast of Henoko in Nago City, where he resides. His story “Droplets” (Suiteki), for which he received Japan’s Akutagawa Prize, is [available](#) in Michael Molasky’s translation in Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson, eds., *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature From Okinawa*. In recent years, Okinawan peace activists have fought the attempted relocation of Futenma Marine Air Station to the relatively pristine coral reef off Henoko, demanding instead a reduction in bases on Okinawa

Satoko Oka Norimatsu is Director of the Peace Philosophy Centre, a peace-education organization in Vancouver, Canada, with a widely-read Japanese-English [blog](#) on topics such as peace and justice, war memory and education in East Asia, US-Japan relations, US military bases in Okinawa, nuclear issues, and media criticism. (View English-language posts only [here](#).) She is co-author with Gavan McCormack of *Resistant Islands: Okinawa Confronts Japan and the United States* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2012; an updated paperback version will be published in the spring of 2018). The Japanese translation is 『沖縄の〈怒〉—日米への抵抗』 (法律文化社, 2013, the Korean translation is 저항하는 섬, 오끼나와: 미국과 일본에 맞선 70 년간의 기록 (창비, 2014) and the Chinese translation is 沖縄之怒 美国同盟下的抗争 (社会科学文献出版社, 2015) . She is also co-author with Oliver Stone and Peter Kuznick of 『よし、戦争について話そう。戦争の本質について話をしようじゃないか』 (Let’s Talk About War. Let’s Talk about What War Really Is!)』 (金曜日, 2014) . She is editor, author, and translator of 『正義への責任 世界から沖縄へ (Responsibility for Justice – From the World to Okinawa) Vol 1,2,3』 (Ryukyu Shimpo, 2015, 2016, 2017). She is an Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus editor.

Watanabe Osamu is Professor Emeritus at Hitotsubashi University. His areas of expertise include political science and the Constitution.

Steve Rabson is Professor Emeritus of East Asian Studies, Brown University, and a

contributing editor to the *Asia-Pacific Journal*. He is the author of *Righteous Cause or Tragic Folly: Changing View of War in Modern Japanese Poetry* (Center For Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1998) and *The Okinawan Diaspora in Japan: Crossing the Borders Within* (University of Hawaii Press, 2012). He was stationed as a U.S. Army draftee at a nuclear weapons storage base in Henoko, Okinawa, 1967-68.

Lawrence Repeta is a former professor of law at Meiji University in Japan, an Asia-Pacific Journal contributing editor, and a director of Information Access Japan Clearinghouse. He is author of “Limiting Fundamental Rights Protection in Japan – the Role of the Supreme Court,” in [Critical Issues in Contemporary Japan](#), edited by Jeff Kingston (Routledge, 2014), “Reserved Seats on Japan’s Supreme Court,” (Washington University Law Review, 2011) and other writings on Japan’s constitution and legal system.

Notes

¹ “Hatsu no kokusho, Man’yōshū shutten – Chūgoku koten fumae,” Tokyo Shimbun, April 2, 2019, p. 1.

² Abe Shinzo, “[On the New Era Name ‘Reiwa’](#),” *Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet*, April 1, 2019.

³ Akihito, “[Address by His Majesty the Emperor on the Occasion of the Commemoration Ceremony of the Thirtieth Anniversary of His Majesty the Emperor's Accession to the Throne \(February 24, 2019\)](#),” *The Imperial Household Agency*. The official translation has “people of Japan” as the translation of “Nippon-jin” that Akihito used in his speech, but it would be more accurate to translate this as “the Japanese people.”