Indigenous Food Sovereignty:

Amami Memories of a Time before Capitalist Food Systems

by

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ABSTRACT

Within theoretical frameworks of Indigenous Food Sovereignty and Indigenous Decolonizing Sociology, this research explores the 30 Tokunoshima 'elders' memories of the changing foodways and food systems during their lifetimes. Tokunoshima, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since July 2021, is one of the Amami Islands, formerly part of the Ryukyu Kingdom, recognized as Indigenous by the United Nations, but not by Japan. Using a form of yarning specific to Tokunoshima, elders aged 60 to 95 storied their lifetime experiences of self-sustaining agriculture, changes occurring when post-WWII ration centers developed into grocery stores, and how changes in colonizer from Japan to the US to Japan again impacted regulation of their lands and lives and farming practices. My research examines how successive colonizers have changed their lives, identities, and foodways, constituting slow violence in the form of degraded land and increasing use of inorganic farming methods, slow poisoning of the rivers, oceans, and soils. Through historical sociological narrative, the thesis traces how Indigenous Food Sovereignty existed as a series of rules encased in rituals handed down over generations but have now become a series of rules encased in regulations and policies that are enacted without consultation, by the colonizers to their benefit. This is a story on how new rules surrounding food came to be the catalyst for change in food rituals on the island of Tokunoshima, a counter narrative to the dominant belief system that Indigenous peoples pursued convenience and thereby became dependent. Rather, loss of Indigenous Food Sovereignty is a side effect of a series of policy changes even on a fertile island peopled by hardworking agriculturalists.

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DEDICATION

This Thesis is dedicated to my Ancestors, the people who raised me. I will name a few I had the privilege of knowing before they passed away.

In Order of Passing:

Toku Masu (great-grandmother) who taught my family to care for siblings.

Jean Kouritzin (grandmother) who showed me that having food allergies gives the community an opportunity to show love, rather than a reason to become an outcast. She taught me to love stories.

Yoshi Nakagawa (great-grandmother) who taught my family theory and grit, but also poetry and gardens.

Betty Johns (my “other” grandmother) who loved me like family when we lived where we had none, and who assured me Academia is a good path for me.

Toshiko Hisaeda (Auntie-grandmother) who taught me the art of the unexpected visit, with snacks in hand, and the joy of laughter.

Kouzou Nakagawa (grandfather) who showed me what it takes to produce food, to provide for a family, to always be honourable.

I will share my gratitude with those still living in person.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

I am a promise made to all my grandparents and ancestors by my mom and dad. Without knowing this, I grew up between worlds, partly in the snowy cold of Winnipeg, Canada, and partly in the beautiful subtropical rainforest of the island Tokunoshima. Tokunoshima defines intensity: the heat and humidity of summer days and summer nights; the sun itchy-burning your skin even through long sleeves; the glare when rays of sunshine glance off the ocean and batter your eyes until you sneeze; the mighty 1.5 tonne bulls charging at one another in frenzied madness during *Tougyu*, mingling sand and passion and foecal fear; the constant need for vigilance against the wild…..wild under/over growth, wild bacteria, wild viruses, wild venomous snakes. “Life is powerful on Tokunoshima” my grandfather told me; I have grown up hearing this.

My dad grew to adulthood on Tokunoshima and graduated from high school there; then, like all “good” islanders of his generation, he went to university on the mainland of Japan. He met my mother there and brought her to the island. My grandfather met my mom, and knew she was “the one”, not only for his son, but also to love the island. He welcomed her and he made sure everyone else did. My grandmother trusted my mom. My grandparents recognized that island dreams for a proud and defiant Tokunoshima could not be achieved while my Dad lived there. They recognized the need to fight from away because staying on the island would result in capitulation and ethical sacrifice.

My mom loved Tokunoshima. She promised my grandparents that their son would return one day. My parents promised that their children would think of Tokunoshima as home. And that is how my sibling and I became promises, raised to identify as islanders, and as Indigenous Amami, even though Tokunoshima Islanders shudder at the notes of primitive-ness those words evoke. But also, as partial outsiders, we can engage politically without the constant threat of reprisal; we have a Canadian escape hatch. Hammine (2022) writes about the political nature of researching in the Ryukyus, and the need to be wary of complex power relationships acted upon, as well as within and between

communities, partly historical and partly as a result of uneven bestowal of power by the colonizers. I am removed enough to be aware, but not embroiled.

The peoples of the former Ryukyu Kingdom are Indigenous peoples recognized by the United Nations, but not by Japan (Patzer 2008:7-8 describes this legal context). Among the Ryukyu peoples, a traditional class system exists; the Amami and Yaeyama peasant islands were subsumed by and fed Okinawa while Naha was recognized as the center of the kingdom beginning in 1466 for Tokunoshima and the other Amami islands (Oguri & Takano 2021). To achieve recognition and strive for autonomy, Amami and Yaeyama peoples have been placed under the collective umbrella of the Ryukyu Kingdom, their former colonizer, establishing external validation and limited protection. Additionally, at the Japanese Endangered Language Summit I attended in January 2023, I witnessed the alliance between the Indigenous Ainu peoples from Hokkaido, Indigenous Ryukyu peoples, and some Honshu (mainland) speakers of minority languages come together to disprove ethno-nationalism. Ethno-nationalism is weaponized by the nation state of Japan thus forcing assimilation to the Yamatsu standard, and establishing second class-ness of Indigenous peoples.

For years, I have wanted to fulfill the weight of being a promise. I have planned to do this research since I first began my studies in Nutrition, then switched to Sociology to examine food sovereignty. In my undergraduate program, I wanted to work on this project, but it was not permitted; meanwhile, Tokunoshima elders in their 80s and 90s were literally dying for me to get on with it. Then, just before I entered the graduate program, the novel coronavirus circulated the world, and shut us all down. Determined, I finished my coursework in less than a year and got my proposal ready to defend. I was hampered by the waves of the pandemic and resulting uncertainty, by a University of Manitoba faculty strike (that I supported), and by the need to wait for Japanese borders to open. I began data collection via Zoom, but soon realized that my elderly participants did not have email, computers capable of connecting to the platform, or even an understanding of what it means to “log in”. Meanwhile my grandfather Kozou Nakagawa, perhaps the most authoritative Amami knowledge

holder concerning traditional food production lost the ability to speak, and my auntie/grandmother Toshiko Hisaeda, a powerhouse of experience and knowledge, passed away. I name them so that they also live among these pages; they have loved me, guided me, and continue to do so.

CONTEXT

Many rural and Indigenous communities worldwide, becoming aware of the white supremacy inherent in industrialized food systems (Holt-Giménez & Harper 2016), have begun working towards food justice by re-building traditional systems of agriculture based on food sovereignty. One Indigenous response being enacted globally to counter the structures and impacts of settler colonialism is Indigenous Food Sovereignty (IFS). The Working Group on IFS (WGIFS), established in Canada in 2006, is dedicated to increasing awareness of IFS, a concept that can be considered to inform and contribute to the global Food Sovereignty movement.

Made up of Indigenous and non-Indigenous harvesters, farmers, gardeners, urban and rural community members, academics, researchers, NGOs, and others, the WGIFS best explains the importance of Indigenous food systems in the Food Sovereignty context:

> Consisting of a multitude of natural communities, Indigenous food systems include all of the land, air, water, soil and culturally important plant, animal and fungi species that have sustained Indigenous peoples over thousands of years. (Indigenous Food Systems Network, np)

Indigenous foods, the WGIFS explains, are those:

> …primarily cultivated, taken care of, harvested, prepared, preserved, shared, or traded within the boundaries of our respective territories based on values of interdependency, respect, reciprocity, and ecological sensibility. (ibid, np)

These are just words on a page, unless I think about the island of Tokunoshima where the Indigenous Amami people live, and where I have spent significant time in my life. I do not understand how profound these words really are unless I think about my Obaachan's (grandmother's) stories. I could endlessly share my Obaachan's and Ojiichan's (grandfather's) stories—told to me while we shared food preparation and provisioning tasks—about the land, the sea, the water, the soil, plants,

animals, fungi, and about human and non-human relationships, interdependency, respect, reciprocity, and ecological sensibility. However, here I will only share a few.

Sea Salt and Imported Salt

On Tokunoshima in the past, there was no refrigeration, so everyone needed salt. Salt was used to preserve each family's pig for the year. The salt used was sea salt. My Obaachan remembers that an old man boiled down the sea water to produce salt for those who needed it. When she was a child, my Obaachan's job, once the pork had been entirely consumed, was to chisel the salt that had crystalized around it as it blended with the blood from the preserved pig and with moisture from the humidity and rainwater, to render the salt to a powdered form. Salt was a precious resource and so it was re-used until it was gone. Only enough salt was purchased to replace what was used up in the year prior. As ships from the mainland began to come to the island, one of the first things that was available for purchase was salt. Although Tokunoshima Islanders have been a part of the capitalist structure for centuries as unpaid labourers in a form of slavery[1] (Nelson 2006), then as labourers who extracted and produced commodities like sugar for use by their Japanese colonizers, the purchase of salt marked a turning point in island history. It was a moment when Tokunoshima Islanders became consumers rather than merely providers in the industrialized, capitalist food system. It was also a moment when a traditional islander role, that of salt procurer, was marked for decline and eventual loss.

Fetching Water

Fetching water was a daily activity for everyone in my grandmother's youth. In fact, my grandmother did not get running water in her home until shortly after my father's (her second child) birth. After coming home from school, children would grab their carrying poles affixed with aluminum

[1] The years of being subject to Satsuma-han (Japan) after being conquered in 1609 are seldom referenced in academic literature, nor spoken of openly. For one thing, there are few Amami-born researchers. For another, as is referenced in an online petition posted by the Amami people on Change.org, "**Context**: Amami-Oshima, one of the biggest of the Ryukyu islands was colonised by the Satsuma regime while its people were enslaved for over 200 years, toiling in sugarcanes. Keeping silent to avoid serious consequences was how they survived. To this day this "slave mentality" still persists in Amami-Oshima." (retrieved January 21, 2022 https://www.change.org/p/save-the-last-jurassic-beach-of-amami-japan)

cans saved from their canned bacon rations (Chiemi Nakagawa 2022, Fumiko Asatsuka 2022). Bacon rations[2] were received from the Licensed Agencies for Relief in Asia (LARA), a relief agency operated by American NGOs and religious groups that worked with the US military during the Occupation following World War II (Barth 1997). Tokunoshima schoolchildren would walk to streams with the women, chatting about life, and walk back home helping to fill each family's large clay pot that was used for cooking and drinking (Chiemi Nakagawa 2022, Fumiko Asatsuka 2022, Yoko Taira 2022). Because they did not have shoes, my grandmother and other children would take just the smallest amount of water to wash the bottoms of their feet, so that they would not dirty their homes when they entered. Fetching water was a time of storytelling and intergenerational knowledge transmission on Tokunoshima. My Obaachan tells me the places where they used to fetch water, bathe, and do laundry—even her route to school—are now overgrown and forgotten. Finding and following the paths now involves much greater risk of encountering the venomous Habu, compared to when the paths were frequented.

Hibiscus, Rice Paddies and DDT

In the summertime on Tokunoshima, clothes were washed in the island streams and carried home on one side of a carrying pole; water for the home was carried on the other side. These carrying poles were made with wooden buckets carried by adult women. The stream was also used in the summers for bathing. Hibiscus flowers were crushed in the hand to produce a lather used to wash hair. In the winters, bathing was done closer to home in a community tub. Some of the water from the rice paddies was hauled to a large community tub that was then brought up to temperature using fire. Each family took turns preparing the bath. After everyone had finished, the water was returned to the

[2] The rations were given to schools in form of powdered milk and at ration centres like Matsuda Shouten. Some details about ration tickets were captured in Fusae Matsuda's book about Agon, written before her passing but my participants were too young at the time to recall how their parents obtained rations. Taniko Tsuneyama was just old enough to remember living in a work residence that included food: Matsu Fusae. (2018). 松 ふさえ2018. "かたりべ". I suspect, based on the description that "bacon rations" actually refers to Spam, which remains popular today.

paddies. Obaachan recalls that while she was attending school, a white powder called DDT was sprinkled on their heads to address and prevent lice (Ibarra & Hall 1992). While DDT was celebrated among community members for its convenience, Obaachan was later surprised to find out that it is now a strictly-regulated pesticide and known carcinogen.[3] The difference between crushed hibiscus and DDT is large, especially when it is added to water that is used as drinking water, bathing water, and nourishment for food staples.

Community-based Historical Sociology

With the value of such stories in mind, I engage community-based (TCPS2 2018, 9c) Historical Sociology with the Indigenous Amami people of the island of Tokunoshima, Japan to examine the impact of settler colonialism on traditional food production and Indigenous foodways. As part of the larger global projects of IFS and food sovereignty, my research investigates how inherited ideas and traditional practices of food production, preparation and provisioning changed among the various social groups of Indigenous Amami peoples (e.g., farmers, caregivers, housewives, sugar cane factory workers) when challenged by colonizer-enforced policies and procedures (the colonizers being the Ryukyu Kingdom, Satsuma-han, post-war America, and Japan). My research starts from the shared premise that food sovereignty and environmental movements help Indigenous peoples "…to ensure the continuance of the land-based sustenance on which their survival as culturally distinct and autonomous peoples depends" (Willow 2019:26).

For Indigenous peoples, community is imagined and practiced within physical, social, political, psychological, historical, linguistic, economic, and spiritual spaces (Smith 2012:128). Therefore, the idea of "community" is about something distinctly more intimate than spaces implied by academic research being done in 'the field' (Smith 2012:129). Tokunoshima is not a totalizing group; it is made

[3] DDT as well as the other pesticides used during the rapid development era after WWII is also linked to Parkinson's Disease which is what the medical professionals in our family believe my grandfather suffers from. DDT is a known carcinogen (http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/aeru/ppdb/en/Reports/204.htm).

up of hundreds of *shima,* a word that technically means "island" but that actually refers to distinct and bounded communities of islanders with distinct cultural and linguistic norms (Nakagawa 2013).

In fact, little is known in Western and/or industrialized countries about the Indigenous Amami people, except that they are among the longest-living people in the world because of their traditional diets (Wilcox et al. 2005). Therefore, to better understand the rationale for my research, it is first necessary to explain the context of Tokunoshima. Measuring approximately 25 km from north to south and 16 km from east to west, Tokunoshima is located 500 km south of the "mainland" island of Kyushu. First colonized by the Ryukyu Kingdom around 1450, the Amami Islands (consisting of Amami-Oshima, Yoro, Uke, Kakeroma, Kikai-jima, Tokunoshima, Okinoerabu, and Yoron) were later colonized by Satsuma (now Kagoshima) of mainland Japan in 1609 (Siddle 1998). At that point, the Amami peoples living there were forced into sugar slavery[4] to pay high taxes on their own lands that had been seized by the colonizer (Nelson 2006), while travel between and within islands was banned.

Approximately 22,000 Tokunoshima Islanders live on the island today, almost all of them now fluent in Japanese (which I also speak fluently). While public media like Wikipedia entries (Tokunoshima, nd) suggest that the oral island language (*shimaguchi*) is no longer used and that the island is a popular tourist destination, I am aware that few tourists visit the island. I am also aware from interacting with my research participants that while the island language of *shimaguchi* is spoken fluently by most adults over 60 and many over 50, the only empirical study of *shimaguchi* use indicates that each succeeding generation speaks it less but that the language survives among younger people in creolized forms called *hiratoyamaguchi* (Nakagawa, 2013). There is no written form of *shimaguchi* except in documentation analyses and archives created by Western-trained linguists, outsiders who do not speak it. Additionally, one of my participants, Takahiro Okamura, is the

[4] Mintz (1985) details how the final stages of sugar cane processing never took place in the colonized space (p.50), with physical discipline being enacted on the labour force to "rid themselves of 'undesirables'" (p.52), meaning the now-landless islanders forced into free labour.

recognized local Tokunoshima authority on the languages of the island (Okamura 2007) and is widely cited by outsider Japanese and European linguists who are dependent on his knowledge for their academic publications. Takahiro Okamura, I learned, is the father of my father's best friend, and therefore someone who has been influential in my life. I have been learning *shimaguchi* from my grandparents and my father in online lessons that began during the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic. In my language lessons, my grandparents also tell stories.

The first supermarkets in Tokunoshima were not established until after World War II. With policy changes came supermarkets and the idea of food as a commodity, the importance of retail in what came to be the food industry after World War II (e.g., Burch & Lawrence 2005; Hamilton 2018). In a complex series of moves I will detail from my data, over time, Ryukyuan Amami people (*Shimanchu)* were able to purchase food items they traditionally produced themselves, then items that they traditionally lived without from supermarkets, with the result that attitudes toward food production, preparation and provisioning shifted. A series of regulations and policies introduced changes to Indigenous Amami foodways, reinforced by the introduction of market foods, ultimately leading to changes in social orders and social group relationships on the island. Family food provisioning, for example, was no longer bound by seasonal crop production, defined by sex and gender roles, nor limited to foods from the island regions (or even from Japan). Family food plots were replaced by cash crop specialization, even among my own family who began to produce mangoes and oranges for export to Japan. Sugar cane production expanded, providing cash for purchasing food at supermarkets.

The island of Tokunoshima is in a sub-tropical climate zone. Traditionally, islanders produced rice, sweet potatoes (*imo*), and silk, while households worked small vegetable plots (Meiko Maruno 2023, Chiwmi Nakagawa 2022). Today, most of the people living on the island rely on sugar production for export as their main income source; however, this is preferable to other cash crops such as *kabocha* (pumpkin-like squash) or potatoes because these require frequent tillage, resulting in soil

erosion and degradation of the coral reef. Fishery and forms of commercial farming (e.g., various fruits, potatoes, and flowers) are also considered to be major industries on the island (Isan Tougo 2022). Interestingly, the only remaining places where Tokunoshima sugar is available for purchase on the island are souvenir shops and specialty aisles. It is available only in raw form called *kurosato*, or in chunks served as candy, not in a form for everyday use.

Very little, if anything at all, has been written about the recent transitions in foodways, while nothing at all has been written from an Indigenous Amami perspective. This oral knowledge is not written in texts; it is traditional knowledge shared by Indigenous island elders in stories. My research therefore addresses a gap in knowledge about the imposition of capitalist food systems in Indigenous communities, and the need to counter colonial practices in Sociology by embracing Indigeneity in the theory and analysis of social group interaction (Khoury & Khoury 2013).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of my research is to understand and theorize one geographically isolated context where capitalist food systems and policies were imposed, and, through analysis and discussion, to analyze the opportunities for the reclamation of local Indigenous foodways. My hope that is that this research will have implications for other IFS struggles. Keeping in mind the brief historical and cultural context that I provided above, my study will address the following overarching research questions:

1. What were traditional methods of food production, preparation, and provisioning?
2. How were chain food stores introduced into the food system on Tokunoshima?
    a. How did the introduction of food stores, especially chain food stores, affect traditional Amami attitudes and practices concerning food production, preparation, and provisioning?
3. What has been the impact of these changes (if any) on Tokunoshima Islanders (e.g., Willcox et al. 2005)?

a. In what ways do Tokunoshima Islanders identify with a mainland Japanese diet through food system changes?
b. In what ways do Tokunoshima Islanders identify with traditional island diets?

My choice of community-based research with Indigenous peoples allowed community members to help finalize my draft generative research questions. My original questions identified a specific chain food store, part of a department store. However, my community-engaged research questions now explore how chain food stores were established on Tokunoshima, and to what effect because my original questions did not address the historical reasons food stores became necessary. According to the TCPS2 (2018), qualitative research involves inductive and interpretive understanding, meaning a focus on how "individuals interpret and ascribe meaning to what they say and do" (TCPS2 2018 Chapter 10). My research questions do not start with a hypothesis, but rather reflect a social constructivist perspective. My questions allow for multiple participant meanings, aimed at understanding and at endpoint theory generation (Creswell & Creswell 2018:63).

THESIS STRUCTURE

This thesis is structured as follows. Chapter Two provides an historical overview of Tokunoshima and explains explains my theoretical frameworks. In Chapter Three, I explain my research methods and methodology, including my positioning in the research, and then I introduce my research participants. In Chapter Four, I present my data categorized into three themes which tell collective stories of three very important aspects of the changes to IFS precipitated by capitalist policy changes. Chapter Five discusses the themes in relation to my theoretical frameworks. Finally, in Chapter Six, I revisit my research questions, discuss the limitations of my research, and point to how this work should be expanded and elaborated.

CHAPTER TWO: HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

This chapter explains the context of my research in terms of the known history[ies] of Tokunoshima followed by some glimpses into changes in traditional food pathways. I then provide an overview the four pillars of my theoretical framework: Positioning Theory, IFS, (critical) discourse analysis in the context of historical sociology, and decolonizing sociology. Finally, the chapter explores the role of supermarkets in commodifying food and changing traditional rural lifestyles.

As is the case with many Indigenous communities worldwide whose histories and knowledges have been captured by their colonizers (Findlay 2000), the history of Tokunoshima is unclear and contested. As a result, in this chapter I also provide insights from observations made by key informants, notes from my visits to more than 30 history museums in the Amami Islands and in the Ryukyus, translations of documents and articles from Meio University,[5] and my analysis of various physical, visual and audio archives, engagement in the form of miso-making, trips to locations with participants to further my understanding of what they were saying, and eco-hikes such as one of ancient pottery sites, now possible because of Tokunoshima's UNESCO World Heritage designation.

CONTEXT: A BRIEF HISTORY OF TOKUNOSHIMA

As I noted above, little is known about the 22,000 Amami peoples living on Tokunoshima; what has been written has primarily been written from the point of view of the colonizer, and, as my father always comments, we have to use the colonizer's reference points to locate Tokunoshima. According to maps, Tokunoshima is located north at 27 degrees and 51 minutes and east at 128 degrees and 51 minutes between the Pacific Ocean and the Sea of China. Piecing together the history of Tokunoshima requires not merely reference to academic, public and/or political texts, but also consultation with archivists in museums who have pieced together documents from all along the warm

[5] I wish to thank SSHRC and the Michael Smith Foreign Study Supplement for funding my research trip to Tokunoshima, and Dr. Madoka Hammine for her assistance at Meio University. I would also like to thank Dr. Annette Desmarais for her assistance and additional funding for this aspect of my project.

north-flowing Kuroshio current—and patience to hear the echoes of stolen lives narrated by *shima-uta* songsters, accompanied by the mournful plucking of the *shamisen*[6].

From approximately 7000 BC until approximately 800 AD, the northern Ryukyu Islanders (that is, the Amami) are thought to have lived as hunter-gatherers, though cultivation may have been adopted prior to the end of this period (Pearson 2013:83-87). Excavations recovered bones of pigs (wild boar or domesticated pigs), sea turtles, frogs and snakes; however, it is believed that frogs and snakes were not eaten, but rather were just native to the area. There were also a number of bony reef fishes, and some parrot fish—mostly small fish, and there are indications that the Amami peoples had fishing encampments. There are also indications that from the 5th to 8th centuries AD there was significant food stress owing to an expanding population. However, from the 8th or 9th century until the period prior to conquest (1609), extensive cultivation was established resulting in few if any food stresses encountered by Amami peoples prior to colonization (Pearson 2013:95). Notably, there were two annual rice harvests from a single planting on the islands, beginning in approximately the 15th century AD (Pearson 2013:235).

The modern social history of Tokunoshima is also contested. Tokunoshima is now located in the south of Japan but was a northern part of the Ryukyu Kingdom from 907 or the 1400s (contested) until 1609 (agreed) when it was conquered by Satsuma-han of mainland Japan. Before that, Tokunoshima may have been ruled at a distance by China, or Tokunoshima may have simply paid tribute to China. There are multiple books in English, Chinese and Japanese that attest to differing interpretations of pre-Ryukyu and Ryukyu documents. For example, there are arguments that the Amami Islands, including Tokunoshima, did not formally submit to Ryukyuan authority until 1571, despite there being an ongoing battle for control of the sugar produced in the Amami Islands and of tribute being paid to the Ryukyu Kingdom from 1266 or earlier (Museum labels confirmed by the

[6] Shima-uta are "island songs," which are mostly plaintive in sound and form. The shamisen is a three-stringed instrument with the neck made from wood. On the islands, the shamisen body is made from snake skin.

Samurai Archives). In 1609, the Ryukyu Kingdom was defeated by Satsuma-han (currently Kagoshima, Japan). Islands to the south including Okinawa and the Yaeyamas remained quasi-independent, though they paid taxes to Satsuma and were indirectly subject to Satsuma's control. Taxes were paid in agricultural production: Rice, sugar cane, sweet potato, papaya, banana and pineapple, as well as a precious silk textile known as *Oshima tsumugi* (Akamine 2017).

Agreement does exist however, that from 1609 until 1868, Tokunoshima was directly and brutally ruled by Satsuma-han (Kagoshima), while the more southern Ryukyu Islands were controlled at arm's length. Taxes were harsh and eventually could only be paid in sugar, with the result that islanders experienced frequent famine, and slavery-like conditions (Nelson 2006; Maeda 2014) known as *yanchu* (literally "house people"). While 30% of the Amami population were estimated to have been *yanchu* when they (the *yanchu)* were liberated in 1871, the poverty and violence they endured was also experienced by the entire Amami population (Nagoshi 2006) during each period of *satou jigoku* (sugar hell). *Satou jigoku* references frequent famines resulting from "impossible harvest quota" taxes (Maeda 2014:237). Maeda (2014) notes that Amami sugar made Satsuma-han, the current Kagoshima prefecture, very wealthy; indeed, "it is no exaggeration to say that the modernization of Japan was made possible only by the sacrifices of the Amamian people"…. "[h]owever, this sacrifice by Amami is never mentioned in the historiography of modern Japan" (237).

From 1868 to 1945, Tokunoshima and all of the Ryukyus were dominated by modernized Japan while the southern islands were occupied by the United States of America from 1945 to 1972, during which period the former Ryukyu peoples did not have citizenship, being neither Japanese nor American. The Amami islands (including Tokunoshima) were returned to Japan in 1953, becoming part of Kagoshima Prefecture. Finally, the southern Ryukyus were returned to the current Japanese government in 1972 as the Prefecture of Okinawa. Okinawa Prefecture remains the home base in Asia for the US military, degrading the environment and the Okinawan peoples. These distinctions have resulted in differing identities within sub-groups of the former Ryukyu Kingdom. At the present time,

the former Ryukyu Kingdom is spread over two prefectures in Japan: Kagoshima and Okinawa, creating complex identities and radically different experiences of colonization and oppression.

To gain an understanding of the historical roots of current dynamics of power, I lived in Naha (Okinawa) for six weeks in search of archives and documents. Most of the stories are kept in oral form and are Uchinaan (Okinawan) specific and there is little mention in the museums of the Amami peoples. The exceptions are mentions of Tokunoshima's *kamuiiyaki* (found at the Tsuboya pottery museum) and the Amami Archipelago's successful hunger strike for *fukki* (reversion) to Japan in 1953, 20 years prior to Okinawa prefecture's own return (found at the Okinawa Prefectural Peace Museum). The same museums classified the end of the Ryukyu kingdom as 1879 when it became a prefecture of Japan, while for the Amami people, the end of membership in the Ryukyu Kingdom was in 1609.

INDIGENOUS JAPAN

Virtually all of the attention on Japan's Indigenous peoples concerns the northern Ainu, officially recognized by Japan in 2008 and again in 2019. The Indigenous peoples of the south—the Yaeyama, the Okinawan, and the Amami peoples—are recognized in academic literatures and international documents. Together, these peoples have advocated for Japanese national governmental recognition for decades (Yokoto 2015). The 2014 review of Japan in light of the UN *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* noted that while the Japanese government recognizes the Ainu as an Indigenous people the government's failure to also recognize former peoples of the Ryukyu Kingdom, specifically those whose ancestry was Ryukyuan prior to 1879 was of concern (Cultural Survival 2020). Other issues were also documented, including the failure to protect rights, implementation of assimilationist policies, and the violent removal of peoples from their lands (ibid). To gain external recognition as Indigenous peoples from the United Nations, the Amami peoples must identify with their previous colonizer, Okinawa (Ryukyu), rather than their ongoing inhabitation, cultural and linguistic integrity, and sustainable Amami foodways. This concern is shared by the

Yaeyama people to the south of Okinawa, inhabitants of Ishigaki, Miyako, and other islands, who are now those most threatened by Chinese claims to Taiwan.

On July 26, 2021, Tokunoshima (along with Amami-Oshima, Oriomote Island, and the northern part of Okinawa) was added as UNESCO World Heritage Site as a natural sub-tropical rainforest and world biodiversity hotspot (https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2318). Tokunoshima is now subject to the strictest of Japanese environmental protection laws, with residents being forbidden to enter many spaces they consider to be sacred and in which they have always foraged. It is, for the time being, unclear how the mandated buffer zones around endangered species living close to towns and villages are to be achieved, and it is unclear how some agricultural practices such as sugar cane burning will be continued. These will be important areas of research in the future, given the likely impact on current food system practices that are only beginning to be evidenced.

COLONIZATION, POLICY CHANGE, AND FOOD AS COMMODITY

Research in Canada demonstrates that colonization has impacted many aspects of Indigenous food systems and created dependency through means such as handouts and reliance on purchased food often leading to significant decline in health of Indigenous peoples (Wendimu et al. 2018:47; see also Whyte 2018:348; Mason & Robidoux 2017:3; LeBlanc & Burnett 2017:29; Haman et al. 2017). As just one example, research documents how food stores in Indigenous communities in Canada are prone to running out of healthy foods like milk on pay day, and that stores may also have a hard time restocking due to the rural and isolated nature of the community (Wendimu et al. 2018:61). In fact, I experienced a similar phenomenon in Tokunoshima during my second research sojourn. Around December 25th, 2022, a series of powerful storms struck the Amami region. Community announcements were distributed and posted at the ports that the ships landing twice per day (one from the north, one from the south) would not be able to sail at all for a period of seven days. In one day, supplies of fresh vegetables, fruit, and meat were depleted in the grocery stores, a particularly surprising situation given that November and December are the traditional months of great abundance

on this agricultural island. The small corners of the stores where locally-produced vegetables and fruits are sold were still stocked, but the cheaper imported food was not.

We were in no danger of hunger; all islanders are still connected in some way to food production, while giving food to one another is a normal form of sharing wealth. However, I learned that such scarcity is new on Tokunoshima, a result of restrictive new shipping policies initiated after the sinking of the Korean ferry called *MV Sewol* in 2014 resulting in the death of over 350 Korean people, including 250 schoolchildren. *MV Sewol* was revealed to have been previously the Japanese *Naminoue Ferry*, one of the cargo ships that served Tokunoshima from 1994-2012 (Wikipedia nd), meaning that I had frequently ridden on her as a child. I learned that even though the ferry had served the islands well, and had been extensively structurally changed and allowed to become dilapidated in Korea, and even though members of the Korean crew and the captain were charged with abandonment and murder for telling the passengers to stay where they were and then locking them into the rooms on the ship, the Japanese government changed the shipping regulations in the Amami Islands and the Ryukyus in response; instead of being permitted to run in 8 metre waves, the ships were limited to 5 metre waves (Key Informant "Takayo", December 2022). As a result, food supplies that islanders have come to rely on are now unstable. Ironically, even 60 years ago, Tokunoshima was—or at least could easily have returned to being—completely food self-sufficient.

Other studies conducted in communities in Asia have shown that the supermarkets and other chain stores (like convenience stores) do not sell much fresh produce (Humphrey 2007: 436). Processed foods that do not spoil such as noodles, powdered milk, other milk products, and grains in in the form of flour or staple foods are introduced by supermarkets (Humphrey 2007: 436, 438; Reardon, Timmer & Minten 2012:12335). This raises the question of whether the impact on communities started with diet change, that then changed local farming, a question that, in fact, my data will bear out.

According to Hamilton (2018), supermarkets started to take root outside of the USA after World War II, reflecting the spread of American ideals of "free enterprise" to other nations (2),

particularly to nations resistant to the US (3). Having food to stock the shelves is foundational to establishing supermarkets or chain food stores, which implies the need for storage to make food readily available. To build storage facilities for food such as supermarkets, an industrial model of agriculture is needed, including monocropping and food processing systems (Hamilton 2018:3). The change requires an ideological shift as Indigenous people learn to seek food that is available and easily stored rather than fresh food that needs to be used immediately. Humphrey's (2007) findings suggest that supermarkets thrive when processed food stuffs are rendered desirable. There is the potential for this to have further impact on all ceremonies involving food (which my data supports). Springing immediately to mind in the context of Tokunoshima is a food known as *goya champuru.* Traditionally made with bitter gourd and sliced salted pork, it is now made (and preferred!) with Spam, American canned meat introduced to the islands as rations after the war.

The faster the rate of inventory turnover, the more profitable it is for the supermarket (Hamilton 2018:11). The need to re-stock the shelves often establishes financial benefit for the supermarket meaning more frequent shipments are needed. An average American grocer in 1929 turned over their stock 24 times a year; by contrast now each supermarket giant turns over stock 64 times annually (Hamilton 2018:11). If we consider a natural disaster such as a typhoon or the storms that I encountered prevents ships from running, this rate of turnover could lead to significant shortages on the shelves within 2-4 days; in fact, on Tokunoshima, it led to significant shortages within one day.

In contrast, in a community, smaller food shops owned by local people allow for price negotiation or purchasing on credit; such flexibility allowed small-scale shops to resist supermarkets as long as they did (Hamilton 2018:15). However, when wartime rationing was imposed, the ration system favored supermarkets because they provided one stop shopping for all food stuffs. A further established influence of supermarkets on local food systems is streamlining. Hamilton (2018) explains that supermarkets sold only ten of the 200 varieties of apples available in New York in 1930 (Hamilton 2018:19). Consumer demand was created for those ten varieties only, resulting in mass production

(Hamilton 2018:19-20), ultimately also deskilling all steps in the production line in the process of industrialization. The chain store became "…the main factor in teaching farmers to simplify their production" (Hamilton 2018:20).

For example, in Japan during the 1910s, monosodium glutamate (MSG) was developed as a food additive, but the people of Japan were not accustomed to using such "industrial flavors" (Kushner 2020:152). *Ajinomoto* (roughly translated as the root or origin of flavor), the company that patented MSG, campaigned to prove the convenience of using their industrial spices and additives in everyday cooking (Kushner 2020:152) after some initial pushback and counter-campaigning to resist the use of industrial spices and additives, spreading the belief that they originated from snakes (Kushner 2020:152). The Meiji period (1868-1912) opened Japan to global trade, while the Taisho era (1912-1926) saw increased lifestyle changes including favoring convenience cuisines (Kushner 2020:153). Later, once supermarkets were established and demands homogenized, scientists and industries reacted by finding innovative ways to standardize farms (Hamilton 2018). The result was a system in which "food—from seed to plate—is organized in a way that generates the highest possible global cash flows, regardless of the consequences" (Holt-Giménez 2017:56). This model was visible in my data.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

This research is informed by four main theoretical frameworks: Positioning theory, Indigenous Decolonizing Sociology, IFS, and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Here, I discuss positioning theory, IFS and CDA since these are important for understanding my research decisions and resulting findings, while later, in Chapter 5, I will explain how my thesis contributes to an Indigenous Decolonizing Sociology.

Fig 1: Megane Iwa (Glasses rock) in Amagi-cho. Photo by Phoenix Nakagawa

Positionality: Positioning Theory

Watson and Till (2010) explain that it is important for researchers, whether they are insiders or outsiders in a community, to know and identify their position in the research vis-à-vis their research participants (121). I use positioning theory (Kayi-Aydar 2019) as a lens for my research since I engaged in multilingual interviews with colonized peoples, and in cross-linguistic, cross-cultural textual and visual analyses. Positioning theory is a lens enabling researchers to deconstruct how people position themselves with regard to their ideologies, beliefs and identities; how those people are positioned by their ideologies, beliefs and identities; and the stories people tell about those positions (Kayi-Aydar 2019). Kayi-Aydar suggests that "positioning theory offers an understanding of the nature of interactions and participation in bi/multilingual contexts" (2019:43) such as on Tokunoshima, causing researchers to think about common sense storylines and cultural sterotypes that emerge in cross-linguistic encounters (43). That is:

> Positioning and subject position [....] permit us to think of ourselves as a choosing subject, locating ourselves in conversations according to those narrative forms with which we are familiar and bringing to those narratives our own subjective lived histories through which we have learned metaphors, characters, and plot. (Davies & Harré, 1990:52)

Through recognition of position, positioning, and storyline, positioning theory unpacks how individuals and communities position themselves, others, and themselves in relation to others through their performance of narratives and genres of discourse, helping to reveal the workings of power, particularly with reference to ascribing themselves and others social rights and duties (Harré, Moghaddam, Pilkerton-Carnie, Rothbart, & Sabat, 2009).

Positioning theory is also useful in collective memory work, such as in my research project, because it is fundamental to re-positioning, healing the wounds of conflict and leading to reconciliation. To cite an example in the context of settler colonialism in Canada: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has recently focused on bringing forward narratives of experiences, testimonio and witnessing, as well as documents and physical evidence of genocide, trauma and abuse

in residential schools across the country. This important truth-telling process is not simply a means of individual remembering, but also a means for generations of victims to re-frame what happened to them as individuals and as a collective, then to re-position themselves and also re-position settlers within a national narrative. The result is intended to change Canada in important ways, resulting in new ways of being, thinking and doing. In this way, individual action can result in communal transformation. It cannot recapture the past, but it can re-position oppressed peoples moving into the future, an important consideration in decolonizing sociology.

Ichinennsei ni natara.

Central to positioning theory is positioning myself. I will start with an introduction of myself using my Obaachan's (grandmother) story that she tells me every time I come home. In April 2003, I started grade one at Kametsu Elementary school; this is the setting of Obaachan's story. Obaachan prepared all of the things I needed to be ready for school. She sewed a gym bag to fit over my red *randoseru* (leather elementary school bag) and bought me a school uniform as well as getting me a second hand-me-down set from relatives a few years older than me. Obaachan walked me to school singing the *ichinensei* (Grade one students') song which translates to "When I become a grade one student, I hope to make 100 friends." As I crossed the threshold of the school wearing my yellow brimmed hat that symbolizes being in grade one, some of the students started to point at me and say "It's an American, an American!" My grandma immediately became fearful that because I was different from the other kids, this would be the start of a semester of bullying. I then turned, faced them, and yelled in Japanese while stomping my right foot to stand my ground "I am NOT an American. I am only HALF CANADIAN. My dad is from here". I turned to my grandma, swapped into my indoor shoes and proceeded to the gymnasium for the entrance ceremony. We found my classroom, Class One "i" (the second letter in the Japanese writing system) and when Obaachan came to pick me up later that day I had made 100 friends.

My Obaachan tells me this story every time we meet to remind me that by standing my ground and stating who I am with confidence, I managed to create an opening for friendship rather than being ostracized as an American or a "*haafu*," (half) terms that "used to carry a negative connotation in post-war Okinawa as it signified the resentment of Okinawans toward the US military" (Kohatsu 2021:19-20). So, with the same spirit, I am Hanika Nakagawa. I descend from Tokunoshima lands, part of the Amami Archipelago on my father's side; on my mother's side I am a white settler of Canada with records identifying my great grandparents as Yenisei tribal people from Siberia, now of Russia. I am profoundly Dyslexic and consider Tokunoshima home. Canada is the place of my formal education.

My paternal grandfather was from Isen Town, and my grandmother was from Itokina; they spoke different dialects of island language, even though they came from the same town. I "go home" to our island dwelling, and the community has claimed me as belonging. In particular, I am considered to be part of the Isen community; no one really comes from Kametsu since it is a port built mostly on reclaimed land, is the center of commerce for the island, and was once famous for having no food sources. I am descended from Amami Islanders on my father's side as far back as memory can go. I learned Japanese as my first language to communicate with my grandparents whose language of education was Japanese. I primarily grew up in Canada, learning English at school.

The Nakagawa Clan.

The Nakagawa family (my family) is well-known on Tokunoshima. My grandfather was the highest-ranking company official on the island of the island's only sugar cane company (the *Nansei Togyou*) until his retirement. My grandfather was famous for having the knowledge and personal fortitude to defy the company, and for having "won" battles with the mainland bosses about island sugar farming practices. Everywhere I go, I am told of my grandfather's legacy. Even while I am immensely proud of his authority, wisdom and knowledge, I also acknowledge that he was responsible for many "modern" practices that contributed to the destruction of traditional subsistence farming. Originally, he was a rice farmer who was approached by sugar cane farmers and factory workers to

apply for an open managerial position in the *Nansei Togyou* because he was the only islander who had attended tertiary education to study agriculture. He was widely seen to be the only islander who could therefore "speak for" islander farmers. Rising through the *Nansei Togyou,* he formed policy that allowed farmers to have more control over and less worry in their lives, but he also introduced farm machinery that, while reducing farm labour, led to the flattening of fields and regularization of farm edges over time. Mechanization eventually caused more soil run-off into the ocean and coral reef. At his own expense, he attended Kyushu University to learn biotechnology and built his own laboratory, then used that knowledge to produce a higher-yielding variety of sugar cane. Derivatives of his innovation are now the only varieties of sugar cane grown on Tokunoshima (Key informant "Chiemi" January, 2023).[7] On an island where most people are at least partially involved in sugar cane production, there are few whose lives have not been touched by my grandfather's decisions.

Having been evacuated to the mainland of Japan for safety during the war (on the last ship of island children before Red Cross evacuation boats were torpedoed by Americans), my grandfather was educated on the mainland and had to relearn traditional Isen *Shimaguchi* (island mouth, the language) when he returned. He grew up without a father; nearing the end of the war when Japan commanded that islanders join the military to defend their wives and children from the enemy (when everyone knew that defeat was inevitable), my great-grandfather was conscripted into the Japanese military higher than usual for civilians (*chu-i* or lieutenant) and was sacrificed in the Phillipines. Commanded to find a volunteer among his men to fly a *Shinpuu Tokubetsu Kougekitai* (kamikaze) mission, he chose instead to protect his men and go himself. For this, he was promoted to *tai-i* (captain) posthumously. My great-grandmother, his wife Yoshi, was educated, a rarity in her generation, particularly for women. She was left with six children to raise and no husband, becoming a legend

[7] This is another long colonization story that I will have to reserve for another day. Despite developing a new variety at his own expense, my grandfather was unaware that patents existed. He was personally rewarded with a trip around Japan and much gratitude by the *Nansei Togyou* for his time and effort (and contribution to their profit), but that was 35 years ago, and the knowledge of his contribution will die with those who worked for him.

among islanders in her own right for managing to get all of them educated at university through a combination of iron will and excellent planning; she was reportedly terrifying. Yoshi was a poet whose words have been translated by my father, revealing her to be a Marxist without knowing who Marx was.

After retirement from the *Nansei Togyou* after successively managing all three processing plants on Tokunoshima, my grandfather was repeatedly brought back through contract work in biotechnology. In addition, my grandfather continued farming as the island's expert in mangoes and orchids, and an advocate for and practitioner of traditional organic practices. According to my grandfather, walking the land was essential. The key principle of traditional farming is "植物は、人の足音を聞いて育つ" (plants grow with the sound of peoples' footsteps). These words are not to be taken literally. Plants do not hear, nor do they respond to the percussive steps of humans. Rather, this means that plants know they are cared for. My grandfather's plants knew that he walked beside them three times per day; he could spot one pest or one small blight in time to treat it locally and immediately. My grandfather is now over 90 years old, yet, everywhere I go, people ask about him, and then tell me how much they admired him—but that he was terrifying.

My grandmother, formerly a teacher, came from the rural mountainous area of Agon, specifically Itokina, where her family raised silkworms to produce a precious and famous type of silk called *Oshima tsumuugi* (Linton 2020). Her story is also one of courage and strong women. My grandmother defied her family by pursuing a high school education, becoming a teacher, and moving to the mainland of Japan to teach. She had to be tricked into returning to the island to get married, summoned by a telegram with a false report of her mother's imminent death. Chiemi was raised by two sisters, themselves sisters of her biological mother Toku. Toku was her father's second wife and therefore married late. Toku raised her husband's children from his previous marriage as well as her own daughter with him, my grandmother. When Toku was 47 years old and my grandmother Chiemi

was 2.5 years old, Toku gave birth to Toshiko, my aunt. Meanwhile, Toku's sister Mashu lost both of her children in the measles epidemic, and Toku's other sister Uto was married, proved barren, and was divorced. Mashu and Uto lived together in their grief; they agreed to care for Chiemi while Toshiko was an infant. Mashu and Uto spoiled and loved Chiemi who then refused to go home with Toku. Toku eventually thought "perhaps this is for the best." Chiemi's two adoptive mothers were formidable, doing everything between them that men could do except guiding the bull to plough the field. Mashu even cared for the bull and loaded it with wood to carry down the mountain trail where one misstep meant certain death (Key informant "Chiemi" January 2023). Like Yoshi, they became respected and renowned for their ability to provide good lives without want for themselves and for Chiemi.

Insiders and Outsiders.

What this heritage means for me is that on both sides, my family has considerable inherited moral and cultural authority that I am reminded of every time I step on the island. As a Nakagawa, I am expected to live up to our reputation for honour, integrity, steadfastness, and strength. I am granted trust and authority that I personally have not earned although it is my sacred duty to protect it. Therefore, I must carefully consider in what ways I am both insider and outsider when conducting my research. First, as is the case in most settler colonial contexts, the colonizer's language (Japanese) is the language of school, government, medicine, police, and all other forms of authority on the island, while the various dialects of *shimaguchi* are spoken by the older generations. While I do not speak *shimaguchi*, neither do my peers on the island. I am currently engaged in learning *shimaguchi* from my grandparents and father, but since I am reputed to speak Japanese fluently and more grammatically correctly than most of my peers, I seldom have opportunities to engage with people in *shimaguchi* beyond pleasantries.

Second, I attended elementary and junior high school in part on Tokunoshima and have returned to the island biannually for periods of three weeks to six months throughout my life. I have former classmates who are friends. Because my grandfather was a high (then the highest) ranking

islander in the *Nansei Togyou* and was promoted through the three factories, my father was born in Isen, was a young child in Amagi, and went to junior high and high school in Tokunoshima. Consequently, my father has footprints and connections all over the island and is familiar with the major dialects of *shimaguchi*. My extended family is also well-known, extensive and influential, particularly in agricultural circles (on an agricultural island). In short, I am considered by islanders to be an islander, partly because of the strength and integrity of the personal relationships our family has maintained over the years, and partly because I am claimed by all communities. To explain this well, I need to tell a story.

On May 27 2022, I was allowed to attend the Tokunoshima Culture Council discussions and presentations. I am a little lost on the details as to whether Obaachan asked Susumu Machida (an elder I interviewed who is mentioned thoughout and is quite active in promoting Tokunoshima ways) if I could attend or if he said I should come after agreeing to be a participant in my project. Either way, considering that I had landed in Japan two weeks prior (and was therefore "pandemic safe"), I was allowed to attend. Important information about other projects and events happening on the island was shared. During the 10-minute break between presentations, Machida-san came by and sat next to me saying,

> "you came by my house when you were younger with your dad; you were quite young so you would not remember. The theme of the interview [you want to do] is food right? I will try to contact a sempai (senior) of mine too." (2022)

I responded that I loved the island and I wish I had spent more time here, but my family sent me over as many times as possible, at least once every 2 years, usually for extended periods throughout my life. Machida-san responded "It is nice to have a community to come home to. Your research is important and I will cheer for you using English to present it all over the world, bringing the island to the world".

It was at that moment that I felt a complete islander. I asked myself: Am I being claimed?—by people who are not my family? I knew my family claimed me here, but I hesitated when thinking about the rest of the island. With the pandemic drawing thicker boundaries than ever between people who

live on the island and those who visit being threats for disease, I grew ever more conscious of my position as a British Columbia-born daughter of a "pure" Amami father and settler descendent Canadian mother. What made my father pure was his graduation from Tokunoshima high school representing a full childhood on Tokunoshima and growing to adulthood there. Like any person, I am sure I will waver and question my identity throughout my life, but for now with Susumu Machida's words at heart, I felt a bit of loneliness fade away.

Later, once the presentations and discussions were over, a woman approached me. We had already done formal introductions. I knew her face but could not recall her name. She said to me,

> "I thought it was you; you got tall. You mentioned you were Satoru's girl in the introductions so that confirmed it was you. He presented here a number of years ago. And you're Chiemi's granddaughter right? I know her too personally, but everyone seems to know her personally. I can't wait to see you present your research here like your father did." (2022)[8]

I thanked her and assured her that I am not just following my dad's footsteps but have ventured out in the world following what I loved and the path that seemed to fit me. I seemed to have ended up in the same place -- that is, in Tokunoshima.

Later, I made my way home to my grandparent's house, where my cousin Taiyo came from one island north to visit me. His mother, my Aunt Mutsuumi (Kametoku elementary school principal) came over for dinner. Squished around the table Obaachan, Ojiichan, Taiyo, Mutsuumi and me, Mutsuumi said "Hanika were you at the meeting today?" I said yes. Mutsuumi continued,

> "…because a friend of mine called me and said 'hey there is a girl here introducing herself as 'Satoru Nakagawa who grew up in Isen's kid' and she is attending university in Canada and has a striking resemblance to you. You guys are totally related right." So, I told him "yeah you remember Satoru is my little brother and Hanika is my niece. Hanika, I didn't think we looked alike but apparently we look related".

I laughed and told her that it is an honour to be told I look like her and a part of the family.

[8] This person was not a participant in my study. I still do not know her name.

The tsunami-like speed of identifying who I belonged to after a quick introduction was surprising to me. Obaachan has said before that Tokunoshima Islanders do not really do introductions formally because everyone knows each other and if you meet for the first time you can pretty much guess who everyone is related to with the information gathered in conversation. I learned from this encounter what the important information is that I have to offer people when meeting them, so that they can place me. Even though my father left Isen at the age of two, I am "from Isen". I am Amami, from Tokunoshima, of the Isen Nakagawas, Kouzou and Chiemi's granddaughter, Satoru's daughter, and I am (apparently temporarily) living in Canada.[9]

Nonetheless, in this research I also have "social hostages" (Kouritzin & Nakagawa 2018:683), guarantors of whom I must be mindful in my research practice, or else cause those I love irreparable harm. My social hostages are my grandparents, my father, my aunt, my cousins and second cousins, and my very large extended family, all of whom will be forced to suffer the repercussions of my research in the event it violates the community's trust or if I fail to maintain a relationship with the community (Kouritzin & Nakagawa 2018). In every case, the social hostages in my research were negotiated long before the interviews took place. Members of my family, friends, former teachers of my father, Ikebana students of my grandmother, and even members of the local government all made overtures on my behalf, and introduced me as a member of my family, my community, and the island in their negotiations. Consent was negotiated before I was introduced; if someone preferred not to meet me, I was never told about it. In other words, in one sense my social hostage is the Nakagawa name (our name and ancestor altars are "held" by my grandfather, then my father) and the reputation of both the Nakagawa Motoi families, both of which signify integrity on Tokunoshima.

Indigenous Decolonizing Sociology

[9] After my late February 2023 return from my time on Tokunoshima and after I handed in my thesis draft, my grandfather Kouzou Nakagawa passed away March 12, 2023. Because I had cared for him through the summer and visited him in hospital every day while I was on the island, I am overwhelmed by messages claiming me and supporting me. I will not change references to my grandfather to the past tense because he was living while I wrote this.

Until recently, in various parts of the world, much research done on Indigenous lands has been done "without the permission, consultation or involvement" of Indigenous peoples (Martin & Mirraboopa 2003:203). In the context of the Asia Pacific region, Martin and Mirraboopa (2003:205) suggest that an Indigenous theoretical lens involves: (1) recognizing Indigenous worldviews, knowledges and realities as distinctive and vital to continued existence; (2) honouring our social mores as essential processes through which we live, learn and situate ourselves as Indigenous peoples in our own and others' lands; (3) emphasizing the social, historical and political contexts that shaped and continue to shape our experiences, lives, positions and futures; (4) privileging the voices, experiences and lives of Indigenous peoples and lands. Adopting this theoretical framework allows me to minimize the colonialist impact of research, which is "one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary" (Smith 2012:xi).

Consequently, I fully acknowledge that: 1) research with Indigenous peoples in a settler colonial context fundamentally involves issues of power; 2) as a racialized, learning disabled, politicized and gendered scholar from a Canadian U15 member university who was educated via the world's most dominant language, I have an orientation to knowledge that will be reflected in the way I understand my participants and in the knowledge I produce (Marcus 1998:33); and 3) that historically, western forms of research have erased oppressed and marginalized communities and their members (Smith 2012). Despite the status and cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977) I hold in western knowledge systems, I must prioritize community knowledge holders and elders, not allowing Western research forms to reinforce colonization. I am committed to Tokunoshima commmunities, keeping in mind that in community-based research many researchers have often lost community connection (Halseth, Markey, Ryser & Manson 2016). I adhere to four principles of Indigenous research specifically for Tokunoshima: A community-building and healing intent, honouring islanders' dignity and integrity, engaging a validating research process, and maintaining an integrated post-humanist outlook (Nakagawa 2013; Kouritzin & Nakagawa 2018). My research will give Tokunoshima

Islanders data and stories to consider regarding their decisions about food purchases and production, which I regard as a first step toward decolonizing the local food system.

Indigenous Food Sovereignty and Food Sovereignty

In this section, I explain IFS and food sovereignty as theoretical frameworks involving multiple related and thus similar concepts. Food sovereignty is a process whereby people gain autonomy over what and how food is produced, acquired and distributed. An extensive literature is focused on the components of food sovereignty, as well as how it is to be achieved, developed, and maintained in various locales and geographic spaces. Whether addressing definition, rationalization, explanation or aim, the concept of food sovereignty opposes the modern, industrial, for-profit food system that is dominated by a very few powerful corporations and some philanthropic organizations that have used technology, finances and policies to maintain power over how and what is to be produced (Holt-Giménez 2017:54).

There is relatively little debate about the definition of food sovereignty. The most frequently cited definition of food sovereignty comes from La Via Campesina:

> Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. It defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation. It offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime, and directions for food, farming, pastoral and fisheries systems determined by local producers. Food sovereignty prioritizes local and national economies and markets and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisanal fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability. Food sovereignty promotes transparent trade that guarantees just income to all peoples and the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition. It ensures that the rights to use and manage our lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those of us who produce food. Food sovereignty implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social classes and generations. (Via Campesina 2007)

It is important to keep in mind however, that the sentiment of food sovereignty has been around for much longer than this definition implies.

Further nuancing definitions of food sovereignty and their origin stories, Castagnetti et al. (2021) explain that as the concept evolves, it is being adapted and refined to fit changing social environments and to better support proponents' visions and intentions. This has resulted in tying the definition of food sovereignty to input from "…local and Indigenous communities from all over the world who demanded to place at the heart of food systems policy the very people and communities who produce, distribute and consume food" (Castagnetti et al. 2021:2). Food sovereignty thus stands in stark contrast with the industrial food system that has now been normalized, suggesting a move towards dignified livelihoods for food providers (James et al. 2020:33). One example, among many, includes the dignified livelihoods involving fishing, agriculture and mangrove harvesting in the case of coastal Afro-Colombian societies (Turner, Idorobo, Desmarais & Peredo 2020:410). On Tokunoshima, dignified livelihoods included gathering, agriculture, fishing, coral reef harvesting, and fishing in rice fields. In both contexts, trading occurred without focus on capitalist accumulation; trade was built on needs and maintaining social relationships (Turner, Idorobo, Desmarais & Peredo 2020:407).

More recently, the concept of IFS has gained currency, further informing, nuancing, and expanding conversations about food sovereignty. Much of the emerging literature on IFS includes cases in the USA (Ryser et al. 2019), Canada (Desmarais & Wittman 2014; Fakhri 2018; Matthews 2019; Ray et al. 2019; Shukla et al. 2019, Sumner, McMurty & Tarhan 2023) and Australia (Ma Rhea 2017; Mayes 2018). There appears to be little, if any, work on food sovereignty or IFS in Japan. Possible reasons for this are varied. For example, the concept of Indigeneity is an uncomfortable fit for those outside the academic discourses in Japan. Particularly among elders, the traditional ways of doing things have been educated/shamed out of them. In the context of the entire Ryukyu Kingdom, of which the Amami Islands had been part, Oshiro (1999) explains it thus:

> …especially in primary school…aspects of vernacular way of life was suppressed, for example dialect, *mo-asobi* (young people's after school singing and musical games), male top-knots, female tattoos, Ryukyu style clothing and bare feet, in order to create an idealized or imagined 'real Japanese people'…and teachers, born in Okinawa, had been brought up as Japanese….

> Inheritance of the Okinawan way of life was seen as negative and its characteristics were codified like a table of wrongs or sins. (45)

In this context, the participants in my research and most islanders reject their identities as Indigenous peoples, identifying with the colonizer Japan,[10] and viewing themselves as they have been taught, as inferior peoples.

In seeking autonomy for the peasants and other rural peoples who, relying on farming, foraging, and gathering, live closest to the lands, waters, and forests, food sovereignty and IFS appear to be one and the same. IFS specifically seeks autonomy for Indigenous communities and peoples to live more intimately with their natural environment and ecology without interruption from outside influences of the colonizer. Indigenous peoples maintain connection to the most biodiverse regions in the world; this is not only a result of the regions allocated to them by colonization and capitalism but is also partially due to the dynamic view of nature that many Indigenous peoples have. Indigenous peoples view themselves as being a part of nature, not as living "with" nature or living "despite" nature, and certainly not trying to control nature (Morrison 2011:104).

Another line of research connects IFS with struggles for decolonization, self-determination, intergenerational knowledge sharing practices (Daigle 2019, Grey & Patel 2015, Gupta 2015, Whyte 2018), and Land Back movements (Waziyatawin 2012). In an article relating IFS to the social determinants of health, Ray et al. (2019) outline a conceptual framework for IFS. Pointing out that most interpretations of the social determinants of health stem from neoliberal assumptions, focused on deficit-based explorations of food prices, poor nutrition, genetic predispositions, and other individual or community pathologies, they posit instead that structural injustices related to colonialism work

[10] It is frequently the case that I am expected to identify as Japanese as well when I meet Americans, Canadians, or other foreigners who are engaged as ALTs (Assistant Language Teachers) on Tokunoshima as part of the national JET programme (Japan Exchange Teachers). I am privy to their conversations about the desire to get off the island, and into "real" Japan, by which they mean the mainland urban centers. They wear their participation in island activities like a badge to commodify themselves—sitting astride the fighting bull at the end of *togyu*, learning to play the *shamisen*, getting licensed for scuba diving, humpback whale-watching, taking pictures of sunrise and sunset on the white sand beaches, wearing T-shirts with the Kametsu dialect greeting "*obora daren*"—but not so secretly they are just living with the "pause" button engaged, waiting to leave.

against Indigenous peoples' health. Their conceptual framework stems from a meta-analysis of IFS research, including the Healthy Islands Initiatives in the Pacific region (McIver et al. 2015). Healthy Islands is an important inclusion for this research project because islands, especially remote islands, have specific ecosystem considerations. Moreover, Tokunoshima and the Amami islands are spaces not colonized by English speakers, and also subjected to foreign American military presence.

Ray et al. (2019) consider human-ecosystem interactions as well as the impacts of colonialism and land dispossession, noting that "[e]ven among more wholistic models of health, such as the social determinants of health framework, there is a marked failure to conceive of health in relation to land and colonialism" (57). Divided into domains and subdomains, Ray et al.'s (2019) conceptual framework is particularly helpful for thinking through IFS as having mental, physical, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, political, governance and social elements, as well as being influenced by globalization, neoliberalism, capitalism, and colonialism. Ray et al's conceptual framework is presented in table format that both siloes or compartmentalizes knowledges while also demonstrating that these are interconnected and woven together. This conceptual framework would allow sociologists or other health researchers to understand that aspects of Indigenous lifeways cannot be reduced or simplified, that all aspects are embedded.

On the other hand, as can be seen in the wholistic data stories in my research, this conceptual framework is not ***for*** Indigenous peoples. For the Indigenous peoples of Tokunoshima, the connections between the seven domains would be inseparable. Therefore, the conceptual framework cannot serve as a checklist for research, but rather as a baseline tool for researchers working with Indigenous communities, or in Indigenous urban contexts. The seven domains and explanatory subdomains compiled by Ray et al. (2019) are summarized below:

1. <u>policy and procedures</u> including agro-ecological/environmental management and subsistence based activities;

2. local food production and consumption, shifting from globalized food systems to traditional foods and medicines supporting local cultures;
3. social justice and equity, allowing access to traditional lands, territories, natural resources and foods, and equitable participation/sharing of food system benefits and risks;
4. local/cultural knowledges and practices, valuing and transmitting local knowledge in use, rejecting processes that undermine local knowledge, respecting the integrity of sacred sites, and honouring responsibilities to/relationships with the land;
5. self-determination and governance, allowing for control over resources, food systems, networks and decision making;
6. health of the land, specifically respecting the integrity and protection of lands, territories, resources, seeds, plants, medicines, and animals;
7. adaptability and resiliency, in the face of migration, urbanization, displacement, environmental and climate change (Table 1:58).[11]

Ray et al. (2019) state that the table is not all encompassing but rather represents the scope of existing food sovereignty frameworks (58). Consequently, a number of key elements referenced remain under-explained. These are a) that food is sacred (Morrison 2011; Dawson 2020), b) the use and meaning of the word "sovereignty" which is distinct from its political entanglements with self-determination (Daigle 2019; Mihesuah & Hoover 2019), c) the embedded, non-Anthropocentric relationships among food, Indigenous peoples, other peoples and non-human beings (Robin 2019), d) essentializing Indigenous identity (Ehlert & Vossemer 2015), knowledges and practices as traditional (Wendt 2008, cited in Mallon 2010), and e) the intimate connection between land and ontology (Grey & Patel 2015). It is possible that leaving these out of the IFS conceptual framework was purposeful, thereby

[11] I have summarized rather than reproduced the table because reproducing it requires copyright permission, which can take many months to acquire according to the FGS website. No meaningful information is lost in the summary.

acknowledging that the discourses around these elements exist only at the periphery of Western theoretical spaces. However, understanding these key elements is essential to my research.

Addressing these in order, first, most literature appears to cite Morrison's argument that a critical differentiating factor between IFS and food sovereignty is IFS understandings that food is sacred (Morrison 2011:100; Sumner, McMurty & Tarhan 2023). The concept of food as sacred could be further explored in the IFS literature in at least two ways. One way is to consider what makes food sacred for a particular community. This changes for each community, even within a community, and can also change over time. The other way to explore sacredness in IFS is asking what food being sacred means in terms of practicing IFS. The most cited explanation for the first explanation is that food is sacred because it is a gift from the creator (Morrison 2011:100; 220:92 Poirier & Neufeld 2023:2). The second explanation adds to popular definitions in that the gift "should not be controlled by colonial influences" (Poirier & Neufeld 2023:2). Morrison (2011) states that asserting community-based sacred values is one of the actions of IFS; therefore, I will assert what sacredness suggests for Tokunoshima Islanders. Many different forms and representations of sacredness can be found globally. The Tagbanua peoples located in what is now the Philippines use the term *Diiwata* referencing the spirits who live in the environment, become food, and thus relate food to sacredness (Cuevas et al. 2015:34). The Hawaiian concept of "Aloha 'A¯ ina" identifies food in familial relationship, in which an older sibling (the land) feeds the younger siblings (other beings, including humans) (Gupta 2015:531). For the Amami, cattle are considered more sensitive to the material and spiritual worlds than humans and therefore they must be protected (Matsuyama 2004). This appears to imply that cattle are associated with the divine in a way that humans are not. Of course, people living as a part of nature is not entirely positive or without risk (Morrison 2011:105) and just as rain is more appreciated during a drought, food may become more sacred in its scarcity.

Second, Daigle (2019) asks us to consider the state-centric, colonialism-derived word "sovereignty" (300) in IFS, frequently meaning groups of humans who have not been interrupted in

their primary relationship with the land. Sovereignty politically describes a situation in which humans are *sovereign from* the oppressive powers of colonial humans, but in which they are *subject to* the confines (forms and structures) of nature; therefore, Daigle (2019) explains that she does not think sovereignty is the correct word to use when thinking about all the relations within environment and food. In Daigle's truth, food and sovereignty are difficult to disentangle:

> Because, you can't really say that you're sovereign over your own food. It's the plants and the animals that pity us. Our life depends on them. I can't say my sovereignty trumps that of the animal …. And, in order for me to live I have to ask for him or her [the animals and the plants] to help me live. (Daigle 2019:311).

Thus, which beings are considered to be food and when differs depending on the sovereignty of all of the beings involved in human consumption of plants and animals.

Third, the idea of food being sacred and the idea of sovereignty speak to relationships, without necessarily referencing other non-human beings and connecting to the land (Robin 2019:85). IFS is concerned with how food acquisition activities such as hunting, gathering, fishing, beachcombing, finding beehives, shepherding (and much more) influence and are influenced by the environment (Grey & Patel 2015:439).

Fourth, the referent for "Indigenous" in IFS is complex. In 2016, Canada reluctantly endorsed the 2010 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (Settee & Shukla 2020:24). UNDRIP acknowledges the historic oppression faced by Indigenous peoples around the world, and also acknowledges that the legacies of colonialism, slavery and modern migrant labour practices impose on traditional Indigenous ways of life (Settee & Shukla 2020:24; Ferguson, Green & Swanson 2022). While Japan has signed UNDRIP, Japan has not recognized Ryukyuan peoples as Indigenous peoples. The 2020 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants (UNDROP) is a more recent declaration. It is interesting to note that both Canada and Japan abstained from voting (UNHDR webinar 2021) on UNDROP in 2018. No doubt, this is due, in part, to the fact that UNDROP Article 15 outlines the right to food and food sovereignty, thereby laying the groundwork for IFS. This

raises the question "who is Indigenous?" The threat of a definition based on identity resides in the power structures determining who is Indigenous and who is not. The very process of creating a definition creates discord and can perpetuate the dominant power structure (Ehlert & Vossemer 2015:18). One question immediately raised by defining Indigenous identity in one way or another is how many groups are thereby excluded from having Indigenous identity? Another question is "who decides?"

Finally, the shift from a land- and water-based food system to a market-based food system is connected to the legacies of colonialism. The shift disrupts quotidian traditional relationships and thereby also disrupted ontologies (Daigle 2019:302,309; Settee 2020:224; Ferguson, Green & Swanson 2022). Western ways of being and knowing attacked Indigenous ontologies not only in terms of supplanting Indigenous foodways through violations of traditional food practices and the dispossession of lands, but also by dismantling governance processes once embodied by the community and their lands (Daigle 2019:302). Likewise, "time imperialism" is a part of the Western way of thinking and being, prioritizing time spent on wage labour and attendance to colonial institutions like education (Ferguson, Green & Swanson 2022:29). Moreover, assertions about "traditional" forms of food provisioning and procurement, such as fishing, weeding, hunting, raising can themselves be colonizing. Maori author Arthur Wendt explained how unthinking adoption of words like "traditional" can serve the colonizer:

> Traditional inferred our cultures were /are so tradition-bound they were static and slow to change; that they weren't dynamic and growing and changing; that because they were slow to change and fixed in history they were "simple and easy to understand." Traditional also had implications about how we were viewed as people even to the extent that, because we were tradition bound, we behaved out of habit and past practice and [were] slow to adapt to other ways or change our own ways, that we didn't want to think for ourselves, or were incapable of individual thinking and expression. (Cited in Mallon 2010:367)

In IFS, it is important not to reify colonizer words or concepts. We also must recognize and prioritize spirituality and intuition as valid forms of intelligence (Morrison 2011:106).

Critical Discourse Analysis and Historical Sociology

For sociologists in the Foucauldian tradition, "discourse" references a historically contingent knowledge, power and meaning system, produced and transmitted through social interaction, that determines how we think and communicate about the world. Discourse refers not only to language in talk or text, but also to images, gestures, thoughts, events, and any other forms interaction, human or non-human (Pennycook 2018). In keeping with social constructivism, discourse determines what we are able to think and what we are able to know; discourse both *reflects and creates* ideologies, thoughts, ideas, beliefs, values, identities, interactions, and behaviours (Taylor 2013). Therefore, discourse, power, and knowledge are all connected, with some discourses being considered legitimate and others illegitimate, some beneficial and others harmful, some powerful and others stigmatized, some representing the norms of society and others marginalized (Taylor 2013:10).

Discourse analysts believe that individuals' discursive representations of the social world reveal ideology. When individuals have little exposure to differing ideologies, their own ideologies may be the only truth they know (Stibbe 2021:22). Following from this, discourse analysis examines how discourses convey meanings or ideas in a social context. It starts from the idea that for knowledge of any kind to be communicated, it must go through language to get there, that "our access to reality is always through language" (Jergensen & Phillips 2002:8). Discourse analysis can be applied to interviews, conversations, ethnographic fieldnotes, newspaper articles, journal articles, policies, books, advertisements, political speeches, films, sermons, brochures, emails, social media, websites, blogs, videos – any instance of discourse being used for any purpose. Rather than focusing only on *what* the language in a given discourse says, discourse analysis also focuses on *how* it is said (Bergen 2016:5).

Discourse analysts not only look at what is included in discourse, but also what is excluded, the silences (Waitt 2005; Jóhannesson 2010:8) such as, in my project, Indigenous worldviews. For the discourse analyst, the goal is not to discover the real meaning behind the discourse (known as hermeneutics), but rather to understand the ways in which discourse creates social realities that have

social consequences (Jergensen & Phillips 2002). Because discourse analysis primarily reveals inclusion/exclusion, legitimate/illegitimate, normative/marginalized, it always recognizes power, it has been argued that all discourse analysis is CDA (Kayi-Aydar 2019).

According to Jergensen and Phillips (2002:5-6), in keeping with social constructivism, there are four fundamental premises to discourse analysis no matter the form. These include: (1) critically approaching taken-for-granted knowledge; (2) historical and cultural specificity and anti-essentialism because the social world is constructed discursively; (3) knowledge is neither true nor false because it is created through interaction; and (4) different social constructions of the world lead individuals to differing social actions. Critical discourse analysts look at several levels of language in discourse: Grammar (use of specific tenses or forms); vocabulary (word or phrase use), metaphors; genre; pragmatics; non-verbal communication (intonation, pitch, rhythm, use of gestures); social roles and conventions (how people take turns, how to show respect, use of formal speech); discourse strategies (using discourse to get what you want), discourse form (letter, email, hand-written/typed, paper used, decorations) (Taylor 2013:8); and intertextuality (Bahktin's theory of conscious or unconscious borrowing from other texts) (Bergen 2016:3). Discourse analysts also examine non-linguistic discourses—how images, signs, sounds, music, dance, play, toys, films, monuments etc., combine to make meaning (Berber 2016:6-7).

In my study, I find CDA to be a particularly important consideration; discourses of the mundane versus the exotic, for instance, reveal a completely different ideological orientation to food. In terms of linguistic elements, I find myself particularly attracted to many forms of expression and the multilingual nature of my research interviews. I was intrigued by oblique challenges to power, and the manner in which islanders both opposed and disparaged official knowledge claims. In particular, the following specific example springs to mind, one of the many stories told by Shioushi Mizumoto aged 87, participant 29.

Shioushi Mizumoto explained that he and his friends would go to Kobaru (a beach in Isen-cho) bringing only spears and a pot. They would build a camp on the sandy beach using the logs and leaves from the surrounding banana trees. They would camp in Kobaru for 10 days, spending their days spear fishing, cooking by fire, and selling their spoils. This included not just fish but also octopus and *yakogai* (a large seashell—a conch shell that is eaten then polished). They caught the small fish that would hide in the *moe*, an ocean plant that grew to the same length as a person that covered the ocean floor. Shioushi Mizumoto said "you could jump in and you would be covered in *moe*". When reflecting on the changes to the ocean from his youth, he said wistfully: "There is so little *moe* in the sea today that you could say there is none." Shioushi Mizumoto believes this is why the small fish and octopii are reduced in numbers today. In the past, he said, the fertilizers used were only bulls' manure and other plant and animal waste, while the use of synthetic fertilisers coincided with the decline of *moe* in the sea. The amount and severity of red tide also increased due to the development of the land, he told me[12]. Although professional researchers say chemical synthetic fertilizers are not to blame, Shioushi Mizumoto finds this hard to believe and thinks it might be the result of inadequate data, as adding some synthetic fertilizer to a small pool of ocean water wipes out all the living things in it.

Throughout his interview, Shioushi Mizumoto challenged the scientific data presented as evidence of non-contamination and made his contempt for that knowledge explicit through his tone and expression. It became clear to me that he challenged the power structure; moreover, he does not appear to think any data except longitudinal, observational data is valid. He used non-academic forms of discourse and non-academic observational measurements to challenge academic knowledge to propose a more valid, Indigenous form of knowledge construction perhaps best described as qualitative

[12] Kohatsu (2021) details the profound impact of land development practices instituted in Okinawa under Japanese government public works improvement projects, particularly the increased red tides that result from soil run off and the consequent decrease in fish. Much earlier, Higashi et al. (1985) described the situation in Okinawa, that could just as easily have been written about Tokunoshima (and which my father also documented in photos as part of his undergraduate work in 1989), in which the soil run off has had a negative impact on the supply of clean water, and on ocean health.

data over time, with time being measured in decades, not months or even years. This is an idea I will return to later in Chapter 5 when considering slow violence.

On the other hand, while collecting, translating, and analyzing data, I was frequently struck by certain expressions Tokunoshima people used to describe themselves and their customs. Having learned a kind of self-loathing at school and from the colonizer Japan, islanders would reference themselves as "backward", having *dozoku* (uncivilized local customs) that are *zankoku* ("cruel" such as the practice of pig slaughter and that they therefore felt they needed permission from me to describe), "*doko no inaka no wangfune ga shiran*" (a mixture of Japanese and *shimaguchi* translating to "what rural porkbones I don't know" in reference to an islander), being *okureta* ("late" meaning slow), speaking "*hougen namari no Nihongo"* (Japanese accented by the island language), "*oshikatsugai inai"* (does not have the ability to mask the accent), constant references to islanders "not being good enough" for me (because I am educated, half Caucasian, fluent in English, and a Nakagawa), or asking whether the words of "just some grandmothers and grandfathers" are worth anything at all. In fact, on many occasions, I felt that I was being tested; they were using words deliberately, sometimes with a questioning intonation, watching my reaction to see which side I was on. I had many participants tell me how smart I was to be able to speak both Japanese and English so well, and to be able to translate between them. I would respond "yes, I am bilingual just like you" making a purposeful reference to their abilities to speak *shimaguchi* and Japanese. I would also tell them that I had an easier time becoming bilingual because both languages I know are taught in schools; they would respond by saying that indeed, yes, teaching *shimaguchi* in schools does not work. With these words and reactions, they seemed to signal that I had passed all their tests and had become trusted.

Talking to a local archivist introducing an exhibit that documented the series of colonizers in Tokunoshima in a very rigorous and enlightened way, I asked about our own status as "*minzoku*" which is using an expression that would roughly equate to "Indigenous lite" (this could be seen as offensive in our Canadian context but is not in Japan). I did not even use the word "*senjumin*"

(meaning “original people of the past”) which is largely rejected by islanders because of the associations with primitive-ism. The archivist did not respond; he ignored me pointedly. Like me, he is an islander involved with the documentation of our past in the context of colonization. Unlike me, he is a civil servant, assigned this task by the local government, and somehow appearing to distance himself from it. Similarly, there were a few people who appeared to take pride in their agricultural practices, but for the most part, my participants talked about knowing “nothing other than agriculture.” Despite their words, I know from their intonation that they actually felt pride in the depth and breadth of their knowledge of farming, the seasonal crop rotations, the forms of blight and how to remedy them, the different soils and water sources, the sweetness of fruit fertilized by bull manure versus that fertilized by chicken manure, the vegetables like papaya that also become fruits, the need to cull the *kabocha* (pumpkin) so that only the first and second squash remain on the vine, their ability to understand bird chatter warning that a *habu* (poisonous viper) is present.

With all of this in mind, rather than do a CDA of participants’ self-deprecating expressions, I chose to edit many expressions out, and to translate only the elder’s wisdom, doing so only in a positive, educative way. I also made this choice knowing that my participants may have changed the ways that they interacted with me if they knew their discussion genres, grammar, word choice and tone were going to be analysed (Hammersley 2014). Furthermore, engaging in CDA will not provide answers for my research questions (e.g., Berger 2016) in the way that I thought it might. This, to me, is the most respectful way I can behave with integrity and honour their trust.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

There is no existing research on changes in foodways on Tokunoshima, and therefore there is no springboard for my research. To explore this topic through community-based research, I use an exploratory qualitative research design. According to the TCPS2 (2018), a qualitative research approach involves inductive and interpretive understanding, meaning a focus on how "individuals interpret and ascribe meaning to what they say and do" (Chapter 10:np). Because researchers bring their own biases and perspectives to the interpretation of data, they must "demonstrate trustworthiness of their findings by using a range of methodological strategies" (TCPS2 Chapter 10:np). Therefore, as I explain below, I used four ethnographic data collection strategies. Also, to better understand my participants, I also investigated things I learned about, such as looms or agricultural implements.

Ethnography, broadly defined, is used in Sociology and Anthropology to produce interpretive and microscopic "thick description" of any "pattern of life" (Geertz 1973:20). My choice of community-based ethnographic research allowed community members to influence my generative research questions, as well as impact my research questions' focus on how and why from an emic contemporary and historical perspective people acted in the way that they did (Agee 2009). Theory is at the heart of ethnography; as a methodology, ethnography is itself a theory stemming from the belief that all descriptions are inherently theoretical (Hammersley 1992:11-13), shaped by their theoretical assumptions about the universals of society (Hammersley 1992:13). In ethnography, there is no such thing as "raw" data, but rather everything documented is interpreted by the researcher (Kouritzin 2004), making the researcher the most important instrument in the research (Cresswell & Cresswell 2018:181). For this reason, my positionality, detailed above, was essential.

DATA SOURCES AND DATA COLLECTION METHODS

My data collection involved the following: (1) a life history interview process widely known as "yarning" (Bessarab & Ng'Andu 2010) but adapted here as *shimatsumugi*; (2) collection and analysis of scholarly literature in Japanese, documents, and images in archives and public spaces; (3) writing

notes in a community/researcher journal; and (4) time in the community, time giving back to the community, time for reflection with participant and other necessary elements of "slow research" as I discuss below. Narrative historical yarns focused on the goals of "interpreting significance and giving voice" (Ragan & Amoroso 2019, :48) to Indigenous Amami peoples, two very important aspects of working with marginalized peoples who have experienced historical erasure of their ways of knowing, doing and being (Martin & Mirraboopa 2003; Sarkar 2012). Yarning, similar to "testimonio," acknowledges the importance of bearing witness to and providing evidence of painful events and historical injustices for Indigenous peoples, particularly for elders (Smith 2012:145) in a relaxed and informal format that allows for visiting places and discussion relevant to the research topic. The open-endedness of yarning allows an accountable research relationship to develop (Bessarab & Ng'Andu 2010:38) and promotes respectful, relational worldviews (Barlo et al. 2021).

The research participants were 30 adults with living memories of foodways in Tokunoshima prior to major food stores such as *Daimaru*, around 1947.[13] The only exclusion criterion was having always been dependent on supermarkets, thus establishing some age exclusion for those who lived in townships. In keeping with island traditions, I could not control recruitment quota. Respecting traditional island gender norms, I had no gender expectations, knowing that "from an Indigenous perspective, regardless of age or gender, each person has the same rights and responsibilities within the yarning space" (Barlo et al. 2021:47). My actual recruitment experience is something I can only yarn.

All contact on the island is through relationship; without relationships, no researcher obtains real consent to do research. Because I am considered a *Shimanchu* insider, when I arrived by ferry in May 2022, interview participants were already waiting. Interviews started with a tour of the Inokawa

[13] According to the online website at http://daimaru-group.com/about/, *Daimaru* group began in 1947. According to my data, *Daimaru* was initially established as a ration distribution center during the American occupation and "ownership" of Tokunoshima 1945-1953, making a very interesting parallel with Hamilton (2018). The *Daimaru* group owns the only department store on the island, and all of the convenience stores also. The *Daimaru* Group is, however, islander owned and operated, and therefore not considered to be problematic, as it would be if it were Japanese mainlander controlled.

Yokozuna memorial[14] and a video of his winning sumo match. Other interviews ended with a drive to see various locations like the entrance to the limestone caves or Kobaru Beach. The participants knew I was doing a "snowball technique" (Fujii 2018:40), but the speed and gathering of the participants exceeded my expectations. Although my proposal indicated my goal was 10-15 participants, I ended up requesting an amendment to my ethics application, finally leaving the island after hearing the stories and sharing time with 30 elders.

Tokunoshima's Interpretation of Yarning: Shimatsumugi

My first interviews with participants were prompted by my invitation to tell me stories about their memories of food production, food preparation, and food provisioning on the island when they were young, and how that changed over time. I translated the interview questions into Japanese in written format (having many people look these over to ensure the translation was accurate) so that I could distribute it to participants because working with elders means interviewing people who are not confident in their ability to hear questions. My participants also did not hesitate to ask me for clarification of the questions posed and/or if a long story was an appropriate answer to the question. I replied with clarification, different wording if needed, and "long story please!".

When I began my interviewing, I expected that yarning would be familiar to my participants, as it was in Australia, or like storytelling in the Canadian context. However, it was not the same. First, on Tokunoshima, just the preparation for yarning revealed the surprising strength and interconnectedness of relationships. Most participants took control of the setting, and invited their friends, neighbours, family. The introductions then took a long time, usually over tea and snacks, and left me no opportunity to ask questions. My participants already knew about me; they knew the topic, and they were prepared to tell me stories. But the stories were not individual ones. Together they told networked community story, with confirmations between them flying back and forth, sometimes bickering about

[14] A *Yokozuna* is the highest ranked sumo wrestler – a Grand Champion, meaning someone who has won many Sumo tournaments, and never loses more than half of their matches.

exactly who said or did what 80 years ago when they were playing together. Who was the best runner? Who were the rice farmers? Who owned shoes? In some cases, participants would defer to others, acknowledging specific areas of expertise, or teasing one another. In my favorite instance, Shigenari Oku explained that once he and his friends just made it to the ocean and realized that they were hungry. He remembers picking the fruit of the *adan* tree (looks like a pineapple but grows on a tree) and tossing it like a ball among himself and his friends. Once they were good and tired from their game, the *adan* got washed in the salt water and then they tore off small pieces of the dry fruit to eat together. Shigenari Oku said that *adan* was edible, then clarified, "it is not poison, but it is far from delicious." It tasted poor, but Shigenari Oku and his friends were hungry, so they ate the *adan*. Shigenari Oku insisted it is edible, just not good. Kamejio Morikuma jumped in to say eating *adan* makes most people's throats itch. Shigenari Oku insisted he ate *adan* by the ocean "with no ill effect."

Fig 2: Adan Fruit grows along the beaches. Photo by Hanika Nakagawa

Fig 3: Kobaru Beach in Isen Town, site of Shioushi Mizumoto's story. Photo by Hanika Nakagawa

Listening to them, it became clear to me that the threads of the community ties had the strength of pig-blood painted silk rope and that they nonetheless tied together beautifully like fabric. While I recorded field notes, my participants would take my notebook to draw a diagram for me or to write down the name of something or their own names. They dipped their hands into my project and guided me through every stated aspect of the research project. In the middle of an interview, I would suddenly be beckoned to go outside for a walk or to get in a car to go somewhere so that I could have something demonstrated or shown to me. I became aware that this was not storytelling, nor was it yarning; it was

weaving, integrating elements of the go-along (Scott 2020), or the ride-along (Wegerif 2019) but in the manner of guidance only for me, given to me as a gift. For this reason, and because Tokunoshima (not to mention my great grandmother) is a famous producer of silks and wooden home looms still being sold in secondhand stores, I will call this form of yarning *shimatsumugi. Shimatsumugi* is "community weaving" named for the special Tokunoshima twist put on the yarning process by my participants. It builds on the fabric reference in yarning; however, while yarning implies a single narrator's story, *shimatsumugi* references multiple narrators telling an interconnected and intertextual story.

I am uniquely positioned to engage in *shimatsumugi*. I am seen to be living away but of the community because I possess island *kokoro* (specifically "heart", but also containing the ideas of spirit, aura, energy and love). I am both insider and outsider. Elders see this opportunity as their sacred duty to teach me, to make sure that I learn everything for the future, and they are both eager and grateful to finally hand the burden of their knowledge to me. The intensity of their desire to disseminate their knowledge is magnified by my participants' realization that they do not know how to properly worship the island's gods because their parents decided not to teach them. They were told to live in capitalism, and to conform to the new economic structures, to be "good" colonized peoples. They saw that happen in their lifetimes and mourn the loss of knowledge their parents did not hand down to them; therefore, they do not want what knowledge remains to die with them. They found themselves mourning the fact that they did not know how, nor did they have the resources (as in the architectures of the homes had changed) to replicate their childhood tastes.

In keeping with research ethics approval prepared with remote data collection in mind, I recorded *shimatsumugi* in the form of a UM Zoom video recording with an iPhone voice memo as back up. I was therefore able to analyze both linguistic and non-linguistic (gestures, expression) data. Due to the strong islander accent when speaking Japanese, the use of inflections and intonation that are not used in mainland Japan, and the liberal mix of *shimaguchi* with standard Japanese, I was unable to use any form of machine transcription. I therefore translated each oral multilingual interview into

written English, summarizing the stories and themes set out by each participant in enough detail that I could easily find them later and documenting the interactions between participants. Direct quotes were translated with care and time indicated for later reference.

I shared the translations orally or in print (as desired) with each participant, asking them if they would like to add or delete anything, clarification, and sometimes further stories. I continue to deliver edited video interviews burned onto a DVD or USB (the requested formats) and will return this spring to finish distribution. These video recordings are theirs to share publicly, with my help if needed.

Research, Document and Archive Analysis

A second source of data included archives of historical texts (the Amami language is oral so texts written in Japanese are "colonizer" texts), as well as paintings, photos, pictures, songs, drawings, textiles and any other records that document historical island lives and foodways. Such primary source materials are housed in libraries, museums, community centers, folklore centers and universities throughout the Ryukyus. Because I am dyslexic and unable to read Japanese fluently, I hired a research assistant thanks to the help and funding provided to me from my advisor Dr. Annette Desmarais.[15]

Research Journaling

According to Bernard (2006:387-399), it is important to record jottings constantly about things researchers observe, think or hear because human memory is not reliable; because I am dyslexic, I used the voice memo function on my iPhone. I also took photos when appropriate, then downloaded and categorized images by date, some accompanied by voice memos. In addition, I kept a field journal that

[15] I realize that it is not customary to acknowledge one's advisor in the Methods chapter of one's thesis; however, I must acknowledge the extraordinary amount of additional effort Dr. Desmarais put in for me to be able to begin my interviews via Zoom during the pandemic and then amend the protocol to segue to in-person interviews when I realized my participants were much too old and inexperienced with technology for remote data collection. Dr. Desmarais helped me hurdle multiple university policy changes and negotiate ethical issues concerning research with Indigenous peoples in the pandemic. I am forever grateful because I know the work Dr. Desmarais put in is more than usual for an advisor. Without her help, I would not have been able to interview, to take advantage of the Michael Smith Foreign Study Supplement, and would not have built relationships with Meio University. With Dr. Desmarais' support, I established a relationship with Dr. Madoka Hammine, my MSFSS mentor; Dr. Hammine introduced me to undergraduate students from Meio University who were able to help me. Since I had already read everything written about the Amami Islands that was written in English, the research assistant helped me gain access to Japanese language material about the Amami Islands.

began as a carefully organized and meticulous record, but quickly became a community document that my participants would use to write notes or diagrams to help explain things to me. In the end, I found I rather enjoy my field journal in the way it is chaotically, collaboratively written. I remember where everything is; moreover, it is chronological.

Time

To ensure richness and comprehensiveness of data, it was necessary for me to spend an extended period of time in the community to collect my data (TCPS2 2018, 10a). Therefore, after submitting my thesis proposal in early fall 2021, and defending it in early 2022 after the conclusion of a faculty strike at the University of Manitoba, I submitted an ethics review proposal to the University of Manitoba REB1, which was approved and then amended to include face to face data collection. I travelled to Japan in May 2022 as soon as it was Covid safe, self-isolated for two weeks as per health regulations, then began my data collection immediately. I completed interview data collection at the end of July 2022 and I also followed all regulations and protocol identified to me by the Michael Smith Foreign Study Supplement to the SSHRC CGS-M.

In September 2022, I returned to Japan, spending 1.5 months in Okinawa going to all of the history museums and libraries there (about 30). In the archives, it was helpful to hear recorded reflections about the tense relationship between the Ryukyus, Japan, and the United States that played out on the islands during and after WWII, to see pictures of the jeeps that had inspired terror in my participants as children, and to understand how military uniforms could be interpreted as non-human. I examined archives at the Tokunoshima Public Library in Kametsu Town, and I analyzed documents and photos at the Isen Town History and Folklore Museum and the Torao Tokuda Memorial Hall.

During this time period, it was also particularly illuminating to be on the islands while a two week-long military drill played out on the ocean right in front of our windows in November 2022; the participants were Japan, Australia, the USA, Britain and Canada. This training took place on Tokunoshima and the other Amami Islands that are designated world heritage sites, and whose

residents have been aggressively opposed to American military presence for over 70 years. Community members, including my participants, were on the news actively protesting the drills, stating that the tanks, guns, and jeeps reawakened childhood trauma from WWII (specifically, Okinawa and the Amami Islands were the only parts of Japan on which battles took place). While Okinawa is famous for Indigenous peoples' protests against the American military presence enabled by the Japanese government (e.g., Kohatsu 2021), it became clear that the Amami Islands have the same issue, more shrouded as the Amami constitute a rural minority within the powerful Kagoshima prefecture.

DATA ANALYSIS PLAN AND STRATEGIES

Yarning, particularly collaborative yarning (Bessarab 2010:40) while having commonalities with narrative research, is specific to research with Indigenous peoples. My particular form of yarning, *shimatsumugi* is inherently messy, a conversational way to collect data using prompts in the immediate environment and/or recollections to elicit stories. Like Bessarab (2010), I knew that elders and knowledge holders were not to be interrupted; asking them to stay on topic is frowned upon (Bessarab 2010:39). Research in community is messy because being respectful is messy.

When analyzing the transcripts of interviews, food advertisements, nutritional pamphlets and other food, nutrition and agricultural documents, I took a semiotic approach, finding meaning within the language instead of merely engaging in content analysis (Manning & Cullum Swan 1994:471). I determined that any quantification strategy would be more reflective of my western knowledge and ideology than representative of the voice of my participants (Tuck & Yang, 2014). By focusing on the meanings and sentiments of the participants, I can allow their voices to be better captured than through a more structured analysis. Therefore, together with my participants, I narrowed the *shimatsumugi* to the following three main themes as these were the topics spoken about with the most emphasis: a) the institutions that function around the production of food, b) the influence of a parade of changing rulers, and c) the resulting transition to "modernity". What the participants revealed in their *shimatsumugi* was indeed consistent with what little literature was on the topic; however, their memories were far

more detailed than any discourse available to me in text form. As I noted above, I resisted engaging in discourse analysis of genre, discourse strategies or specific narrative patterns in yarning, given that there are layers of ethical challenges in doing so in a multilingual environment that includes existential differences in worldview (Taylor 2013; Hammersley 2014).

Turning to historical texts and documents, to date, I have used them mostly to help me to contextualize my *shimatsumugi* data. Documents illustrated how power works through food systems on Tokunoshima, creating systems of oppression by forcing absolute obedience. For example, there were timelines in the folklore archives in the Lifelong Learning Center in Kametsu detailing exactly the date on which all the men of Tokunoshima were forced to have their hair cut short, and details of the *fukki* protests (e.g., hunger strikes) demanding to be returned to Japan, seen as the lesser of two oppressors (the other being the US). While in Naha and Nago, going to museums and archives, I saw one view of Ryukyuan history that tracked only the colonizing from Japan's perspective, in which trade routes were disrupted. In Tokunoshima, the Lifelong Learning Center tells a different history, described below. I realized that Japan had morphed its colonial model, switching from a resource extraction model to one of forcibly extracting resources while putting traditional island culture in a chokehold. This was done, as I will show, not merely by forcing Japanese language and education onto islanders, but also through new food regulations which were and are often simply announced in policy documents[16]. Food policies are one current mode of colonization and Tokunoshima Islanders currently report they are rummaging international agreements to find anything that might protect them from further cultural oppression, intrusion and the ever-present threat of the American military.

ETHICS, REFLEXIVITY AND RIGOUR

[16] Another example can be found in Papoutsaki and Kuwahara (2018). They noted that the ever-present community broadcast system that is in every Amami household and also broadcast on loudspeakers on the streets suddenly stopped announcing when the ferries were pausing operations for weather, and what ports the ferries would arrive at. No reason was given; it just stopped. When ferries pause in the present day, it means that there are no food deliveries; in fact, the ferry schedule has been the center of island life for as long as I can remember because Tokunoshima relies on these huge cargo ships both for deliveries and for exporting their harvest. Delays can lead to spoilage, or to changes in harvest schedules.

In keeping with TCPS2 guidelines on community-based research with Indigenous peoples in Canada (2018, 9b) and acknowledging that there is no research ethics tradition on Tokunoshima, I apply relevant principles of research with global Indigenous peoples, particularly those of complex authority structures (Article 9.5) and respect for customs and codes of practice (Article 9.8) throughout this research. There are many aspects to this, including the importance of naming my participants because that is what they want, and making sure that I pay attention to what is relevant to them, not merely what I think is relevant to me.

That is, the power relationships in my community-based research project did not favour me (TCPS2 2018, 10a). The Amami people are among the longest living people on earth, and it is not unusual for islanders to live to be well over 100 years old; therefore, one does not gain authority until one is over 50 years old. While islanders allowed me to join them because they know and claim me, they most certainly did not permit me to set the agenda. They told me what I needed to know in their own time and their own way. Moreover, because *shimaguchi* is an oral language, and since many of the participants in my research have limited or no formal education, I obtained oral consent (Article 10b.2). It was important to adhere to a process of negotiated and ongoing oral consent able to respect the elders and thereby acknowledge the power relationships on Tokunoshima.

Because this research includes autobiographical narrative, I maintained the option of allowing participants to identify themselves in my research. I made the option for anonymity in dissemination practices and confidentiality in the research process available for all participants, but also made clear to them that they may reveal their identities in my research if they so desire (Article 10b.4). Neither anonymity nor confidentiality was desired by any elder. My participants see teaching me as their sacred duty, making sure that I learn everything for the future. I was told by Taniko Tsuneyama that it is my duty to use my English skills to spread their stories in academic forums as far and wide as possible. I had two further participants take me aside and tell me that since they have entrusted me with their life stories, I am to publish them. I knew this was going to have to be my life's work, topics I

would be tackling for the rest of my life, but I was surprised by the intensity when they told me bluntly that they saw it that way too: “The ancestors sent you to us, so you can spread our stories”. They complained to me about researchers who pop in a few times, talk to the same few “key informants”, publish a few articles about nothing important, and then are never heard from again until they need material for their next article. Islanders may not be formally educated, but they are by no means uneducated or easily fooled. In conversations, I learned that they were smart enough not to allow complete theft by outsider researchers; they always hold back the core meanings—but not from me. I am to report back, and spread, report back, and spread what I know. I have been told that I am the chosen one who can teach their great grandchildren. It is both an honour and a tremendous responsibility.

Fig 4: Isen Cultural Museum exhibit of donated household and agricultural goods. Photo by Phoenix Nakagawa

Fig 5: *Shimatsumugi* in action. Hanika is taken on a trip into the mountains as part of the interview. Photo by Shigenari Oku

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

For scholars engaging a decolonizing sociology, particularly for those of us coming from communities that have been linguistically and socially constructed by Empire as well as by extractive and settler forms of colonialism, violence, and continued oppression, discourses around what it means to decolonize knowledge remain a site of power and struggle. A major challenge I face here, is how to simultaneously engage the discipline of sociology's methodological approaches that reinforce heteronormative, racialized, colonial and imperial discourses and agendas, while also critiquing and tracking power, and still manage to generate new narratives and understandings of Amami worlds. How can I not simply engage what Tuck and Yang (2014) call "damage-centered studies, rescue research and pain tourism" (811) but also show that our communities remain optimistic, fun-filled, whimsical, delight-ful, and joyous, filled with *yui*? How do I represent the life-generating spirit of community, land, water, non-human life, and ongoing relation with our ancestors? It is essential that I do so to enact more ethical portrayals. Moreover, whatever has been done to us by the forces of Empire and colonialism, whatever has been done by humans, can and must be undone. I can only try.

Therefore, in this chapter, I will first introduce the elders who participated with me in the research. To honour the promises I made to tell their stories and make sure that the next generations know who they were and how they lived, I will use their names, places of residence and ages at the time of the first interview: May to July, 2022 and February, 2023. While I realize that it is not customary to include a participants' list in the Findings chapter, but rather to include demographics of the participants in the Methods chapter, I will not reduce my elders to a table or a list. Therefore, I will mention at least one special knowledge gift each of them has given to me in the context of this research. I do this because knowledge is produced relationally, that is, knowledge is co-constructed by participants in the moment, sometimes also in relation with the researcher. I also establish some aspect of each participant's life, such as a story from childhood, or how they knew one another, or perhaps their relationship to my family members, honouring the participants' desires not to be reduced to

numbers or statistics. Thus, by establishing demographic information in narrative form, I specifically discuss what would normally be called "data points" from each participant. At the same time, I show the relationships between and among them, documenting the networks that elders are involved in grouped by place, time, kinship, community governance and land. I also speak to how in some cases I had to travel to a specific place for an interview to take place, and how little control I exerted.

Following the introductions of the elders, I will discuss the following three overarching umbrella themes that emerged as particularly important: institutions functioning around the production of food, the influence of a parade of changing rulers, and the rearing of pigs in the transition to modernity. Although I grouped the stories into themes, these stories feed on and intertwine with each other, forming what can best be described as a story about the loss of Indigenous Amami autonomy through surveillance and law as a by-product of the political maneuvering of large nations. Over time and with various political moves, Amami means of self-production and subsistence became outlawed, changing the motives and possibilities for island agricultural practices, and of sacred and celebratory practices.

But Tokunoshima people are strong, and my data collection proved inspiring. I drank tea, and listened, and laughed with the elders, and enjoyed how much they made fun of one another—relating lifetimes of relationship that withstood everything. They have lived *lives*.

INTRODUCING THE ELDERS

There is no one best way to introduce the elders who shared their knowledge and stories with me. Therefore, I have chosen to work from location, the place each elder identified as being from at the time of the interviews in 2022. I am beginning with Isen Town, since that is the town that the Nakagawa family and the Masu/Motoi family(s) (my grandmother's family) belong to, and it is with my families that I began to contact my snowball sample. It is important to know that these geographical regions were imposed by the colonizer. At the time my elders are recalling, they did not live in towns, but in villages or communities roughly divided by naturally occurring geographical areas

such as in the mountains, or between the rivers on the island. The larger geographic spaces were known as “shima”, which means island in Japanese, but also references community to the Amami. In fact, traditionally, each plot of land has a name (not a number as in Western systems). No one knows where the name comes from, but each plot, even in the current day when it is possible to sell land, has a name; people are identified by the land they belong to.

Isen Town: Continuous and Ongoing

Chiemi Nakagawa (participant 1) was 87 years old in 2022 when data collection took place. She is my grandmother and the individual who introduced me and my research to many of my participants. I lived in the house attached to her house that my family has lived in on the island since I was very young. The house was built for my parents and for us. Even though the house has its own kitchen, I shared every meal with my grandmother and grandfather during data collection May 12-July 26, 2022 and from October 28, 2022-February 22, 2023. My role was to support Chiemi in preparing the meals. I would do the preparation work and clean up while she talked me through the preparation process, telling me stories throughout, memories of how she learned from her mothers. I took on more and more of the cooking tasks as time went by. My grandfather played the very important role of taste tester. Chiemi is a very connected member of the community and a member of the nutrition and wellness promotion committee. so she knows many people who are interested in food, particularly from Tokunoshima.

Chiemi Nakagawa spent her life mainly in Itokina, a mountain community in Isen, but in her married life she moved between the three towns of Tokunoshima (from Isen, to Amagi, to Kametoku) for her husband’s work. She also taught in a seaside community as an elementary school teacher before marriage where she became acquainted with sashimi. She was very patient with me. I asked her many follow up questions which helped me greatly in the interviews that followed. For example, she would translate the *shimaguchi* words for me, or she would explain the missing steps in some food preparation. When I was unable to fully understand miso-making, she arranged for me to volunteer in a

miso-making collective. Chiemi Nakagawa would also stay for the interviews or drop me off at the decided location and ensure the other elders knew I belonged to her and the Nakagawas. As it turned out, she also discussed "island boys" with the other elders since I am now of "marriage-able" age, but they collectively decided each one "wasn't good enough" for me.

From Chiemi Nakagawa, I learned details about milk rations after the war that many participants mentioned in passing. When Chiemi Nakagawa entered middle school, the school custodian would break apart a cube of pressed, dried milk with a chisel, grind it into a powder and boil the powdered milk in water. The students would bring a cup from home and drink what was commonly known as UNICEF milk. It was only upon telling me this story that Chiemi Nakagawa realized UNICEF milk was called that because the organization called UNICEF provided it. Talking to me of how the children all hated powdered milk was a moment of connecting dots for her about how they had both eaten and worn the marks of Japan's defeat. From Chiemi Nakagawa, I learned that rations also took the form of wheat flour known as *ameriko* or *meriko* an abbreviation (Ameri) plus translation (ko) of "American powder." Along with the distasteful powdered milk came equally disliked canned asparagus, a food bearing no resemblance to traditional vegetables and preserving methods on the island. The salty pork taste of canned bacon (also known as Spam) also provided in the rations was, however, to their liking. In addition to food rations, old American military uniforms (HBT) were given as clothing to the islanders. The uniforms were too large to wear and were ripped apart into fabric. Chiemi Nakagawa recalled that the official school uniform was made out of this HBT.[17] These same goods were distributed to across Asia as a part of the LARA program. It was the most available fabric on the island, and so also became the main component of the school crest.

Isen Town: May 30, 2022

[17] HBT stands for heavy cotton herringbone twill, used to produce military uniforms. This is not known by islanders.

Fumiko Akatsuka (participant 4) was Chiemi Nakagawa's house mate and fellow middle school teacher at the school adjoining their house on another island. In 2022, she was 83 years old, from Isen, born in Showa 14 (1939 in the Western calendar). Fumiko Akatsuka came to Chiemi Nakagawa's home, specifically to the Ikebana (flower arranging) studio in Chiemi's house. Before starting the interview, the two friends had tea and caught up about their lives. Due to the pandemic they had been unable to see each other and could not find a reason to meet other than for visiting, a rationale explicitly banned by governmental authorities. They used the interview as an excuse or opportunity to spend time together. Once tea was finished, Fumiko Akatsuka started the interview immediately by speaking about how they fetched water when she was young. Fumiko Akatsuka took particular care in teaching me the locations designated for getting drinking water, doing laundry, and for bathing; the drinking water was higher up the mountainside. She lives in Isen town today and informed me that most people tend to shop at the ACoop supermarket in Isen and that they come to Kametsu for things not sold there if it is necessary.

Isen Town, Agon, June 7, 2022

For this interview I drove up into the mountain town of Agon, to a particularly grand old home that had just been newly refurbished in preparation to be used as a café. The land the old home stands on is named Maezatu. In the home, there are *kame* for holding water that are significantly larger than anywhere else. There is a well nearby, and a place to worship water in the back. The home has been repaired but the pillars hit by aircraft artillery machine guns during WWII have been left for all to see. Unlike other structures with thatched roofs, the home built on Maezatu had ceramic pottery roofing tiles, a show of wealth. The American air force targeted large buildings like these homes—and schools. During the repair process, the town also cleaned up the brush surrounding the air raid shelter which is now on display at the back of the restored pristine garden. Maezatu represents the "Agon standard" with not a leaf out of place in the garden, not a speck of dust to be found.

The interview in Agon, unbeknownst to me, ended up being a group interview organized mainly by Yoko Honda (participant 6) who is 60 years old. She was born and raised in Agon but spent a few years in Osaka. Her three children were born and raised on Tokunoshima. She is very close with Taniko Tsuneyama (participant 5) whose true birth year was Showa 4 (1929) but her officially recorded date is a year and a bit after, specifically Showa 5 April 24th. Taniko Tsuneyama is "officially" 92 years old, but is really 94. This is very common among elders born in the mountain towns since going to Kametsu meant a very long walk over several days; consequently, they could only go to register births or do other important business once in a while. Taniko Tsuneyama was engaged at 23 and married at 24. She had four children, but she celebrated the 7-year memorial for her eldest son earlier this year (2022). Now, she lives alone but she said that the community supports her. She has known Yoko Honda's (Participant 6) mother since they were in elementary school; back then, the school in Agon only went till grade 4 she told me. For the later years she attended school in Inutabu but only until middle school, with high school not being an option. In June, Showa 19 (1944) Taniko Tsuneyama joined the work force in Japanese military uniform manufacturing. The war ended in August of Showa 20, at which point Taniko Tsuneyama made her way back to Tokunoshima as fast as she could. Kayoko Taira (participant 7) was also a woman in her 60s and she is Yoko Honda's sister-in-law. Kayoko Taira also participated in the interview, really contributing to making a more relaxing and festive atmosphere. The stories she contributed are important but the sisters-in-law acted as a support system occasionally translating between *shimaguchi* and Japanese for me. Yoko Taira (participant 8), also in her 60s, came to the interview as well; she is the local expert in *furicha*, a tea that is whisked up into a foaming beverage. It is a beverage that represents a sitting around and talking, a relaxed casual tea unlike the formal mainland Japanese tea ceremony. She also arranged to rent the interview location in what will soon become *Café Maezatu.*

Fig 6: Main entrance to Maezatu

Fig 7: Specialized brush and vessel for Furi-cha

Isen Town: June 25, 2022

Driving by myself, I met with Takuro Nakagawa, my uncle/cousin/older brother at the Isen Town Hall parking lot. I then followed him by car to the Gi home where he had arranged for me to interview Hiroe Gi and Akio Yoshioka. We entered the home and were presented with freshly made *mochi* (rice cakes) wrapped in *getou* (shell ginger), tea and coffee. The sliding door to the backyard was open, revealing a *koi* (carp) pond and many perfectly aligned trees, some used in crafts, others whose leaves are used in making raincoats and/or as placemats for butchering pigs.

Hiroe Gi (participant 16) is 82 years old born Showa 15, January 15th; she grew up in Isen-cho, Isen. She has not lived outside the island. She has only left for holidays to China and Korea, but other than those holidays she has been on Tokunoshima. She married at age 20 to her husband who was 29 at the time. She made a life by helping at various rice fields when she was young. She graduated from Isen Agricultural school, which, she remarked, was end of her formal education. Akio Yoshioka (participant 15) born Showa 13 January 2nd (1938), is currently 84 years old. Akio Yoshioka said he was born in time for the war, and thus has lived a life before, during and after the war. He started elementary school in 1944 (Showa 19) and the war ended in 1945 (Showa 20). The end of the war began a new period on the island, one often described of as hardship. Akio Yoshioka identifies as a Tokunoshima Islander from Isen-cho, Isen through and through. His family did not have a bull because there was no man in the house and Akio Yoshioka was just a child. They would borrow a bull for

agriculture when needed.[18] This was not an uncommon story.

Isen Town: June 26, 2022

Shigenari Oku (participant 17) was born in Showa 23 (1948) February 18, and is currently 74 years old. He spent 45-46 years teaching high school English. He says he has lived his life on his own accord. It has been a fun life he says. After his retirement, he continued to work after many attempted retirements--being called back to high schools to teach, as well as other programs. He spent one year of actual retirement "years"; he is now working with preschoolers, with their numbers and ABCs once a week at a few direct preschools. He arranged two separate interviews for me and also became a participant himself. I met him while I was helping Inutabu elementary school with their swimming lessons. As it turns out, he was my father's High School English teacher and as the conversation flowed, he said he would arrange some interviews for me.

The first interview of the day took place in Inutabu with Takehiko Tokunaga (participant 18) who is 88 years old, born Showa 8, October 6th. He was born and raised in Isen cho's Nishi Inutabu. He lived on Tokunoshima until he went to university and then he returned to Tokunoshima upon graduation, living on the island ever since. Takehiko Tokunaga is in education and worked at elementary schools. He worked at Intaba Elementary School for 12 years and another 7 years at Nishiagina elementary school in Amagi-cho. Then he returned to Isen-cho and worked at Isen Elementary for 10 years. He also helps the community, particularly the young men in agriculture. He helps do the paperwork and reports for a program funded by the prefecture and other efforts to help

[18] In my grandmother's youth, bulls were kept by most households led by men, their power harnessed by men to pull ploughs and to power the sugar cane press. Bulls were also raised in a limited way for meat and for fighting. In fact, Tokunoshima is famous to this day for bullfighting, known as *tougyu*—often fueled by the excitement of illegal gambling (Shigenaari Oku 2022). In a ring resembling a sumo ring, bulls rush at one another and lock horns, then push each other until one of the bulls surrenders—or less frequently until they stop fighting and start playfighting (Shigenaari Oku 2022). The interlocking horns of the bull fight have become symbolic of one other major locus of monetary exchange: the *Daimaru* Department Store. For reasons my grandparents do not know, *Daimaru's* mascots have always been *Dai-chan* and *Maru-chan*, two fighting bulls.

young people become knowledgeable about agricultural practices.Takehiko Tokunaga says he is not personally knowledgeable about farm work but does what he can.

The second interview of the day was in Kojima where Shigenari Oku lives. The interview was with Kamejio Morikuma (participant 19) who is 95 years old, born Showa 2 (1927) February 14, in Kojima. Kamejio Morikuma has only ever done agricultural work and he has never lived in an urban space. The interview took place at Shigenari Oku's house in Kojima, just across the street from Kamejou Morikuma's home. Kamejio Morikuma is the first-born son of 8 siblings. He followed the example of his parents and lived a typical island life. He attended the mandatory schooling until grade 6. He raised pigs, and market-bound bulls, and of course helped in the sugar cane fields. Kamejio Morikuma translated a *shimaguchi* saying to Japanese for me to describe his life: "I have lived a full cycle in the mountains, as it is said in the island language" (2022).

After the two interviews, Shigenari Oku drove me to the entrance of a limestone cave and the beautiful and much-mentioned beach called Kobaru. While seating ourselves in Shigenari Oku's car, he explained that he has solar panels on the roof of his house because he took advantage of the government subsidies to install them years ago. However, the sun was too powerful and fried them. I asked why they were still on the roof and Shigenari Oku said there was no place to dispose of them, so they are now a decoration, very expensive roof tiles. I later learned that solar panels had been purchased by many islanders, but that maintenance and repair were even now unavailable. Like many government initiatives, this one was not well thought out.

Isen Town: July 12, 2022

Michio Hisaeda (participant 22) born Showa 39 (in 1964) is my youngest participant. He dropped by Chiemi Nakagawa's home for our interview but also brought the special plant used as chopsticks for the ancestors during *Obon* (the festival when ancestors return home). He worked the land with his father and sold produce at the port with his mother. He is unique in his generation because most children were encouraged to study, go to high school, and then leave the island for

university. Michio Hisaeda hated school so devoted himself to working on the farm with his father, seeking praise, he admitted. Michio Hisaeda grew up in Agon. The family moved to Kametsu after his father got injured and could no longer work the land. He remembers how the world changed between the moment of his father's injury and his return to work; one could no longer just do subsistence agriculture and keep their home.

Michio Hisaeda is my cousin/uncle/older brother (in the way that island relationships work, I call him "Michio Nii-chan" or Michio big brother). He told me that he heard about my research through his mother Toshiko Hisaeda (Chiemi Nakagawa's younger sister). Toshiko Hisaeda had long ago already agreed to be a participant in my research, and Michio Hisaeda told me that she waited excitedly for my arrival in Tokunoshima. She unfortunately passed away just before my proposal defence. Michio Hisaeda came doubly prepared to represent both his late mother and his late father.

Isen Town: July 13, 2022

Etsuko Yasui (participant 23), clarified to me that Yasui is her husband's family name, and he is a man from Tokunoshima-cho. She is 81, born in June, Showa 16. She was born in Isen-cho, Metegu, the eldest of eight. She does not remember what the war was like but does remember being about four when it ended. Her parents did agriculture. She was introduced to me by Shigenari Oku.

Isen Town: July 19, 2022

Shioushi Mizumoto (participant 29) is an 87 year old man born in the year Showa 11. He had older brothers and, when the family fell on hard times and had to sell their land, he gave the portion of land he was allotted to his older brothers and set off to Osaka where he worked for a wage[19] every day of the year except the three days of New Years. He saved his money, knowing he had no land on Tokunoshima. He then purchased many plots of land in Nishi Inutabu where Inutabu Misaki (war memorial) stands today. He saw *robata* gaining popularity and brought it to the island. *Robata* is a

[19] It is not unusual for islanders not to identify the kinds of work they did when they simply worked for money. The jobs islanders were able to get were normally menial and hard.

form of cooking fireside, and so he cooks fresh fish at pier side with the view of the ocean and welcomes guests. He even hosts events and weddings; this was also the location of our interview.

Isen Town: February 15, 2023

Mieko Maruno (participant 30) is 86 years old. She grew up in Agon at a time when there were six or seven food stores; now there is one. She invited me to her home to conduct an interview while her son Kiyoshi Maruno filmed us making lunch for the island *YouTube* channel. We started with a tour of her *ataribate* (kitchen garden in *shimaguchi*) while picking vegetables to cook. She explained how she grew the cabbages so they would be ready to harvest at different times. She also gave me a tour of her kitchen including the frozen *yomogi* for mochi making and *aosa* (seaweed) she had gone to the Agon beach to get a few days prior. After we had eaten, we then started the *shimatsumugi* intended for data collection.

A former shop owner herself in Agon, Mieko Maruno gave an in-depth review of how small local shops gave way to supermarkets as roads were constructed and people started driving. Now, as she has grown older and is coming face to face with giving up her license soon, she is realizing that there is no place for people to purchase food locally. Recently, she has heard about *Tokushimaru*, a traveling food sales company (a grocery food truck) that contracts out of supermarkets, in the case of Tokunoshima, *Daimaru*. She also mentioned that in Amagi-cho, there is a "call for" grocery service, in which a bus service comes to pick people up at their door and take them to do their grocery shopping.

Mieko Maruno rides a 50cc motorbike (a moped) and is acutely aware of how she may soon need to trade that in for an electric wheelchair scooter to commute from community to comunity adding at least an hour to her commute to get groceries. She has friends who have already made the switch, who are riding their scooters along mountain and city roads (some of them highways) simply to get food. I am grateful to Mieko Maruno particularly for describing the process and creation of food deserts, the impact on elders, and the community efforts to alleviate that.

Tokunoshima Town: May 29, 2022

Susumu Machida (participant 2) from Inokawa in Tokunoshima-cho. He was introduced to me by Chiemi Nakagawa and we scheduled the interview at the Yokozuna (sumo grand champion) monument in Inokawa. He is active in the community helping schools promote growing rice, and he participates in language revitalization efforts specifically for the Inokawa language. Susumu Machida introduced me to Sakiko Yasuda (participant 3) born in 1945 who was born and raised in what she calls the rural parts of Tokunoshima, spent some time in the urban areas (of mainland Japan), but has returned to Tokunoshima. She is very active in the community and has organized a group called "*amma no aji*" (a mother's taste). The group gets together two days consecutively each month to make miso. She invited me to join them on two occasions. Susumu Machida invited another elder to the interview but due to sudden need attend a funeral, that elder was unable to attend.

Tokunoshima Town: June 17, 2022

Hiroko Matsuda (participant 9) is from Tokuwase. She is 91 years old in the "kazoe" age counting system.[20] She was the host of this interview and is the owner of the shop in Tokuwase that is located across the street from the *Nansei Togyo* (this is the name of the sugarcane company; the Tokuwase factory was one of two managed by my grandfather). Hiroko Matsuda gathered the other women from Tokuwase for the interview and she also periodically provided snacks and drinks to the participants. The shop also has a history of being a station where rations were handed out. Gima Keiko (participant 10) is also from Tokuwase. She is 86 years old she was very knowledgable about *mayoke* (warding off evil) and the various ways food and food processing by-products were used to ward off evils. Nobu Matsuyama from Tokuwase (participant 12) who is 85 years old produced deeply meaningful stories about rations provided and how these interrupted traditional healing practices. Shizue Shigehisa (participant 13) who is 90 years old spoke about the shift of traditions over time while Keiko Gima, Nobu Matsuyama and Shizue Shigehisa excitedly interjected many facts and

[20] This is a system originally from China. At birth, infants are considered one year old. Then, New Year's day every year marks one year older. Therefore, a child born December 15 would turn 2 years old before being alive for one month.

memories about all the topics, each of them filling in bits the others missed. Kaori Maeda (participant 11) is 95 years old. She spent several decades in *yamatu* (the mainland of Japan). She spent her childhood on the island, then returned to Tokunoshima about five years ago. When she was younger, she intended to go to the city and make money for her children so that she could send them to school and support them. Her intent was to go for about 10-20 years, but it turned into something closer to 50 years in *yamatu*. Shigehisa Isamu (participant 14) is 67 years old and from Tokuwase. He arrived early, invited by Hiroko Matsuda as he is invested in transferring traditional knowledge to the next generation. Originally scheduled to observe, he instead participated in sharing stories and knowledge.

Tokunoshima Town: July 7, 2022

Yoko Nao (participant 20) is 70 years old. She grew up in Todoroki, a land known for its water and having rice fields. Todoroki in Tokunoshima-cho is a lush, green place, filled with rice fields. When she was in Grades 1 and 2, she remembers having rice fields across the whole land that had a golden shine when ready for harvest, a rich landscape. She remembers the breezy homes of the past, something very different from the concrete buildings they live in now that retain the heat.

Tokunoshima Town: July 8, 2022

Takefumi Tsukawa (participant 21) was born Showa 27 (1952), September 20, and was 69 years old at the time of the interview. Takefumi Tsukawa was born in Tete in northern Tokunoshima and attended elementary school there until grade 6. From middle school he moved to Osaka where his grandfather and older sister were living. Therefore, he attended middle and high school in Osaka living with his grandfather, then joined the workforce in Osaka. Takefumi Tsukasa regained his relationship with Tokunoshima about 14 years ago when he returned home in 2008 because his father passed away, leaving his aging mother to live alone. Considering that he is the eldest son, he moved back to Tokunoshima. Until this time, his family has been agricultural; his father did work at the government office but was also a farmer. Takefumi Tsukasa retired from his career and since moving back to the island he has made use of the family land and is actively farming to this day. Takefumi Tsukasa says

that if asked his profession now it would be agriculture. Apart from that, he told me, he is a part of the section group dedicated to preserving nature on the island.

I was driven to this interview in Tete by Takayo Harushima. We met up with Takuro Nakagawa, her brother. They arranged for this interview together and helped me set up the interview equipment as we moved about the island. Before the formal interview Takefumi Tsukasa took us on an Eco-tour of Tete, visiting many sites like the temple for the rivers (each river in Tete is a god).

Tokunoshima Town: July 13, 2022

Isan Tougo (participant 24) is from Kametoku. He is 84 years old, born in Showa 14, July 30th in Tokunoshima-cho. The ocean conditions were ideal on the day of the interview, so we scheduled it around his fishing. He still actively goes spearfishing from the beach visible from his home. We conducted the interview beside his beautiful wooden house that he built himself (a rarity now, as most homes are concrete), under the shade of a tree. His land and house have views of the port and are washed over by the ocean breeze. After the interview, Isan Tougo took me right to the edge of his property to show me the concrete wave breakers (these are both breakwaters and tetrapod structures) for Kametoku port and explained to me how he watched them being built, and observed that they changed the tide patterns, disrupting the octopus and other ocean life. Nothing is the same anymore.

Amagi Town: July 16, 2022

Tokiko Azuma (participant 25) is 77 years old and from Amagi-cho. Tokiko Azuma did not help very much in the fields because she is the youngest child of many and most of the work was done by her older brothers and sisters. Her mother was also single. Although Tokiko Azuma said she does not know much, she explained many things about how common plants that grew everywhere (like *nobiru)* are not found any more. This plant is like green onion, and it was not planted but grew everywhere around the farm edges and therefore was eaten often. It would be eaten like most vegetables cooked inside *ojia* (rice porridge) or in miso soup.

Tokiko Azuma also drove Mika Kawa to the interview that took place in Chiemi Nakagawa's Ikebana studio. Mika Kawa (participant 26) is 80 years old and is from Amagi-cho. As a health teacher in elementary schools until she was in her 60s, she used to be in charge of ensuring the health of the children at school. Mika Kawa said that immediately after the war, powdered milk was brought in. There was a portion meant for at-home drinking and a portion set aside for the schools. Mika Kawa worked in the government office, and she remembers handing out rations to the different communities. It was a time when food was scarce, and Miwa Kawa remembers that people were appreciative when receiving American rations.

Amagi Town: July 17, 2022

Takahiro Okamura (participant 27) is 87 years old, born in Showa 11 April 27 (1936) from Asama. He lived on Tokunoshima exclusively until middle school—Asama to be exact, born and raised. He attended Oshima High School in Naze (on the next island) and then went to university for four years in Tokyo. He was a teacher and, as is usual for teachers, moved around the Amami Islands during his career until he retired. He is now interested in researching the island language, *shimaguchi*. He is a key informant[21] in every academic work related to Tokunoshima languages, probably because he has published a dictionary. Reiko Okamura (participant 28) is originally from Agon. A woman in her 70s, she currently lives in Asama and is married to Takahiro Okamura; they are the parents of my father's best friend. Reiko Okamura was not scheduled to be interviewed with her husband but kept him on track and added key elements to his stories. Reiko Okamura's insights and perspectives were so influential that at minute 39 of the interview with Takahiro Okamura I formally asked her to be a participant and she agreed. The way she spoke about living with animals as cohabitation has influenced

[21] In fact, he is usually the only informant for outsider research. Insider research on *shimaguchi* is also done by my father. At the Endangered Languages Summit I attended in January 2023, the fact that having colonized everything else, Japanese and European researchers are now colonizing the languages and identities of islanders was frequently discussed.

my thinking greatly, as I describe below. Reiko Okamura also taught me that knowing the seasonality of food, including when to season and preserve, is a skill.

These short introductions can only provide glimpses and thus do not do justice to the elders who spent time with me, drank tea with me, took me to places to teach me, and who have now become my friends. One participant, Isamu Shigehisa, took professional video of some of the interviews, planning to share those videos as professional documentaries. Sadly, unexpectedly, Isamu Shigehisa passed away at age 67 in the late summer of 2022. His contributions were shorter than expected, but important. In the next section, I use the elders' stories and quotes to explore the three umbrella themes that emerged in my research.

INSTITUTIONS FUNCTIONING AROUND THE PRODUCTION OF FOOD

The memories of the research participants illustrate how food provisioning and production functioned in and around institutions. For many rural and even urban peoples, food quite commonly dictates the timing of harvest festivals and the patterns of daily life (Spence 2021), but while school breaks were certainly weather dependent, they were also food production dependent, to a greater degree than I could have imagined.

School is Important, but Not Number One

Food was at the center of life. School and everything else came second to the production of food which resulted in *yui*. "*Yui*" is untranslatable, a kind of spirit or feeling of generosity and togetherness, that is also proven with action. It exists in celebrations and gatherings, in singing, dancing, making food, and eating together. Therefore, *yui* was also demonstrated in the thatching of roofs, as well as annual practices such as rice planting, harvest, and the harvest of sugar cane as well. The roofing part of *yui* is also connected to the production of food, not only because roofs both house and protect the producers of food but also because rope, made from the shafts of rice called the "*wara*", was an integral part of re-thatching roofs. Also integral to traditional festivities and ceremonies, the by-product of rice, *wara,* is now unavailable in Tokunoshima.

The schools were simple structures in the post-war era; this is due to the school buildings being the targets of (American) air raids during the war. The new school structures had thatched roofs and bamboo benches. The facilities were taken care of by the community with certain families being charged with each structure's maintenance, particularly after a typhoon. Fumiko Akatsuka remembers one structure in her school falling and Michio Hisaeda's father lost a family member when a home blew over during a typhoon. Later, students were told to bring their farm tools to school on non-farming days to contribute to building the new permanent school building. Chiemi Nakagawa recalls building part of the new school in time to spend one semester of middle school in it before graduation. The students carried sand from the beaches for the school grounds, and together with their families they would go to the docks to pick up the wood and other building materials and carry them to the grounds.

During the war, the pre-existing large school buildings were bombed by the Americans. Therefore, during the active war time, classes were held in the woods under vast tree cover. After the war was over, schools migrated out of the mountains and into *hotategoyo*, simple, thatched roof A-framed structures. But there were no school supplies—no paper, no pencils, especially after the war. Gima Keiko remembers pressing the needles of the sotetsu tree into the back of a *tsuwabuki* leaf as a pencil and paper (*tsuwabuki* is food that grows wild and is commonly eaten). Not surprisingly, although education was valued, learning from books was a lesser priority than making food; learning also took a backseat to physically building the school.

Schools, the elders remembered, would close when it rained since this was the optimal time to dig up the *imo* (sweet potato) as the rain softened the soil. Schools also had farms of their own that were tended to by the students. Some participants reported that schools had livestock in the form of pigs, chickens, and a bull, just like a household. Waste products were used as fertilizer for the school farm, while the bull ploughed the fields and transported the harvest of sugar cane and vegetables. The harvest from the school was either sold (especially sugar cane) and/or divided up amongst the students

and staff to consume with their families. Schools also organized collective work, farm work done by the students separate from their family farm work. There was *yui* among the community members at harvest too, as members of the community took turns harvesting the fields at the schools. Children's play fostered *yui* as well, but there was always more work than play. Tsuneyama reminds me that she started working in Grade 3. Something she did in the past that Tsuneyama wishes to do again is *taue* (plant rice)—when everyone, as many as 20 people, came together. Everyone engaged and enjoyed the *yui* work. At first, she recalls, tea would be served before noon and was accompanied by handfuls of boiled *soramame* (peanuts grown as a suspended vine). Then *umei* (the Isen *shimaguchi* name for *tsuwabuki*) leaves were used as plates for serving food to the *yui* workers.

Like the schools in the communities, all home roofs were *kayabuki*, meaning thatched. Isan Tougo said that this was when he remembers taking part in *yui*. During the work of *yui,* a home's roof would be re-thatched in a day. It needed to be completely as quickly as possible because if it rained while the home did not have a roof the home became unliveable. Isan Tougo said this was how homes and schools were constructed and repaired until shortly after WWII because there were no blue tarps as there are today to make buildings temporarily rain resistant. The thatched roofs also held a danger to those who lived in Kametoku as the homes were close together there. If one home caught fire, then the embers and sparks from that fire could easily light another roof causing another house fire. The wind would also pick up the flames. The role of young people was to climb on the roof of your own house and wait in preparation to put out any flame that came. No one asked for a young person to come help with the fire or climb onto their roof; everyone just acted. Everyone looked and knew that if you did not save the neighbour's home, it also puts one's own home at greater risk. Of course, he continued, there was also a bucket relay. Kametoku has a river and there is also a 3-meter diameter water tank in town. The tank has a faucet to allow dishes and other washing to be done at it. The tank and river allow for a simple bucket relay in Kametoku, but Tokuwase has neither, making fires more threatening and dealing with them more difficult. Isan Tougo remembers his father's land was close to the river.

Takahiro Okamura explained that in some communities, homes were spaced far apart to prevent fire spreading, unlike in Asama and Boma.

Isen Town is also famous for having little water and therefore growing little rice. Takehiko Tokunaga says his community, Inutabu, is one that even today still struggles with obtaining water. He explained that instead of rice, other crops such as wheat, barley, corn, and soybeans were grown. The only form of rice that was planted in the area is *Okabo*, a land-based rather than water-based plant. But since this crop did not produce enough rice to last for a year, there was trade with those communities (Itokina, Saibaru, Kojima and Kawachi) that had the conditions to have rice fields. Takehiko Tokunaga said people of Inutabu of course ate *imo,* but rice could be obtained even if it was not grown locally. In addition to trade, Yoko Nao mentioned there were *dekasegi* (commonly translated as migrant workers) who came from other island communities like Isen to work in Todoroki on the rice fields. Yoko Nao remembers these workers having their wages paid in rice, their backs seeming to break on their walk home to Isen. The workers bore extra weight because they took the *momi* freshly beaten off the stems and dried it at home. She says it seems like an impossible job now but back then it was the norm.

Shizue Shigehisa described the Tokuwase area as not being a significant rice producing community, so all the students ate *imo*, while Inokawa had significantly more rice. While talking about how banana leaves were used to carry food, using a long towel and slinging it over the shoulder, She explained that the people who had *onigiri* (rice balls, often with a vegetable inside) to eat were the well-off ones; the majority had more *imo* than rice. She remembers no one had rice while she was in middle school and into high school most people brought *imo* as their meal. Nobu Matsuyama adds that there was no *kyushoku* (school-provided lunch) back then as is provided today. With this prompt, Shizue Shigehisa remembered that some boys brought a bento box containing *imo* with the skin peeled off and the *imo* cut into bite size pieces that they ate with chopsticks. This was because the boys did not want to be seen peeling the skin off the *imo* at school. Shizue Shigehisa talked about the boys as if

peeling *imo* was linked to social status. She said "むくのわアレだから" meaning "peeling is…you know…" (Shizue Shigehisa 2022)—and in context this is a display of not having rice and therefore of being not well off. Michio Hisaeda also mentioned this form of thinking in his interview, explaining that the school system and social norms of Japan promote sameness to disguise inequalities. Michio Hisaeda went on to say sameness does not resolve the issues and can place strain on a family who must pay for a uniform for school and much more. Kamejio Morikuma who is from Kojima said:

> "I had a big family, if we were going to eat rice, it was during *obon* and *shogatsu*. Other than that, it was during elementary school special lunch days. These were the days I was given some *Onigiri* (rice balls) to take to bring. I only had rice on these rare occasions." (2022)

Hiroe Gi ate *imo* every day after school, but once a week her parents would give them rice. Her parents worked hard to serve the children hard rice; this is rice not in the porridge style. Hiroe Gi remembers being excited and surprised at having steamed rice. Tokiko Azuma remembers sometimes she did not have a lunch to take to school, and without a provided lunch she would go home. Going home for lunch took 40 minutes each way. When asked if she was late for class, she replied "I do not think being late was a thing, because I ran" (2022). This running and walking back and forth from school and home could be seen as poverty, she said, but they developed strong legs and soles of their feet. Yoshioka Akio said there was no school lunch; it was a foreign concept. He brought *satsuma imo* to school excursions; he remembers picking two from a pile of 10 good *imo*. Yoshioka Akio also added that: "On school trips, even if a person's family had rice, you could not bring it on the [school] excursion. Everyone brought a wrapped up *imo* on the trip" (2022).

Over time, school food changed. There was a shift in what people grew before and after the war as imported rice and other foods became more available on the island. Kamejio Morikuma said that at first these foods were called rations. They had rations depending on the number of people in the family and so on (e.g., ages of family members). After that, these foods became freely for sale and people stopped producing rice because the government provided money to those who converted to sugar cane.

Consequently, rice became an imported good and most people planted sugar cane. Kamejio Morikuma explained:

> "Now, if you look for people on the island growing *imo*, there is not a soul. Few people produce for subsistence; all the farms have been cleaned up and tidied for the roads. It does not even resemble what it was like before the war." (2022)

Although the *imo* is no longer grown as a staple food, Kaori Maeda said that after spending decades away from the island, when she returned what surprised her most was that the rice fields and the patches of farmland where *imo* used to be were no more. In their place were great forests. Maeda Kaori raised her hands, holding her hands up at about her shoulder width, to display the circumference and the vast height of the trees, saying that the land had returned to the mountain.

Gods are Sacred, Even the Evil Ones

Susumu Machida explained to me that one fundamental Tokunoshima belief is that all beings are gods and are therefore sacred. He explained how many gods are directly involved with growing rice and that there were festivals at each stage of rice growing to celebrate them. In the first stage, islanders would remove the insects (that would eat the rice plants), wrap them in the leaves of the *imo* and send them off into sea. Susumu Machida was clear that these pests too were gods and that gods can do evil as well as good. The next stage was in May when all the drainage holes were plugged in the rice fields to prevent water spillage. Third, in June farmers stirred the soil, the start of the early harvest. Early harvest rice was stirred together with three grains of the last harvest and used as an offering to the ancestors and the gods. In July came the main harvest. The male participants described the cycle of celebrations recurring in August and September, beginning with seeding. Long ago, there was only one rice harvest per year but, with the introduction of government subsidies, farmers transitioned to two harvests. Later still, rice production stopped.

The elders of Tokuwase also came together in explaining how there are many household gods. The way to worship *higamisama* (fire gods) was to give offerings of the food that was being eaten and to give offerings of tea as well, much in the same way as the *hotokesama* (ancestors) are given food

and tea every day. *Higamisama* are very important and respected since they protect the house most. Worshiping *higamisama* involved placing three stones at the "*kamado*" and some elders even placed three rocks beside their gas burners.

There are many kinds of worship for *mizugamisama* (water gods). Depending on the family, there are places and people who worship the river for its water. Tete, in the northern part of the island, is where Takefumi Tsukasa brings offerings to the shrine of the god (the river) on behalf of his parents who were the keepers of that shrine. Takefumi Tsukasa was not coronated into the role of shrine keeper and therefore, he brings offerings on behalf of his parents. Other communities have sites for water god worship in the spring, while in other communities, members make offerings at their houses or rice fields. Offerings such as sake or some *dango* (soft rice balls) were given so that crops would not fail (Reiko Okamura 2022; Takehiro Okamuura 2022; Shizue Shigehisa 2022). This was done by grinding *namagori* (生御り raw rice) into a powder that was then formed into a dango. This dango was not just round but was squeezed between the fingers making them not quite round but triangular. Nobu Matsuyama showed this with a pinching of her fingers. Yoko Taira gave me a post-interview tour of the household shrine to *mizugamisama* in the great house of Agon. The shrine was a rock placed carefully and precisely with a staircase leading to it. As Reiko Okamura explained:

> "We placed a susu tree, even though this is not "tsukimi" (moon gazing). I am not sure what tree was used for purification. I was a child so I am not even sure what day or month it was in. I now wish I had asked my parents while they were still alive. All I have is the memories of making the dango." (2022)

Mizugamisama were spoken about nostalgically by the women of Tokuwase: "yes, the old one…there were people who worshipped it, but the one close by is *jigamisama* [earth or ground gods]—these were just three of the larger gods at the home" (Nobu Matsuyama 2022; Shizue Shigehisa 2022).

When islanders worshipped the moon, many small dango would be made as the moon rose in the dark. The *ojiabako* (translates to charity box, likely meaning offering box) would be filled with small dango, and one big one would be placed on it to give to the *kamisama* (god). This was done at

midnight whenever food was scarce. Nobu Matsuyama remembers struggling to stay awake to give the offering but once the offering was done, their parents let them eat the dango.

The transition from growing rice to growing predominantly sugar cane occurred during Showa 40s, after Tokunoshima's reinstatement to Japan. Michio Hisaeda explained that due to the overproduction of rice across Japan, the northern rice was said to "be better tasting" (however, he also wryly remarked that sugar does not grow in the north). Isan Tougo clarified that a national government initiative to replace rice growing with sugar production was the first step in the bulls losing their role in household agriculture. Coercive subsidies were given for farmers to drain and then bury[22] their rice fields, making them suitable for sugar cane. Unable to sell rice and needing to pay taxes, education fees, and goods that modernized island life, farmers were left with little choice. After fields were converted to sugar cane, they were readied for mechanization. The edges of the fields were straightened and divided by concrete retaining walls. The shift to sugarcane production occurred within a span of 4-5 years, spurred by government subsidies to subsistence producers to not produce rice for personal needs but rather to produce a cash crop. Thereafter, rice came in rations and eventually became a purchased good. At first, *Senbai Kousha* (literally "monopoly corporation") used to control rice, sake and salt sales but now there are many different corporations selling rice and other goods. Susumu Machida also emphasized that sugar cane has no substance as a staple food and was sold only as a cash crop.

"And that was the end of festivals," Susumu Machida (2022) explained with Sakiko Yasuda nodding beside him. Because most island festivals and ceremonies celebrated growing and harvesting rice, without rice, the festivals disappeared and so did much of the heart of communities. Rice harvest was celebrated with *mochitabore* in which each household made mochi with the rice they harvested in anticipation. In each community, children walked and danced to the drums, while adults groups

[22] The word used translates as "buried". This is a more profound description and includes the tone used by islanders than switching to the more commonly used English word "filled".

walked, danced and drank as they made their way around the community. The homeowners would wait in anticipation to hand out the mochi. Most of the participants commented this is the celebration they miss most. The communities of Tete and Inokawa still have *mochitabore* in name, but the shape of the festival has changed. Mochi cannot be made from home grown rice so mochi rice must be purchased. But because *mochi* become stale or moldy quickly, money and preserved snacks are seen to be more desirable if *mochitabore* no longer produces *yui* anyway.

The elders also expressed their sense that there was a loss of peace and community with the loss of the rice fields, along with a temperature increase because concrete retaining walls retain heat and the water-filled rice fields were gone. No rice fields also meant no *taue* (to plant *nae* or rice seedlings) for which the community came together. Roofs are no longer being thatched which means that the act of rethatching as *yui* or community activity is lost. Before the conversion to sugar cane, rice was used as a form of currency given in exchange for labour, as were the rice products *sake* and *wara*. The loss of the rice fields and other traditional foodways changed the physical environment of the land along with the social dynamics in the community. It would be difficult, even impossible, to return to rice production on Tokunoshima, even for an educational experience or a special event. Nobu Matsuyama explained that sparrows now eat rice grains as soon as they form.

THE INFLUENCE OF A PARADE OF CHANGING RULERS

The Amami peoples on Tokunoshima have endured multiple manifestations of colonization specifically owing to the richness and variety of the island's agriculture (Takefumi Tsuukasa 2022). Repeatedly through history, Tokunoshima Islanders have been conquered by other nations or kingdoms, forced to describe themselves by space and time indicators that belong to others, inscribed by languages and cultures that do not belong to them (Funmiko Asatauka 2022; Mika Kawa 2022; Susumu Machida 2022; Takahiro Okamura 2022). In this section, I address changes to agricultural practices made by economic or physical force by 20th century rulers then describe recent island re-naming of successive waves of colonization, done in reference to food production.

Tokunoshima has a long history of being a pawn in political gaming. The generation of participants I interviewed have memories of being played with in this manner. They were born as a part of Japan and trained to fight and resist the Americans (Chiemi Nakagawa 2022). American resistance training included learning to wield a bamboo spear as a weapon, or having parents serve Japan in the military (particularly through conscription) or sometimes they even worked themselves in roles such as Japanese military uniform manufacturing as was the case for Taniko Tsuneyama. Japan used the Amami Islands and Okinawa as bargaining chips with America to end the war, forfeiting the region to a new governor, the United States. When the war ended Tokunoshima was immediately cut off from the mainland of Japan. During this time the Americans came to the islands on Jeeps. The Jeeps could be seen being unloaded from the ports of Kametoku according to Isan Tougo. The Americans rode around in Jeeps littering chocolate bars to gain the trust of children (Keiko Gima 2022; Shizue Shigehisa 2022; Nobu Matsuyama 2022). The elders believe these were joy rides for Americans to check out their new territory. The Americans drove around Tokuwase, according to Nobu Matsuyama, while in Isen, Akio Yoshioka remembers, the jeeps were parked in front of the government office and chocolates were simply handed out. Chiemi Nakagawa recalls walking home and hiding in the bushes as the Americans scattered chocolates on the path. Chiemi Nakagawa's mothers and the parents of other elders warned against eating anything American soldiers gave them. Shizue Shigehisa said: "We thought we were going to be taken. Girls were told not to go near the Jeeps. At least that's what our parents told us. So, when we saw one, we ran" (2022). The fear was real. Americans had just been the enemy. Elders are aware of the irony of distributing foreign sugar to island children who were starving because their families had given up their rice fields to plant sugar.

Elders recall this period under American rule as being the hardest and hungriest. Their farms had been bombed (Takahiro Okamura 2022) and all of the local stores had been emptied as all existing human and material resources were needed to survive during the war. That was complicated further by the homecoming of people who had gone to the mainland for work. Some believed that Tokunoshima

could provide from the land and could feed the community; therefore, people returned because jobs were scarce on the mainland after the war. Elders believe that the combination of the lack of produce that made it to harvest, lack of provisions in the stores, and the increase in population resulted in hunger for their generation and led to their shorter stature. Additionally, they said, the US demanded more food for export and taxes than the Japanese government had (though Japan was even worse after *fukki*)—not a liberating situation at all. Nobu Matsuyama explained that the tax officers would come by to check up on households to ensure that no one was keeping more than their allotment of sugar and sake. It was not until the reinstatement (named *fukki*) that the rationing and strictness surrounding food stopped. However, with *fukki* came new regulations about household pigs as they were now banned from being kept at home. Pigs were still allowed on the island, but they could only be kept by pig husbandry specialists rather than at home. Islanders were given rationed flour and canned bacon as well as HBT military cloth as aid under American rule.

Although this made for a very hard time after the war, the participants describe how their lives were saved by *sotetsu*. Sotetsu, a kind of palm, has poisonous meat that becomes edible after proper rinsing, cooking and pounding. Morikuma Kamejio explained what she was told about how the *sotetsu* was prepared:

> "Once a upon a time, a bull was placed beside a Sotetsu tree, and the bull ate the leaves from the tree. Then, a while after the bull ate it when its owner came back, the bull was dead. Therefore, it is important to sun dry the sotetsu fruit for days, then clear it out with water to remove the *aku* (poison) before consuming it." (2022)

The other lifesaver was *imo* which was harvested as soon as possible, every three months, and kept most households going. Morikuma Kamejio explained that because food was so scarce "there was no time to let the *imo* grow" (2022). Takahiro Okamura spoke of how hungry islanders were:

> "After the air raids all that was left to eat was *imo*. I ate a serving of *imo* then a small bite of rice as a palate cleanser. That was it. Around the third year, maybe even in the second year, things got a bit better. What is for sure though is the first year was one of absolute hardship." (2022)

Another shift occurred when in 1953, Tokunoshima and the other Amami Islands were successful in their demand to be reinstated to Japan. These islands then became the "property" of Kagoshima prefecture.[23] Tokiko Azuma commented that "[t]he people of the Amami Archipelago have been made fun of by the Kagoshima people quite a bit and have been oppressed by them numerous times" (2022). Here, Tokiko Azuma is referring to the long history the Amami islands has with Japan. In 1609, the Satsuma (Kagoshima) samurai came into conflict for territory against the Ryukyu Kingdom. At that point, the Amami Islands were annexed and the islanders lived in a form of slavery. Susumu Machida also explained this history of *satou jigoku* (sugar hell) and how the Satsuma enslaved the islanders. In this regard, Mika Kawa told a story:

> There was catholic missionary who went around the islands. He came across an elderly woman on the Okinoerabu, an island south of Tokunoshima. He says she did not have a hand and so he asked what happened. The elderly woman replied that "I was trying to give some sugar to a sick child, when a samurai from the Satsuma came and cut my hand off." She then claimed that it did not hurt. (2022)

This story, according to Mika Kawa, made its rounds around the Christian community. She claims that the point of the story is to illustrate how the Amami Islanders were enslaved and tortured by the Satsuma. The Satsuma gained power through harsh exploitation of the peoples of the Amami Archipelago and north into the Tanegashima area, thereby becoming powerful throughout Japan.

Some participants like Takahiro Okamura, Michio Hisaeda and Chiemi Nakagawa explained that families on the island would change their family names from a single character to a two-character family name to avoid discrimination from the Yamatsu (mainlanders). However, Michio Hisaeda commented that his family name's original *Hisa* character is a "tell" and Yamatsu people would comment on his name, suggesting he was a foreigner when he went to the mainland for work. However, Shizue Shigehisa also explained that the cut off from the Yamatsu was severe. Under American rule, movement on Tokunoshima was restricted. Shizue Shigehisa said that they were able to

[23] The remaining islands of the former Ryukyu kingdom still have a plethora of American Military bases but became the Japanese prefecture of Okinawa in 1972 rather than being an appendage of islands in the main prefecture of Kagoshima.

go to the urban cities of Japan before the war, but after, they were not permitted to go to the mainland. They were, however, able to go to Okinawa which was also under American rule.

Many elders spoke of how the *yamisen,* a black-market ship, would surreptitiously take sugar to the mainland of Japan and when the *yamisen* returned, other goods would be sold or traded at the ports on the island. Akio Yoshioka told his story of the *yamisen*:

> There was a deeper port in Misaki where me and my friends used to play where the *yamisen* can get in. I remember playing at Misaki and being there as a *yamisen* that landed. The *yamisen* were loaded with 50 kin barrels and 100 kin barrels (100 kin is approximately 60 Kg). While I was playing with a friend, the man working the *yamisen* called to us to help load the ship. We helped lift and load the ship. It was while we were helping that a police officer came by and we ran. The police officer was right behind us, and my friend and some others were caught and arrested for helping load the *yamisen.* There were [American controlled] police of the Amami Islands and from Okinawa, as well as the Japanese police that were looking out for *yamisen,* making it more difficult for them to run. The *yamisen* ran until *fukki* in 1953, the reinstatement to Japan. (2022)

It was only if the ships made it past the authorities that they would make any profit; otherwise, all goods and profits were taken from them. Islanders themselves were not detained, however.

Taniko Tsuneyama asked me to share her experience with the *yamisen.* She explained that just because the war ended, it did not mean she could get home. Taniko Tsuneyama was working for a Japanese military clothing manufacturer during WWII. At the end of the war she found herself trapped on the mainland with now-foreign citizenship, and no way back home to Tokunoshima. All those who could return home did but there were no options except the *yamisen*. It was December and she was left with no money and no savings. All through the war, she worked making military clothing, as well as women's clothing one day and children's clothing the next, earning just enough to eat for the day. Once the war ended, the military uniform company gave the workers nothing. There was not one yen that could be spared. It was winter so there was nothing to eat. The war ended in August but by December, *yami-shobai* (black-markets) had been established so there was a *yamisen* that went to Tokunoshima. Taniko Tsuneyama said that there just happened to be people involved in this trade in Agon so her parents and family gathered the 100-yen (about one CDN dollar, but considered a lot of

money back then) *Yamisen* fare. Once the money was confirmed, there was still the train ride from Osaka to Kagoshima to board the ship to be covered as well. The trains had been converted to transport double the number of people and Taniko Tsuneyama remembers there being people from all over China and Taiwan--people affiliated with the military (though she does not remember soldiers), as well as people like her who were just trying to get home. It was a military train and they ate the *taketsutsu* that were the military rations. It took a week to get to the *yamisen.* The *yamisen* was not a big ship. Taniko Tsuneyama describes it as "a size that would sink at sea". The *yamisen* landed in Shikaura, the port closest to Agon. She was able to return home just in time for the end of their year. There was no food on the island either, but food was more available than on the mainland because the islanders had adapted to make foods they could eat to survive.

The Alternative Island History: Division by Yu

Japanese history is written with reference to the Emperor. Throughout this thesis, I have used the historical periods of the Japanese such as Showa, Meiji, Heian, to represent time periods, and I have also used the Western Christian system of dating to translate time for readers. I have done so deliberately, given that my participants use Japanese time periods and there seemed to be little reason to switch from the counting systems of one colonizer to another. However, it is important to document the reclamation of history that is ongoing on Tokunoshima.

On the fifth floor of the Lifelong Learning center in Kametsu of Tokunoshima Town there is an exhibit dedicated to the history of the island. I happened to run into Satoshi Endo who runs the Center for Lifelong Learning on Tokunoshima while attending the Endangered Languages Summit on January 28 and 29, 2023. I also met with Susumu Machida there, one of the elders I interviewed for my research. While I sat near them, I was able to ask some questions in the lulls between sessions about the Amami-centered historical timeline in the Lifelong Learning Center. The first question I asked was what was the difference that divided the Amami-yu from Aji-yu.

The men explained that both Aji-yu had some documented internal power structures although both are thought of as a time before an official ruler. Rulers means that the "conquerors" or "colonizers" could be identified. Amami-yu came first and represents the time before the Heian period according to my informants (the Heian period was from 794 to 1185 and is explained in Japanese terms in the museum, even though Japanese periods were irrelevant during the Amami-yu). Amami-yu was community-based and lacked island superstructure for leadership. The major difference between Amami-yu and Aji-yu was that some power structures began to appear during Aji-yu, around the 11th and 12th centuries. In fact, the term *Aji* is related to *aruji* that translates to "master". The men explained that the term for father in *shimaguchi, ajia* is related to these terms as well. Starting with the third period, Naha-yu when the Ryukyu kingdom came into power, each Yu represented the ruler at the time. Naha-yu was 1429-1609, and is named after the capital of Okinawa. Satsuma-yu lasted 1609-1867 and was the period of being conquered by mainland Japan. This was followed by the Yamato-yu (mainland Japan) 1867-1945, August 15th, then the American-yu August 15, 1945 through to Christmas 1953 (the Christmas "gift" of *fukki* but not an end to American influence).

The second question I had from the exhibit was what came after the America-yu. Of course, there was becoming a part of Japan as a nation state, but did we have a name for it yet? The answer was that *fukki* happened on December 25, 1953; therefore, this was the exact date that the ruler officially changed. Therefore, they told me, in 2023 there will be many speeches and celebrations to commemorate 70 years of liberation from American rule, just as Okinawa celebrated 50 years of liberation in 2022. Official American rule on Tokunoshima lasted only six years, but a profound six years. As someone learning about *fukki* and the conversion of the rice fields as pieces of history, I feel that there is a definitive period-based change that has had a profound impact on the islanders. Even though there was only a six-year hiatus between the two periods of Japanese rule, there was a recognizable change of heart from Japan in the intervening period. The new Japan-yu imposed national economic dynamics onto the rural peoples, changing their lifestyles by often brutal and detrimental

policy and regulation change. For example, according to my research participants, the period between 1953 through to the 1970s saw significant economic coercion to switch from rice farming over to sugar cane. Then, the 1970s to 2021 represent a period of rapid Japanese development projects on the island such as building the airport, massive bridge and water infrastructure, the construction of dams, and the introduction of pesticides. At the same time, there was a growing realization among islanders that "development" was synonymous with land degradation and increasing urbanization. Several of my participants spoke about the impact on the ocean water, the coral reef, and the soil as agriculture began to include specialty crops such as sugar cane, and a greater variety of fruits and vegetables for export (Isan Tougo 2022; Shioushi Mizumoto 2022; Mieko Maruno 2023; Takehiko Tokunaga 2022; Susumu Machida 2022). Consequently, pushing back against development became more commonplace. As recently as 2008, islanders protested and successfully blocked a plan to establish an American helicopter base on Tokunoshima. It is legendary on the island that a group of rural nobodies managed to stymie the will of Obama's America, which is what they see as America at its strongest.

Taking this a step forward into the present, I see that a new form of rule emerged in 2021 as Tokunoshima has been named a World Natural Heritage site, with Japanese governmental jurisdiction now being subject to international environmental laws. The timing for this also coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic and cloistering of islanders. Although the UNESCO stamp is seen as a victory for a number of island elders, they also see it as a double-edged sword. It signifies protecting the island from further development, but also protecting the island from the humans who live there; that is, humans are not seen to be part of the ecosystem anymore. It seems that Tokunoshima Islanders sought external international powers to establish rules and regulations to protect the mountainous areas and to block encroaching development pressures from the nation state and corporations. For Tokunoshima, elders explained, this was a now or never designation as 50% of the land mass must remain in its wild

state for the region to obtain World Heritage status.[24] Even while the population is declining, more of the wild forest was at risk of being concreted over or made into agricultural lands to engage in more intensive sugar cane monoculture. By contrast, now with the aging population and a stoppage on further encroachment from industrial corporations, it is possible that some privately (family) owned farmlands could return to forest. This is, of course, just speculation, but what is certain is that Tokunoshima cannot afford to develop any further commercial or agriculture lands without losing its World Heritage designation. With the change in international status alongside the change to all nations internationally, I believe that islanders in history will label this moment as a shift in *yu.*

I cannot close this section on the influence of a parade of changing rulers without making some statement about the lost generation of men. While it was never explicitly mentioned because not mentioning the lost men is a survival strategy for elder islanders, their absence was ever-present in elder men's stories. Many stories began by lamenting the fact that as boys they were unable to keep agricultural bulls because that was work for men. Even if their family owned a bull, it was rented out to another family that still had an adult male. Some families gave sons to families without heirs to save both parties. Out of respect for some lingering reluctance, I will not name the islanders who told me these stories. However, I learned that islanders were conscripted during the waning years of WWII, sent to fight a war that had already been lost. Many lost their lives, as in my family. Many children in my grandparents' generation grew up without fathers, as in my family.

THE REARING OF PIGS IN THE TRANSITION TO MODERNITY

Perhaps nothing symbolizes changes to Tokunoshima foodways more than the story of the Shogatsu pig, recounted to me by almost everyone. Traditionally, the day-to-day source of protein was salted pork, commonly known as *shogatsu buta* which translates to "new year's pig" (Yoko Taira 2022; Takefumi Tsukasa 2022; Isan Tougo 2022; Mika Kawa 2022; Chiemi Nakagawa 2022; Mieko

[24] This should not be understood as meaning that there was universal desire for UNESCO status, nor that all elders support it. Perhaps the best way to understand it is as buying time to protect the land for the next generations.

Maruno 2023). Shogatsu is the celebration that opens the year (Shioushi Mizumoto 2022; Chiemi Nakagawa 2022). In the lead up to the New Year, the pigs were slaughtered at each household by the adults (Taniko Tsuneyama 2022; Keiko Gima 2022; Nobu Matsuyama 2022; Shizue Shigehisa 2022; Isamu Shigehisa 2022; Akio Yoshioka 2022; Hiroe Gi 2022; Shigenari Oku 2022; Michio Hisaeda 2022). The fresh meat was enjoyed that day; in fact, the only time one could eat fresh meat was during *shogatsu*, when the pig was newly slaughtered (Fumiko Akatsuka 2022; Yoko Nao 2022). Yoko Nao remembers eating an enormous amount of meat during Shogatsu. This was prepared as *yakiniku*-- meat cooked over a charcoal grill, from firewood previously made into charcoal. Yoko Nao explained that "*Yakiniku* has become a normal meal now. It was not like that in the past. *Yakiniku* was only possible once a year" (2022).

Every part of the pig was preserved in a different way. Takehiko Tokunaga listed a few different preparations: sundried, salted, smoked. In short, every part of the pig was preserved for use through the year. Takahiro Okamura added every household kept at least one pig and had a pigpen for them. The pigs were fed leftovers from family meals, the skin of the *imo* as well as the stems of the *imo* called *imozuru*, and anything else that would now be considered food waste was given to them (Fumiko Akatsuka 2022; Chiemi Nakagawa 2022). Takehiko Tokunaga said it was variety in the pig's diet that made the pigs back then so delicious and also the fact that there was a variety of breeds (Takehiko Takunaga 2022). Even just the broth from the pig's meat had a different depth of flavour, he said, much better than the pigs sold now. At the present time, there are maybe three breeds of pigs being sold. They have been raised to be fattened and do not have variety in their diets—and this shows in the taste.

Takahiro Okamura said it was difficult to keep more than one pig as the goal was to raise each pig up to 100 kin (60kg). Akio Yoshioka indicated that the raising of the pig was women's work and the wives would end up in a competition to see who could raise the biggest pig (also Nobu Matsuyama 2022; Keiko Gima 2022; Hiroe Gi 2022; Shizue Shigehisa 2022). He explained that while the slaughter

of the pig was men's work, there were also pig slaughtering experts who would come to each home. Having the pig slaughtered at home was an important step (Susumu Machida 2022; Sakiko Yasuda 2022). Yoshioka Akio remembers as a kid hearing screams from a neighbour's house. This was how everyone found out whose house had slaughtered their pig, always close to December 25th (Kamejio Morikuma 2022; Etsuko Yasui 2022; Akio Yoshioka 2022). Leaves would be laid out for the pig to rest on. Akio Yoshioka walked outside to show me the tree the leaves came from, saying that alternatively banana leaves could be used. Then water would be boiled and poured over the slaughtered pig to soften the hair. Then the pig was shaved. The blood was drained and collected (Shigenari Oku 2022; Takehiko Tokunaga 2022) some of which was later eaten (Shigenari Oku 2022; Chiemi Nakagawa:2022). From there, the pig was turned belly up and dismantled. The process of butchering the pig was known by every adult at the time, and as Takahiro Okamura put it "We ate everything aside from the tip of the nose and the ends of the hooves" (2022).

The offal meat was washed in the salt water in Kametoku and in Tokuwase (Isan Tougo 2022; Keiko Gima2022; Nobu Matsuyama 2022; Shizue Shigehisa 2022), while rivers and streams were commonly used in other communities (Chiemi Nakagawa 2022; Fumiko Akatsuka 2022; Yoko Nao 2022; Isan Tougo 2022). Yoshioka Akio's community did not have a river so they had to wash the intestines in the water in the rice fields. All 100 kin (60 kg) of the pig would be brought down to the beaches in places close to the ocean to be cleaned (Isan Tougo 2022). Takahiro Okamura explained the rest of the pig was washed with ash and butchered in preparation for eating and preserving. The larger pigs may have fed a family for the whole year, though fisher's families had fish as well (Takehiko Tokunaga 2022).

Takehiko Tokunaga from Inutabu remembers preserving the blood to paint deep sea fishing lines. Takehiko Tokunaga explained that in the past the rope was made of *tsumuugi* (silk). There were households that had a loom and were known to be weavers; the same thread was used for the rope. The silk from these weaving families that was left over would be spun back into a clean silk strand and then

made thicker. The fishers were going after fish in the deep sea and wanted rope that would repel the water. This led Takehiko Tokunaga to explain the pig slaughtering process so that the blood of the pig was used on the rope. Blood was painted onto the silk rope and hardened; this is called *chinori*. It is hardened pig's blood. It has a smell, but Takehiko Tokunaga described pig's blood coated rope as "so good it smelled". Preserving the blood was something specifically done by the fishers of Inokawa; they would plug their noses by tying a towel around their heads while painting the saved blood onto the rope. Takehiko Tokunaga continued that this blood that has gone bad was soaked into a towel and spread over the rope; in short, bad blood was better for rope coating. All rope was wound by hand with a winder back then. They would make hundreds of meters of it to fish deep into the ocean. To withstand ocean pressures, after the rope was wound together, *chinori* was performed not once but multiple times, letting each coat dry overnight. *Chinori* creates an extremely hard rope that does not tangle and repels water. It was bundled into 50m sections and was an absolute need for the island's many fishers who fished out of hand paddled boats.

Other practices around sharing and preserving the pig were explained by Shizue Shigehisa who remembers not only giving pork to the teachers but also eating the smaller lesser cuts of the pork, and carefully preparing drying and salting the best cuts to send to Tokyo. When I asked why it was sent to Tokyo, she replied that the people (islanders) who went to work there miss it.

Cohabitation was a common theme with how the pigs were raised for Shogatsu. As Reiko Okamura explained:

> We lived together with the animals. Pigs were there, chickens were there, bulls were there. The pig's pen was close to home, the bulls pen was on our land too. That's how I remember it. Cohabitation. (2022)

Gi Hiroe's mother bred pigs. She remembers living next to the pig pen--so close it felt like they shared a home. The pigs were family, and her mother raised the pigs then sold the offspring to the community to support the family. The pig would be brought to another household pig to "get married," that is, bringing the pig from house to house to meet with the male pig and leaving

them together in the same pen. Later, about three piglets would be born. Having a female pig was the only source of income for their family. Soon after all of her children had graduated from school, new regulations were introduced, trade with Japan resumed, and breeding piglets ended for Gi Hiroe's mother. Regarding the loss of this practice, Takahiro Okamura explained

> "There is a recognition that the pig's life is being taken to give life to the family. There is no desire or pleasure taken from killing the pig. Just recognition. But that is the same with rice too; planting the grain and to eat it is to kill it. Same with the pigs. I think that the people of the past lived with the cruelty but with a better understanding and appreciation for what was being done. I do not think people are going to the supermarket now and thinking about the life of the cow when grabbing a package of beef. The same with chickens; they used to walk amongst us, bulls too. I think in that was where our hearts stored wealth." (2022)

Yoko Nao remembers the keeping and butchering of pigs at home being banned when she turned 23 (around 1965), while refrigeration became available when she was in high school. Although there appeared to be a few years of overlap when a slaughtered pig could have refrigerated, Yoko Nao explained that the refrigerators and freezers were not of that capacity. Meats still needed to be preserved in the *kame* or they would go bad. Nor did everyone have a freezer just because they were available, nor were the shops selling them capable of obtaining many at one time. Moreover, Tokunoshima is a rather remote island; many companies did not ship to the Amami Islands (even today). Consequently, the traditional preservation techniques were still important even after the introduction of refrigerators.

Another new regulation that was introduced around the time of *fukki* (late 1953) was that pigs could no longer be kept at families' houses. Fumiko Akatsuka said that people stopped keeping pigs at the household level because of the new law. And then a community slaughterhouse was built and a meat shop as well. It was not immediate or sudden that the ban and the transition occurred, but it was swift, only taking a few years. Shizue Shigehisa added that there were still a few specialists allowed to

keep pigs after the ban, and there are still pigs on the island today, just not at home; they are raised on separate pieces of land away from households.[25]

This chapter has detailed significant changes to island foodways, particularly after WWII. New policies and regulations prioritized sugar cane production over subsistence farming and banned the keeping of pigs at the household level. These rules and regulations introduced by a series of increasingly repressive rulers heralded other changes. Meat became available only at butchers and supermarkets, changing diets and lifestyles. There was not a lot of money circulating on the island (Michio Hisaeda 2022), so islanders could not purchase a year's worth of meat to preserve for a year. Meat therefore became a daily or weekly purchase dispensing with the need for preserving and salting, resulting in the abandonment of preservation and preparation techniques, and for the participants loss of the flavours of youth. Although refrigerators were available once the island got 24-hour electricity, people kept kame filled with salted pig until pig rearing was banned (Fumiko Akatsuka, Michio Hisaeda 2022). That is, islanders were reluctant to give up their foodways until forced.

Fig 8: Kamui yaki no mori. Photos from community expedition to former pottery kilns famously known as Kamui yaki. We were encouraged to pick up and look at fragments that are thousands of years old. Photo by Hanika Nakagawa

Fig 9: Isen Cultural Museum collection of Kame used for preserving and storing foods. Photo by Phoenix Nakagawa

[25] There are emerging discourses, particularly popular discourses (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mfswWSOrWY4), identifying modern husbandry as the cause of inter-species virus transmission, not traditional farming practices. This is an interesting corollary to my research, but cannot be confirmed or disconfirmed in my data.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Having already extensively discussed two aspects of my theoretical framework, namely positioning theory and CDA, I will next explore specifically how my research relates to IFS and Indigenous Decolonizing Sociology. I will focus on the most relevant aspects of each of these.

INDIGENOUS FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

IFS as a theoretical framework "privileges Indigenous people's control over food systems, including markets, production modes, cultures and environments and operates in a wholistic philosophy, seeing food as encompassing the mental, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual" (Ray et al. 2019:58). IFS includes notions of food being sacred; considerations of the meanings of both "Indigenous" and "sovereignty"; respect for embedded relationships among food, Indigenous peoples, other peoples and non-human beings; and acknowledgement of the intimate connection between land and ontology. Here, I contribute to deepening understandings of IFS as a theoretical framework within the local context of Tokunoshima. I will also illustrate how one specific change in foodways can therefore trigger a cascade that results in Indigenous identity change.

To begin, consider the salt-making process on Tokunoshima related in my Introduction through a lens of IFS, specifically of food being sacred. Traditionally, making salt took up a very large amount of firewood, more than just windfall branches thus making the salt-making process damaging to the environment. However, salt was needed to preserve the protein intended to feed a whole family for an entire year without refrigeration. Moreover, now that Tokunoshima is a UNESCO World Heritage site, the islanders are forbidden access to the mountains. Consequently the "clearing and cleaning" of paths is no longer happening, with the result that the danger of wildfire has increased, and the habu have become more fearsome. In other words, the mountains reference danger now rather than life. Viewing such traditional food practices through an IFS lens, practitioners acknowledge that food waste is non-existent (for example, my participants claimed every bit of the pig was used except the tip of the snout

(Yoko Nao:2022) and the bladder was used as a balloon toy (Yoko Nao, Akio Yoshioka:2022), while involving children passes the knowledge, intergenerationally, that salt is sacred. Also in IFS, humans are an acknowledged part of the ecosystem. Viewed another way, this example illustrates the intimate connection between land and ontology, respect for embedded relationships in which humans are an acknowledged part of the ecosystem.

Food is Sacred

According to IFS, food is sacred (Morrison 2011) and foodways are local. Part of food's sacredness stems from its connection to individual places. My research reveals that in the past on Tokunoshima food was sacred because its production, provisioning, and preparation were central to every part of life, but now food has become sidelined and is no longer central. Now sold in supermarkets, food has become a commodity. Therefore, only some food can be sold, food without nibbles from insects or animals, food that has not been sunburned, food that has appealing colour and shape. Food production has become a form of oppression, putting stress on the food producers and also on the land, with the end result that the essence is lost, the sacredness of remembering that food is a life form. Thus, food is stripped of respect while the production of food is viewed as science.

Desire to return to the land.

It is important to recognize that, as the elders have told me, that on Tokunoshima, the land is a living being and lives in relationship with all human and non-human beings who live on her. Plots of land used to grow food have names; these are not the names of the people living on the land or in the current society recognized as owning the land, but rather are the names of the land that have existed for all of living memory. For example, my great grandmothers lived on Nijiban and my grandfather's farmland is named Iributa. People belonged to the land and were products of it; for instance, my great grandmother, Uto Motoi, may also be known as Uto from Nijiban. Food, people, all life, are gifts from the land and their remains are returned to the land once life has been taken. That is, eating always involves death and therefore the taking of life, but it is done by fellow products of the land, and only to

sustain their lives. *Imo* was grown on Nijban. The *imo*'s life is taken by a person who eats the *imo* and feeds the scraps to a pig. The pig is slaughtered and salted for preservation by salt coming from ocean water that is boiled using trees from the land. When a person eats the pig, that person remembers these processes. Sometimes, an infection can enter the body of any being feeding off the land, thereby taking life to sustain the life of the bacteria which is also returning to the land. Bodies are buried in the land. Food grown on the land contains ancestors' wisdom that enters the body and is used to build the body, but also simply working and being alive burns the body as fuel. We cycle through building, eroding, collapsing, heating, cooling, moving and absorbing to build and change the world; all processes are made possible by the sentience of the spirit proteins. The ancestors become gods after their passing. That is, the interlocking of many life cycles produces the ecosystem life cycle.

These processes are also documented and understood by Western science. What makes this scientific process sacred for Indigenous Amami people is recognizing that all nutrients are sentient (Nakagawa 2020). As Nakagawa (2020) explains, Amami people understand that the remains of human and non-human beings do not just return to the land passively. Rather, they enter into the land as spirit proteins holding knowledge, perception and realization, which is passed on to the next generations of human and non-human beings in what grows there and is eaten. Living with nature in sacred ways means not disrupting anything or killing any more than is necessary for living. Moreover, as Susumu Machida informed me in the interviews, all human and non-human beings are gods, and they do not necessarily wish to follow the will of humans. They have will and destiny. To practice IFS, then, is to allow all beings the autonomy to achieve balance in will and destiny. Not having autonomy results when other (often national) sovereignties disrupt all things without considering the will and destiny of the human and non-human beings in that place. For example, Kaori Maeda's experience of reclaiming her farmland is a testament to how the mountains and the land also have will and destiny. Kaori Maeda returned to her mountainside farm on Tokunoshima after decades away to find that her farmland had been overtaken by trees and forest. She had to work hard to return the land to farmland,

disrupting the will and destiny of the mountain to take back the farmland. Her effort, she explained, exacted a price in protein from her. She gave 10 kg of her body to return the forest back to farmland—the 10 kg she gained living in the city. Kaori Maeda now eats from the land she tends, balancing her will and destiny with that of the land.

Rice as Islander Identity

Because returning one's body to the land after death means that one's body nourishes the next generations (Nakagawa 2020), food is connected physically and spiritually with identity, as acknowledged by Tokunoshima elders. This understanding raises questions about what happens when "staple" crops, specifically rice, are forcibly changed to the production of a luxury item (sugar). Sugar cannot sustain life, as Susumu Machida noted (2022), meaning that sugar itself cannot feed the people growing it, but rather sugar's value is represented by money used to purchase food that sustains life. Money or crops that do not directly feed people do not create communities with power (Pérez 2019) or autonomy over their own lives. When both land and people derive their identity from the production of rice, then what happens to those identities when the outline of rice-growing land, land that has its own name (Chiemi Nakagawa 2022), is changed to accommodate sugar cane, and when life-giving nutrients are replaced by simple carbohydrate? This leads to further questions: Who deserves their historical identity based on interactions with rice? Whose identity is prioritized? Who decides whose identities are expendable?

Historically, as my elders have narrated, rice and sugar cane have both been used as a means of control over the Amami Islands, especially in terms of taxation and economic slavery. From the beginnings of colonization, meaning going back to the Naha-yu or the time of the Ryukyu Kingdom, land tax (or tribute) was paid to the ruling elite in rice. In fact, there is evidence that even before Naha-yu, rice was introduced to mainland Japan from China by way of Okinawa and the Amami Islands, and was the basis of subsistence agriculture, history, culture and identity in the Ryukyus (Takamiya 2001) before it became the basis of these for Japan (Ohnuki-Tierney 1993). Rice was also used for trade and

to pay for wage labour, as my elders narrated. Sugar, on the other hand, is related to slavery (the sugar hell) in the Amami islands from the time of colonization by Satsuma in 1609. During the 1920s when world sugar prices crashed, many Ryukyuan people moved as migrant workers in diaspora to mainland Japan where they became identified as distinct from Japanese, southern islanders (Tomiyama 1998). Once inserted into the capitalist system, Ryukyuan peoples' identities were acknowledged by Japan as related, but not equal, peoples (Tomiyama 1998:177). Tomiyama (1998) details how the people of the Ryukyus were seen by Japan as lower ranked people in Japan from 1920-1945, a period when the southern islands transitioned from "less than citizen" to "non-citizen" and then "citizens returned from America" over two reinstatements in 1953 and 1972. The important point here is that, beginning with colonization, Tokunoshima Islanders became increasingly identified with sugar, with negative impact on their social standing in the nation. The sugar produced and processed on Tokunoshima was mostly *kokutou,* viewed as a lesser black sugar that was sent north to mainland Japan to be refined into white sugar for consumption by Japan. Under American rule, black-market ships (*yamisen)* sent boatloads of sugar to Japan.

Throughout the history of colonization by Satsuma in 1609, despite pressure from successive colonizers to produce increasing harvests of sugar, rice continued to be produced on the Amami Islands, including Tokunoshima. According to my elders, *imo* was also a staple food across the island and the places without access to sufficient water grew corn, buckwheat, wheat, and a dry variety of rice instead, but wet rice was the gold standard carboyhydrate. Even when rice was a rationed good throughout mainland Japan, Tokunoshima fed islanders from the rice fields that still existed alongside the sugar cane fields. As a staple food, rice was able to provide the islanders enough power physically and politically to have some decision-making power. However, from the point of view of the colonizers, the existence of linguistically and culturally distinct Indigenous peoples—who through IFS had (and to some extent still have) the ability to sustain life independently on Tokunoshima and the other Amami islands – could be seen as a threat to the nation state of Japan (Hammine 2019; 2020;

2021, Kohatsu 2021; Nakagawa 2011; 2013; 2020; 2021, Oguri & Takano 2021) as the Ainu had been (Iwasaki-Goodman et al. 2009). IFS could potentially lead to political sovereignty, because if the islanders are well fed, they may develop yearning for sovereignty from their colonizer.

Putting together elders' stories with the Japanese literature, the growing realization that Tokunoshima and the other Amami islands were still food sovereign after WWII aligned with the rice boom in Japan in the 1960s and 1970s. Although Ohnuki-Tierney (1993) did not specifically address rice production among the Ryukyu peoples in the time between 1927 and 1953, roughly the time period that most of my participants were children (she did, however, establish ancestral lineage between the ancient Jomon peoples of mainland Japan and the Indigenous Ainu and Ryukyu peoples), my data confirms that islanders were deeply involved in rice production for subsistence, taxation, as wages, and in some communities for trade. In their *shimatsumugi*, elders also spoke to the regulatory and policy changes throughout Japan that coerced islander farmers to change from rice farming to sugar cane. Overproduction of rice developed after intensification of agriculture post WWII, when machines and chemicals causing harm to the environment effectively reduced human agricultural labour by 88.6% between 1950 and 2010 (Katayama et al 2015:75). By the 1960s self-sufficiency in rice production was established and by 1970 there was over production of rice (Katayama et al 2015: 75). Ohnuki-Tierney (1993) details how, in response, the Japanese national government selectively chose the colder northern regions that were only able to grow rice, establishing them as rice growing regions specializing in cold weather varieties of rice, while at the same time the government forced through punitive regulations other regions to specialize in non-rice crops. Participant Michio Hisaeda expressed skepticism that the *koshihikari* and *sasanishiki* varieties of rice grown in the northern mainland Tohoku region (the prefectures of Niigata, Fukushima, Miyagi, Iwate, Aomori, Yamagata and Akita) that were deemed to be of higher quality and therefore given priority in the time of over production (Ohnuki-Tierney 1993:14), were actually more delicious than southern grown varieties as the national narrative suggested (see also Perez 2019). Michio Hisaeda (2022) remarked wryly that

cold regions could not grow other crops, while the Amami region could produce anything. As a result of the national narrative, lower ranking tropical rice varieties were no longer deemed acceptable in mainland Japan, nor even in Tokunoshima whose residents wanted to be considered cosmopolitan and modern. Importing rice and exporting sugar cane became the norm on the island.

Also during this time period, Ohnuki-Tierney (1993) argues, a citizenry hierarchy was established, making urban life appear most desirable. While the price of rice was stable in Japan until the 1960s (Hayami 1975:363), keeping the price of rice low was not for the agricultural workers' sake but for the promotion and stabilization of the urban wage labour workers. In effect, rice was considered a "critical wage good" and the product needed to pursue industrialization of Japan so it had to be affordable (Hayami 1975:363). Japan therefore sought to change the growing practices and ecology within their nation, using rice as a political tool to encourage wage labour and begin the rise of a new class of people in the cities, the "urbanite" identity (Ohnuki-Tierney 1993).

With this process, urbanites from either Tokyo or Osaka became viewed as the top tier citizens in the nation state, followed by other urbanites. Following urbanites in prestige were rice farmers as well as those who grew staple crops and nutritious foods, and at the bottom were the farmers of sugar cane, or other crops that were purely luxury items and/or cash crops (Ohnuki-Tierney 1993). Among my elders, I witnessed sugar cane farming discourses that associated it with laziness, lack of education, and general low-class status. There is significant resonance with agronomist Francisco Javier Balmaseda (*Tesoro del Agricultor Cubano, 1*:294 1885-1887 translated by Pérez (2019) from Spanish) who mocked practices of rice production and processing in the traditional Cuban way using wooden tools and human effort as "reminiscent of primitive times, or better said, exactly what is used today among the savage peoples of Pacific islands" (Pérez 2019:93), the "small farmers to whom [rice] has been relegated," (Pérez 2019:43). This translated phrase is powerful for my research because the "primitive practices" and "savage peoples" of the Pacific islands can be seen to include the Ryukyus, and therefore the Amami peoples. Balmaseda may not have meant Tokunoshima as a specific place nor

Amami-specific practices, but the processing of rice and usage of animal powered humans and bulls with wooden tools he describes are the same.

There is in this another aspect of identity change for islanders shifting to sugar cane production as their effort-driven rice-production agricultural practices became mechanized. Rice came to be imported from the peasants of the northern Tohoku regions. Peasants from both regions sent rice and sugar to the urban centers like Tokyo and Osaka where key decisions were made. Within the nation state, the lived realities and identities of citizens developed differently. In other words, the ranking of rice varieties and the consequences of doing so can be viewed as constructing which peoples have the privilege of keeping their identities, which peoples have the privilege of forging new identities as urbanites (Ohnuki-Tierney 1993:18), and which peoples must give up traditional identities to contribute to the nation as lower tier rural peoples.

It also becomes possible to speculate that urban Japan established sugar as a replacement for their staple crop (rice) on the islands for political reasons. Once Tokunoshima invested most of its productive land and human energy in producing sugar, islanders' self-sufficiency was removed, as was the ability for the islands to seek independence in the coming decades. While such speculation is beyond the scope of my thesis, this line of thought dovetails with research in the rest of the Ryukyu Archipelago that suggests that the collusion of the Japanese government with the American military in controlling the entire Asia-Pacific region requires controlling of the Indigenous peoples who live there by any means, especially military (e.g., Kohatsu 2021).

Yui and Productive Celebration: Changing Food Rules and Rituals

Yui, the elders explained, is found in the gathering of the community to complete a farming task such as *taue,* or perhaps the rethatching of a roof. After completing work in one field or home, community members move on to the next household; food is served by each household, and everyone comes together multiple times. These feelings of community and togetherness bleed into the rest of life; in other words, *yui* is born out of productive celebration. Productive celebration is not merely

celebrating or holding a festival, but also gathering with the purpose of doing work or in celebration of work well done. The celebration and working together that enable subsistence also build networks necessary for times of emergency. Isan Tougo (2022) explained that in Kametoku when one house caught fire all able people climbed to the roof of nearby homes to stamp out any sparks that landed there. A third form of *yui* requires the least work and derives from *furiicha*. Yoko Taira (2022) explained that people would drop by, chat, and have foamed tea, slowly drinking then passing the whisking brush to the next person. Islanders would gather together, speaking over the whisking and scraping of the wood brush on the wooden vessel. Yoko Taira explains that, while slow, *furiicha* celebrated humble, mundane tea drinking and was also a way to deepen connections and build *yui*. *Yui* can no longer be cultivated in traditional ways.

For example, the incentivized change in focus from rice production to sugar cane production that I have discussed changed the meaning behind the harvest celebration and many other festivities and rituals. Traditionally, people went door to door to gather *mochi* (rice cakes) from every neighbour to celebrate the year's harvest, while those who stayed home prepared to hand out mochi waited excitedly for the parades of people to come by—groups of young people, of elders, of children all dancing by moonlight to the beat of the drum that could not even be heard over the singing. The groups would all gather at the end and divide up the mochi they gathered, eating some on the spot. With the advent of US and then stricter Japanese colonial regulations, what was once a whole evening's song and dance parade for young and old filled with eating, drinking, singing and dancing became what has been referred to in sadness as a "Hallowe'en that takes place in August."

That is, islanders have lost the *productive* celebration that leads to *yui*. There is a level of sacredness, constant moments of recognition of taking life when a home-raised pig is slaughtered for a celebration, when the rice is grown and harvested, and a seedling planted to be cut later. Productive celebration is not only an appreciation of the work but also of the lives being taken by the work put in. Therefore, before the change to the food systems on Tokunoshima there was more to celebration; as

Chiemi Nakagawa said she misses *muchitabore*, but what she misses is not the day of celebration itself but the feeling of celebration after the year's productive work.

Productive celebration is celebration of the hardship involved in getting to the day of celebration. Therefore, the elders have identified that the celebrations today exist in shape only. Yes, they explain, what is handed out during Shogatsu changed from *mochi* to money; yes, *muchitabore* also changed from mochi to packaged snack foods; however, these changes result from no longer producing rice, something that embodied lives taken and work put in. Just as the food could not be removed from work as it is everywhere physically and the center of everything culturally, the food production and life cycles could not be removed from celebration because the celebration does not neatly contain itself within dates. The build up toward a productive celebration took weeks, months, years and many lives. Restricting celebrations to certain national holidays or days of worship siloes sacredness and the meaning of celebration, just as we have siloed food in the shrine called the grocery store or supermarket. Meanwhile, new festivals are born celebrating what was once everyday heritage agriculture. Rice planting, production and processing are enshrined as cultural experiences at some schools, rather than being a part of daily life. New festivals are dedicated to traditional black sugar processing; while once many families came together to work their bulls to produce the year's sugar, there is now an annual festival to remember the traditional way that is no longer practiced.

An important point to note is that traditional festivals have become part of the school curriculum, while new festivals are being established to remember and honour traditional practices. This move, it seems is almost a colonizing move, one that enshrines specific forms and activities within a festival so that festivals are like museum pieces now. They are unchanging, frozen, shackled to tradition, not vital and part of the community. Samoan scholar and author Albert Wendt (2008) speaks about the dangers of trying to freeze traditional practices:

> I came to feel very uncomfortable with terms such as traditional, folk history folk art. . . . Colonial scholars and researchers used them whenever they referred to us but not to their cultures. Such terms I concluded were part and parcel of the Euro-centric colonial

> vocabulary. Traditional inferred our cultures were /are so tradition-bound they were static and slow to change; that they weren't dynamic and growing and changing; that because they were slow to change and fixed in history they were "simple and easy to understand." Traditional also had implications about how we were viewed as people even to the extent that, because we were tradition bound, we behaved out of habit and past practice and [were] slow to adapt to other ways or change our own ways, that we didn't want to think for ourselves, or were incapable of individual thinking and expression. Such terms are also part of that view that our "real" Pacific cultures are true only in what are in the museums. Right from my early twenties, I've never trusted writing or studies about us by outsiders and by our own people who've been successfully colonized! (Wendt, pers comm, 21 March 2008 cited in Mallon 2016)

Traditional practices being taught as part of a school or community curriculum robs the practices of their meaning and disengages them from the production of *yui.*

Moreover, processes of change have accelerated the theft of cultural rituals according to the elders. Participants and others throughout the island talk frequently about changes already resulting from Tokunoshima becoming a World Natural Heritage Site in July 2021. This international designation works like a series of regulations and has changed food sources. Mundane foods that were gathered on the mountains (like *tsuwabuki*) have now become items that must be planted, while at the same time once-hunted proteins such as *inoshishi* (wild boar) are illegal to hunt. As a result, the *inoshishi* are finding their way into the towns and ruining the crops. Moreover, Tokunoshima people are deprived of an important traditional protein source, while the *yui* developed in procuring *inoshishi* is also lost, as is the knowledge of how to hunt. Such collective identity practices appear to be diminished by imposing rules and regulations made for a different geographical space, or for no geographical space at all. Meanwhile, in their protected mountain habitat created by UNESCO regulations, the *habu* are multiplying, forcing endangered Amami black rabbits to run onto streets where they are hit by cars. In other words, the balance of prey and predators is shifting because UNESCO does not consider humans to be part of the ecosystem. This experience is not unique to Tokunoshima. Like Tokunoshima Islanders, the people of Punta Negra can no longer rely on hunting and harvesting from the forest now that it is part of the Juati Nga Ecological Reserve, their source of food when ocean conditions were scarce (Davidson-Hunt, Idrobo & Turner 2017:9). Moreover,

scarcity is increasing in oceans worldover, with significant impact on Indigenous ways of life, even in "protected" regions.

Throughout this section, I have illustrated how the change in just one aspect of IFS, the provisioning of rice as one fundamental component of the Tokunoshima diet, changed everything. Specifically, the changes to just one agricultural practice, the switch from rice production to sugar cane encouraged by Japan in the 1970s, also triggered other changes. I could also detail how, without rice, the by-product of rice was no longer available, meaning that the raw material for the ropes that held the roofs on were gone, as was rope for the annual tug-of-war and sumo match that came with the feasts and festivals, and the use of rope as an accessory for walking at night. With further data collection, I could illustrate how the change to the annual household pig slaughter changed fishing practices; without raising pigs, fishermen had no access to the rancid pig blood that strengthened their silk ropes and kept them from tangling. They had to purchase blood or use something else that was not as good. That is, each small shift in food production sent a ripple effect, changing not only food rituals and festivities, but also quotidian activities. Finally, I discussed how each small change contributed to the loss not only of IFS, but also to the prevention of reinstating Indigenous sovereignty.

TOWARDS AN INDIGENOUS DECOLONIZING SOCIOLOGY

Popular and scholarly narratives of Indigenous lifeways change too often address colonization as a historical event that reorganized local ways of life and foodways in unprecedented ways (Griffin 2020:336). Thus far, I have illustrated how colonization is a process, and the loss of IFS is likewise a process. In the next section, I will add to this argument to generate new narratives and understandings of Amami worlds. I do this by first specifically engaging with one member of the sociological canon who reinforces colonial and imperial discourses and agendas. I then discuss the theft of IFS as slow violence in toxic spaces.

Addressing the Canon/Cannon: Durkheim

In addition to addressing how rice shapes identity in Japan, Ohnuki-Tierney (1993) argues that peasant producers of rice were despised by newly formed Japanese urbanites who saw themselves as somehow above food production and provisioning. In fact, several of my participants also talked about this phenomenon though in a manner normally unrelated to agriculture (see discussion of CDA in Chapter 3). The urbanite mentality Ohnuki-Tierney refers to seems to run parallel to the thinking of Durkheim. In one of his first works, *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893), Durkheim explains how European society evolved from "simple to complex, primitive to modern" communities (Fenton 1984:18). In the works of Durkheim, peasants and rural peoples practice traditional forms of solidarity, classified as mechanical solidarity, while what Durkheim calls Organic solidarity can also be thought of as an urban societal order, a wage labour-oriented society. Durkheim believed that a transition towards urban-ness was favorable, that the large urban system gave freedoms to individuals to pursue any wage labour job of their choosing. Durkheim, coming from a fixed (more mechanical) society, viewed organic solidarity as progress in a linear way. The urbanites described by Ohnuki-Tierney (1993) would seem to agree that their life is progress, while idealizing geographic spaces where their food comes from to be clean, mechanized, orderly, without sweat, that is, while looking down on manual labour. In this paradigm, not needing to work the body appears to be the marker of freedom.

By contrast, mechanical solidarity was named this way by Durkheim because in rural settings individuals are seen as cogs in the small machine that is society, each assigned a role to make the machine move. Put another way, there is no freedom as every individual is necessary to meeting subsistence needs in a traditional society. However, because the community is not bound to the confines of a wage labour market, once subsistence needs are met, the community can choose the direction in which to "move" the "machine". While there is a common moral order, a *conscience collective* (Giddens 1971:77), there is also freedom as the collective. Nakagawa (2007) refers to a similar collective organization of society and the consensus involved in decision-making as "accord."

It is not just Durkheim's naming practices, but rather his ideological foundations that need to be queried from the perspective of my data. Durkheim ultimately believed that the transition from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity was good for industrialized society and that a collective would emerge. In Japan, there is little collectivity in decision making. The people of the northern Tohoku region continue to grow rice for export meaning they may well experience restraints similar to those present in my data from Tokunoshima. Tokunoshima Islanders were told by the Japanese government to stop the production of rice and instead to grow sugar cane. That is, urban society (with organic solidarity) in Japan as a nation state placed demands on food producers (with mechanical solidarity), meaning that those with the more desirable organic solidarity only had it at the expense of unseen rural peoples. Using IFS as a lens reveals that food producers across Japan obtain autonomy in their fields but have individual and community sovereignty removed through the nation state's allegiance with the urbanites.

I bring Durkheim to this discussion not because I find his theoretical frameworks illuminating or helpful for my data, but because I do not. Like other modernist canon theorists in Sociology, Durkheim is entrenched in modernism and Eurocentric capitalist ideologies (Go 2016), not separating capitalism from its roots in colonialism (Seidman 2016), extractivism, and necropolitics (Mmembe 2019). It is important for an Indigenous Decolonizing Sociology to recognize that referencing the canon may make sociologists complicit in colonialism, perhaps not as a sudden, brutal and ruthless event, but as an indirect, insidious and gradual process. It is important to recognize, for example, that Durkheim's ideological stance contributes to slow violence.

Slow Violence and Toxic Spaces

Rights to land, water and bodily integrity for human and non-human life forms are the crux in all forms of [settler] colonial violence. In studies of the global struggle for economic primacy are found frequent references to the violent consequences for land and soil, and questions about whose communities and whose ecosystems are left to deal with the aftermath of development, specifically

encroachment, extraction, contamination, and pollution. In this section, I examine how "slow violence" (Nixon 2011) is exemplified in my data.

According to Nixon (2011) a different understanding from our normal view of explosive, rage-fueled violence must be understood. Comparing conceptualizations of swift violence with slow violence, Nixon suggests that slow violence,

> …occurs gradually and *out of sight,* a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is *typically not viewed as violence at all.* Violence is customarily conceived as an event or action that is immediate in time, explosive and spectacular in space, and as erupting into instant sensational visibility. We need, I believe, to engage a different kind of violence a violence that is *neither spectacular nor instantaneous,* but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales…. (2).

Nixon's argument is that many forms of violence are gradual, accumulative, and even hidden. They may take their forms over years, decades or even longer. Nixon also suggests that the initiation of violence can be removed, not only in terms of time but also in terms of geographic space, from the impact of violence.

Applying Nixon's ideas to my data, elders described how policy decisions and regulations were made in Kagoshima, in Tokyo, or even in Washington, and only felt in Tokunoshima decades later. One example is the Japanese national government's decision to encase its coastlines with seawalls, breakwaters, and tetrapods to guard reclaimed land against ravages caused by high tides (Yamashita 2020). Isan Tougou (2022) observed that these structures changed the patterns for and reduced the abundance of fish and octopus, thereby changing the lives for fishermen in Tokunoshima. Yamashita (2020) suggests that, in the aftermath of the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, discussions began about increasing the height of these structures to up to 15.5 meters high to protect land and peoples against future tsunamis. However, environmental sociologists point out that seawalls and breakwaters create boundaries between the natural and the social, thus between the natural world and humans (Yamashita 2020:175). Building these structures creates divisions between those who benefit and those who suffer across time barriers (that is, current and future generations) and across geographic spaces (that is, those

who live on reclaimed land close to the sea and those who live far from the sea). Additionally, unknown increased risks cannot be assessed in advance (such as passing on traditional wisdom regarding sea patterns and behaviours, and the potential impact on sea life).

What Yamashita briefly mentions is the impact of concrete structures on river systems, changing the course of rivers both by straightening them and damming them which changes the amount of and spaces where water is available for agriculture on Tokunoshima. A number of elders (Keiko Gima 2022, Nobu Matsuyama 2022, Shizue Shigehisa 2022, Isamu Shigehisa 2022, Fumiko Akatsuka 2022, Takefumi Tsukasa 2022, Isan Tougo 2022, Susumu Machida 2022, Sakiko Yasuda 2022, Chiemi Nakagawa 2022, Reiko Okamura 2022, Takahiro Okamura 2022 and Takehiko Tokunaga 2022) spoke about changes to local foodways that occurred in response to changing water availability owing to modernization. And, it cannot be stressed enough, slow violence and destruction result from separation of humans from nature and from each other; slow violence and destruction result from not viewing humans as part of the ecosystem.

In this regard, Ohnuki-Tierney (1993) explained that urban artists depict and represent nature in terms of a rock garden or a rice field, in representations devoid of workers (1993:125), separating humans from nature while also creating idealized conceptions of nature. In fact, she argues, "[t]hey represent agriculture without manure and sweat, which, in turn, represents the idealized past" (Ohnuki-Tierney 1993:125). This sweat-free representation of nature is very different from the way the elders explained it to me. The rice fields on the island are not nature, elders explained; the rice plants are living but not nature. Nature is the mountains and forests converging on humans. Nature is the oceans and reefs surrounding humans. Nature is found in the places people venture into with risk to fish, hunt, gather and peel away foods. The islanders must actively tend to the lands and their homes to keep the land arable and to prevent it from returning to the mountains. In this environment, humans must constantly struggle against the forces of nature; for this reason, my father refers to culture and cultural practices as "the policies of nature" (Nakagawa 2013).

Looking at the elders' stories above, there are also numerous observations speaking to environmental contamination from the coerced and then codified elimination of rice fields (including the lack of pond-like standing water that resulted), the planting of sugar cane, and the not-officially-admitted release of chemical contaminants into the water and land both at the level of individual farmers and from industry that cause loss of life-sustaining ocean flora and plants over time. Draining, burying and removing the rice fields on Tokunoshima eliminated the biodiversity of pond loach, fish birds and invertebrates that lived in rice field waters throughout Japan (Katayama at el. 2015:74), further limiting islanders' diets. The elders in my research remembered picking snails for dinner as well as catching pond loach in their *zaru* and roasting them on sticks by the fire (Isan Tougo 2022). They lamented that by removing the rice fields and introducing chemical fertilizers, this effectively eliminated a place to wash, a staple food source, a place to recycle human and animal waste, a source for obtaining protein and, in addition, it degraded the environment, poisoning nature on the island.

Elders' observations disclosed to me spoke to how Tokunoshima geographies have become toxic spaces, places that within the paradigm of the "necropolitics of place" reference "how certain places, polluted through the slow violence of environmental denigration, are rendered death worlds, exposing some inhabitants to violent experiences of pollution and the denigration of living conditions" (Davies 2018:1542). Necropolitics, related to Foucault's notion of biopolitics, is more appropriate to the concept of slow violence because the term makes the "exclusionary and discriminatory notion of *let die* violence more explicit" (Davies 2018:1542). That is, the environmental contamination that the elders in my research talk about is an incremental process; it has been achieved through aggressive policies supporting capitalist monocropping to manage agricultural practices, along with increasing regulation of their lands and lives and farming practices. Such incremental processes are ill-suited to fast testing of environmental impacts; they are only observable over time if research spanning decades is conducted with Indigenous elders. The elders in my research have borne witness to the environmental impact, in the form of degraded land and increasing use of inorganic farming methods,

slow poisoning of the rivers, oceans, and soils; they are most definitely aware, longitudinally, that contamination has happened. As rice fields were filled and leveled for sugar cane and the machines needed to harvest it, rainwater that had once been absorbed and retained in the fields during typhoons ran off along the concrete roads and into the sea. Elder Isan Tougo (2022) in particular spoke of how the red soil run-off is visible from his home on rainy days. Switching from rice production to sugar cane changed the physical landscape and also changed all aspects of social life, including the ages of people able to participate in field work. Children could no longer learn how to guide the bull in the mud of the rice fields where bulls cannot rampage. Michio Hisaeda (2022) explained that due to the soft sinking ground the bulls maintained their composure, allowing for children to guide the bulls; dry fields were left to the adults because the bulls needed experienced, stronger hands to control them. Therefore, switching to sugar cane also heralded the last bull for families who used machines instead (Isan Tougo 2022).

One elder, Shioushi Mizumoto (2022), even spoke to how the research data presented by corporate scientists proving that there has been no contamination must be faulty. Lacking the vocabulary to explain, but certainly not the wisdom and understanding, Shioushi Mizumoto appears to be questioning speedy research that produces unreliable data that contradicts the knowledge of those who live on and with the land and water. Tesh (2000) describes how speedy research is scientifically flawed. Pointing to the substitution of laboratory data for applied data, short time periods for long ones, laboratory measures for human experience, and proximity to hazardous substances for actual exposure, Tesh (2000) suggests that scientists' findings are unlikely to support a causal relationship between chemicals and health issues. Sony et al. (2022) adds to this that the burden of proof for contamination studies is "absolute and final proof that a specific agent, alone, caused the problem" (2). This, Sony et al. (2022) argue, allows the science to maintain a constant state of uncertainty that prevents environmental justice for suffering populations. In short, speedy science, if not actually engaging in necropolitics, creates the preconditions for necropolitics.

Reluctant to call speedy research an outright lie, Tokunoshima elders' observations of disappearing food sources, or the inability to pick *tsuwabuki* because it grows alongside roadways where it is exposed to toxic vehicle emissions (yet outsiders from other islands will pick it and take it home because they have not seen the pollutants over time) all appear to point out how speed is a "toxic blind spot" (Mah 2017) in discussions about environmental toxins.[26] Davidson-Hunt et al (2017:3-4) likewise point to some species being perceived as unhealthy or unsafe due to contamination, noting the appropriation and transformation of cultural values inherent in the loss of food and associated practices. The sources of environmental harm that are identified in my data are widely dispersed; they include corporate power in the form of the sugar cane company, structures of capitalist accumulation such as chain supermarkets or the shipping companies, and various assemblages of state power from different nations operating on regional, national and international interests (excluding local interests).

Davies (2018) argues that "[t]he way toxicants are slowly secreted allows such accumulations of pollution to be ubiquitous yet unrecognized, accruing harm over time yet also making it more difficult to epidemiologically and geographically locate blame" (1538). In keeping with Davies (2018), my data demonstrate the impact of time as "slow violence", harm that accrues over time as the land, the water, and human and non-human bodies/forms become worn down over time after an initial period during which they were able to defend themselves.

In a number of interviews and conversations after the interviews, women elders talked about the toll that changing to waged labour from subsistence farming took on the men of the island. While this is well beyond the scope of my thesis, in the generations of elders aged 70 and older, women appear to outnumber men about ten to one. Working all day to earn a wage and farming to put food on

[26] "Voice" (who speaks), and "expertise," (able to produce statistical science data) are also required. Mah (2017) also points out that lay discussions about environmental justice may not use the language of the academy, but rather may mobilize around ideas like 'defense of the commons', 'ecofeminism', or [Indigenous] 'food sovereignty' (p.131).

the table had aged the men early; women spoke sadly saying "it's my turn now", but also it is palpable. The sons of the missing generation of men are dying 20-30 years before the island norm.

I have purposefully addressed slow violence on Tokunoshima within the theoretical framework of decolonizing sociology. I have done so not merely because the slow violence is enacted upon marginalized peoples such as Amami Islanders, but also because the idea of slow violence suggests the need for slow research and for slow activism. For example, it would appear at first glance that the elders in my research are resigned, if not indifferent, to the water and land incrementally toxifying over time. On the other hand, at a time in life when they have earned the right to take it easy, enjoy their tea, and relive happy memories, they instead entered into my research aims, told me about their lived experiences with increased toxicity, and then they told me to tell the world their stories, and to do so in English.[27] I suggest that the observations over time they shared with me constitute slow research, their appeals to me, slow activism.

Slow violence in all colonized contexts can also, in my mind, reference the number of the responsibilities foisted on colonized peoples in the ongoing *process* of being colonized. In this particular context, a democratic government system was put into place at the end of the war in Japan. At that point, people became burdened with the responsibility to choose from a pool of chief colonizers promising different but equally unfathomable freedoms and rights. Freedoms and rights come with responsibilities. These freedoms may be the right to vote or the right to purchase the land that was stolen from them, while the accompanying responsibility is to pay taxes. Freedom is the right to education, bringing with it the responsibility to assimilate to national systems. In schools, the young are educated into believing that the traditional way of life is inferior, that subsistence is less valuable than the lowest wages in the nation state, and that they are lesser humans than *Yamatsu*. In Okinawa,

[27] I have also been asked to do this in Japanese. For those able to speak the language, two YouTube interviews of me have been uploaded by the Tokunoshima Cultural Center. They are located at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r_TpzXCuR6M&t=102s and at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKm4GUdLUP0&t=958s

the freedom of having lower food prices comes with the responsibility of hosting the American military bases. In short, slow violence exists in subtle changes in the name of freedom when there is no freedom for colonized peoples; they cannot choose not to be colonized.

Fig 10: Kedoku beach in Tokunoshima Town. There, the November 2022 and February 2023 joint Japan, US, and Australia and Canada military training camps occurred. Photo by Hanika Nakagawa

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

I begin this concluding chapter by returning to my research questions. I then provide a brief discussion of the limitations of my research and highlight some possible future research directions.

The aim of my research was to understand and theorize one geographically isolated context where capitalist food systems and policies were imposed on self-sustaining foodways in living memory. My first research question addressed what were the traditional methods of food production, preparation and provisioning among the Amami on Tokunoshima? The traditional way, the way of my participants in their youth, was mainly subsistence agriculture, growing rice, *imo* and in smaller quantities sugar cane, wheat, and seasonal vegetables. The pig was fed *imo*; the chickens roamed, eating bugs and seeds. Planting and harvest were community affairs creating *yui*; making sugar cane into *kokutou* was also *yui,* as was pressing the sugar as bulls walked in a circle, turning the press. Rice was produced just for the family or sold in small quantities depending on the growing region and access to water. Yoko Nao is from Todoroki where she said "Once thing I remember is that it was abundant. There was excitement surrounding what was available, unlike today where everything can be purchased anytime. This excitement of abundance is something special to that time" (July 7. 2022). Rice was even used as the main currency for trade. Gathering food from the mountain was combined with fetching water or firewood. There were many orange and citrus trees to be climbed for snacks, and fish was plentiful in the seaside communities. There were shops that popped up by the ports; most things were sold by weight and people had to bring their own packaging (Chiemi Nakagawa 2022 & Matsu Fuusae 2018). *Sotetsu* was used as an emergency food to survive times of scarcity. During post WWII times rations in the form of wheat flour, canned bacon, canned asparagus, and powdered milk were distributed; ration centers eventually became grocery stores.

My second question asked how chain food stores were introduced into the food system on Tokunoshima. Rations were given out at ration centers and smaller shops, some of which remained stores after the war and reinstatement to Japan. Slowly the small stores became fewer and further

between. My participants told me that the roads have made all the communities into one. Shikaura, the former trade district, moved as a community up to Agon when the valley they occupied became bypassed by a bridge built over the old port town. In Kametsu, small shops that lined the path, including a smaller version of the department store were lost when the 2 km long main road was built on reclaimed land. As roads by-passed communities and using a car became more convenient, the smaller shops closed. Now the main food stores are located in Hetono (in Amagi-cho), in Isen (Isen-cho) and in Kametsu (in Tokunoshima-cho). In short, there are fewer smaller shops close by, but a few large shops in the most urbanized areas. Now islanders need a vehicle to go to and from the shops. As the roads where built and it became normal to transport goods from the big shop to the home independently. This proved to be a problem when people outlived their ability to drive and found themselves in a food desert-like situation. For those without vehicles, there is a bus. There is also *Tokushimaru*, a truck that is a mobile grocery store affiliated with Daimaru getting food to some rural places. *Tokushimaru* was featured on ABCテレビニュズ (Sept. 2 2020). The segment advertised that *Tokushimaru* was developed to bring food to people who had given up their driving licences, in particular, the elderly. I heard about *Tokushimaru* during interviews; the relationship with the Daimaru group was reinforced when I found the store selling *tokushimaru* mini truck toys at the cash register. I have heard the jingle of the *tokushimaru*, not unlike *imo* trucks that I remember or an ice cream truck.

However, the roads and the existence of the larger food shops are not the root cause of change. The traveling grocery is a remedy to the immediate problems with the system. This leads to the follow up research question of how the introduction of food stores, especially chain food stores, affect traditional Amami discourses, attitudes and practices concerning food production, preparation, and provisioning. The food stores did not disrupt the traditional Amami foodways. The stores arose as a response to the restrictions, laws and bans placed on island agricultural workers. Once pig raising was banned, people had no choice but to contact certified professionals to obtain legal meat. People then

needed to have enough money to buy a whole pig to salt, a great sum. Coupled with this, refrigeration changed the preservation of food from an annual timeline to a weekly or even daily one. Rice was a staple food on Tokunoshima. Once rice production stopped and all major farmland was converted to sugar cane, rice had to be purchased; shops were needed to supply rice. The shops on Tokunoshima were not the initial drivers of change; shops sprung up to service the loss of food sovereignty—which came from successive governments through policy.

The final questions my research pursued addressed what impact these changes had (if any) on Tokunoshima Islanders and what ways do Tokunoshima Islanders identify with the Mainland Japanese diet and with their traditional island diets. The impact of the structural policies surrounding food and the changes to ecology stemming from those changes have made Tokunoshima Islanders dependent on shipped foods. The ships and ports became places of exchange—the luxurious sugar cane for luxuries from the mainland. Changes to food policies and regulations have ensured that even staple foods like rice and *imo* are imported. All food grown on the island can be found in labeled sections of the grocery stores; everything else is imported. The selection of foods increased with an expanding supply chain and more frequent ships, but the supply chain also made food security more precarious as the ports are often shut down for weather. With new regulations reducing the ship's limit from 8m waves to 5m waves, along with the less predictable weather patterns stemming from climate change, the supermarket has become a less reliable source for obtaining food. In particular, bread is imported and popular; it sells out immediately when the boats do not arrive. By contrast, the foods grown and made on the island, found in the Tokunoshima sections of the stores are dependable during this time.

In the past, people's relationship with a mainland Japanese diet was enforced by the Japanese government. For example, the *hinomaru bento* (rice with pickled plum in the middle to represent the Japanese flag) reinforced patriotism during the war. Such food was unachievable regularly for most islanders; their staple food during the war was *imo,* then *sotetsu* during post war scarcity while under American rule. Incorporation of specific foods was encouraged by different rulers; for example,

America sent wheat flour with their post war aid. Americans introduced empty snack foods. By contrast, care and pride is taken in island foods. Foods made traditionally on the island are *wanfune dosuban* or *dosui,* a pork rice soup made with *tsuwabuki*. Another is the *tamago onigiri,* egg-wrapped rice balls, and much more. These recipes are actively celebrated, but much like island languages, classes and recipe books explain and promote these, without *yui*. Traditional foods are not recipes; they are the production and gathering of the ingredients, the journey to the mountains, the gathering together to cook and share food, the community.

In short, Japanese national economic and extractive corporate/business interests post WWII related to the economic development are responsible for many of the harmful social and environmental impacts. As I suggested earlier, it remains to be seen if the conservationist ideologies represented by the designation of Tokunoshima as a World Heritage site enact better policies, or if new conservation regulations just enable further appropriation of Indigenous lands, taking them out of the hands of the people who live within them. It appears, at least in the initial stages, that the latter may be the case.

Countering these practices and returning to IFS requires a decolonizing lens, a decolonizing sociology. The sociological canon must no longer be mired in colonialism, changed to include marginalized voices, marginalized research practices (like *shimatsumugi*), and marginalized worldviews. There are three main reasons why IFS proved to be the "best fit" theoretical framework for examining Tokunoshima foodways. First, it was and still is the export and shipping of food that puts the islanders at risk of food scarcity as the island has supported a much larger population in the past sustainably, while still producing sugar under slave-like conditions. Second, the feeling of *yui* still lies within the soils of the island and people take pride in the food they produce for themselves and even deliver what they do not need immediately to friends and neighbours. Third, this is an Indigenous affair because the islanders are struggling to maintain some sense of autonomy sandwiched between two colluding nation states (United States and Japan, not to mention the alliance members of Canada, Australia, Britain and others) who are currently colliding, locked into a staring contest with China over

claims to Taiwan. While as a general rule, colonized peoples do not distinguish between nor rank degrees of land theft and violence they experience at the hands of waves of colonizers, there is palpable fear that their home will become the battleground yet again if violence erupts. To that end, there is also a pressing need to document peoples' life experiences, often lost in the focus on the struggles between nations. This thesis is my contribution to that pursuit.

LIMITATIONS

I want to highlight three limitations to my study. First, this is far from a complete data set as I only have stories from 30 elders, most of them from Isen-cho and Tokunoshima-cho, with fewer elders from Amagi-cho. This is due to my community ties. Although I have ties in each town, my community networks are strongest in Isen-cho (where the Nakagawas are from) and in Tokunoshima-cho (where we now live). I also feel that, in the absence of interviews with government officials who represented the colonizers before and after *fukki,* and without having access to their governmental records, I cannot fully piece together the whole story of policy and regulation change. Unfortunately, most people in decision-making positions do not live on the island, and most from the time period of my interest are no longer alive. Additionally, interviewing them would have created a risk for my elder participants, a risk that would not otherwise exist. Expressing opinions and reminiscing about old memories of elders poses no threat, but as I am working with the real names of the participants as the community requested, I feel a duty to protect them from foreseeable threat. Digging deeply into political affairs may not pose a threat now but could become problematic later as relationships among America, Japan and China become more volatile. However, Kohatsu (2021) points to the urgent need to contextualize the impact of US imperialism and militarization throughout the Asia Pacific, thereby challenging Western perspectives.

The second limitation can, depending on one's point of view, also be seen as a strength as it concerns the minimal control I had in the interview process. On top of the open format of the interviews, the way the elders show care is through the form of interviewing I call *shimatsumugi* in

which the participants bring friends and people they want to introduce to me for the research project. They also took me to meaningful places and cooked traditional foods for me or with me to ensure I experienced the taste. I had very little directive authority during *shimatsumugi*; I simply asked a question when/if silence fell. My role was more of a conversation prompt provider—and audience, and recorder.

While the limitations above are all applicable to other forms of qualitative research, the third was specific to this research and includes the assumptions made from the literature review. The literature suggested that the supermarket is a catalyst to social change and changing foodways. I formulated my research questions based on the literature; what I heard during the interviews are that supermarkets were a response to government policy. It was because of the *shima tsumugi* format in which the questions were broad and open ended that I came to find out the literature did not apply except as a foundation to researching reality of place, the island of Tokunoshima. The other assumptions found in the literature is that the colonizer's history is the only point of departure. In fact, it is important to establish land-based, islander-first counter narratives, to work within a decolonizing sociology.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

While this thesis is a good first step, there is so much more research to be done, from the perspective of islanders. After expanding my participant pool on Tokunoshima, I would like to pursue research on the changing food systems along the rest of the Amami Archipelago: Yoron, Okinoerabu, Amami-Oshima, Kakerome, Kikaijima. It is important to understand the interconnections and solidarities that were forged within and between islands throughout history, and how they are maintained today. Additionally, it is important to investigate the experiences and knowledge of the children of this group of elders who would have much to say about the rapid change of industrialization on the island as they experienced first-hand what Nakagawa (2013) refers to as "beautification by concrete", in reference to the seawalls and breakwaters and other manifestations of

modernization. Through the *shimatsumugi* of elders it is also important to document histories of the non-human beings—the soil, the land, the waters, and the burdens they carry. We are part of the same ecosystem, as much as we now attempt to hermetically seal ourselves from water and soil with concrete homes and paved roadways. Our ancestors, and those of other beings **are** the soil.

The changes to the food system and adoption of capitalist structures on Tokunoshima were not voluntary endeavours. The autonomy over the food system and resistance to over-extraction have been a point of contention throughout Tokunoshima's history. What shapes Tokunoshima's reliance on purchased foods rose not out of capitalist interests but as a necessary solution to autonomy lost with restrictions placed on producing food in traditional ways. Frictions continue to build on the island as the people use all tools available like the UNESCO World Heritage status and many successful movements to stop military bases being placed on Tokunoshima. However, in the present time, the fight to regain sovereignty over their food systems seems far away, as it is taking every resource available to fend off both the Japanese and the American military for taking what autonomy remains for the islanders. With Tokunoshima being "first line" in the path between China and Taiwan, Japan and America seem to have turned a blind eye to the wishes of the residents and have resolved to trample the ground when they feel the need.

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Appendix 1

Oral Consent script translation (to be read and discussed in Japanese and/or Shimaguchi)

I will state the date and time both in Winnipeg and in Tokunoshima. I am both video recording (if we are using UM Zoom) and audio recording this interview conversation. My name is Hanika Nakagawa and I am a Masters student in Sociology at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba. I am also the daughter of Satoru Nakagawa, granddaughter of Chiemi Nakagawa originally from Itokina and Kozou Nakagawa originally from Isen, and I spend time together with them where they live at Kametsu 7701. I have been introduced to you by (name the person who recommended this interview), who told me that you will have something important for me to know. I am available for as long as you want to speak to me today. If you become tired, you must let me know and we will stop for today. I will check with you after 90 minutes to see if you would like to continue, and then I will continue to check with you every 45 minutes after that. This interview is entirely voluntary, and continuing is also voluntary.

I am both video recording (if using UM Zoom) and audio recording everything including this consent process. Therefore, I want to explain to you a little bit about what I am doing, and why I am asking you to share your knowledge with me. I will give you a basic idea of what my research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something I say, or if you would like any information not included here, you should ask me. I am very grateful to you for sharing your knowledge with me and with future generations. The benefits of your knowledge will be long lasting. There are no risks in this research to you that are greater than everyday life. You control this process.

I am interested in learning about how you produced, prepared and cooked food in the times before the Daimaru Supermarket was established and/or you started buying food at the store. I am interested in all of your stories about growing food, about what your kitchen was like and how you cooked, about fetching water, raising animals, picking fruit, and all other things related to eating in a traditional Tokunoshima way. I am very interested in this because I value the knowledge that you have and I want to be sure that I am able to preserve your knowledge to pass to all shiman-chu people. There is no compensation for participating in this research.

I am asking you to participate in at least two interviews that will probably take quite a bit of time. It may take as many as five interviews, but you will be able to tell me when we are finished. I believe that, in total, our interviews will take between six and ten hours. I will meet with you as many times as necessary to tell me all the knowledge that you think I need to know. Therefore, I want you to tell me whenever you are tired so we can arrange to meet again. We will complete the interviews virtually as we are meeting now. I will give you a copy of the audio and the video recordings when we are done. You can choose to share those with your family if you like. You may also place your audio or video recordings in the Tokunoshima Library or in your local town hall if you would like, and I am prepared to help you with that process. If you are interested, I can help you upload your video or audio onto the internet so you can share it that way. If you like, I will send you interview questions in advance, but mostly I am interested in listening to you and learning from you.

You can withdraw from the study at any time, simply by contacting me and asking to have your recordings destroyed. However, you will not be able to withdraw after May 1, 2022. You can remain anonymous in my research, or you can choose to be identified. You do not need to make this decision right now. If you want to remain anonymous, you can choose a different name for yourself in the

research, or I will assign one to you. All of the recordings will be kept on my computer here in Canada, and it is not accessible to anyone else except for my supervisor Dr. Annette Desmarais. I will send you a copy of the recordings either to your home address, or I can share them with you on a confidential online site (We Transfer) that I will help you to access. If there is anything you don't like, you can tell me to delete it.

If you agree to continue in this study, I will arrange interviews that are at a good time for you, in order to ensure that you are comfortable. You can refuse to answer any or all of my questions, and you can teach me what I need to know. All of your personal information will be kept confidential unless you tell me otherwise by waiving anonymity.

Your name will not appear in the results or reports, unless you wish to be identified. I may use direct quotations from our interviews in my research reports and thesis, but I will make sure that any information that could identify you is removed unless you waive anonymity. At the end of my research, I will offer virtual public presentations of my findings to Tokunoshima islanders, and I would be honoured if you would agree to attend. I will not identify you, but you may identify yourself at that time if you wish.

If you are willing to participate, please tell me on this recording. First, are you willing to participate? (answer) Second, are you willing to let me audio record this interview? (answer). Finally, are you willing to let me video record this interview (if UM Zoom – answer).

I have given you my name, phone, and email information so that you can contact me.

My contact information in Tokunoshima is:

Hanika Nakagawa

[redacted] (phone to leave message and I will call you back)

Kametsu 7701

nakagawh@myumanitoba.ca

You can also call me at my Canadian telephone number [redacted] or [redacted]

This research has been approved by the Research Ethics Board 1 at the University of Manitoba. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact me or the Human Ethics Coordinator at [redacted], or e-mail humanethics@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this script has been left for you.