Rabble Rousing: Senaga Kamejirō Struggle against US Occupation
Authoritarian Paternalism and the Restoration of Okinawan Pride

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Okinawan latent frustration with the American occupation exploded in protest in 1948-49, which took American officials by surprise due to an ingrained Orientalistic disposition toward Okinawans as "mild-mannered, courteous, and subservient to authority." Occupation officials interpreted the uprisings as an aberration and believed a range of political, economic, and cultural reforms would placate the discontented masses and facilitate the return of a more submissive status quo. Continued and protracted Okinawan resistance, however, belied American expectations for a docile and impotent Okinawa. This essay first examines how occupation policies and attitudes gendered Okinawa as feminine and how this led American authorities to underestimate Okinawan resolve. Second, this essay analyzes how Okinawan resistance can be understood in part as a effort by Okinawa men, twice emasculated—first by Japanese military authorities during the war and next by Occupation policies which gave Okinawan women new opportunities, especially in employment on U.S. bases, that challenged patriarchal authority within the family—by politically resisting the authoritarian paternalism of the Occupation. By scrutinizing the actions and words of Senaga Kamejirō, who occupation authorities denoted as the occupation's greatest "rabble-rouser," one can better comprehend the gendered context of the occupation and how Senaga epitomized the virility of Okinawan resistance to both American and Japanese authority.