

Seeds, Sowing Techniques, and Season Migrant Labor: Taiwan and the Transformation of the Sugarcane Industry in Okinawa's Remote Islands, 1924-1972

“Looking back at the progress and development from the late Taisho to the early Showa period, sugarcane, the key crop at the time, established its superiority through unique breeding and rationalization of cultivation techniques... The same was true for other crops and livestock; Okinawan agriculture interacted with Taiwanese agriculture, adopted its good points, and yielded fruitful results until the end of the Pacific War.” -Inafuku Seigen (稲福清彦 1916-1991)¹

In the 30-year commemoration of the establishment of the Ishigaki Sugar Manufacturing Company, former chair Inafuku Seigen recalled the importance of agricultural exchange between Okinawa and Taiwan. Specifically, he cited Miyagi Tetsuo (宮城鉄夫 1877-1934)—known as the “father of sugarcane in Okinawa”—and his successful transplantation of POJ 2725 in 1924, noting how he transformed sugarcane cultivation in the prewar period. Beginning in 1948, agricultural experts and technicians in Okinawa advocated for the revitalization of the destroyed sugar industry. In 1956, after the archipelago transitioned to civilian rule, the Okinawan government dispatched Inafuku to Taiwan to negotiate the transplantation of the NCo 310 variety of sugarcane. NCo 310 quickly replaced POJ 2725 as the dominant variety in Okinawa's fields, composing 99.4% of all the sugarcane grown by 1962.² Numerous sugar industry yearbooks and the historical volumes on the Okinawa Prefecture Bureau of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries credit this new seedling as the foundation for the sugarcane boom in the 1960s.

As Martin Dusinberre and Mariko Iijima have argued, the framework of “transplantation” can be useful in examining the connections, mobilities, and entanglements of Japan's colonial sugar industry with global history by asking basic questions about how commodities move, who

¹ Inafuku Seigen, “NCo310-gō dōnyū ni tsuite,” in *Ishigakijima seitō 30-nen no ayumi* (Ishigakijima Seitō Kabushiki Kaisha, 1991), 182-183.

² *Okinawa-ken nōrin suisan gyōsei-shi dai 4-kan* (Nōrin tōkei kyōkai, 1987), 427.

is doing the moving, and why.³ The Japanese empire mediated multiple migration networks that connected tropical sites across the Asia-Pacific, facilitating the transplantation of seeds, knowledge, and labor that influenced the development of the sugar industry in Okinawa. The collapse of the Japanese empire in 1945 did not mean that severance of this archipelagic network. Using sugar industry yearbooks, commemorative essays, and postwar magazines, this paper traces the transplantation of POJ 2725 and NCo 310 from Taiwan to Okinawa, and then examines the impact that these had on agricultural practices and labor migration in the remote islands of Minami Daito and Ishigaki.

Seeds and Sowing Techniques: The Transplantation of POJ 2725 and NCo 310

When Nitobe Inazō (新渡戸稲造 1862-1933), known as the “father of the Taiwanese sugar industry,” became head of the Sugar Bureau in 1901, he proposed the construction of sugar plantations modeled after Hawaii as well as major investments in water infrastructure and industrial factories. A key component for this plan was the widespread adoption of Rose Bamboo, a large-stem sugarcane variety that originated in Hawaii. The Agricultural Bureau in Taiwan had transplanted Rose Bamboo from the Proefstation Oost-Java in 1898. After experimentation revealed superior yield and sucrose content compared to native varieties, the colonial government released Rose Bamboo to the public in 1902.

Nitobe argued that major environmental engineering was necessary to ensure the successful transplantation of Rose Bamboo. He justified the labor involved, starting, “Crop quality and intensive cultivation are the cause and effect of each other; if the crops are good, it is

³ Martin Dusinger and Mariko Iijima, “Transplantation: Sugar and Imperial Practice in Japan’s Pacific.” *Historische Anthropologie* 27, no.3 (2019), 331.

natural to use intensive cultivation, and if the cultivation is intensive, it is natural to sow good crops.”⁴ Unlike the native sugarcane grown in Taiwan, Rose Bamboo was particularly vulnerable against strong winds, which meant that windbreak trees and shrubs had to be planted near cultivated lands to provide protection during typhoon season. To improve growth, the Taiwan Government-General standardized agricultural practices. This included the adoption of ridge tillage (畦立植 *unetate-shoku*), which involved the construction of ridges or raised beds to provide better drainage and reduce erosion, as well as the use of chemical fertilizers. Government investment and coercion worked. At its peak in 1912, Rose Bamboo consisted of 96.19% of the sugarcane grown in Taiwan and remained the dominant variety until its replacement by POJ 2725 in 1920.⁵

In 1909, Rose Bamboo was transplanted to Okinawa. Agricultural experiment stations demonstrated that Rose Bamboo produced higher sugar content and yield compared to the native Yomitanzan variety. However, Okinawan farmers refused to switch, and the prefectural government decided not to encourage its cultivation.⁶ Unlike Taiwan, Okinawa was technically not a colony, and so the government could not use coercive measures to force farmers to adopt new agricultural seeds and practices. The government had also neglected to invest in water infrastructure and did not enact economic policies to protect the sugar industry in Okinawa.

⁴ Nitobe Inazō. “Tōgyō kairyo ikensho (1901)” in Nitobe hakase shokumin seisaku kogi oyobi ronbun shu (Iwanami Shoten, 1943), 210.

⁵ Ikehara Kazuma, *Nihon tōchi jidai chūki no Taiwan tōgyō: hinshu kairyo o chūshin ni* (MA Thesis, Hyogo University of Education, 2008), 22.

⁶ Osawa Atsushi, “Nichiro sengo nihon ni okeru togyo seisaku no ichidan men: Yomitanzan-shu to togyo shiken.” *Meiji Gakuin Daigaku Keizai Kenkyu* 156 (2018), 45-46.

From the perspective of Okinawan farmers, the lack of support made the adoption of Rose Bamboo cost prohibitive.

Nevertheless, Miyagi Tetsuo was convinced that Taiwan's success could be replicated in Okinawa. Miyagi was born into a wealthy family from Haneji Village in present-day Nago. In high school, Hiratsuka Naoharu (平塚直治 1873-1946), a graduate of the Sapporo Agricultural College and a botanist who had experience working in development projects (開拓 *kaitaku*) in Hokkaido, served as his mentor. Miyagi followed in Hiratsuka's footsteps, graduating from the same institution in 1906.⁷ Afterwards, he served as a teacher and then principal in Kunigami Agricultural College. While he was principal, Miyagi conducted a survey of the sugar industry and submitted his findings to Governor Kawagoe Sōsuke in 1919.

The 1919 survey, "An Opinion on the Sugar Industry in Okinawa Prefecture," diagnosed insufficient sugarcane supply as the main hindrance to the growth of the sugar industry. To create a more self-sufficient industry, Miyagi focused on six areas of improvement:

- “1) Pay attention to new cultivation methods, and teach those methods to the farmers;
- 2) Encourage deep plowing methods (深溝植 *shinkōshoku*)⁸;
- 3) Pay attention to the season and timing of planting...along with deep plowing, this will enhance the water retention capacity of the soil;
- 4) Although the use of self-sufficient fertilizers such as 'green manure' (*ryokuhi*) and compost as basic fertilizers has been encouraged, it is also necessary to combine them with soybean meal and phosphate fertilizer for greater efficacy;
- 5) Revise regulations on pest control and preventative measures;
- 6) Water is necessary for crop cultivation...it is imperative that the national treasury or prefectural budgets subsidize irrigation projects.”⁹

⁷ Miyagi Tetsuo Kenshokai, *Miyagi Tetsuo* (Okinawa Sha, 1956), 18.

⁸ Deep plowing, as its name suggests, involves digging into the soil to mix the topsoil and subsoil to modify water retention characteristics. In Okinawa, this process was labor intensive, as the topsoil was difficult to dig in rockier environments such as Minami Daito.

⁹ Miyagi Tetsuo Kenshokai, 260-261.

Notable in Miyagi's proposal was the heavy emphasis on agricultural education, rather than the implementation of favorable economic policies that would have encouraged farmers to adopt Rose Bamboo. The Okinawan government took note of Miyagi's proposals, but ultimately did not enact policies that would improve the infrastructure of the prefecture. Nevertheless, Miyagi believed that he could change the fortunes of his home island, left his job to work as an agricultural technician for the Tainan Sugar Manufacturing Company branch in Okinawa.¹⁰

In 1924, Miyagi traveled to Taiwan on a 40-day research trip. By this time, the sugarcane landscape in Taiwan had changed dramatically. The POJ variety of sugarcane, which was developed in Java in the 1890s and then transplanted to Taiwan in 1920, consisted of 86.3% of the sugarcane grown.¹¹ POJ was highly resistant against the Sereh plant disease, whose rapid spread had nearly caused the sugar industry in Indonesia to collapse, and produced high sugar content. More importantly, in addition to the spring, the season in which sugarcane was usually planted, POJ could also be planted in the summer. As sugarcane generally took 14 months to cultivate, the additional planting season allowed for greater yield. Because of these characteristics, the POJ sugarcane spread across the globe in the 1920s.¹²

Impressed by its potential, Miyagi negotiated with Kinjo Nobunao, who worked as an engineer with the Taiwan Teikoku Sugar Manufacturing Company in Taizhong, and successfully facilitated the transfer of 5,000 seedlings of POJ 2714, 2725, and 2727 to the Tomigusuku and

¹⁰ The Tainan Sugar Manufacturing Company was established in Taiwan in 1913. In the late 1910s, it merged and acquired various sugar companies in Okinawa and Miyako.

¹¹ Ikehara, 22.

¹² One ironic outcome of the rapid proliferation of the POJ sugarcane was that it resulted in overproduction, which contributed to global crash of sugar prices in the 1920s. See Ulbe Bosma, *The World of Sugar: How the Sweet Stuff Transformed Our Politics, Health, and Environment over 2,000 Years* (Harvard University Press, 2023), 239.

Nishihara agricultural experiment stations. Experiments demonstrated that POJ 2725 was the most promising in Okinawa. To assuage the concerns over labor intensity and economic costs, Miyagi and his former students held teach-ins in villages, providing direct guidance to farmers on deep planting methods and to demonstrate the efficacy of industrial agriculture.¹³ Sugar factories also facilitated the adaption of the POJ variety. Farmers in the Daito Islands received the POJ seedlings from the sugar companies for free to encourage its proliferation.¹⁴ Unlike Rose Bamboo, concerted efforts at persuasion worked. By the mid-1930s, POJ 2725 became the dominant sugarcane grown in Okinawa.

The effort to grow the Okinawan sugar industry through the propagation of POJ 2725 was short-lived. As the Pacific War intensified, sugarcane was viewed as an unnecessary crop, and food staples like sweet potatoes and rice were grown instead. Sugar factories were also ripe targets for aerial bombings, such that the factories remote islands such as Minami Daito and Ishigaki were destroyed. In the aftermath of the war, hunger and food supply were major issues, and so the United States Military Government of the Ryukyu Islands (USMGR, 1945-1950) saw little value in revitalizing the sugar industry.

Former sugar industry technician Miyagi Jinshirō (宮城仁四郎 1902-1997) felt otherwise. Originally from Ogimi Village, Miyagi graduated with a degree in agricultural chemistry from the Kagoshima School of Agriculture and Forestry in 1920. He worked as a manager of a sugar factory in Okinawa before he migrated to Java, where he engaged in sugar

¹³ Miyagi was apparently so confident in his prowess as a teacher that he brushed off a factory manager's proposal to provide subsidies to farmers who switched. Miyagi Tetsuo Kenshōkai, *Miyagi Tetsuo* (Okinawa Sha, 1956) 77-78.

¹⁴ Kita Daito Sonshi Henshu Iinkai, *Kita Daito Sonshi*, (Kabushiki Kaisha, 1986), 221.

refining, cement manufacturing, and farm management. After the war, he served as a deputy director in the Engineering Department for the Okinawan government. In 1948, he was the first to advocate for the revitalization of the sugar industry, urging USMGR officials to permit the import of seeds from Hawaii.¹⁵ Military officials were largely skeptical that Okinawa's lack of arable land and mountainous terrain could sustain the sugar industry. To show the seriousness of his commitment, Miyagi left his post the same year, founded the Daitō Sugar Manufacturing Company, and purchased industrial machines from Hawaii.¹⁶

In 1951, as Okinawa transferred to civilian rule, technical experts once again pushed for revitalization. In the same year, the United States introduced H44-3098, a sugarcane variety developed in Hawaii in 1944, as a form of agricultural diplomacy. H44-3098 was suitable for growth in non-fertilized lowlands and mid-mountain areas. Although the sugar content was lower than that of the prewar POJ 2725 and the cultivation limited to the spring season, the Hawaiian cane was much easier to grow because it did not require chemical fertilizer. However, the sugar industry struggled to refine quality sugar comparable to Taiwan, in part because H44-3098 produced lower-grade brown sugar. The lack of industrial recovery led the Resource Bureau of the Economic Department of Ryukyu Islands to publish a report titled "The Sugar Industry in the Nansei Islands" in 1953. The report lamented the lack of progress in the past eight years:

As the only subtropical region left in Japan, after the loss of Taiwan and the South Seas, there is no doubt that the industrial role of the Nansei Islands will be

¹⁵ *Okinawa-ken nōrin suisan gyōsei-shi dai 4-kan* (Nōrin tōkei kyōkai, 1987), 414.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 426. The Daitō Sugar Manufacturing Company was based in Minami Daitō, a remote island located 360 kilometers east of Okinawa. Minami Daitō had a reputation as a sugar island in the prewar period; Tamaoki Han'emon (玉置半右衛門 1838 – 1910), an entrepreneur who made his fortune in albatross feather trade, and a group of settlers from Hachijo Island, re-engineered the environment of the uninhabited island to make it suitable for sugarcane.

extremely valuable to the national economy in the future...In particular, the sugar industry is the most fundamental industry in the Nansei Islands, considering the climate and agricultural conditions, and its revival would immediately impact the rural and island economies, and at the same time, be of utmost importance to the homeland economy.¹⁷

The Resource Bureau recommended large-scale government and private sector investment, citing the importance of the sugar industry in the prewar economy as reason to revitalize it in the postwar period. Moreover, the loss of Japan's major sugar colonies—Taiwan and the South Seas—created a window of opportunity for Okinawa to become the main supplier, an outcome that would not only financially benefit local farmers and industrial workers, but also aid in the future integration with Japan.

Ultimately, what facilitated the revitalization was the transplantation of NCo 310. The NCo variety of sugarcane was developed in Natal, South Africa to address the problem of infertility in certain POJ seedlings. The experimental station in Natal had acquired POJ seeds from Java and crossbred them with the Coimbatore variety from India. The most notable of this new crossbreed was NCo 310, which was transplanted to Taiwan in 1947. In 1952, Taiwanese technicians released the seedlings to farmers. NCo 310 rapidly became the dominant sugarcane variety in postwar Taiwan, accounting for 81.62 percent of total sugarcane acreage in 1955-1956, and then 91.54 percent in 1956-1957.¹⁸

In April 1956, the Economic Department dispatched a research team to Taiwan in hopes of transplanting NCo 310. Aragaki Shūichi, who served as vice president of the Okinawa

¹⁷ Ryukyu Seifu Shigen Kyoku. "Nansei Shotō no Tōgyō (1952)" in *Okinawa-ken nōrin suisan gyōsei-shi dai 13-kan* (Nōrin tōkei kyōkai, 1983), 603.

¹⁸ Chinese-American Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction. *Crop and Seed Improvement in Free China (1956-1959)*, 3. The successful propagation of NCo 310 became a key pillar of Taiwan's agricultural diplomacy during the Cold War.

Department of Agriculture and Forestry, selected Inafuku Seigen, who had worked for the Tainan Sugar Manufacturing Company, to lead the team.¹⁹ Aragaki had selected Inafuku based on Miyagi's recommendation, who believed that Inafuku's experience in colonial Taiwan would aid the transfer NCo 310 to Okinawa. Successful test results in the agricultural experiment station in Yogi convinced Inafuku of its viability. In the following year, the government recommended the adoption of NCo 310. By 1962, the variety constituted 99.4% of the sugarcane in Okinawa.²⁰

The proliferation of NCo 310 also impacted the development of sugar refineries in remote islands. Officials from Ishigaki and Hateruma Islands, hoping to revitalize their own island economies, invited members of the Daitō Sugar Manufacturing Company in hopes that their expertise could help develop the industry in Okinawa's southernmost remote islands. In 1961, Inafuku surveyed Hateruma and Ishigaki, and determined that a medium-sized sugar refinery was possible. In 1962, Inafuku became president of the newly established Ishigaki Sugar Manufacturing Company, while Miyagi Jinshirō, Miyagi Yasunori, Hirasawa Yoichiro, Shioya Makoto—all directors of different sugar manufacturing companies—served as directors along with locals.²¹ A committee of industrial engineers, chair by Inafuku and Miyagi, decided to model the refinery after Taiwan based on familiarity.²²

¹⁹ Inafuku, 186.

²⁰ *Okinawa-ken nōrin suisan gyōsei-shi dai 4-kan* (Nōrin tōkei kyōkai, 1987), 427.

²¹ *Ishigakijima Seitō 30-nen no ayumi*, 70. Among the directors, Miyagi Yasunori (宮城雍典 1893-1976) and Shioya Makoto (塩谷誠) Iso had experience in the sugar industry in colonial Taiwan. Born in Inamine in Nago, Miyagi Yasunori graduate from the Okinawa College of Agriculture and Forestry in 1911. He was one of the initial members of the Daitō Sugar Manufacturing Company, and then established his own company, The Ryukyu Sugar Manufacturing Company in 1953. Shioya had worked in the Dainippon Sugar Manufacturing Company branch in Taiwan, and in 1960 edited a historical volume on the history of the company (*Nitto 65-nen shi*).

²² *Ibid.*, 81.

Seasonal Migrant Labor: The Taiwanese in Okinawa's Remote Islands

The propagation of POJ 2725 and NCo 310 during their respective time periods also resulted in increased demands for laborers. Although hard data on migrant laborers in Okinawa during the colonial period are difficult to ascertain, village yearbooks from Minami Daitō and Ishigaki revealed that the factories in these remote islands had hired Taiwanese farmers. In 1920, the Toyo Sugar Company hired 260 Taiwanese men to supplement the labor shortage caused by rural depopulation but decided not to extend their contracts due to unruly behavior and resorted to hiring workers from the Amami islands instead.²³ In the Yaeyama Islands, hundreds of Taiwanese farmers began to migrate to Ishigaki in the 1930s. Lin Fa (林癸 1904-1978), a Taiwanese industrialist from Taizhong, became one of the founders of the Daido Takushoku Manufacturing Company. While Daido became most famous for successful land reclamation of the Nagura area and the cultivation of pineapples, the initial business plan included the refinement of brown sugar. The company took over the sugarcane fields of the Okidai Corporation. Ultimately, the inferior quality of the refined sugar prompted the company to focus solely on pineapple cultivation, but the success of the company attracted further Taiwanese migration to the island.²⁴ Around six hundred Taiwanese farmers moved to Ishigaki to work in the neighboring sugarcane fields owned by the Dainippon Sugar Manufacturing Company.²⁵

²³ Minami Daito Sonshi Henshu Iinkai. *Minami Daito sonshi* (1990), 225.

²⁴ Lin Fa. *Okinawa Pain Sangyo Shi* (Okinawa Pain Sangyo Shi Keigyokai, 1984), 20-22.

²⁵ Takata kominkan kinenshi henshu iinkai. *Takata 50-nen no Ayumi* (1995), 3.

These colonial era ties proved useful in facilitating postwar seasonal labor migration. Lin, who remained in Ishigaki, used his connections to agriculture and industry in Taiwan and Okinawa to negotiate labor migration. Between 1964 and 1969, Lin was able to bring in thousands of Taiwanese agricultural and industrial workers using the technical exchange visa.²⁶ Similarly, beginning in 1966, the sugar industry in Minami Daitō brought hundreds of Taiwanese workers to the island. Wu Sanshe (吳三舍), a 61-year-old manager from Hualien, recalled, “During Japanese rule, I had worked at Kotobukishō Farm (寿公牧場) for 30 years. At around that time, I befriended Tamai Kameshiro (玉井亀四郎), and that’s how migrant laborers started coming to Minami Daitō. When he needed workers, I would investigate the background of potential applicants to ensure that they would not cause trouble and work peacefully.”²⁷ At its peak in the 1969-1970 harvest season, Taiwanese migrant laborers constituted 90% of the foreign laborers in Minami Daitō.²⁸

Initially, both the Taiwanese and Okinawan governments as well as Taiwanese companies were reluctant to allow Taiwanese migrant labor. According to Lin Fa, both the Taiwanese factories and government were loath to permit their skilled workers to Okinawa, concerned that the successful development of the industries would adversely affect their own.²⁹ Similarly, the

²⁶ Ibid, 138. The number of skilled industrial workers Lin brought was as follows: 27 in 1964; 62 in 1965; 190 in 1966; 300 in 1967; 700 in 1968; and 230 in 1969.

²⁷ “Kibi kari nara omakase o: Taiwan kara no kisetu rodosha wa yoku hataraku.” *Okinawa Graph* (May 1970), p.62. Kotobukishō (壽庄; although written as 寿公 in the article, it was most likely mistake) is in present day Shoufeng Township, near Hualien Harbor. Tamai Kaneshiro had worked to develop the farmlands in Hualien the colonial period, was part of a smuggling network between Taiwan and the Yaeyama Islands in the early postwar years.

²⁸ *Minami Daito sonshi*, 225.

²⁹ Lin, 137-138.

Okinawan government was concerned that reliance on skilled migrant laborers would adversely harm domestic workers in the long run.³⁰ In the end, the Taiwanese government allowed Taiwanese to travel to Okinawa on the basis of establishing good relations. After negotiation, the sugar industries in Minami Daitō agreed to limit the employment of skilled industrial Taiwanese workers and to train domestic workers, while the Okinawan government permitted Taiwanese unskilled laborers—farmers and factory hands—to enter to resolve the critical labor shortage.

On a practical level, Taiwanese migrant farmers were willing to go to the remote island because of higher wages. Men earned between \$2 and \$2.50 per day, while women earned \$2 per day, while in Taiwan, those wages were respectively between \$1.80 and \$2 and \$1.20 and \$1.30.³¹ Huang Yu-lan, 39-year-old women, explained, “My husband works in the Forestry Bureau. We have 3 boys and 1 girl, so I send my wages back to pay for their school fees.”³² Liu Bing-jun, a 38-year-old retired military officer originally from Beijing also stated that worked out of economic necessity: “My wife works as a nurse and earns \$75 a month, but since we have 2 sons and 3 daughters, I remit about \$100 a month.”³³

Okinawan workers remembered the Taiwanese with affinity, praising them for their hard work ethic. A considerable number of Taiwanese could speak also Japanese, which made communication smooth and helped build intimate relations. Okinawan workers built lasting

³⁰ “Taiwan kara no rōdō-sha dōnyū nitsuite” in *Daiichi Seitō Kabushiki Kaisha 20-nen kinenshi* (1980), 192.

³¹ *Okinawa Graph* (May 1970), 62 -63.

³² *Ibid.*, 63.

³³ *Ibid.*

friendships with the Taiwanese, noting that they often “would drink alcohol together, and sometimes invite them to our homes to chat.”³⁴

These recollections, however, also indicate underlying tensions within the migrant community. Some of the migrant workers were former Chinese military soldiers. In the 20th anniversary of the foundation of Daiichi Sugar Manufacturing Company, an unnamed Japanese worker recalled:

When the Taiwanese government sent laborers to Okinawa, they mixed in some veterans from the mainland as well...As a relief measure, the Taiwanese government sent them to Okinawa along with other Taiwanese. Most of them do not understand the Taiwanese language and had to communicate with Mandarin-speaking Taiwanese. From then, a 3 or 4 could translate from Mandarin to Cantonese or Sichuanese.³⁵

In addition to the economic hardship they faced in Taiwan, former Chinese soldiers experienced personal and linguistic isolation in Minami Daitō, making it difficult to communicate and forge connections with other Taiwanese and Okinawan workers. Likewise, Taiwanese workers could also be distrustful of their peers. Okiyama Hideo, who managed the boiler room in the refinery, recalled an odd conversation with a Taiwanese who refused to socialize with his co-workers: “That man graduated from an agricultural school before the war and was completely fluent in Japanese, but refused to read in his spare time, stating ‘In my country, you cannot just read or publish any book you like without issue. I do not want to be tainted by bad ideas, and I do not have to be misunderstood when I return home.’”³⁶ Implied in this statement was the Taiwanese

³⁴ “Taiwan rōdō-sha to no kōryū (chiisana kokusai shinzen)” in *Daiichi Seitō Kabushiki Kaisha 20-nen kinenshi* (1980), 194.

³⁵ “Rō shōgun no nageki” in *Daiichi Seitō Kabushiki Kaisha 20-nen kinenshi* (1980), 197.

³⁶ “Jimide shinbōdzuyokatta Taiwan no yūjin-tachi” in *Daiichi Seitō Kabushiki Kaisha 20-nen kinenshi* (1980), 198.

were potentially surveilled by their peers while they worked abroad. Although the *Daiichi* yearbook framed these stories as interesting or amusing, they reveal conflicts and discords within the Taiwanese community.

The presence of Taiwanese seasonal laborers stopped in the 1970s. In 1971, the United Nations recognized the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the official China, resulting in Taiwan's withdrawal from the organization. In 1972, Okinawa was returned to Japan and the Japanese government officially recognized the PRC. The denationalization of Taiwan and the reintegration of Okinawa to Japan created uncertainties over whether the Japanese government would recognize Taiwanese legal documents. To replace the Taiwanese migrant laborers, sugar companies in Ishigaki and Minami Daitō brought in workers from South Korea. However, economic liberalization in the 1970s also caused the sugar industry to decline, and companies found it difficult to recruit Korean migrant laborers. To address the chronic labor shortage, the sugar industry began to scale down operations and invest heavily in mechanization.³⁷

Concluding Thoughts

The Japanese empire created circumstances that allowed the transplantation of sugarcane seedlings across archipelagoes, trained elite Okinawans to become agricultural and technical experts, and moved Taiwanese laborers to remote islands. These ties persisted into the Cold War, shaping the revitalization of the postwar sugar industry as well as the friendship between Okinawan and Taiwanese laborers in the remote islands. But lest we fall into the narrative trap

³⁷ Minami Daito Sonshi, 555.

about technological progress and the positive connections between Okinawa and Taiwan, it is also important to remember the dark side of this relationship. The proliferation of POJ 2725 in 1924 did not resolve famine conditions in Okinawa nor did they benefit Okinawan farmers. The transplantation of NCo 310 aided the sugar industry boom in the 1960s and formed a basis of contemporary memories of inter-island friendship, but obscured are the stories of economic hardship, personal isolation, and political surveillance among the Taiwanese community. Historians have noted that the sugar industry placed Okinawa into a semi-colonial status under imperial Japan. Rather than interrogate the necessity of the sugar industry in the postwar period, Okinawan technical experts could not imagine an economic future separate from sugarcane. This too was a legacy of Japanese empire.