“Neocolonialism and Struggle in Okinawa from Wartime Mobilization to Reversion”

This presentation analyzes the meaning of the 50th anniversary of reversion of Okinawa to Japanese sovereignty through the frame of neocolonialism. While many Okinawan scholars have repeatedly characterized the region as under colonial rule under US Occupation, their position vis à vis Japanese rule bends disproportionately toward the language of coloniality, especially in the cultural and political spheres. Kwame Nkrumah’s 1965 *Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism* allows me to interrogate the economic significance of Okinawa to US and Japanese capital throughout the postwar period to reversion. Based on an analytical framework that focuses on the economic implications of the transformation of Okinawa into a militarized region (as opposed to simply islands of bases), this presentation discusses the threat that a series of struggles that began as a water struggle in the 1930s in Naha and adjacent territories posed to Japanese, and then US officials and corporations precisely due to their rejection of the developmentalist logics that drove these infrastructural projects in the first place.