Jason Wu’s Response Paper 1 on “The Cocktail Party”

Course: Japan 435 A

Name: Jason Wu (1936678)

Instructor: Professor. Davinder L Bhowmik

Relationships in Okinawa: Victims in “The Cocktail Party”

By reviewing “The Cocktail Party,” the movie presents the respective positions and perceptions of the three parties, Okinawa, Japan, and the United States. While Japan and the United States are trying to build long-term friendships through the event of the cocktail party, people on Japan's mainland are also trying to establish communications through the Okinawa people. The story depicts the underrepresented perspectives of the Okinawan people. “It provides insight into a situation of military deployment that has lasted nearly 70 years” (Party). Understanding the human relationships developed in Okinawa for hundreds of years, we can see a blueprint for the past and future relations between the United States, the U.S. military and civilians, and the people who live in the U.S. operating permanent military bases. “The film also challenges the prejudices felt towards the Okinawan people not only by members of the US military but also by representatives of the Government of Japan who continue to ask Okinawa to bear the burden of numerous military bases.” (Party) The story shows Uehara confronting his nightmares of what happened to his sister in the Okinawa wars. In addition, he tries to protect a young businessman’s quest for justice while at the same time searching for a way to save his business, illustrating the double-edged sword faced by all Okinawans. “They want their island back, but the base is an undeniable source of revenue and livelihood for many.” (Party)

In the movie, we have Hiroshi Uehara, whose ancestor has an excellent position for Okinawa, contributing to the peace between Japan and the U.S. military and the reconstruction of Okinawa after the wars. Kenji Ohashi is a businessman from Tokyo trying to establish business relationships between the United States and Okinawa. Major Lucius Porter takes charge of the U.S. military and invites Hiroshi Uehara and Kenji Ohashi to the Cocktail Party. Finally, soldier Wilson, as an essential character on the U.S. military side, causes the raping behavior of Naomi, Kenji Ohashi’s daughter. In this paper, who the victims are will be discussed. In addition, why they are considered victims and the relationships between Japan and the United States that lead them to become victims will also be briefly stated.

To begin with, Naomi Ohashi, the businessman’s daughter, is with no doubt a victim. She is raped by the American soldier, Wilson, and suffers both mentally and physically. Even though she consents to go with the soldier, she disagrees with the behavior of having relationships with the soldier. In addition, as Naomi cannot overcome the fact of being raped, her father, Kenji Uehara, can also be a victim. He is a victim of the political struggle between America and Okinawa (Doan). He loves his daughter. However, for his business and to build the business relationships between Japan and Okinawa and between Japan and the U.S., he tries to accept the Americans. Still, he is not seen on an equal level by the Americans. After the incident, he has to think of scarifying his daughter and give up on pursuing justice. “The history really does repeat itself.” (Seishin) By hearing Hiroshi Uehara’s story, the Okinawans and Japanese choose to fight for justice this time. They come forward and continue to pursue the soldiers' verdict.

Secondly, I see the Okinawa people as victims as well. The Okinawans are facing pressure from both Japan government and the United States. First, they want to live their everyday life on their island instead of having the U.S. military base. However, the political situation does not allow their wishes. So, they have no choice but to try to build friendships with the foreigners via the cocktail party. Secondly, the Hiroshi Uehara is forced to face a situation that he must mediate between Major Lucius Porter and the Ohashi family, which causes inconvenience to their “friendship” via the first Cocktail Party.

On the other hand, the marine soldier, Wilson, can also become a victim. From his statement, he says the girl, Naomi, consented to have a relationship with him. However, as I have concerned, due to the various background and cultural differences between Japan and the United States, Wilson believes that what happens later also consents to Naomi. According to Naomi’s testimony, she does give consent to have a relationship with Wilson. This is why judgment can be hard to place on the soldier. The whole incident happens because of different cognition about their consent in the relationship.

Therefore, on the flip side, the cultural difference between Okinawa, Japan, and the United States can reflect the harsh process of building their friendships during the peace age. Everyone has enough reasonings to become a victim.

# Reference

Doan, Martina. "Canvas Japan435A: The Cocktail Parties discussion." 21 4 2022.

Party, Cocktail. *Cocktail Party*. n.d. <https://www.facebook.com/cocktailpartythefilm/>.

Seishin, Chinen. "The Human Pavilion." 1978.