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Vortrag

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Making Homes, Building Empires: Women, Domesticity, and the US Military Occupation of Okinawa (1945 – 1972)

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In this presentation I examine domesticity as a crucial though hitherto understudied site of imperial expansionism in the US occupation of Okinawa. In the 1950s and 1960s, as violent confrontations erupted between the occupiers and the occupied over militarization of Okinawa as the “Keystone of the Pacific,” the islanders witnessed a flourishing of domestic discourses and practices where American, Okinawan, and Japanese elite women jointly pursued a series of activities related to homes and homemaking.

By doing so, they (re)defined the occupation as an occasion for feminine affinity and affiliation among women of diverse racial and national backgrounds. Drawing on insights from studies of gender, empire, and Cold War culture, I analyze how domesticity functioned as the “engine of empire” in US-occupied Okinawa, recruiting women as agents of American expansionism while at the same time feminizing (and thus obscuring) the deeply political nature of women’s involvement in post-WWII militarism and imperialism.

Mire Koikari is Associate Professor of Women’s Studies Dept, University of Hawaii. Her research interest includes gender, race, military, and empire in the Asia-Pacific region, with a specific focus on feminism and expansionism of the US and Japan in the 19th and 20th centuries. Her recent publications include *Pedagogy of Democracy: Feminism and the Cold War in the U.S. Occupation of Japan* (Temple Univ. Press, 2008) and *Cold War Encounters in US-Occupied Okinawa: Women, Militarized Domesticity, and Transnationalism in East Asia* (Forthcoming, Cambridge Univ. Press, 2015).

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