

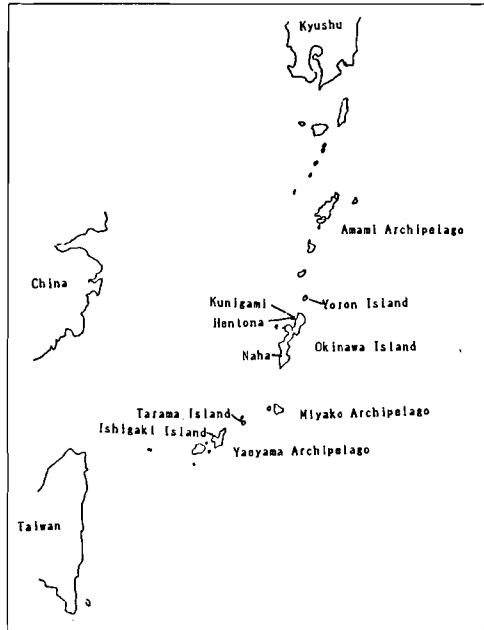
Liminal Experiences of Miyako Shamans: Reading a Shaman's Diary

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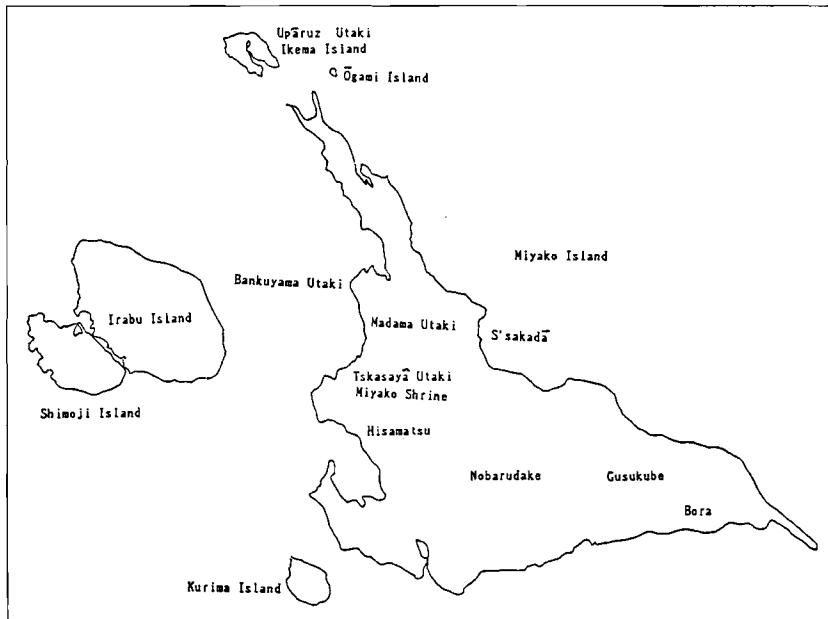
THE WORLD OF A MIYAKO SHAMAN

By definition the shaman is a liminal being. He¹ is a mediator between this and the other world; his presence is betwixt and between the human and supernatural. In a trance, possessed by the divine force, he becomes the focus of fervent attention of the client and séance audience. Manifesting the power of the gods, the shaman indicates what is causing the extravagant behavior of a usually frugal and submissive housewife or ensures the success of the enterprise that an ambitious businessman has just undertaken. Incarnating the ancestor suffering from severe punishments in the afterworld, he moans with pain, asking for pacifying rituals. Off-duty, however, the shaman's charisma fades away. He tends to be socially peripheral and morally ambiguous, his life full of traumatic incidents such as illness, divorce, and poverty (OHASHI 1980; PETERS 1981; SAKURAI 1973; SASAKI 1984; SHARON 1976). Miyako 宮古 *kamkakarya*,² who are believed capable of interacting voluntarily with the gods and ancestors and utilizing their power for the sake of clients' welfare, also show these what TURNER (1977) calls "liminal" characteristics.

The role the people of Miyako assign to their shamans roughly corresponds to that of "folk therapist"—religious figures who find out causes of domestic and personal troubles and solicit divine support to solve them through ritual and divination. As life style rapidly modernized, 50,000 residents of a formerly isolated island 326 km south of Okinawa (MAPS 1 and 2) now enjoy, like the rest of the Japanese, modern public facilities such as schools and hospitals. They also benefit from electric appliances such as VCR's for diversion, and fly 45 minutes to



Map 1. Miyako Archipelago and Ryukyu Islands



Map 2. Miyako Archipelago

Okinawa to shop or visit friends and relatives.

When they catch the flu, people will go to the hospital; when deciding to have a divorce, they go to court; and when their business fails, they might bother their acquaintances for financial aid. When modern medicine fails, when marital conflict persists, or when business problems continue, however, the Miyako people have turned, and do turn, to their shamans as a last resort.

The shaman's clientele come from various social strata—a divorced mother of three children working at a bar, a store clerk whose husband is a compulsive gambler, a hard-working carpenter whose wife ran deeply into debt, a middle-class couple whose only worry is that they are not blessed with a child, a company owner who wishes for more success, a doctor who returned from a large city, and so on. The problems the shaman deals with are also numerous—success in academic entrance examinations or business, child delinquency, debt, psychosomatic disorder, conflict between mother and daughter-in-law, and so on.

Successful shamans are very perceptive in grasping personal relationships in the family and becoming acquainted with its secrets or even those of its ancestors (illicit sexual relations, rape and assault, a curse uttered on a son by his father, abortion by an unmarried daughter, etc.), which would otherwise never be revealed to people outside the household. They confidently sing in divine voices and show signs of divine favor (see, for instance, ŌHASHI 1978; SAKURAI 1973; TAKIGUCHI 1986).

Clients' satisfaction might be psychological but sometimes their situations are indeed improved, for instance when a barren couple is blessed with a child, and shamans' help is heartily appreciated. Shamans, however, despite their pervasive influence over the islanders' domestic lives, tend to be looked down on with vague suspicion as socially marginal, morally ambiguous, glib-tongued, jealous, or loose in sexual and financial matters. Some shamans are targets of gossip for their behavior such as extra-marital relations, failure to pay debts, and involvement in gambling³; at least they are looked on as innately different.

Lay people believe shamans are innately *kamdaka* or *sādaka* (spiritually high born). Shamans hold more specific ideas of the rebirth of an ancestor shaman's soul: they are born to achieve what their ancestor shamans failed to do and more importantly to save people and the world.⁴ For instance, one shaman is destined to pacify divine ancestors, compensating for the neglect of his great grandfather whose religious activities were directed to the gods of the universe and sea.

Certain general characteristics are observable in their life histories. They tend to be born in poor and illiterate families, undergoing lonely

and often difficult childhoods because of ill health, poverty, and display of mystical powers (dreams, prophecies, convulsions, etc.). Although destined to be shamans, they first defy or are not aware of divine calling, then they are struck by divine punishment (*kamdāri*). This involves auditory and visual hallucination, insomnia, loss of consciousness, lack of appetite, physical pains, and domestic and financial misfortunes. During this painful initiation sickness, novices are exposed to divine teachings and receive various qualifications (*chōbo* 帳簿 or *chō* 帳)—for instance the ability to pacify recent ancestors, to sing in divine voices, to interpret dreams—directly from the supernatural. At the same time, they go to many accomplished shamans for divination and choose one of them as their mother shaman. Under their guidance neophytes visit the gods of many sacred sites (*utaki*) to absorb divine energy, which is to be integrated as their *mau* (individual protecting gods) (see LEBRA 1964; ŌHASHI 1980; SAKURAI 1973; SASAKI 1978; YAMASHITA 1977 for Ryukyuan shamans' initiation processes).

Having overcome these traumatic experiences, shamans open the path to the gods (*mts aki*). Yet after initiation their lives as well as their divine abilities exhibit a great deal of vicissitudes (intensive involvement in rituals, escapes from the gods into gambling, extra-marital relations, indebtedness, etc.); their secular lives and religious activities are far from peaceful and restful. Therefore, liminality seems to be an essential feature of being a shaman.

In this paper I would like to deal with this fundamental nature of shamans with the focus on one male shaman, NT (born in 1952). The question I want to address is: How does the shaman relate and react to the supernatural and explain troubles and trials in his life?

I study NT's case because it strongly exhibits the salient features of liminality. He has an excellent reputation as a powerful shaman. He is a social, open, and affectionate man with charismatic charm. He seems to be blessed with an inborn talent to gain the instant faith of his clients. His sincere concern, his insightful, appropriate, and practical suggestions, and his energetic performances of rituals have fascinated his clients as well as me.

However, off-duty he has failed to solve his own problems in many critical ways. He has failed at marriage twice already; the first one lasted only for a few months, the second one for a few years. In both cases his wives left him. What is worse, he is indecisive. In difficulties he literally escapes from rather than stands up to problems, which are thus aggravated until his family and friends intervene at the last moment and clear up whatever mess he has created. This leads to a vicious circle that worsens his personal relationships and alienates him from

his family and close friends.

Since I began my research on Miyako Island in 1982, NT has been one of my major shaman informants and I am very familiar with his religious activities and personal problems. Most importantly, during his initiation and for a few years after it, he kept a diary. In it he reveals in detail how his gods encouraged him to open the path to the gods, scolded him for his wrongdoings, gave him practical suggestions, imposed tasks upon him, and blessed him with knowledge and qualifications (*chōbo* or *chō*). He also tells how he responded to and reflected on the divine teachings. Following a general discussion on the nature of the Miyako supernatural and the means by which shamans communicate with them, I shall let him talk about his interactions with the gods. At the end I shall also incorporate other shamans' experiences to explain some factors which might cause various difficulties in their lives.

COMMUNICATION WITH THE SUPERNATURAL

An essential feature which distinguishes shamans from ordinary people is their direct and voluntary communication with the supernatural (LEWIS 1983; SASAKI 1984). I shall first explain the nature of the Miyako supernatural. The Miyako people recognize two kinds of supernatural entities in the entire cosmos—the gods and ancestors. Numerous gods (the god of fate, of the ritual plate, incense sticks, the north star, child-birth, etc.) dwell in the universe, the sea, the afterworld, and on the earth. Although there is no rigid hierarchy among them, major gods can be distinguished from minor ones; among the former are the sun, the moon, the north star, the gods who reside on the eight axes of the universe, earth, sea, and afterworld, and so on. NT and some other shamans conceptualize the creator, though not in the absolute sense. They believe that the father sun (*asa tida*) and the mother sun (*m'ma tida*) are manifestations of the only sun, which can be identified with the descending sun (i.e., moon) and also with the gods of fate. These gods dwell on the four axes of the universe and design and control everything in this world. They are by nature benevolent unless offended seriously by humans, who do so, for instance, by destroying sacred sites.

Humans, once dead, go to the afterworld, where they are punished according to their conduct in their lifetime. Ancestors inform their descendants of their sufferings, asking for pacifying rituals; their requests are manifested in misfortunes the offspring suddenly face (failure in business, divorce, child delinquency, disease, etc.). Well-appeased ancestors obtain power to protect their offspring; those who died a miserable death or have none to conduct pacifying rituals could turn into evil spirits. Certain distant ancestors are deified and enshrined at sacred

sites, but they are differentiated from the gods. They are figures who contributed to founding the Miyako society by cultivating the wasteland, unifying the people, inventing something useful, and so on. These divine ancestors, especially divine heroes (*tuyumshū*) who ruled the island from the 14th through 16th centuries, often become shamans' *tsdz*, the protectors through whom accomplished shamans interact with various gods and ancestors.

It is through their *tsdz* that shamans solicit help from numerous gods, ask the gods for relief for ancestors afflicted in the afterworld, expel evil spirits, eliminate pollution, and so on. However, during initiation novices' relations with the supernatural are undifferentiated; they are directly possessed by various gods or divine heroes and sometimes go astray, tempted by suffering ancestors and evil spirits.

Shamans hear, see, smell, touch, taste, dream, and sense physically and intuitively. For instance, just above or inside his head NT hears his *tsdz* say, "Take the path to the gods. Stand firm . . .," and sees a beautiful goddess with long hair in a colorful kimono accompanied by a girl and a boy, an old woman bent with age in a yellow coat who is a jealous neighbor of a client, and a man holding a pinwheel who looks like an official in the Ryukyuan period—an ancestor of another client. He smells an odor of powder from a courtesan who met a miserable death many years ago, and dreams a dream in which his *tsdz* scolds him for his idleness or teaches him procedures of clearing away pollution for a certain ritual. He touches an incense burner for the *ukamagam* (household-protecting kitchen gods), instantly perceiving domestic problems of a client, and senses an acute pain in the eye, which reveals that the father in one family had been struck by his son-in-law and had been hurt in the eye. He feels nausea, which informs him of pollution caused by death or birth, or senses intuitively the strength of the power a certain shaman or sacred site possesses. Polluted food tastes rotten to him even if ordinary people relish it.

Messages communicated in this way contain diverse meanings such as: encouragement for the shaman's mission, blessing of power, revelation of knowledge and of the clients' and their ancestors' problems, and so forth.

NT'S INTERACTIONS WITH THE SUPERNATURAL AND HIS REFLECTION ON THEM

Since it is impossible to present all of NT's lengthy diary, some kind of selection was necessary. Here I shall explain how I edited it. NT's diary from June of 1974 (Fig. 1) through March of 1981 consists of two parts; one contains divine messages, the other descriptions of daily in-



FIG. 1. The title page of NT's diary 1974.

cidents and his thought. During the initiation period (1974–1976) the divine messages were communicated to him auditorily, that is, he heard divine voices. After initiation, dreams became more common. One characteristic of the revelations is redundancy both in style and contents. We find the same messages expressed in stereotyped phrases over and over, for instance to save the world or realize the gods. To satisfy conflicting demands of rendering revelations readable and presenting them as faithfully as possible, I chose more or less typical and coherent ones and translated them verbatim. To provide general contexts in which his religious experiences took place, I described his life history briefly. To offer more specific contexts in which he received particular messages, I also summarized his descriptions of critical incidents and thought. All the divine messages presented below, unless the identities of the deities are indicated, are given to him by his *tsdz*. In the following, comments on the shaman's experiences are indented.

THE DIARY: INITIATION PERIOD (1974–1976)

In his initiation days, NT lived in Okinawa, attending college and working as a waiter at night to supplement the allowance his parents sent him. He visited many shamans and numerous sacred sites to soothe

his *kamdāri* (initiation symptoms), which had troubled him since the previous year (1973). Around June of 1974, he met a female shaman, MI, who initiated him into the path of the gods and helped him receive *mau* (individual protecting gods). Although the encounter with this “wonderful” shaman first impressed and excited him very much, this initial rapport did not last long. An unfortunate incident which turned out to be disastrous to NT was that MI’s daughter, KY, had fallen in love with him and MI arranged their marriage, stating that the gods wished NT and KY to be husband and wife. First of all, he was not mentally and physically ready for a “happy” marriage. Second, being a student, he did not have the financial resources to support a married life. Third, he was in doubt of his “love” for KY, being apprehensive about her childishness. Feeling his lack of affection, KY often threatened to break up the relation and took tranquilizers in the fifth month of her pregnancy (11/5/75). Despite all these troubles, NT and KY celebrated their marriage in December 1975, which was dissolved two months later under discord and MI’s intense meddling. In March 1976, NT left Okinawa for Miyako to be a shaman there. His son, KA, was born in April but has been raised by MI.

Around June of 1974, NT was anxiously awaiting divine visits every day. He was euphoric with communicating with his *tsdz* (protector) and determined to “follow the teachings of the divine hero Yunapasiidz 与那覇勢頭, [his] *tsdz*” and “devote [himself] to people and the world, love the gods⁵ and attain *satori* on the true path.” However, occasionally anxiety struck him. He felt sick and miserable and repented that he had betrayed the gods. In summer he returned home. His sister, also being a shaman, could understand his difficulties and took him to many sacred sites. His parents, on the other hand, expected him to complete school and to obtain an ordinary job. One day, having quarreled with his father in a drunken state, he jumped into the sea. The following day his *tsdz* spoke to him as follows.

8/8/1974

*Haisa yōi!*⁶ My holy! *Irayoi*, My holy! The path of the gods is the path of the universe. *Haiyōira!* The path of the determined mind. The gods take hold of your life. So that there will be no injustice on this earth, be honest, open the path. *Haisa yōira!* The golden child born in the year of the dragon, you! Do not think your life is an ordinary one. The divine hero!⁷ The lords of the universe, the luminously shining gods! Be bright! Be radiant! The gods! The lords of the universe lead you to the path of the gods, to the presence of the

gods. You are infused with power and will be glorious. Rise, rise, rise! You will be led to the path and bring prosperity to your family. . . . One's path is different from another's. . . . Think of your parents; respect them. This is the mind the gods love. Happiness is a link between parents and children.

. . . The month of the boar. Your sister, born in the year of the boar, represents the gods. Become her right hand; join effort with her, devote yourself to her. The gods will help your sister establish herself on the path. You, born in the dragon year, must open the path. Your path and your sister's will lead to the farthest end of the world and will blossom and bear fruit. The paths will lead to peace and harmony. Worship the gods! Worship the gods! You are my precious child born in the year of the dragon. Do not lose your temper so quickly. Do not drink so much. Be resolute. It concerns your body and yourself, my dear child.

Haisayu! The Master of Niima!⁸ *Sāsāyōi!* (Fig. 2) *Hai!* The golden child born in the year of the dragon! *Sāsāyōi!* Do not be idle on your path. 'Take a path to Kunigami 国頭, Hentona 辺土名, even to Peking 北京, Tō 唐, and Yamato 大和.⁹ 'Take the path of the gods. Your parents expect a great deal from you. You must know why your

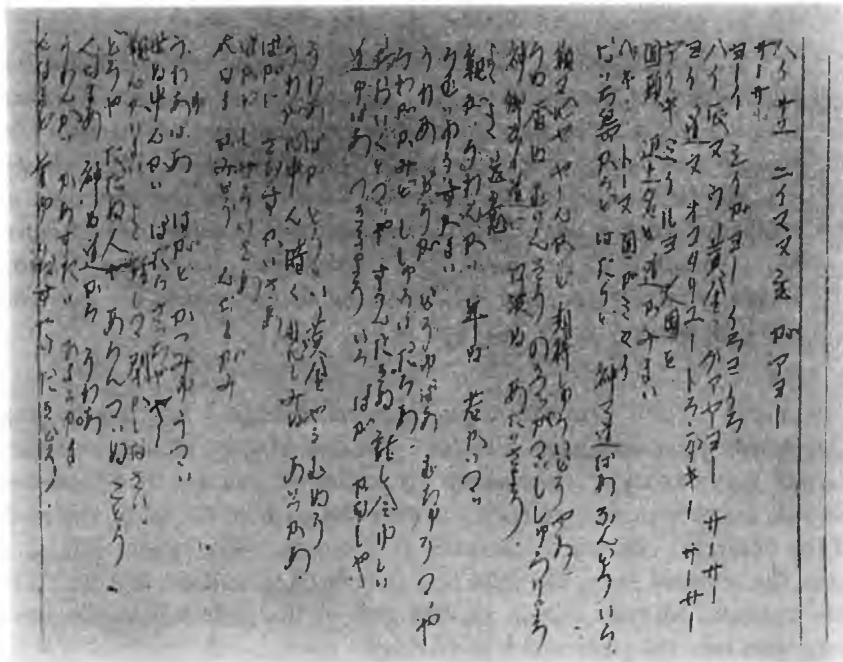


FIG. 2. NT's diary. Entry of 8 August 1974. Third page.

incense sticks did not burn well. In the presence of the gods, bad words were uttered.¹⁰ Your parents think you are too young, but you know about yourself. Do not quarrel with your parents. Talk to them and persuade them, my dear child. You are my precious golden child. If you feel depressed and sad, I [*tsdz*] feel the same way. I know about you. I take hold of you and let you set out in the world. Inform your parents that you are not an ordinary man. At present on the path of the gods, you are a chick just hatched; just now you popped your head out. Do not betray the gods. You shall learn; let my teachings soak deeply into your mind but do not reveal them to anyone. Talk to your parents, brothers, and sisters so that they understand you. . . . You will undergo hardships. You might think you are still young, but now, now, you must decide to take the path. "Someday" will be too late. You need your parents' help; be prudent.

You did not know about yourself yesterday, did you? Do you know that evil and good are always waging war against each other? You must not be tempted by evil spirits. . . . You dove into the sea; I made you do this. You purified yourself. Gushing water, water of life; pure and beautiful child! You must not go astray. The divine hero Yunapasiidz is always with you. You went into the sea. The moon was shining. Did you see it? Do you know why? Did you look up and see my face?¹¹ Be a shining man. Do not be idle. . . .

In shamanistic beliefs the Kan'on 観音 goddess is conceptualized to protect the entire family. Historically in Okinawa Kan'on worship became popular around the 17th century and the Kan'on temple was founded in Miyako in 1699. However, NT believes that his *tsdz*, who in 1388 sailed for Okinawa for the first time as a Miyako chief, brought back and spread that worship. On August 11, together with his sister, NT visited the site of the Miyako Kan'on temple and had the following dialogue with his *tsdz* and the Kan'on deity.

8/11/74

[*Tsdz*] *Hai!* You did not keep in mind what I had taught you. You caused your own great distress. On this Miyako Island, you have learned many things. Because of your idleness you are in difficulties. On this auspicious day, go forward, take the path of the gods, the path of the universe. Be careful in using your words. Today you will learn from the goddess here, the Kan'on temple (Kan'on-dō 観音堂). On this beautiful Miyako Island, on this gem of the gods where you were born, you take the path which is destined.

[The goddess of the Kan'on temple] I am the goddess of the

Kan'non temple. Believe in the gem of the gods, gem of the universe, child born in the year of the dragon! You must know about your path and attain *satori*. Dragon-year-child! How do you think of your path and yourself? Answer me.

[NT] Yes, I am the child born in the year of the dragon. The gods blessed me with my very life. I was born to pray for the peace of the world and to attain *satori* on the path of the gods. I will be faithful to the teachings of the gods. I will take the path of honesty, integrity, and truth. I will be patient and as hard as iron. I promise to cultivate myself.

[The goddess] What do you think of yourself? Why did you speak so rudely to your mother and to your *tsdz*? Answer me.

[NT] I apologize for my wrongdoings. I did not mean what I had said. I was weak, pitiable, and arrogant. I expected *amae* 甘え (indulgence) from my mother. Evil spirits possessed me and made me miserable. I regret my imprudence. Please pardon me.

[The goddess] From now on never neglect your duty. Amend, endure hardships, and guard yourself; you must save people. You told me you would be determined, sincere, and noble-minded. At no time must you indulge yourself. Your path will be found in your learning. Many people will approach you and many difficulties will you face. Pray to the gods and attain *satori*. People hold various ideas and take various paths. You must listen to the gods and conduct yourself as the gods teach you. Promise me.

[NT] Yes, I am the dragon-year-child, I promise. I am happy to go out into the world guided by the gods.

[*Tsdz*] You shall learn many things from now on. Vanity, greed, and *amae*, these things you must not bear in mind. Do not forget your *tsdz* is always with you. Realize that your vanity would destroy you. When knowledge is revealed to you, you must not become greedy. Anywhere, any time, behave yourself on the guidance of the gods. Nor should you expect *amae*. You must work hard, and learn. Only when your effort is acknowledged by divine grace, will you attain *satori*. Endure hardships, stand firm, learn many things. . . . On this fully blooming day, dragon child, reflect on these words, read them carefully. On this path of words, do not think your knowledge enables you to write these things. From now on, I [*tsdz*] will have you hold a pen and take the path of the gods. You are just a baby. Today what I show you is yourself: you are lying on the bed, drinking milk with your eyes still closed. From today on, compose yourself and walk the path. Now you have just opened your eyes. Do not forget the image of the baby. I will close today's teachings.

NT went back to his apartment in Okinawa. Communion with the gods brought him happiness, but he was uncertain about his future and frustrated with his inability to live up to the gods' expectations. He did not like to study. He liked to go out and have fun, his mind was restless and weak. He felt as if he was living in a dream.

8/19/1974

Dragon child! You must determine your path. I [*tsdz*] will bless you with my power. . . . The path of the gods is the only one. . . .

[Another deity] *Sarisari*, auspicious, auspicious. Today you shall attain *satori*, child born in the dragon year! I am Ototachibanahime 弟橘媛.¹² Realize the gem of the universe, the gem of the gods, the dragon-year child. Do not act against the path of the gods, go wherever your mind takes you. The path is in *chūdō* 中道 (the golden mean), which leads to redemption of the world.

[*Tsdz*] My compassion, the path of the divine hero, the divine hero Yunapasiidz is with you. I will lead you to *satori*. First, when you look and listen, rely on me. Second, you shall have *nibishi* (root rocks which symbolize the souls of the gods), your family treasure. . . . Tenth, build *musubi*¹³ (relationships) between numerous lands and islands, absorb power and step forward, my child. Do not be idle on the path of the gods, *chūdō*, the path of truth. Keep this in mind and move on; you shall have my glory. Do not disobey your parents or your children will break your heart. Happiness is a link between parents and children. . . . [I know the] hardships you have undergone, your agony. I know all about you. Be tolerant and blossom. From today on in your broadmindedness lies my compassion. My power is yours too. But do not be boastful, never become conceited, dragon child, never. When you were born, on the day of your birth, I predestined it to be so, my child. Rouse yourself; the world will be reformed. This is the power of the gods and of the path. People in the world are so numerous. Do not be taken in by their glib talk; be careful, be resolute. Rely on me, you shall be infused with power. Rise, realize the path of the gods, the path of the universe. Until now you have taken various paths, you have seen various minds. Learning is what you are supposed to do. Sometimes you were disturbed by evil spirits. Purify yourself and receive power. Rise up over people.

The saw, the saw you were given, the power of this saw in the future must be gained by you; the power to expel evil dreams and epidemics. You were given a hammer at Kanikuhama beach, the sacred site of the divine hero Yunapasiidz on Yoron 与論 island; a hammer (*tsuchi* 槌), to

cultivate (*tsuchikau* 培う), to make wishes come true (*tsuchikanau* つけ叶う): it will be a hammer of luck.¹⁴

10/2/1974 (in Okinawa)

Auspicious, auspicious, auspicious! Today, the day of the rat, from the sacred day, take a step. . . . The sun throws light on this great world, and all the islands are illuminated. . . . You lack firmness. Know that you need to cultivate your mind. Take the path of learning. You must undertake the reform of the world with the right conduct of your own: "to reform" means to indicate wrongdoings of people and lead them to the right path. Men always look for immediate success, only seeking their own interest. Revere the gods, believe in the root, realize the origin, spread the teachings of the father god, never shake your faith. Whatever hardships might befall you, think of the father god. Keep in mind that you represent the gods. . . . I will watch you.

Never indulge yourself, always act on the divine teachings, praise others rather than yourself, do not speak well of yourself. I tell you that the island of Miyako will not be saved unless you rise up. But keep this secret. Strengthen your mind.

Today, offer prayer from the bottom of your heart. If you want to go to Miyako, go without worries. Go and receive divine teachings. Work, study, and have fun. But at any moment, in any circumstance you must not be off guard. Be as hard as iron, take the path. You will meet with happy affairs in your trip to Miyako. . . . The path of learning is accompanied by hardships. I understand you very well, I guide you. . . . I am compassionate. You must let divine compassion infiltrate people's minds. Now the divine hero is beside you. Talk! Talk! Talk to me (the divine hero)!

NT had been engaged to MI's daughter but was not sure that he loved her. He wanted to believe in MI's word that the gods designed their marriage. "Anyway it is too late to cancel our engagement." He was also insecure about himself. He regretted his indecisiveness and lack of patience. However, he was still on good terms with MI and tried to remind himself of his mission.

4/21/75 (in Okinawa)

Dragon child! Develop ability to perceive things intuitively. . . . I will let you hold a pen; develop ability to write down divine teachings. This ability I have already bestowed on you. From the path of sincerity, from the path of divine writings, realize the gods.

5/13/75 (in Okinawa)

Holiness of the young master of the universe; you must be the young master on this earth Be youthful, save people; the divine hero expects a great deal from you. Embody the gods. . . . Consolidate yourself; whatever hardships might befall you, stand firm and set out into the world. Cultivate patience, your path is a long way; wait for chance . . . , the divine hero has been raising you from truth and honesty, immaculate dragon child! Be youthful, be brave; in this world I will make you rise up as the child of the gods.

On May 26 NT returned to Miyako, where he was relieved from his worries about his fiancée. He felt relaxed, assured, and peaceful. He was euphoric with divine blessing and admired the beauty of nature and the god who created that beauty. He was confident that he could sing in divine voices loudly. He identified himself with his *tsdz* and even the gods themselves, "I am the child of the gods. I am the divine hero Yunapasiidz. My voice is the voice of the gods and of the divine hero. . . . I will spread my wings and soar up into the universe. . . . I will become the rock deeply rooted on this earth and spread my branches forever." On May 30 he revisited the Kan'on temple in Miyako.

5/30/1975

[The goddess] *Sarisari*, I will rise. The dragon-year! I, the goddess Kan'on, have been waiting for your birth. From today, from this auspicious day on, keep my words in mind, build *musubi* between the universe and earth, child of the gods. Do you know how long I have been waiting for you? Worship me. Build *musubi* between the universe and earth, take the path of the gods. From the Kan'on goddess, from the gods of the universe, on June 24 in the year of the tiger (1974), on the path you had taken, you were a baby who just opened its eyes. Since then you have relied on me, you have been saved by me. From now on revere the path of the Kan'on goddess and of the divine hero. You are to be granted virtue, success, and prosperity. Realize this and go forward. On this auspicious day, on this day of the rat, on the path to which you were brought, you have received much knowledge. Accept it gratefully, pray. . . .

The divine hero, the lords of the universe, I am the goddess of Kan'on. Build *musubi* between the path of the gods and Buddha; both are closely interrelated. Realize this. The Kan'on goddess am I, who enlightens the world and saves the divine hero. Seek me, dragon child. . . . Rise, move on, receive the power to save people; be a living god. I will entrust you with worldly affairs. I have been waiting for

this day. . . . The divine hero sailed for Okinawa to save this beautiful island, Miyako.¹⁵ This path, on which the divine hero had gone through many hardships, on this path of Buddha, build *musubi* between the Kan'on temple in Okinawa and that in Miyako. Pacify the soul of the divine hero. I will ask you to accomplish this. Together with the one born in the snake year (NT's fiancée) take the path. Dragon-year child, you have grown up so fast . . . a blessed path. Go forward, go forward on the beauty of the path. Unless you take this path, you will go astray to this person, that person, this god and that god. You shall learn the true path, which will bring peace to the world. Pray to the gods, attain *satori*. Your path is straight open and becomes wider and wider. You will find only good things on it. You will be the person to save the world. The goddess of Kan'on will watch you. Stand firm, fulfill my expectations. People will come to realize your power when you speak and sing in the gods' voices. Show compassion, do not lose your temper, be prudent. Tolerate people's rude words. Embody divine teachings and spread them to the world. . . . My child, the sutra you recite represents the truth. The Kan'on goddess will endow you with this power, this sutra. Be confident, expel evil spirits, disease, pollution, and illusion. Purify the path, which leads to the *musubi* between the universe and earth. I have been waiting for your birth, your growth. Only few people recite this sutra, *kiyomikyō*. I grant this to you and your sister. The Kan'on goddess wishes to inform you of these words. From now on, never go astray. Personify the gods and take this path. With your sincerity you will soon open your path; identify yourself with the universe, earth, and the gods.

On July 7 NT returned to Okinawa, where his problem was awaiting. "One year has passed since I met my fiancée, but I have never had satisfying feelings in our relationship. I always have some doubt in my mind." On July 18 with MI's help he received his *mau*, individual protecting gods. He was ecstatic. He felt as if he was ascending to the universe and to the presence of the gods. However, insecurity soon came back. "I want to be a shaman even if I face many hardships. This is my calling. I wish I could love her. I wish she could love my father, mother, brothers, and sisters. Otherwise please find for her a wonderful husband." On August 22 he returned home without notifying MI and his fiancée. There he could compose himself and became intensively involved in religious activities. He and his sister visited many sacred sites on Miyako Island as well as Tarama 多良間 Island.

8/26/75

Haiyō hai! (Fig. 3) Worship the gods, rise up. . . . The father god, the path of the gods of the holy Tarama Island . . . go forward, go forward, dragon child. You were begotten by the young master of the universe, the child who illuminates the world; rise above the world, above people; assimilate divine energy, energy of the universe. Rise up. The gods of the universe, the master of *tsdz*, be sensitive, the master of this world. Together with your boar-year sister, in Miyako, Okinawa, Yaeyama 八重山, Yamato, Peking, and Tō, rise up, be prosperous. The true god, the holy spirit dwells in you. Raise the east pillar, the center pillar, and the pillar of the mind.

The truth will resound as far as thousands and tens of thousands of miles. Holy Tarama Island, the prosperity of the world, *Hai!* On the path you have come to rise up, on which you were granted to hold the *chō* (qualification) to sing in divine voices, from now on flourish in the world; on the path you were begotten, be successful. The holi-

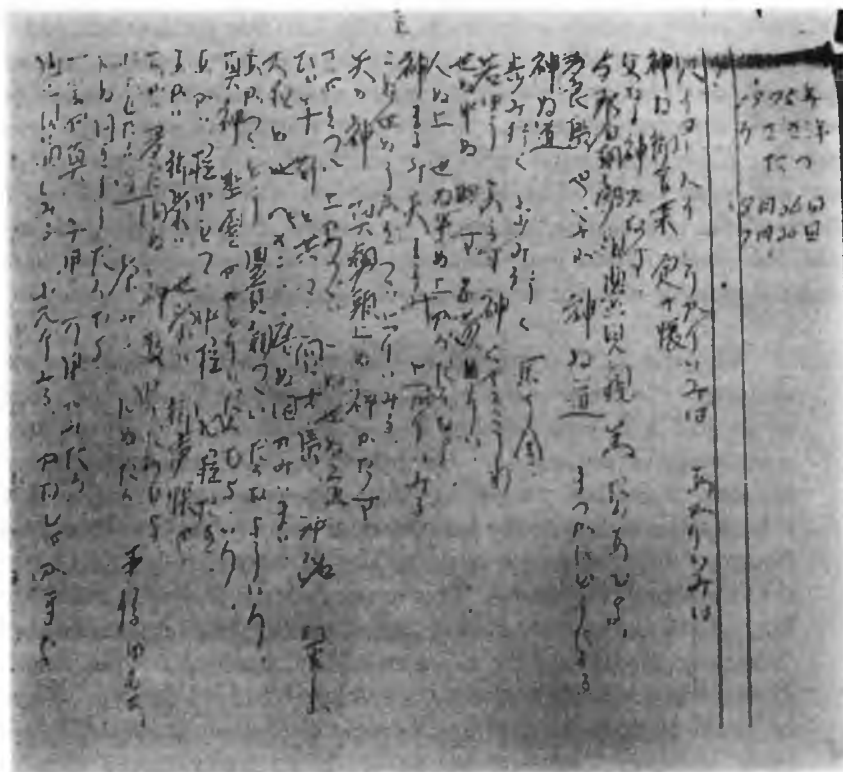


FIG. 3. NT's diary. Beginning of the entry of 26 August 1975 (20 July in the lunar calendar).

ness of the divine hero Mtabaru 土原, the holiness of the divine hero Nakasuni 仲宗根, the divine hero Migurumudz 目黒盛, the divine heroes Kinskyā Nagitatsu 金志川那喜太知 and Kanimudz 金盛,¹⁶ the holy master of Niima, the holy divine hero Yunapasiidz, the god of the true *tsdz*, the holy god of examination, the sun god; rise up. Seven layers of the sea, the holiness of the young master of the universe, the master of *chō* of heavenly virtue, the holy ability to interpret dreams, to write down divine teachings, to perceive matters intuitively and to think clearly, the holiness of practice. You shall be rooted on the true path.

Open the path and go out into the world. . . . In September, in the month of the gods, on holy days receive what is determined, absorb it, thereupon go forward. Carry through your tasks. Your wishes will come true one by one, shining and beautiful, thanks to your sister born in the year of the boar. Her name will be renowned for her virtue. Be resolute, rise up, truly you are fortunate. Make your name in the world, see into people's minds. The master of divine voices rises up. You! The path of the golden child must rise up and advance forward from now on. Study to obtain the certificate of the *gūji* 宮司 (Shinto priest), as the gods direct you, as the universe directs you. The basis of a loving marriage, the root of a strong bond is based on caring between husband, wife, and children. As the gods please, as the universe pleases, go through, child begotten by the gods. . . .

Hai! the dragon year, your path as the gods guide you, as the universe guides you; do not entertain illusion. From the truth, from the straight path, as the gods orient you, do not harbor shallow ideas. Establish your mind, your body, and the gods. Your sister's path will rise up. You, dragon child, together with your sister, think, consolidate your mind and body as the gods take you; rise up. The wonder, the marvelous sister and brother, the family line which inherited the miraculous power. People will wonder at you in admiration. Look at the divine sign, the north star, child born in the year of the dragon, rise up, be courageous, do not worry about trivialities, be confident. Oh! I expect much of you, child of the gods. The savior was born in this world, the child of the universe was born, the living god! (Fig. 4)

8/29/75

. . . September, open the path of the gods. Granted to you is the *chō* of divine voices, granted to you is the *chō* to prescribe things, granted to you is the *chō* of success in the world, granted to you is the *chō* of heavenly virtue, granted to you is the power of Shingon Mikkyō 真言密教 (esoteric Shingon Buddhism). From the holiness of Shinkai 心海, the master god of Terayama 寺山, you receive divine *chō*. The holiness



FIG. 4. Page of NT's diary, sometime towards the end of August 1975.

of *mikkyō* 密教, *kiyomikyō*, *Shingonkyō* 真言經 (Shingon sutra), *nyorai kyō* 如来經 (tathāgata sutra), *amidabutsu* 阿彌陀仏 (amitābha), *gongensama* 権現様,¹⁷ the Kan'on goddess, the holiness, the beauty. Open divine *chōbo*. *Hai!* The divine hero, receive his holiness, the master of *tsdz*, the master who bestows on you the true path. From now on, on the root of *tsdz*, rise up. You are blessed with such a holiness. The beauty of the path! Take the path, rise up, fulfill the gods' expectation together with the divine hero as his words guide you.

Absorb energy from many gods, receive their power, be prosperous. The divine priest(ess) will rise up. Receive the power to save people, receive divine *chōbo*, receive the power from the master of *chō*. . . Receive qualifications from the gods. Begin your practice with divination and take a steady path. In three years you will take the path of the *gūji* (Shinto priest). Bring happiness to your marriage; you and your wife, both of you will flourish as the gods lead you, as the universe leads you.

NT was filled with divine energy. He was grateful that the gods had cultivated him and blessed him with wisdom. He realized that he was born together with his sister as a part of the

divine design to establish harmony between the universe, earth and humans and to make people know the gods. He decided to conform to the divine law.

However, when he returned to Okinawa, the problem of his prospective marriage distressed him very much. His fiancée was pregnant, and he ardently loved the baby. She too was upset about his indifference. One day he failed to go to her house and did not call her either, although he knew she had been waiting for him. On the following morning, very agitated, she came to him and threw her engagement ring back at him. Having returned home she took tranquilizers. She was in the fifth month of her pregnancy. He felt disqualified as husband and father. He wanted to save his baby by any means. He drove a car to the sacred site of his *tsdz*, the divine hero Yunapasiidz, there he prayed to his *tsdz* with all his mind. He determined to raise his baby even if it were born with defects.

In December with much ceremony, NT wedded his fiancée at the largest shrine in Okinawa. Two months later, his brief and trouble-ridden marriage ended in a very humiliating divorce. Surrounded by all his wife's relatives and with MI shrieking, "Even if I threw you into a ditch, no one would help you climb out," he affixed his stamp on the divorce paper as ordered.

NT went back home. Together with his sister and mother he visited the Bankuyama Utaki, one of the most sacred places in Miyako. He described his communion with the god in the following way.

2/28/76

I felt chilled at the awe-inspiring atmosphere of the sacred site. When I held my incense sticks in my hands, the god penetrated into all parts of my body and mind. I was possessed by the god. I was the god. Many priestesses were watching me. I was myself and not myself. The god came into me. I was grateful for his visit. A priestess said, "The god is very pleased. You must sing and dance. Do not feel shy and ashamed." Her words sounded like permission from the god. The god sang through me. People became excited, danced, and sang. What will be the divine intent? I look forward to my future. If I can be of use to the gods, I will entreat you to use me as a tool.

He knew that the divine power indigenous to Miyako had been revealed to him.

In March, NT went to Okinawa to vacate his apartment.

Alone in his room he reflected on the body and mind, human desires, and love. He sensed that the excellence of mind is found in its ability to love. His *tsdz* consoled him that the child of the gods encounters many ups and downs.

3/2/1976

Today, today's path; tomorrow, tomorrow's path. The gods will test you, the universe will test you. The child of the gods has many ups and downs; you shall rise up; you shall be struck by great waves and high waves; you shall advance in the world. Look through people's minds, perceive them intuitively. You shall encounter chances, you shall recite the names of many gods. Human paths are numerous; the divine path is absolute. Humans take diverse paths; human minds change in various ways. However, there is no mistake on the divine path; this is the only path the gods determined. On this path you must go forward.

Excel in the path of the gods, excel in the path the gods determined. Do not entertain illusion. Renounce the human mind; acquire the divine mind. Take the path as the child of the gods, my child, my dear child. It is me, your protector, the master of *tsdz*, the master of Niima, the divine hero Yunapasiidz. No matter what may happen, before everything call my name; under my name the universe will descend to you. I am the master of your *tsdz*, I take the path with you as your protector. I think as you think.

From now on, never allow yourself to behave for pleasure. On your path, you have learned many things and have met many people. You have overcome many difficulties. Believe that you will prosper on your path. Learn many things, realize the laws of the world, be sensitive to the miseries of the world, watch the contradictions of the world, reform the world, take the path of the gods. The universe will promise you that the heavenly *chō* will descend to you, your qualification. You will practice as a shaman. Build *musubi* on Miyako Island with your power, the peace of the island depends on you, it is in your hands, in yourself. I tell you—when you were born, the gods had already designated your fate. Move forward, take the path of the gods.

NT returned to Miyako on March 17 to establish himself as shaman there. He imposed on himself a task to seek the gods and realize the path of the golden mean (*chūdō* 中道). He became aware of the necessity to integrate ancestor worship and belief in the gods of the universe. In April he was endowed with the power of the sacred lion and the dragon god.

4/27/1976

With its hair bristling up and a red flame gushing from its mouth, sending out a cloud of spray, the dragon god is dancing; rising up. The one who opens the path of justice, reforms the world, protects the sacred, and blows out breaths to purify the world. Soaring up is the sacred lion; the one who purifies and eradicates evil. Everything becomes calm.

Truly look around; certainly thriving island, beautifully thriving people; let you receive their prosperity. The path of the true universe, the great sun of the true universe, its virtue is granted. Certainly splendid, its virtue is granted to the dragon year. Receive it. Worship the gods, know such a blessing. Radiating stars shine beautifully. Fulfill divine expectation. Excel. Be insightful.

The three pillar gods of Miyako stand up. On the root of the Miyako Shrine stands the divine hero Yunapasiidz; recite his name, receive the true *yū*,¹⁸ the true path.

The holy gods stand up and prescribe things. The task of *tsunagi* with the water deity of the sacred well, In'gā, carry this out. The *musubi* with the universe of the boar year, seven layers of the universe, Kuitsunu 古意角 and Kuitama 姑依玉, carry this out.¹⁹ The steps of divine tasks. The holy god of Upāruz at Ikema 池間 Utaki (sacred site), the heavenly *chō* to prescribe things, the master judge, the master of life, the master of fate; build *musubi*; rise up. The truly prosperous world will emerge.

Shine in the holiness of Mdzka Utaki, excel in brilliance, dragon child. Marvelous is the path of the gods. Do not commit wrongdoings, do not make mistakes. Under divine guidance you take the path to which you were brought, child of the gods! Pacify the holy master of Niima, regain his glory. The masters of Madama 真玉, the master and mistress of fate, after whom you were named, the holy Kanidunu, the holy Matsumiga, high deities.²⁰ The prosperity of the root, the prosperity of the universe, recite the holy father sun, the mother sun of the north. Excel in divine glory. The god of Pazakamin Utaki is invited, the *utaki* founded by Grandfather Tōgani, and the god will rise up.²¹ Excel, dragon child!

But NT was disappointed with his own weakness and the gap between how he should be and how he was. "I like to go to drinking places. I should not step in. I must show people the right path, but I am vulnerable to temptations—a pitiable man." He entreated the gods to bestow on him courage and to protect him from evil. "May I be faithful to the path of the gods, gain repu-

tation as the child of the gods, strengthen my body and mind and establish the gods so that I will not stain the path." His *tsdz* instructed him again as follows.

8/3/1976

. . . take the path of the golden mean. The universe protects this world, the dawn of Miyako Island. Peace, justice, and fame are granted You are blessed with power to advance on the path of the gods, the path which integrates the universe, earth, and humans. The path of the universe (天), the above line represents the path of the universe, the below represents the earth; humans (人) are placed between the universe and earth. To take this path is your destiny.

8/6/1976

On the root of the path you made a mistake.²² On this root of the path do not make mistakes again. The path of the gods is a long way; on the root of your mind be faithful and honest. Do not taint your path, advance on the path of the true *tsdz*. Do not taint your mind; keep this in mind. If you are entrapped in greed, you will be struck by misfortunes. What did you do yesterday? You were led to illusion and were possessed by evil spirits. You know about yourself and that you were polluted. From now on you must sense danger when you face illusion; you must not be tempted by evil spirits; you must not spoil yourself by evil doings. Realize that your lack of appetite is a warning from your *tsdz*. Both your body and mind must be healthy. You must not close the path of the gods.

On August 10, 1976, NT dreamed a dream in which he was given a book, *Miyakojima shominshi* 宮古島庶民史 (The history of ordinary people of Miyako Island) by an old man. The dream suggested that he was designated to be a shaman in charge of the entire island of Miyako, as well as of various domestic problems of the islanders.

These divine messages, as we have seen so far, have several purposes: to inspire him to become a shaman, save people, and reform the world; to bless him with knowledge and power (qualification); to impose upon him tasks; to inform him of his growth as a shaman; to admonish him for his weak points and wrongdoings and teach him ideals of the path of the gods; and to console him for his hardships.

NT'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE SUPERNATURAL AFTER INITIATION (1978-1981)

After a few years of enthusiastic involvement in religious activities, NT seemed to get bored with listening to the grumblings of middle-aged female clients.²³ He wanted to have fun with his friends and to enjoy his youth. He started to visit bars at night, sometimes spending all of his day's earnings on one night of drinking. He began to get up very late in the morning and avoided seeing his clients, often leaving home to escape them. He involved himself in politics and administration and became the president of the youth association (1978-1982) in Miyako. He organized many activities such as volleyball games, marathon races, song contests, drama performances, and so forth. He was also appointed a member of the city committee for social education.

However, his religious activities dwindled and he faced a flat rejection in his attempt to receive the certificate of a *gūji*, a Shinto priest. His *tsdz* had told NT that he must obtain the *gūji*'s certificate and take charge of the Miyako Shrine (8/26, 29/75). Therefore he wanted to take intensive courses given at K University. Recommendation was required to attend the course, but the supporting organization of the shrine, opposed to *kamkakarya* presiding over their rituals, turned down his request.

At the beginning of 1979, NT's first wife returned to him with their three-year-old son. She hoped to try again for the son's sake. However, their living together failed after a three-month trial period, and she went back to Okinawa, leaving the boy in Miyako. Soon her mother came to fetch the boy back. Around September he met a woman at a bar. They fell in love and she became pregnant. NT married her in 1980, although they had many disputes and disagreements even before marriage.

During those days he received divine messages mostly through dreams, which sometimes suggested tasks he should realize but many times seemed to reflect his anxiety, frustration, and uncertainty.

1978 (date undesignated)

Old shamans (females) are performing rituals at one of the row houses in Okinawa. I visited one. I was told they had been waiting for me. Outside a boy was practicing Japanese fencing. I went out. I saw a different scene. I came to a place like a garden, where there was a pool. I set a toy boat afloat. I went eastward (upward). I was told to worship the waterfall there.

1978 (date undesignated)

I came from the west to Papillon (a bar NT's brother ran), into which came three men. One of them, who had tried to steal my car, picked a quarrel with me. The other two took my part. I went outside. . . . Areas around my house turned to woods. There stood a door, which I opened. In the woods, I went to the north, where I met a man. He held a log and tried to beat me with it. I became frantic to escape, but my legs failed to move. I apologized. He threw stones at my face, but I could not protest.

When NT dreamed the following dream, his first wife and their son were living together with him. One night he returned home around two o'clock. He did not feel good and could not sleep well. He woke up and offered incense sticks to the kitchen gods. Feeling heavy, he went to bed again.

1/2/1979²⁴

I was driving on the street around my house; my son KA was in the car. Some evil spirits tried to carry off the car. The door opened and KA fell out. . . .

In July he had a significant religious dream, in which he dreamed of the sacred site located at the central point of Miyako Island. He interpreted the telescope in the dream to be one of the island's axes.

7/*/1979 (exact date undesignated)

I walked toward the hillside. I came to a narrow lane, on both sides of which were a row of trees. I saw a sacred site on the left. I walked down the lane, where I found what looked like a microphone. It was a retractable type and looked also like a telescope. I picked it up. . . .

At this point, NT's life deteriorated. He was drinking almost every day until very late. He felt frustrated that he could not straighten out his life. He heard his *tsdz* scolding him as follows.

3/12/1980 (revelation)

. . . you must know your mind and think of your situation . . . , dragon child. Your mind is corrupt. You neglect to develop it. You should not be like this. Amend your mind. You must conform to the path of the gods. Watch changes of the world; fulfill my expectation. Disasters from the universe and on the earth might befall you at any

moment, you never know. To the path of the gods devote yourself; take the path which is splendid, as the universe guides you, as the gods guide you. . . . I will make you excel among people. But you are stupid, you changed your mind. You are ignorant of the world, stupid! The gods will let you learn; watch people and the world.

Although remarried, frequently he had a dream of his son, who in the previous year had lived with him for a brief period and soon had been taken back to Okinawa.

4/5/1980

I went to KY's [his ex-wife's] house in Okinawa and took my son out, saying I would buy candies for him. But MI [ex-mother-in-law] as well as KY's sister were watching me. My son and I fled to the airport but I was afraid MI and KY's sister might catch up with us, so I decided to go by ship. . . .

NT was low in spirits. He felt his life aimless, although he knew he must start something important. He did not like himself. "I am foolish, miserable. I am wasting my time. I am dirty. I lack beauty. I lie to the gods and don't know myself. Am I a man? Am I human?" He prayed to the gods to pardon his wrongdoings and asked them to spur him on and discipline him. The following are dreams he dreamed in those days.

5/23/1980

I entered the ancient world. I hid my body and lurked around, trying to escape. I sneaked into a certain house, where I saw a large world map. People there were impressed with it. A man ran after me and attacked me. I fled by the back door. . . .

6/2/1980

There was a committee members' meeting for social education at school, but I could not attend it. For this reason, they decided the vice-president would go to Japan in place of me. I have great potential, but I am not hard-working, nor responsible.

In the dream below his *tsdz* seems to have asked NT to correct a mistake committed in the past by a certain shaman.

7/2/1980

It looked like the eastern part of Miyako. I visited a factory in a factory area to talk about a baseball game we were supposed to play

with the factory workers. After a while they returned to work. I went out. I looked for certain people and was told they were in the waiting room. I looked inside and found some middle-aged women. I went toward Gusukube 城辺 and came to the seashore. There was a baseball park where people were about to play a game. I was told to join one team. I did. A different scene appeared. Near the park, I found a tunnel, a road and a grotto cave. I went into the cave and found a row of white coral. I walked around. The god said furiously, "It is Mitsuishū who did this." Mitsuishū seemed to have carried away some coral. He returned it in fear of divine punishment but left it on the ground. . . . There came a bus on which I rode. The bus passed by the airport. I went southwest and walked around. I saw a tomb below the cliff. I felt odd.

In those days NT was working with an old shaman, M, to identify the residence of the god of S'sakadā 白川田, the source of the water supply of Miyako Island. The following dream seems to be related to the task.

10/25/80

At a craggy seashore in the north of S'sakadā, under the rocks there was a pool from which my friends were drinking. I tried to drink out of my hands, but the water got muddy. I dug up and removed some stones. When I took a large sandy rock away, the water sprang up. I was very pleased. Toward the north, a man in black was reciting a sutra, facing the southwest. I watched his back and left. In the depth of the forest above S'sakadā, people from Tarama Island were cutting down bamboo. [A different scene] At a certain athletic meet people had to arrange numbers; the number 4 was written on a small piece of paper, 8 on a large piece. . . .²⁵ [A different scene] I was running in the rain toward the market in Okinawa. On the way I found a beautiful bell pepper on the street.

NT's second marriage was not a happy one. He and his wife had a great deal of discord. One day he came back home after midnight and quarreled with his wife. She threatened him that she would have an abortion the following day and divorce him. That night he had the following dream.

12/15/80

On the baseball ground (Figs. 5, 6), a black ball was thrown at my head at a furious speed from the west. [A different scene] At a vacant lot, my mother, born in the year of the boar, and U, born in the year



FIG. 5. NT's diary. Entry of 15 December 1980, first page.

of the rat, were there to gather firewood. I arranged for a car. On the eaves of the neighboring house I saw sparrows, at which children were pointing. But the children and sparrows all disappeared while I was absent for a moment. We loaded the wood into the car, which turned out to be bottomless. The wood fell on the ground. I said, "Imagine there is a bottom." Then a narrow line was drawn on the four sides and we could load the wood. [A different scene] The seashore of Bora 保良 (Fig. 6): I was walking on a beautiful beach (a foreign island?). Odd people were pursuing me. I escaped and entered grotto caves (there were two), which were very long and built up by stones. Through the caves I came to an open place, which was a sacred site. I found several stone statues with foreign faces. I wondered whether or not I should hide myself in the tomb. . . .

NT felt as if his life energy was weakening because of pollution caused by his relatives' deaths. He was sick and uneasy when he had the following dream.



FIG. 6. NT's diary. Entry of 15 December 1980, second page.

3/28/81

I was walking from Hisamatsu 久松. There seemed to have been a quarrel; a man was lying on the road. I passed by and went straight. On the right side, there was a hut, where my friend (the same age as I) told me that there had been a drunken brawl and one man was killed. Around the baseball park, a drunkard born in the year of the horse was driving, accelerating his speed. I felt uneasy, followed him and found another man collapsed beside the road.

Having dreamed such a "confusing and indescribable dream," he prayed to the gods that no misfortune would befall him.

NT AFTER 1981

NT's second marriage failed in 1983, although they had a girl and a boy successively in 1980 and 1981. Its failure might be attributed first to discords between his wife and sister and second to financial difficulties. His wife always felt NT depended too much on his sister, who was dominating him. His wife back-bit and slandered the sister,

but he took his sister's side. The couple quarreled many times and his wife often returned to her mother's house. He also began to stay away from home, spending nights at bars or gambling. Furthermore he opened a store which sold Buddhist altar fittings, borrowed money from the bank and tried to have his wife run it. However, she did not and the store was closed all the time. His life, both familial and shamanistic, deteriorated.

NT's wife left him in February and they were divorced in September of 1983. In this divorce he obtained the custody of his children and started to raise them by himself. However, raising two small children as a single father seemed to be a heavy burden for him. He often escaped from home, leaving his children in his parents' and siblings' care, forgetting himself in gambling. His parents, siblings, and friends considered him a failure with no hope of getting back on the right track. His relationship with the family worsened and he isolated himself, often not joining family gatherings.

Recently he began to straighten his life out, accepting many clients from other islands such as Tarama, Ishigaki 石垣, and Okinawa as well as from Miyako. Furthermore, having received a book from the god of the afterworld in a dream, he expanded his specialization. This now involves pacifying rituals for the recently deceased, in addition to the ones for the gods and distant ancestors, who were his previous specialties.²⁶

Once I asked him. "Why? Everybody has a high opinion of your shamanistic activities, so how come you do such stupid things to defeat yourself? Don't the gods say anything when you gamble?" He answered, "The gods scold me a lot, and I apologize each time. My poor *tsdz* always tries to protect me. But the gods said, 'We are fed up with your apologies. We will not accept your words. Show your sincerity with your conduct. Next time it will be a matter of your very life.' When I am scolded I feel very scared. Everything around me becomes threatening. All of my power is gone and I feel like a mere shadow. I am miserable and weak, I know. . . ."

ANALYSIS

Why does NT behave so destructively? As is well described in LEWIS (1971), trance-involved religious phenomena tend to represent marginality. An NT-like shaman is also reported by PETERS (1978) among the Tamang in Nepal. His major informant, Bhirendra, was a powerful shaman but could not manage financial matters. He was heavily indebted to his brother-in-law. Despite the fact he was paid by Peters and was a very good patron at local taverns, he did not repay his brother-

in-law at all.

Personality

The shamans I met in Miyako are in general unstable and vulnerable in personal relationships and crisis situations. NT is one of them. He is fun-loving, dependent, and indecisive, having been spoiled as the long-awaited eldest son among seven siblings. He once said "The gods made a mistake to have chosen me as shaman." He cannot endure difficulties and escapes into drinking and gambling in order to forget about them and to ignore the divine voices which keep watch on his behavior and scold him for his wrongdoings. The best way to solve a problem is to ignore the problem itself! NT's sexual relationships do not last long, since he is always looking for a mother-substitute who will nurture him and allow him to behave naughtily.

Shamans experience trance almost every day and rely on altered states of consciousness such as dreams, visions and voices as the basis for their judgment, therefore they might be less pragmatic in dealing with daily matters. They might feel empty when they are not possessed and need to fill emptiness by depending on god-substitutes (drinking, sex, gambling, and so on).

Ability to communicate with the supernatural

This ability makes certain persons shamans, setting them apart from ordinary people. It is their identity and means by which they draw clients, and a source of their therapeutic self-healing energy (TAKIGUCHI 1987a). This ability, from a layman's viewpoint, is utilized by shamans to solve clients' everyday problems; however, shamans think it is also to be used to achieve loftier and nobler aims, such as accomplishment of tasks imposed by the gods. This leads to protecting the path of the gods, redeeming the world and strengthening their own power. The divine tasks involve identification of the residences, names, and roles of gods unknown (for instance, the gods in China) or forgotten to people, reconstruction of ruined sacred sites, prevention of their destruction, pacification of the divine heroes who built and ruled Miyako from the 14th through 16th centuries, protection of the entire island by holding a religious office at important sacred sites, etc. These are difficult or "painful" to be achieved and provoke strong anxiety in the shaman. For instance, as he was ordered by his *tsd̄z* (see 5/30/75), NT pacified the divine hero and reinforced *musubi* (relations) between the temple of the Kan'on goddess (who protected his *tsd̄z*) in Okinawa and that in Miyako. However, he has hesitated to respond to the calls from the warrior gods of Yamato (Japan proper). If he correctly identifies the

gods, he can become more powerful, by establishing relations (*musubi*) with mightier gods and absorbing more divine energy. However, if he wrongly identifies them, misfortunes strike not only him but also his family.

Sometimes society does not allow shamans to undertake their tasks, as is seen in the following cases. The beach encompasses sacred entrances to the sea, and it has to be protected, but it also provides an excellent site to build hotels, and shamans with little political influence cannot prevent their construction. A luxurious hotel is already in operation on Yonaha 与那覇 beach, a sacred site related to a divine hero, and more are planned. NT was told to obtain the license of the Shinto priest and to protect the Miyako Shrine, which enshrines the three pillar gods—three divine heroes who founded Miyako (8/26, 29/75). But the supporting organization of the shrine stoutly rejects “backward” *kamkakarya*. A female shaman had a dream in which she was sitting naked in the most significant sacred site, Tskasayā Utaki. She felt ashamed, looked for clothes, and found a white robe for shamans hanging from the ceiling. She interprets this to mean that she should accept the role of the *utaki* priestess, but her claim has not been acknowledged yet. It is said that young and powerful shamans are more often visited by the gods and assigned difficult tasks. Those who retreat from the tasks (like NT) must worry about resultant divine punishments (misfortunes, deprivation of the power, etc.).

Shamans believe that their power can be accumulated by strengthening relations (*musubi*) with more powerful gods and absorbing more divine power. However, lay people evaluate shamans' powers by whether or not their divinations are realized and their rituals produce good results. Unfortunately neither hard work, honesty, nor accomplishing divine tasks ensures enhancing these aspects of their ability and shamans are not insensitive enough to ignore the laymen's evaluations. Sometimes unfortunate incidents occur after shamans conducted rituals. In a certain ritual NT warned the client that grave misfortunes might befall the family unless they conducted more rituals for the gods. Several days later, a child of the family was killed in an accident. NT was in a panic, gnawed by painful feelings. I said to him, “You were right. You are not responsible for the child's death. You had already warned them. You should not worry about this.” However, he seemed to have associated this incident directly with the decline of his power. Why did he not precisely forewarn the client of the accident? Why did the worst misfortune strike the family after he had conducted the ritual, which was supposed to have produced good things?

Several years ago, one famous shaman who used to attract many

clients became frenzied because she could not sense anything any more. This shaman now spends her time visiting other shamans, back-biting and complaining that she has been cursed.

Clients

Clients are sources of shamans' income and are probably required to help maintain their self-esteem (see also ŌHASHI 1980). Rituals conducted at clients' homes engender (at least for a few days immediately after the rituals) joyous optimism, in which shamans can feel well satisfied for their utmost effort and enjoy the greatest gratitude of their clients; but clients can also be their burdens and frustration, as NT (and others) state(s):

Even before clients show up at my house—at the moment they think of visiting my gods for divination—I start to carry their burdens. For instance, when a client has an ancestor who died in pain of stomach cancer, my body reacts in the same way. “Problems which are deeply rooted in the ancestor” especially distress and drain me. I tell clients what my gods clarify; the gods always reveal the truth, so clients may think my divination nonsense, but it is their ignorance that keeps their eyes off the truth. Even if the wishes shamans make on their behalf are accepted by the gods, rituals may not yield immediate effects; however, as it is said, “the path of the gods is a long way,” they must believe in the gods. Some clients are very stubborn and dependent, neither listening to divine advice nor making any effort to improve their situations. They just want a divine miracle.

While I was in Miyako, one client wanted the recovery of her schizophrenic brother and delinquent son who had already fathered two children but was always drinking and fighting. She had been separated from her husband for twenty years, although she has not consented to divorce and has been taking care of her bedridden parents-in-law. NT always told her not to carry too many burdens; first to work out her own and her immediate family's problems; then to take care of her brother's problem. However, she did not comply with his advice, wishing all the problems could be settled at once and complaining that none of them yet saw a solution.

To the regret of many shamans, most clients regard them as easily available human resources for problem-solving and want to get back what they pay. In reality, however, shamans do worry about the consequences of rituals and their reputation among clients. It is also believed that the gods send the client to them, thus their avoiding the

client amounts to refusing (or at least evading) divine duties. This also results in a poor reputation with the client and a decrease in clientele.

Since shamans are not protected by an institution they must maintain their identity and make a living by means of divine ability and clients, both of which are unstable and sources of anxiety. Deprivation of the power, meaning the denial of shamans' identity, does not lead to their safe return to ordinary society. Heavy burdens are carried by their sensitive personalities. The more powerful the gods who possess them, the heavier their burdens are. By accepting and integrating the burdens into themselves, as in the process of psychotherapeutic individuation, they can develop their potential as shamans and humans.

Curses

I am least acquainted with this aspect of Miyako religion and have never thought this to be significant in explaining shamans' downfalls. Most lay people are not preoccupied with curses either, but shamans place importance on this element as a cause of the decline of one's fortune. Anyone can curse his or her victim. However, if the victim becomes aware of the curse, he or she can send it back to the aggressor, who in turn will suffer from its consequence. One old shaman, whenever she saw me, complained how she lost all her flesh, having seen in a dream that her rival shaman, M, had performed a cursing ritual at the pier; the following day she went there and confirmed its trace. NT attributed his involvement in gambling and consequent debt to M's curse uttered upon him at the four important sacred sites. NT once worked with M, known as powerful but aggressive, to identify and establish the residence of the god at the source of the water supply (see dream 10/25/80). During this process, they could not agree on the exact site of the divine residence; consequently NT left her. Unhappy with his withdrawal, she put a curse on him at the four sacred sites, stating that he had stolen the money from the fund he had raised to accomplish this task. Now he discovered this curse and the whereabouts of the four sacred sites, therefore, he told me recently, he could return to the right course. He feels much more reassured.

Intense jealousy among shamans is a well-known fact. Many shamans speak ill of their peers, exaggerating their rivals' lack of competence. It may not sound odd to hear that an unsatisfied shaman places another under a curse. Although I am still puzzled as to how the curse exercised adverse effects on his life, NT is happy to have realized the direct cause of his downfall, "I always wanted to right my life, but I repeatedly failed to do so. Now I have regained my confidence and I can concentrate on my calling." If he can refrain from

gambling, perhaps the curses which had entrapped him into such ungodlike conduct might indeed be removed from him.

Apart from their vulnerability, shamans contribute a great deal to Miyako society as folk therapists, bringing the power of the gods to solve widespread human suffering. The divine energy they embody also allows ordinary people (bound by rules, driven by efficiency belief, tired, bored) to experience sacred or "communitas" feelings (TURNER 1977) and to refresh themselves.

NT looks like a typical trickster or sacred clown. Absorbed in the role of the divine messenger, he embodies divine compassion, dignity, and wisdom. Returning to the flesh and bone human, he loses himself in pleasure, displaying human weakness and stupidity. Probably because he is always weak, silly, and hurt, he can understand and sympathize with clients whose problems might be caused by their weakness and stupidity. The money-less and family-less state is one ideal of religious figures, as St. Francis embraced his Lady Poverty, and Saigyō 西行 is said to have kicked down his small daughter who clung to him when he renounced the world. NT is made to be so not by his will but by his weakness and perhaps by divine intent.

NOTES

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1. To avoid inconvenience of such expressions as "he or she," or "his or her," I use "he" to signify a shaman—either female or male—when the sex of the shaman in the text is irrelevant.

2. I have transliterated indigenous terms as my informants pronounced them. The Japanization of Miyako dialect is progressing and the younger generation prefers using Japanese or Japanized dialect. Some of the terms in this paper are Japanized ones or Japanese (e.g., *chōbo*, *musubi*, *nyorai*). For some terms we cannot find corresponding Chinese characters, therefore Chinese characters are provided only when appropriate. For place names in this paper, see Maps 1 and 2.

3. Prior to the Second World War, whose end brought about freedom of religion, Ryukyuan shamans had repeatedly experienced severe persecution, as their "sorcery deluded the populace." (Ōhashi discusses the history of persecution in ŌHASHI 1982.) As for current public reactions, see TOMOYOSÉ 1981 and *Aoiumi* 1980.

4. I describe Miyako shamans' belief briefly below in the text; however its comprehensive discussion is beyond the scope of this paper. For details see TAKIGUCHI 1987b.

5. The term *kam* 神 (god or gods) is used here. In this language the singular takes the same form as the plural. NT told me that in his diary the term represented the Miyako gods in general. Another term *nus* 主 (lord or master), is often used to refer to an individual god, for instance, *yū nu nus* (the master of *yū*, wealth), *uika nus* (the master of *uika*, worldly success), and so on. In principle I use the word "god" to translate *kam* and "master" or "lord" for *nus*. Both *kam* and *nus* are also used to signify ancestors, especially deified ones, e.g., the master of Niima 根間主, although customarily pronounced *shū*, Niima nu shū. Shamans draw a line between the gods and ancestors even though the same terms are used.

6. Indigenous terms without translation are all taken from ritual chants.

7. Although there are several renowned *tuyumshū* (divine heroes), here the term *tuyumshū* refers to his *tsdz*, the divine hero Yunapasiidz.

8. The master of Niima is an ancient shaman believed to have originally come from Japan proper. At the beginning stage of his initiation, NT could not distinguish the master of Niima from his *tsdz*.

9. All these places symbolize "places far away." Kunigami and Hentona are located in the northernmost part of Okinawa, Tō refers to China, and Yamato to Japan proper (see Map 1).

10. When incense sticks do not burn well, it signifies something bad, for instance the gods are not happy with the person who offered the incense sticks.

11. NT's *tsdz*, Yunapasiidz, worshiped the moon; the message therefore can be interpreted that the *tsdz*'s face is reflected in the moon.

12. NT cannot explain why Ototachibanahime, a consort to Yamatotakerunomikoto 日本武尊, possessed him.

13. *Musubi* is a ritual act, by which relations between different entities (the gods of various sites, the gods and shamans, etc.) are consolidated and interactions of divine energy are facilitated.

14. Once NT made a trip to Yoron Island, where he found a hammer at the bottom of the sea. Around the same time he picked up a saw on the street of Naha 那覇, the capital of Okinawa.

15. This part refers to the historical fact that NT's *tsdz*, the divine hero Yunapasiidz, opened the trade route with Okinawa and paid tribute to the king there (in 1388).

16. The divine heroes Nakasuni (who ruled Miyako around the 15th century) and Migurumudz (who unified war-torn Miyako around the 14th century) together with Yunapasiidz are deified as the three pillar gods of Miyako and enshrined in the Miyako Shrine. Both Mtabaru and the Kinskyā brothers were powerful early in the 16th century, the former on Tarama Island and the latter in the eastern part of Miyako.

17. Here we see Buddhist and Shinto influences in shamanistic beliefs. In the Ryukyus, Buddhism (the Shingon and Zen 禪 sects) flourished from the 14th through the 16th centuries under royal patronage, but declined greatly after the Shimazu 島津 invasion in 1609; Shimazu prohibited Ryukyuan priests from studying in Kyoto and disseminating teachings to the public. Shinkai, a famous Shingon priest, was said to have practiced asceticism in Terayama on Tarama Island and to have spread Shingon Buddhism to the islanders. Gongen worship is the most accepted form of Shintoism, seven out of the "eight Ryukyu shrines" enshrine the gods of Kumano 熊野 Gongen. The Gongen temple was founded in Miyako around 1611. As for Buddhist and Shinto influences, see FUJII 1976; MIYAKE 1976, 1978; SHIMAJIRI 1978.

18. The concept *yū* signifies abundance and fecundity.

19. The concept of *tsunagi* almost overlaps with that of *musubi*. The sacred site,

utaki, and the sacred well are considered to be husband and wife. The Ingā is the well sacred to the Tskasayā Utaki, to which the progenitor couple Kuitsunu and Kuitama descended in ancient times.

20. The child at birth is given a divine name, which is chosen from among several names of the gods and ancestors. NT was named after the couple deities of the Madama Utaki, i.e., Kanidunu and Matsumiga.

21. NT's great grandfather Tōganishū was a famous shaman. He perceived a god descending to Pazakamin, where he founded a *utaki* (sacred site).

22. No information is given on this "mistake" in NT's diary.

23. It is usually the senior housewife, representing the household, who comes to the shaman to solve domestic problems.

24. The dates from January 2, 1979 through March 28, 1981 are based on the lunar calendar.

25. The numbers 4 and 8 in shamans' belief usually refer to the four and eight axes of Miyako Island on which major sacred sites are located.

26. Shamans have their own specialties. Some are good at performing rituals for the gods and distant ancestors; others for ancestors. Shamans who specialize in death-related rituals are called *sungam kakarya* or *gusō zas* and are distinguished from ordinary *kamkakarya*, for whom death is strictly taboo.

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