

# Miyako Theology: Shamans' Interpretation of Traditional Beliefs

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## INTRODUCTION

The Miyako archipelago consists of one central island, Miyako, and seven smaller islands: Ikema, Irabu, Kurima, Minna, Ōgami, Shimoji, and Tarama. These constitute the Ryūkyūs together with three other island complexes: Amami, Okinawa, and Yaeyama.<sup>1</sup> The Miyako archipelago covers an area of 227.04 square kilometers, located halfway between Okinawa and Yaeyama (see Figure 1). Its population totals 62,629 inhabitants, eighty per cent of whom live on the largest Miyako Island.<sup>2</sup>

Miyako is a flat, triangle-shaped coral island. The highest point measures only 114.6 meters. Therefore, the island is exposed directly to summer typhoons. Otherwise it enjoys a subtropical climate throughout the year. Even in the coldest season the temperature averages from 10° to 15°C. Rain falls heavily from the middle of May through June. During the hottest season (July through September) ocean breezes provide some relief from the intense heat. In early fall, typhoons often strike the island. They cause serious damage to crops, houses, livestock, and so on; however, the rain which accompanies them is always welcome. There is abundant rainfall (2,247.2 mm) in Miyako, but the porous soil does not retain water, which seeps underground and eventually flows into the ocean. Thus the island tends to experience drought.

The Miyako Islands form one administrative unit, Miyako County, which is divided into five sub-units: one city (Hirara), three towns (Gusukube, Irabu, and Shimoji), and two villages (Ueno and Tarama). Hirara includes the northern half of Miyako Island and two islands offshore near the northern tip, Ikema and Ōgami. Gusukube covers the southeastern quarter. The southwestern quarter is divided between Ueno

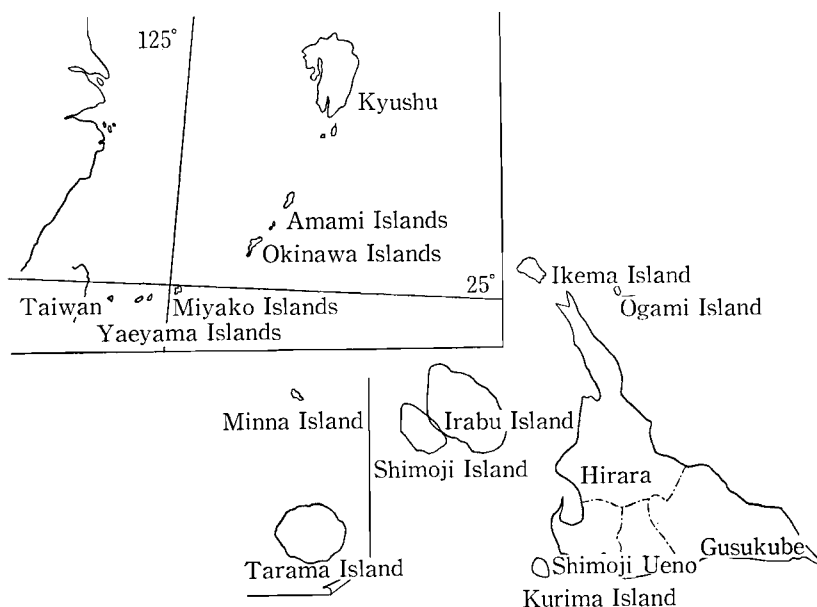


Figure 1. Miyako Island and its archipelago

and Shimoji. Kurima Island is affiliated with Shimoji. Two adjacent islands, Irabu, and Shimoji, form one town, Irabu. Two isolated islands, Minna and Tarama, located halfway between Miyako and Yaeyama, belong to Miyako County as Tarama village (see Figure 1). Administrative offices are located in Hirara, which is also the business and commerce center.

Forty per cent of the population (24,613 out of 62,629) were active in the labor force in 1980. Among them, thirty-five per cent (of the total labor force) engaged in agriculture, about one thousand persons were full-time or part-time fishermen and others were engaged in manufacturing, construction, commerce, in finance and insurance firms, in transportation and communication, and in public service. In Hirara, commerce and service industries have greater significance than agriculture; but in other areas of Miyako, agriculture is the backbone industry, absorbing more than half of the work force.

Transportation within and outside the islands is provided by automobiles, ships, and airplanes. Miyako and Kurima, Ikema, Irabu, and Ōgami Islands are connected by ships. Jet airplanes fly between Okinawa and Miyako (45 minute-flight), and Tarama and Miyako are connected by both airplanes and ships. As described above, present-day Miyako is an increasingly modern, technological society, characterized,

for example, with such electrical appliances as refrigerators, TVs, vacuum cleaners, washers, and video-recorders.

Various foreign religions (Christianity, Tenrikyō, and Sōka Gakkai, for example) coexist, and indigenous religion still plays a dominant role in people's daily lives. Indigenous religion operates on various levels such as the community, family, individual, and so on. At the community's sacred sites, often called *utaki* or *mutu*<sup>3</sup> (see below), priestesses officiate at numerous rituals, praying to gods for a good harvest, successful fishing, health and safety of community members, successful academic achievement of students, and so forth.<sup>4</sup>

There is also another kind of religious specialist who mainly engages in domestic (family and individual) rituals. They are called *kamkakarya*, *munus*, or *kamnuptu* and have the ability to make direct and voluntary contact with gods and ancestors. They utilize their divine power for the sake of clients, engaging in rituals and divination to solve the problems brought before them (e.g., marital crisis, business and school failures, prolonged disease). Judging from these characteristics, I identify them to be shamans,<sup>5</sup> and the focus of this article is shamans; their theology or their interpretation and organization of traditional beliefs.

#### SHAMANS AND PRIESTESSES: NT AND TS SIBLINGS, THE MAIN INFORMANTS

Shamans have been distinguished from priest(esses) in the academic tradition (Lowie 1965; Park 1938: 10; Sasaki 1983: 88–95, etc.); the former are inspirational individuals, the latter institutional functionaries in some kind of religious hierarchy. However, this demarcation is not very clear in Miyako. In many communities, priestesses are selected by divine lottery<sup>6</sup> from among community women of a certain age span (e.g., above 40, between 40–60). Some, not all of them, have the ability to make direct contact with the supernatural to some extent and do engage in domestic rituals—e.g., *upuradasi* and *mazirumma* priestesses of Ōura community (Kamata 1965a: 181) and the *kakaryamma* priestess of Sarahama community, Irabu Island (Sakurai 1979: 127–134). Among my informants, HS, a *yuzas* priestess who officiates at rituals together with a *tskasa* priestess at Atsumama Utaki in Hirara, has been well-known as a shaman for more than thirty years. Furthermore, sometimes Miyako shamans exercise influence over community religious matters. Before selecting community priestesses, people often go to several shamans to have them divine for suitable candidates, or community priestesses several times a year visit shamans to certify whether or not the gods are satisfied with the rituals they have conducted. When something extraordinary happens, they go to shamans on behalf of the community

for divination and rituals. For instance, in the K community, people destroyed the residence of the well goddess to construct a road. After that, there were frequent occurrences of accidents on the spot, and they employed a shaman to reconstruct the residence of the goddess. In present-day Miyako, shamans are regarded as experts in things related to the supernatural, and their influence is pervasive in people's daily lives.<sup>7</sup>

I interviewed approximately ten shamans and noticed that religious knowledge was unevenly distributed among them. They attempt to interpret and verbalize their religious experiences on the basis of Miyako tradition. Talented shamans develop elaborate theologies; others can account only partially, following cultural precedents (*cf.* Sakurai 1973: 324). Differences can be attributed to many factors, the levels of education and intelligence, locality, creativity, eagerness to organize one's religious experiences, willingness to learn from old people, and so on.

Among the shamans, I worked intensively with sibling shamans, NT (brother, born in 1952) and TS (sister, born in 1947). The siblings are unique in many aspects, e.g., education, age, sex, and living experiences outside Miyako. Most of the Miyako shamans are females of rather advanced age.<sup>8</sup> Although they are articulate and their intelligence level is well above average, most of them received only a few (or several at the most) years of school education; some are illiterate. Their living experiences are limited to Miyako. On the other hand TS finished high school and NT went to high school and college in Okinawa. NT has also traveled to Kyūshū, Kansai, and Tokyo. Both of them are very active as shamans, drawing clients from many communities (sometimes other islands, e.g., Minami Daitō Is., Tarama Is.) and diverse social strata (see Takiguchi 1986b).

Their theology is by far the most elaborate among the shamans encountered. Theirs should not be considered to be 'the' Miyako theology, but their version is significant by its sophistication, elaboration, and comprehensiveness. Except where noted, the description of the belief system presented below is drawn from these siblings. When I use information from other sources (other shamans, lay people, general beliefs shared by most Miyako islanders, etc.), I indicate its source. The uniqueness of the siblings' version in Miyako tradition (to what extent their version is unique and to what extent traditional) is discussed in the concluding section.

#### POTENTIAL TENSION AMONG PROTAGONISTS IN THE MIYAKO COSMOS

The siblings consider potentially tense relationships among three protagonists—gods, ancestors, and humans—of the Miyako cosmos to be a

dominant theme or an organizing principle of indigenous religion. Gods reside by nature in the universe (*ting*), the earth, the sea (*ryuguu*), and the afterworld (*nijja* or *gusoo*). Humans live on the earth; once they die, they go to the afterworld. The shamans I encountered emphasized the benign nature of the gods. NT learned from his protector (*tsdz*):

Gods are all loving and almighty. Gods are shining lights, radiating affection and compassion. The sun god throws light equally on the poor, the rich, and sad people, joyful people, wild flowers, birds, plants, and trees.

However, not all the people are grateful to the gods, and some of them even threaten their existence. For example, Hirara city planned to convert the site of a sacred well, Funasukugaa, into a parking lot fifteen years ago. A businessman had his restaurant built on an *utaki* (sacred site) which enshrines the *ting* god who judges right and wrong. A Japanese corporation purchased Yunapa beach, which encompasses sacred entrances to the sea, and constructed a resort hotel. The gods sent sickness to these "aggressors." People who abandon the *ukamagam* (the kitchen gods) may develop eye diseases.<sup>9</sup> Those who fill up sacred wells tend to have eye and abdominal ailments. A blind child may be born into a family which destroyed an *utaki*, or the child may suffer from polio. The gods also ask shamans to prevent the destruction. The goddess of Funasukugaa used TS as her messenger to warn the people that the goddess would cause drought or let tidal waves strike the island. That year (1971), rain indeed did not fall almost for three months and the city gave up the plan to turn the sacred well into a parking lot.<sup>10</sup> The *ting* god of the *utaki* possessed HS, who implored the businessman to stop building on the site of the *utaki*. However, HS's effort was unsuccessful, and this god's residence (*ibi*) is now under the building's restroom. A popular belief says that no business which occupies this building will succeed, and some have already failed.

Siblings think that humans have the freedom to decide whether or not they will interact with, and solicit support from, the Miyako gods. The household-protecting gods, such as the *ukamagam* (kitchen gods), the *tukurugam* (household protector), and the *yu nu kam* (the gods of wealth), do not by nature dwell in houses. Humans ask the gods to settle in their homes. An individual is not endowed with *mau* (individual protecting gods) when he or she is born. He or she asks the shaman to conduct rituals, which enable him or her to receive *mau*.<sup>11</sup> Both NT and TS emphasize a client's voluntary intention to believe in the gods. A young woman consulted NT because her relatives exerted pressure on

her to worship the *ukamagam*. He replied to her, "If you don't feel like venerating the *ukamagam*, wait until you really feel you want to worship it at home." It appears that the people of Miyako do not want to trouble themselves much about the gods unless they need divine aid. As one civil servant said to me, "Forget about the gods unless you need them." However, when people face hardships, they beseech the gods to help them. They go to shamans and ask them to identify the causes of their difficulties and to conduct problem-solving rituals, expecting immediate results. It is principally ancestors who drive people into circumstances under which the latter must seek divine aid.

It is a deeply rooted belief among Ryūkyūans<sup>12</sup> that ancestors who have not received enough pacification (*kuyoo*) send misfortunes such as disease, divorce, accident, business failure, etc. to their offspring (Fujii 1976: 342; 1978: 144; Sakurai 1973: 119; Takeda 1976: 172). In the afterworld, the rich, the poor, the famous, and the miserable are all judged equally on the basis of their lifetime conduct and are punished by the gods. If they are to be forgiven by the gods and to turn into protecting ancestors, their souls must be appeased by their descendants. Therefore, ancestors notify their descendants of their sufferings and demand pacifying rituals (*kuyoo*). They do this by sending misfortunes to their offspring, forcing their descendants to resort to the gods.

The relationship among the gods, ancestors, and humans can be characterized as follows. The gods are transcendental, benevolent, and impartial. Humans are this-world oriented. They do not wish to be related to the gods and are not obliged by the gods to be so. Suffering ancestors exercise corrective forces to pull their descendants to the religious sphere. The ancestors make their descendants realize their vulnerability and the necessity for divine support by sending them misfortune.

#### THE UNIVERSE (TING)

A traditional expression, *uting nanasou* (seven layers of the universe), suggests that the universe has seven layers. NT conceptualizes them as corresponding to the sun, the moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn. It is vaguely believed that gods reside on twelve axes of each layer (*cf.* Sakurai 1973: 126). TS did not know what kinds of gods dwell on each of the twelve axes of seven layers, but she was certain that the four gods who confer the blessings of the universe on the fate of a new-born baby dwell on the four principal axes of the top layer. The four gods (Fuu Nu Nusu) are basically identical and are assimilated into one concept, the creator god, the sun. The sun (*tida*) throws light

on all things on earth and rules the universe. The north star (*ninupabusu*) points out directions. Shamans I encountered (the siblings and others) do not seem to know much about the gods of the universe. HS said, "I do not know about the universe. I have never ascended into the universe." An old shaman, MY, said, "The universe? Who knows?"

#### GODS

TS told me that in ancient days, the God Kuitsunu and the Goddess Kuitama descended from the universe to create humans on Miyako Island. Other deities also descended to protect the island. The original couple produced everything on the island and begot a male deity and a female deity. When these deities grew up, a male deity and a female deity appeared from the earth. The original couple arranged a marriage between their children and the deities born from the earth. Each couple begot a child, one male and one female, who became husband and wife. From this couple, all the people of Miyako were descended.<sup>13</sup>

People soon inhabited the entire island, and the gods who descended from the universe lived together with humans. Deities and humans living together did not last very long. Humans became greedy and started to persecute the gods. Ninupa Mma Tida (the Mother Goddess of the North Axis) served a wealthy family as a maid servant. She worked hard and was not allowed to rest, even for a minute. One day, she went to the fields and gave birth to twelve eggs. In a few days, all the eggs hatched, and twelve deities were born. With these deities, the Mother Goddess retreated deep into the mountains of Karimata. Later, she distributed her twelve children to twelve sacred points of the island and told them to protect the island.

The deities who descended to the earth did not like living with selfish and greedy humans. Many of them departed from the earth to their original home, the universe. The world of the gods was cut off from the world of humans. Since then, humans have had to resort to mediators (shamans) to know about the gods and to ask them to fulfill their wishes.

It is generally believed that the gods reside in the seven layers of the universe, as well as the earth, the sea, and the afterworld. Although there is not a clear hierarchy among the gods, major gods can be differentiated from minor ones. NT cited such gods to be major ones as the sun (*tida*), the moon (*aro tida*), and the north star (*ninupabusu*), and the eight gods who reside on the eight principal axes of the universe, the earth, the sea, and the afterworld, the goddesses of sacred wells, the rain god, the goddess of fecundity, and so on. In addition to these major

gods, a number of minor gods—the dragon god, the sacred lion, the god of incense sticks, the gods of light and mirror, etc.—constitute the pantheon of the Miyako cosmos.

Gods who represent new concepts have also gained their places in the pantheon. They are the gods of sewing machine and motor (Noguchi 1973: 64), pipes, radio waves, and so on.

Although most Miyako shamans, as well as lay people, do not conceive the existence of omniscient gods, the siblings are unique in conceptualizing an omnipotent god, a creator god. As discussed above, the four gods who endow humans with the fate of the universe are essentially identical and are absorbed into one concept, the sun, the almighty. The sun illuminates and reigns over all the universe, the earth, and the sea, and is essentially equated with the moon (*aro tida*), who reigns over the afterworld.

The deities usually appear to shamans in the form of humans—an old man with a long beard in a white robe, a dark-skinned man in a kimono of splashed pattern, a beautiful woman with long hair in a multicolored kimono. Shamans told me that the deities do not show themselves very often to shamans. For instance, NT frequently sees the souls of ancestors and living people. However, he has seen gods and goddesses only a few times, even though he hears the voices of gods, senses their presence, dreams about them, and sings their revelations.

Names of the Miyako gods are in many cases indicative of their roles. For instance, the god of the Tsunuji Utaki is called Mmanupa Nu Yu Nu Nusu, which is translated as the God of Wealth of the South Axis. The god who dwells in the Bissi Utaki is named Mamts Nusu; the name means the Master of the Right Path. The names of the gods for whom the Akanaguu Utaki is dedicated are Uika Nusu (the Master of Success in Life) and Ftsukata Kuikata Nu Nusu (the Master of Appetite). This naming method seems to me to reflect pragmatic concerns of the Miyako people. If they are interested in obtaining assistance from the gods, it is very important for them to know what kinds of gods can give what kinds of help to them.

#### THE EARTH

The siblings' and other shamans' knowledge of the names and roles of the *utaki* gods and their locations are much greater than that concerning the *ting* gods. This may be attributed to the concreteness of the gods of *utaki*, which are located on 'this' earth. The shamans can and do visit *utaki* and confirm the residences of the gods by themselves. Such knowledge is required for them to solicit divine aid for their clients.

Many gods, having been repulsed by the selfishness of humans, re-



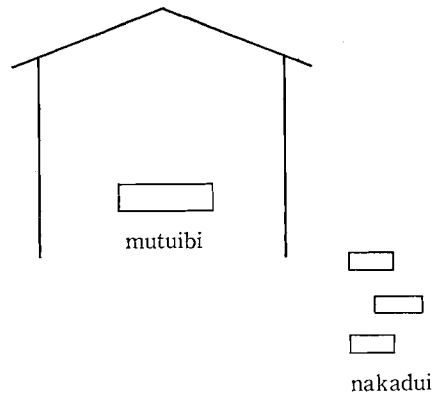


Figure 2. Basic structure of an *utaki*.

turned to the universe. Some gods, however, remained on the earth. The residences of these gods, as well as the places to which the gods once descended, are defined as sacred sites (*utaki*) and people go there to ask for divine support.

Many *utaki* share a basic structure (see Figure 2). There is a small, simple building in which people can find several stone (or concrete) objects. They look like “planters” which are filled with ashes. People place burning incense sticks into the ashes and pray to the gods, or offer unignited incense sticks to the gods of the sea and goddesses of sacred wells. One of the “planters” is *mutuibi*, the residence of the gods to whom the *utaki* is dedicated.<sup>14</sup> The others, sometimes located outside the building, are *nakadui* (or *utuusi*) and considered to be a kind of “transmitter.” Some people cannot go to distant *utaki*. They can, however, send their prayers to the gods who may reside on the opposite side of the island or in Japan through each god’s *nakadui*.

Although being communally supported, the *utaki* is not exclusively reserved for people of the community. Except for a few exceptional *utaki*, anyone can get in anytime and offer prayers to the gods.<sup>15</sup> When community rituals are held at major *utaki*, many people (shamans and lay people) from outside the community come to pay respects to the gods and to receive their blessings.

#### MAJOR SACRED SITES: UTAKI

The siblings locate major *utaki* on the eight principal (*yaching*) axes of the island as well as on their crossing point. The concept of axes is unique to the siblings as discussed below, but there is a general consensus among Miyako people concerning who are important gods resid-

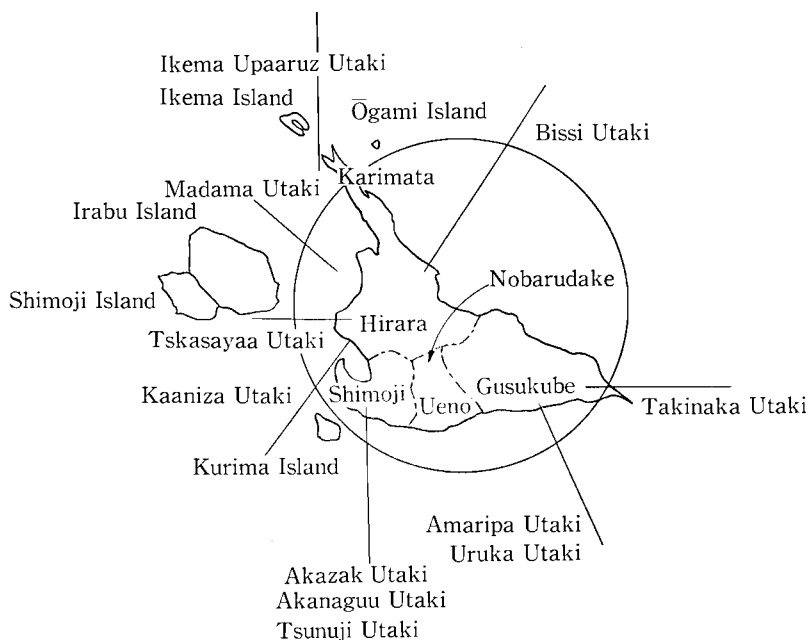


Figure 3. Directions and *utaki* in Miyako.

ing in major *utaki*. An *utaki* is inhabited by numerous gods; here I present only major ones (see Figure 3).

*The North Axis.* Major deities on the north axis are Ninupa Mma Tida (the Mother Goddess of the North Axis) who bore twelve deities and her eldest son Upaaruz on Ikema Island. The Upaaruz god is responsible for differentiating lost souls of living people from the souls of the dead. If the person, together with the shaman, comes to the god to retrieve his or her soul, the god returns it to him or her. Otherwise the god sends it to the afterworld.<sup>16</sup> No one can enter his *utaki* without the priestess' permission. HS told me how serious it was to violate this rule, citing her son's experience. The son visited his friend on Ikema Island. During his visit, the son was informed by his friend about the greatness of the god Upaaruz. He then wanted to pay his respects to the god. HS's son entered the *utaki* without knowing about the restriction, and walked toward the residence of the god. All of a sudden, a raven flew down and perched on the pavement. The raven became bigger and bigger in front of him, and he was frightened and fled. In a few days, the shaman was told in a dream that the god of Ikema Island had captured her horse. Thinking something had happened to her horse, she went to the stable but found nothing unusual. She then

visited another shaman for divination. The second shaman said that her dream signified that the god of Ikema Island had been keeping the soul of her son who was born in the year of the horse. HS had to conduct a ritual to apologize to the god Upaaruz and to regain her son's soul.

*The Northeast Axis.* The Bissi Utaki exists on the northeastern axis. The *utaki* is dedicated to one main deity, as well as five others. The main deity is named Mamts Nusu, the One Who Directs Ships in the Right Direction. Other deities whose *nakadui* were established here are Masabi Nusu, who determines right and wrong; Fuzi Nu Nusu, who is the god of the offshore reef; Yabisi Nusu, the God of Yabisi, a great reef off Ikema Island; the sea deity on the northeastern axis; and Mmanupa Nu Yu Nu Nusu, the God of Wealth on the south axis. The last four deities also have their own residences in other *utaki*.

However, people who cannot go to those *utaki* can offer prayers to the gods at the Bissi Utaki; their prayers are transmitted from the Bissi Utaki to the permanent residences of the gods through the *nakadui*.

*The East Axis.* People of Bora on the east axis consider Utachiyaa Mutu in which the community protecting god resides and Takinaka Mutu, which is dedicated to the god of fate, to be very important; though the former is more significant than the latter (Kamata 1965b: 402; Kojima 1978: 461–463). The siblings' idea was slightly different: the god who dwells on Takinaka Mutu is a navigation god.

*The Southeast Axis.* Two of the *utaki* in Uruka and Tomori stand on the southeastern axis. They are the Amaripa Utaki and the Uruka Utaki. The goddess who protects the people and the island from tidal waves is worshiped at the Amaripa Utaki. Together with the nature deities, two divine sisters who accompanied a divine hero, Nakazuni Tuyumshuu,<sup>17</sup> in his expedition to Yaeyama Archipelago, are venerated at the Uruka Utaki.

*The South Axis.* There are two major sacred sites on the south axis. They are the Akazak Utaki and the Akanaguu Utaki. The second son of the Mother Goddess resides in the Akazak Utaki. He is called Akazak Nu Akaruting Akamamiganusu Mamts Mazo Nusu (the God who Enlightens the World, Blesses People with Abundance, Orients People to the Right Path, and Protects the Gate). This *utaki* was established by a divine-hero, Yunapasiidzu Tuyumshuu. The *tuyumshuu*, on his way back from Okinawa, drifted to the shore of Akazak. When he landed on the shore, the sun rose from the east and illuminated the entire place. He was grateful to the god of the place for having protected him, and he established this *utaki*. No one is allowed to enter the *utaki* without permission of the priestess. People, therefore,

go to the Tsunuji Utaki, which is dedicated to Mmanupa Nu Yu Nu Nusu (the God of Wealth on the South Axis) and which is also *nakadui* to the Akazak Utaki. Uika Nusu, who is the third son of the Mother Goddess and is in charge of one's advancement in life, and Ftsukata Kuikata Nu Nusu, who stimulates one's appetite, are worshiped at the Akanaguu Utaki.

*The Southwest Axis.* The Kaaniza Utaki falls on the southwest axis. The Kaani Mma Tida (the Mother Goddess of the Kaaniza Utaki) is worshiped there.

*The West Axis.* The Tskasayaa Utaki stands on the west axis. This is the place at which the progenitor couple, Kuitsunu and Kuitama, descended. The *utaki* is dedicated to the eldest daughter of the Mother Goddess, as well as the first couple. In addition, six residences were established as *nakadui* for Kinko Nusu Kura Nu Nusu (the God of Granary), the Mother Goddess of the North Axis, The god Upaaruz, Mapaiting Skama Nusu (the God of Occupation of the South Axis of the Universe), the sea god on the west axis, and the god of navigation.

*The Northwest Axis.* Two deities, a couple, Ting nu Kanidunu and Matsumiga, are worshiped at the Madama Utaki in Ngkyadura. They are in charge of longevity, health, and happy marriage.

*The Crossing Point.* At Nabarudake, the crossing point of the axes, the god Fudzuamiganusu, who controls rain, has his dwelling.

A great many *utaki* fall between these axes. Some of them are as significant as the ones on the axes. The Bankuyama Utaki was relatively recently founded by a very well-known shaman, YM, though deceased almost eight years ago.<sup>18</sup> The *utaki* is located between those of Madama and Upaaruz, and is the place where lost souls of living people are kept temporarily. If a person whose soul is lost does not come to the Bankuyama Utaki to retrieve his or her soul, the god sends it to the Upaaruz Utaki. The god of the feast table, the god who receives offerings, and the god of the ritual plate reside in between the axes of the southeast and the south. The goddess Bzumaruting occupies a large cave in Yunangdaki, which falls between Bora and Uruka. From the ceiling, there hangs a huge stalactite, which signifies the male sexual organ. She is the goddess of fecundity and enables women to conceive and bear children. The Atsumama Utaki (Hirara) is also important. This *utaki* is dedicated to Niija Mumuchooganusu (the God who Passes Judgment on Dead People on the Basis of Their Lifetime Conduct) and Choo Nu Nusu (the God Who Determines Right and Wrong), etc. There, people can also pray to the god of the Tsunuji Utaki, the Akanaguu Utaki, the god of education, Japanese deities, and the goddess of the sacred well, Funasukugaa, through each god's *nakadui*. Kamamamine (Hirara) is a

small hill to which the dragon god is said to have descended. The god Kuitsu in Kagamihara (Hirara) is supposed to be as important as the progenitor couple, even though no building is dedicated to this god.

In the vicinity of an *utaki* people can find *kaa*, sacred wells, from which fresh water springs out. On such a coral island as Miyako, it was critical in people's daily lives to insure water supply; thus deities who protect these wells were endowed with great significance. When a child was born, his or her family used to draw water from a nearby sacred well and to wash the baby with the water. There is a sacred well, Mut-tomaigaa, near the Upaaruz Utaki on Ikema Island. The Bissi Utaki has its sacred well on its eastern side. Abundant water still springs from Boragaa on the eastern axis. In Tomori, there are two large grotto caves, Amakaa and Kinsukyagaa, which are filled with water. Nukagaa and Sakdagaa are sacred wells to the Akazak Utaki and the Akanaguu Utaki. At present, people pump water up from Sakdagaa and use it for farming. On the southwestern axis, near the sea, there is a place where fresh water comes out. Ingaa is located adjacent to the Tskasayaa Utaki. Several times NT saw the dragon god, radiating white light, descend to Ingaa. There are many sacred wells in Ngkyadura, where the Madama Utaki is located. There is also Funasukugaa a short distance from the Atsumama Utaki. *Utaki* and *kaa* are considered husband and wife.

#### THE SEA (*Ryuguu*)

Traditionally it is conceived that the sea is seven or nine layers deep. NT generalized sea deities as follows.

The sea deities protect the island from outside evil, for instance, from epidemics. They are benign and patient. However, when they lose patience, they show their rage by bringing about tornadoes, tidal waves, and typhoons. The sea deities are nature itself.

I could not obtain much information about individual sea deities. The concept of a paradise beyond the sea, which has been a subject of discussion by scholars for many years (Higa 1983a: 141–147; Itō 1973: 207–271; Kreiner 1977: 11–26; Mabuchi 1974: 228–241; Origuchi 1923: 42–79; Yanagita 1950: 92–107) is not clearly seen in the siblings' version.

NT sees the dragon god in a huge cave at the bottom of the sea. It looks around with glaring eyes. Sometimes, it sends up a spray, soars to the sky in a bright light, and descends to the sacred well Ingaa. When people want to offer prayers to the sea gods, they go to one of the entrances to the sea. The major entrances to the sea are found on eight

sacred points, which are distributed around the coast of Miyako Island. In the vicinity of an entrance, there are a *kaa* and an *utaki*. The three sacred places—an *utaki*, a *kaa*, and an entrance to the sea—form a sacred triangle.

#### THE AFTERWORLD (*Niija* OR *Gusoo*)

The afterworld is the world of the dead, but the siblings think it is also the place where new life is created. The siblings cite the following as major deities in the afterworld: Niija Asa Tida (Father Moon), Niija Mma Tida (Mother Moon), and eight Kang-nung deities who protect families.<sup>19</sup> Father Moon passes judgment on the dead and punishes them for improper conduct. Mother Moon is responsible for procreating new lives from the dead souls. NT describes the afterworld as follows.

The afterworld exists at the bottom of a deep deep hole. Many dead are squirming. They are afflicted with punishment and moaning with pain. The dead are always looking for a chance to escape from the afterworld.

Another shaman, HS, saw the world of the dead as such:

I stepped down a stair and came down to the bottom of a hole. I saw glittering golden deities. They held sticks in their hands and were striking dead people.

#### ANCESTORS<sup>20</sup>

When a person dies, NT said, his or her souls are supposed to leave the body. One which represents the bones goes to the grave, which is the entrance to the afterworld (*cf.* Sakurai 1973: 130, 132–133). Gods stand at both sides of the entrance, protecting the gate to the afterworld. The god of the left side opens the gate and that of the right side closes it. The other souls (seven souls which sustain human life during one's lifetime)<sup>21</sup> lodge on the *ipai* (ancestral tablet) which represents the physical appearance of the human body.

However, it is a general belief throughout the Ryūkyūs that the dead soul<sup>22</sup> is not aware for a while that its owner has died and wants to remain in the world, calling on his or her family, relatives, and friends. This is particularly true of the soul of a person who had many things to look back on with regret (see Sakurai for similar belief in Okinawa (1973: 43) and Yamashita (1977: 259) for that in Amami). As the recently deceased soul moves back and forth between the afterworld and this world, other dead souls try to sneak into the world of the living. This

is a very dangerous, polluted state called *busoozu*.<sup>23</sup> This contaminated state traditionally lasts for forty-nine (or sometimes 100) days after one's death. The pollution is believed to be contagious, affecting not only the attendants at one's funeral, but also neighboring families. People who are susceptible to this pollution (e.g., shamans, pregnant women) must avoid this contaminated state. They try not to go to the funerals and memorial services of their relatives and friends.<sup>24</sup> If they do, they may become ill with such ailments as headache, nausea, and fever.

During the mourning period, the family of the deceased (and people who are visited by the dead soul) must conduct a ritual (*kamptu bakyaadzu* or *mizubaki mtsbaki*), which tells the dead person, "You cannot come back to this world. You are not a member of my family any longer. Do not call on me. Go to the world of the dead" (see also Sakurai 1973: 99-100; Takeda 1976: 165).

When people die at places other than their home, their souls may linger at that spot (e. g., hospital, friend's house, battlefield). Their families ask *sungam kakarya* (or *gusoo zas*) to draw the souls from the site to the grave and *ipai*<sup>25</sup> (see Sakurai 1973: 139-140; Naoe 1983: 133, etc.).

In the afterworld, dead souls are judged on the conduct of each person during his or her lifetime and are punished accordingly. Those who committed suicide and crimes are severely tortured. The only way the dead can be released from these punishments is through the performance of pacifying rituals (*kuyoo*) by his or her descendants. In the rituals, his or her descendants implore the gods to forgive the dead. Therefore, dead souls always look for opportunities to sneak into this world to tell their families, relatives, and friends about their suffering. Severely tortured souls and those who do not have offspring stand on the streets and call to anyone asking for rituals. If no one performs the *kuyoo* rituals for them, these souls eventually turn into evil spirits (*mazumung*) and spread various misfortunes among people.

When an ancestor asks his or her descendants to perform a pacifying ritual (*kuyoo*), TS said, the ancestor chooses one of his or her descendants and sends misfortunes (e.g., sickness, accidents, marital problems, failure in school) to the descendant. Even lay people are very familiar with the idea that ancestors, when not pacified enough, send misfortunes to their descendants.

However, when a misfortune falls on a particular person, he or she tends to ask why—why his or her ancestors, who should protect offspring, give hardships to them. According to the shamans, the descendant must realize that the misfortune is a message from his or her suffering ancestor and that he or she is responsible for appeasing the ancestor's

soul. (It is his or her *bang* to pacify that particular ancestor). If the descendant ignores the ancestor's request, the latter will send more and more misfortunes. The former may continue to ignore the request. In that case, the ancestor must ask another descendant who is seemingly willing to hold a pacifying ritual. The siblings say that the descendant of second choice may decline the ancestor's solicitation, indicating that he or she is not responsible for that particular ancestor (It is not his or her *bang* to pacify that ancestor.); for once he or she satisfies that ancestor's wish, other ancestors rush to this generous descendant, who is eventually overburdened. The siblings think it is very important to discern who among descendants is responsible for appeasing whom among ancestors and call this process of discernment *irobaki dangbaki* (differentiating colors and steps).

Descendants usually conduct *kuyoo* until the thirty-third year after one's death. After that, it is generally believed, an individual dead soul is absorbed into the ancestral spirit-group, losing its unique individuality (see Fujii 1978: 177; Gamō and Ōgo 1976: 389; Ōgo 1973: 179; Takeda 1976: 165–166). The siblings had different ideas. Unless ancestors are pacified enough and forgiven by the gods, they cannot turn into beneficent ones even after thirty-three years, and NT thinks that ancestors maintain their individual identity forever.

Divine ancestors (or legendary figures of great achievement) are deified and honored at *utaki*, although the siblings distinguish them from the gods. They are warrior-heroes, inventors, or persons who brought something useful from outside.

The three most famous heroes—Yunapasiidzu Tuyumshuu, Migurimudzu Tuyumshuu, and Nakazuni Tuyumshuu—are venerated as the three pillar gods of Miyako at the Miyako Shrine. Pigitarya Yu Nu Nusu, great farmer who cultivated the wasteland, is worshiped all over Miyako Island as an agricultural deity, and Inaishi, who refined the means to weave Miyako *jōfu*, is worshiped at the Inaishi Utaki.<sup>26</sup>

#### BIRTH AND TRANSMIGRATION OF SOULS

The siblings say a human is born in order to achieve what his or her ancestors failed to do. Most humans die without achieving what they wanted to do in their lifetimes. In the afterworld, the ancestor hopes one of his or her descendants will achieve what he or she has left unfinished. The ancestor asks the sun god of the universe and the moon goddess of the afterworld to create new life into which his or her soul transmigrates. If the ancestor's wish is granted, many ancestors come together and create a human body. In the third month, they mold a prototype form of a human being. By the seventh month, their creating process is al-



most complete. The gods of the universe bless the *waafuu* (the fate from the universe) of the fetus. In the eighth month, the ancestors give the ancestors' destiny (*stafuu*) to the child. This destiny includes the ancestor's wish (1) that the child accomplish what the ancestor could not do during his or her lifetime and (2) that the child pacify certain ancestors.

In the ninth month, the path of the universe opens. Through the path, the child comes into this world. At birth, the god of childbirth covers the maternity room with veils and guards the house from evils. The *ukamagam* (kitchen gods) and the *tukurugam* (household protector) protect the lives of the mother and her child. When the child is delivered, the goddess of Inгаа cuts the umbilical cord. The baby is washed in water from a nearby sacred well.

Sometimes a baby is born with defects. I asked NT why this happened if the gods examine the baby. He said that the defects were messages from ancestors; some ancestors have been suffering so much that they have had to resort to drastic means to tell their offspring about their sufferings.

Birth, like death, is a dangerous or taboo (*busoozu*) state. The soul of a new baby is the transmigration of an ancestor's soul. When that soul moves from the afterworld to this world, other souls become restless, and they try to penetrate this world. When a child is delivered, people attach a cross made of bamboo (*azi*) to each of the four corners of the maternity room. The cross protects the room from evil.

On the fourth, eighth, and tenth day, people conduct a traditional ritual, which clears away all the pollutions (*soozubari*). On the tenth day, they give the baby a divine name. They choose one out of several names (those of ancestors, gods of *utaki*, and *ukamagam*) by divine lottery. This naming custom is still practiced, though the name given thus is usually used neither in everyday nor in an official context. Parents are also supposed to offer incense sticks (and offerings) to the *utaki* god (from whom the baby received the name) on the first and fifteenth days of every month. After grown up, the person is expected to offer incense sticks when the community ritual is held at the *utaki*. Parents also offer *ngk* (libation) and incense sticks, when the fifteenth of August comes for the first time, to the *utaki* gods of the *mmarizatu* (the community in which one was born), so that the baby is recognized as a community member and receives divine protection.

Once born, the human is protected by souls (*tamas*), which are life-sustaining sources.

Although variations exist on number and location of *tamas* in various areas of the Ryūkyūs (Naoe 1983: 129–135; Sumiya and Kreiner 1977:

266; Yamashita 1977: 276–280; Yohena 1970), seven seems to be the most prevalent number in Miyako. According to Naoe (1983: 129), one lodges on the fontanel, one on the forehead, one on each shoulder, one on the chest, one on the back, and one on the legs. The one on the forehead is the most important; its loss is believed to be fatal. NT had a slightly different opinion on the location. One on the head, one on each shoulder, one on each side, one on the chest, and the last one on the back. A *tamas* easily dislodges itself, when its owner is frightened (e.g., being almost drowned, hit by the car, verbally threatened). The owner must conduct a ritual to retrieve a lost soul (*tamas uki* or *tamas ukabi*). Otherwise, his or her fate declines and he or she is likely to face misfortunes (See also Naoe 1983; Sakurai 1973: 275–319; Sumiya and Kreiner 1977: 266; Yamashita 1977: 276–280; Yohena 1970).

In the siblings' explanation of the origin of new life, we see a continuum from the dead to the living (or rebirth of the dead). From the concept of one's destiny, we learn that an individual is bound to the past, especially the past conduct of his or her ancestors.

TS says the child's fate is linked with that of his or her parents until the child is eighteen years old. After that, the child lives life according to the fate blessed by the gods of the universe and assigned by his or her ancestors. The gods of the universe always wish a person to live a long, happy life. However, the person is also bound by *staifoo* (the destiny assigned from his or her ancestors). For this reason, the person faces many difficulties.

Because each person's soul is the transmigration of an ancestor, the person tends to repeat the same mistakes the ancestor made. This concept is known to the people as *tsdz uri* (See also Ōhashi 1980: 19; Takeda 1976: 172). For instance, if the ancestor failed in school, his or her *mmarikaadzu* (a descendant into whom the ancestor's soul transmigrates) is likely to fail in school. To prevent the same mistake again, the siblings explain, the descendant must find out whose *mmarikaadzu* he or she is, how the ancestor lived his or her life, how the descendant can pacify the ancestor and convert the ancestor to a protecting one, and who the other ancestors are to whom the descendant is responsible for conducting pacifying rituals.

Unfortunately people do not start to search for their ancestors until they encounter misfortune, such as divorce, sickness, barrenness, or accidents. When people face difficulties, they seek protection from the gods. People ask shamans to perform rituals which enable them to establish relationships with, and to receive support from, the divine, as described below.

## SHAMANS

NT thinks that the concept of the transmigration of an ancestor's soul can be applied to the birth of shamans. In his case, his great-grandfather was a well-known shaman named Toganishuu. He was mainly concerned with religious activities related to the gods of the universe and sea. He did not seem to be interested in distant ancestral matters, such as appeasing the souls of divine heroes and sending them to the universe. Toganishuu left what he did not do, i.e., ancestral matters, to his great-grandson, NT.<sup>27</sup>

TS states that male shamans tend to be *mmarikaadzu* of ancestor shamans and that female shamans are born to redeem society and humans from sin. During his initiation days, NT was mainly possessed by his distant ancestors who were divine heroes. One of them became his *tsdz* (protector) and took him to many sacred sites and gods. TS was chosen by an ancient shaman, who was also the messenger of the creator god, to fulfill the same duty; there may or may not be a blood relationship between TS and this shaman. TS's mission is to "save" everyone impartially, to spread the teachings of the gods, and to "give birth to" new shamans rather than to achieve what her ancestor shamans failed to accomplish.

Throughout the Ryūkyūs, a shaman's initiation process shares a basic pattern —innate tendencies, calling (appearance of initiation symptoms), declining of calling, deteriorating of initiation symptoms represented in psycho-somatic disorders, involvement in (therapeutic) rituals such as visiting many *utaki* and appeasing ancestors, becoming a shaman by opening a path to the gods.<sup>28</sup>

Shamans are by nature spiritually oriented, i.e., *kamdaka mmari*, and are likely to have idiosyncratic childhoods. For instance, NT saw a spinning snake biting its tail; beside it stood a male figure. At that time, he was four or five years old. TS often had religious and prophetic dreams in her childhood. A female shaman, TH, often experienced sudden loss of consciousness. Before the doctor examined her, TH saw some deities descend from the universe. One god carried a medicine kit in his hand, and he asked her, "Do you promise me?" Then he shook hands with her and gave her an injection. However, potential shamans are not aware of their mission until gods and divine ancestors tell them they are destined to be shamans. Their message is manifested in *kamdaari*, which involves such symptoms as audio-visual hallucination, violent body-shaking and jumping, insomnia, loss of appetite, loss of consciousness, singing, and screaming. A series of serious organic disease, domestic troubles, and business failures may substitute for, or add to, these disorders. *Kamdaari* victims visit many shamans

and are told that they had to open the path to the gods. However, in many cases, the potential shaman tries to escape from his or her destiny by defying these messages or asking the gods to wait for a while. This attempted escape leads to aggravation of *kamdaari*.

Not all *kamdaari* victims choose to accept the mission. Some who experience only minor *kamdaari* symptoms resume normal lives after they are treated by accomplished shamans. For others, their symptoms are of much greater magnitude. The family of such a victim may choose to hospitalize the victim in a mental hospital; however, such hospitalization is said to lead to further deterioration of the victim's condition. Still others decide to accept the mission, and each proceeds to select a mother shaman, who helps the apprentice receive *mau* (individual protecting gods) and orients him or her into shamanhood.<sup>29</sup>

There are variations in the process of receiving *mau*; here I cite the siblings' example.<sup>30</sup> The apprentice, under the mother shaman's guidance, must first identify his or her *mmarikaadzū* and *tsdz*, a distant ancestor who fulfills the role of the apprentice's protector. It is the *tsdz* who asks the gods to give various divine powers to the apprentice. Second, the apprentice must find out what kinds of gods gave support to his or her *tsdz* during the *tsdz*'s lifetime. Then the apprentice and the mother shaman visit the sacred sites of the gods who protected his or her *tsdz* and assimilates divine powers from the gods.

The apprentice starts from gods of the *utaki*, sacred well, and entrance to the sea of the *mmarizatu* (the community in which he or she was born), then moves up to major sacred places. As mentioned above, major sacred places of the *utaki*, entrances to the sea, and sacred wells lie on the eight axes of the island. Between the axes, there are many additional sacred places. The mother shaman, by the power of incense sticks, incorporates divine energy from the sacred places between the axes into each of the sacred places on the eight axes. Interactions of the divine energy from various sacred sites produce much greater power than their sum. This ritual manipulation is called the process of "multiplication." Next, the mother shaman constructs a path between the crossing point of the axes and each of the major sacred places on the eight axes; the power is transmitted from those sacred places to the crossing point. This procedure is called *musubi*. Then, paths are built between the crossing point and the apprentice's *mau kooru* (vessel in which incense sticks are burned). Through the path, the multiplied energy is transferred into the apprentice's *kooru*. If the apprentice's *tsdz* (protector) worshiped gods of Okinawa, as well as those of Miyako, he or she must make a visit to the sacred sites of Okinawa.

In the process of receiving his or her *mau*, the apprentice learns

from the mother shaman to whom each *utaki* is dedicated and what kinds of roles the gods of each *utaki* fulfill.

The apprentice also conducts *kuyoo* for ancestors, tracing them back as far as possible (in the siblings' case, tracing ancestors back for thirteen generations). The apprentice also offers gratitude to the gods who protected the ancestors. If his or her *tsdz* is still suffering in the afterworld, the apprentice must appease the *tsdz* and send it to the universe.

Ideologically, NT says, a shaman's power can be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria: how much divine energy the shaman has incorporated into himself or herself and the number of gods from whom the shaman can solicit support for himself or herself and for his or her clients' sake. Thus, knowledge of the names and roles of gods becomes very important for shamans. The process of assimilating divine energy (*musubi*) is essential to the determination of the shaman's maximum potential. However, a shaman can absorb energy only from the gods his or her *tsdz* once venerated. Therefore, the potential of a shaman depends on the power his or her *tsdz* possessed. If the shaman's *tsdz* was a minor shaman who was concerned only with village gods, the shaman can assimilate powers only from village gods. If the shaman's *tsdz* was a divine hero who was given protection not only by the gods of Miyako, but also by those of Okinawa, the shaman can utilize divine powers from various gods of Okinawa as well as Miyako.

The apprentice becomes a shaman after opening the path to the gods (*mtsaki*). The apprentice may have a dream in which he or she is given qualifications (*choobo*) from his or her *tsdz*. In the dream, the *tsdz* may tell the apprentice that the path to the gods is open. His or her mother shaman may determine whether or not the apprentice has opened the path. In NT's case, he had a dream in which he was given a book, *Miyakojima Shomin Shi* (The History of Ordinary People on Miyako Island, written by Inamura Kenpu (1972)) by an old man, and after that his mother shaman, TS, judged his opening the path.

#### SOLICITING DIVINE SUPPORT

When the Miyako people face difficulties, they seek divine aid in various ways: (1) by receiving household protecting gods, such as the *ukamagam* (kitchen gods), the *tukurugam* (household protector), and the *yu nu kam* (gods of wealth), (2) by receiving individual protecting gods, *mau* and (3) by means of *hanji* (divination) and *nigadzu* (problem-solving rituals).

*The ukamagam* (Kitchen gods). A female and two child deities constitute one concept: the *ukamagam*.<sup>31</sup> The *ukamagam* do not, by nature, dwell in one's kitchen. A shaman, on behalf of his or her client, conducts a

ritual so that the *ukamagam* settle in the kitchen and insure peaceful domestic life. The *ukamagam* are messengers to the gods of the universe. People can petition the gods of the universe through the *ukamagam*, who also observe domestic life and become well aware of family problems. NT said he could discern domestic problems of a client by communicating with the client's *ukamagam*.

A family's *ukamagam* is passed on from parents to the eldest son whose wife is in charge of the *ukamagam*. When younger sons set up branch houses, they receive the *ukamagam* newly, making a connection between that of the origin house and of the branch house by the power of incense sticks. This ritual act (*bunke bung*) reflects people's wish that offspring will spread and flourish forever.

As for relationship between the *ukamagam* and ancestors, some scholars say ancestral spirits (which have passed the thirty-third anniversary) are worshiped as the *ukamagam* (Ōgo 1973: 179–180; Takeda 1976: 165–166). But Nakahara does not see any relation between the two (1959: 168). Even among Okinawans, contradictory views exist, as Furuie indicates (1983). NT explained the relation as follows. The *ukamagam* and ancestors are different entities. However, *musubi* (connection) was to be made between the two by the power of incense sticks. The *ukamagam*, which the family continues to worship through generations, have protected the peaceful and happy domestic life in the past and are asked to do so in the future. This explains why *musubi* between the two is required.

*The tukurugam (Household protector)*. When a person has a new house built, he or she asks a shaman to perform a ritual during which the shaman asks the *tukurugam* to settle down in the house and to protect the household from outside evils (e.g., robbers, unwelcome guests, thieves, animals). The *tukurugam* also functions as *nakadui* to the gods of *utaki*, sacred wells, the afterworld, and the sea. TS noted that the *ukamagam* sends human prayers vertically to the gods of the universe and the *tukurugam* horizontally to the gods on the earth and below to those in the afterworld and sea.

*The yu nu kam (The gods of wealth)*. The *yu nu kam* are a group of gods which insure abundance to the family. When a person wishes to receive the *yu nu kam*, the person asks a shaman to take him or her to sacred sites in which the gods related to abundance reside (e.g., the Tsunuji Utaki, the Akanaguu Utaki), as well as those of the person's and parents' *mmarizatu*. The eldest son of a family inherits the *yu nu kam*, which insure the family's wealth through generations.

*Receiving individual protecting gods, mau.* People receive *mau* as personal protecting gods (*mau o kamiru* or *mau o tomosuru*). An individual may hope to receive his or her *mau*, although no *kamdaari* symptoms appear. For instance, in such communities of Gusukube as Uruka, Bora, Higa, and Aragusuku, the community members seem to become affiliated by birth with one (or some) of the community *utaki* when they reach a certain age (e.g., birth, seven, thirteen, twenty, thirty-five). People worship the god(s) of the affiliated *utaki* as their *mau* (See Kamata 1976; Kojima 1978: 465–466). For others (people of Matsubara and Ōura in Hirara, Yonaha in Shimoji, etc.), experiences of misfortunes, especially minor *kamdaari* (e.g., occasional body-shaking, frequent dreams, restlessness), motivate people to receive *mau* (See Kamata 1976; Higa 1983b: 164; Sakurai 1976: 323–325; Ushijima 1969: 93).

After the *mau* is received, the *kamdaari* symptoms are said to disappear (or subside). I do not have statistical data concerning the rate of those who receive *mau*, who experience *kamdaari*, or those who become shamans from among *kamdaari* victims. Shamans say that they can differentiate between those who will and others who will not become shamans. The differentiating criterion appears to be the degree of severity of symptoms.

As indicated above, there are minor variations present among shamans in the procedures of receiving *mau*. The siblings usually take their client to the *utaki* and the sacred well of the client's *mmarizatu*, then to the *utaki* and the sacred wells of the client's parents' *mmarizatu*, and finally to major sacred sites and wells of the island. By the power of incense sticks, the shamans establish a path between the sacred sites and wells and the client's *kooru*, which serves as the path through which divine energy from the sacred places flows into the *kooru*. Then the shaman prays to the gods so that the absorbed divine energy will be harmoniously integrated and rooted in the *kooru*.

*Hanji (divination) and nigadzu (problem-solving rituals).* Even if the household is regularly protected by the *ukamagam*, the *tukurugam*, and the *yu nu kam*, and an individual is under the protection of his or her *mau*, people still encounter misfortunes. When the Miyako people face inexplicable misfortunes (e.g., prolonged or incurable disease, accidents, marital problems, business failures), they, like other people in the world, call on shamans to discover the causes and have shamans conduct problem-solving rituals.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS: THE UNIQUENESS IN TRADITION

To what extent is the siblings' version unique among Miyako shamans?

I propose that their uniqueness is in their ability to verbalize and organize traditional beliefs. For instance, there is a general consensus among Miyako people that gods reside in twelve directions; the central point is in Nobarudake.<sup>32</sup> Although people are not familiar with all the gods, some of them (e.g., the gods of north and south directions) and their roles are very well-known even to lay people. The siblings identify and organize major deities in eight directions. They also utilize the concept of principal axes in the process of absorbing divine energy from *utaki* gods. They conceive a multiplication of divine powers by bringing about interactions of divine energy incorporated from each *utaki*, then transferring multiplied divine energy into the *utaki* of each principal axis, and finally to one's *kooru*.

In another case, the concept of *mmarikaadsu* is known to other shamans. However, they simply know that the soul of a new born baby is a transmigration of the ancestor's. They cannot explain why the ancestor's soul transmigrates or in what process new life is created. This is true also of the concept of destiny—*waaifuu* and *staiifuu*. People are familiar with these traditional expressions but do not explore how these two kinds of fate work to influence one's life.

The siblings' most significant contribution is seen in their integration of seemingly separate religions: beliefs in gods and ancestor worship. People recognize that beliefs in gods (*utaki*, well, sea) and ancestor worship are two pillars of Miyako religion. But, for most of them, these two religions simply coexist. They are not interested in conceptualizing, for instance, how these two are interrelated to each other. The siblings locate the two kinds of supernatural beings in relation to humans and perceive potential tension among these three to be an organizing principle. The Miyako gods are benevolent, impartial, and transcendent. However, the Miyako people are predominantly secularly oriented. They are not concerned with the gods as long as their lives are happy. It is their ancestors who pull people into the religious sphere. Ancestors suffering from punishment in the afterworld ask their descendants to hold rituals to pacify their souls. The ancestors send misfortunes to communicate their wishes and the descendants are driven into circumstances in which the only salvation is to ask for divine aid.

By identifying the principle in this way, I would like to suggest that the siblings' version justifies and asserts their own (or shamans') existence in this world. The version, answering the question of why humans need gods, and therefore shamans as divine messengers, becomes in a neo-functional sense (e.g., Firth 1968; Leach 1968) an 'instrument of argument' or 'validation of the significance of shamans' in Miyako society.



As for the motivational basis of the siblings' attempt to organize beliefs, there seems to exist a sense of crisis—against rapid social changes. As indicated above, Miyako society has been changing rapidly: the changes are not limited to material levels. Foreign religions (Christianity, Tenrikyō, Sōka Gakkai, etc.), equipped with more organized theology, have been introduced and do engage in missionary activities. Even among shamans on Okinawa Island, there are a few attempts to gather many devotees and to develop religious organizations (e.g., *Seitenkōkyō* 生天光教 introduced in Sakurai 1973: 323–416) around a very charismatic shaman. Furthermore many young people leave the island, looking for better job and educational opportunities. It seems to me that shamanism is flourishing in present Miyako society, responding to various social and domestic problems (e.g., divorce, child delinquency, business failure; see Takiguchi 1986b), but the siblings keenly sense the need to organize traditional beliefs; otherwise it might disappear in the process of ongoing socio-cultural changes. The siblings' organization of beliefs presented above reflects their attempt to adjust to and survive recent social and cultural changes on Miyako Island.<sup>33</sup>

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#### NOTES

1. As administrative unit, Okinawa prefecture includes three island-complexes: Okinawa, Miyako, and Yaeyama. In emic sense, Okinawa refers to Okinawa Islands. In this article, Okinawa is used in this narrow sense.

2. My source for the statistic data presented in this article is the 1982 version of *Miyako Gaikan* 宮古概観 (An Outline of Miyako) published by the county office.

3. Indigenous terms (terms used by my informants) are transliterated as I heard them. Japanization of the Miyako dialect has been in progress in Miyako. Younger generations tend to use Japanese or Japanized forms of the Miyako dialect. Although some of the terms designated as indigenous are in fact Japanized Miyako words (e.g., *choobo*, *musubi*), I follow my informants' usage. For some terms, we can find appropriate ideographs; for others there are no such ideographs. Thus, for the sake of consistency, no Chinese characters are provided for indigenous terms.

4. As is well-known, in the Ryūkyūs religion is a domain of women (see, e.g., Kamata 1965b, Sakurai 1979: 108).

5. To distinguish shamans from other kinds of religious personnel and lay people,

Miyako people use these two criteria: 1) the ability to make regular and direct contact with the supernatural and 2) active engagement in divination and ritual for clients. These emic criteria are comparable to the ones used in other societies to define shamans (see Peters and Price-Williams 1980).

6. Divine lottery (*kam fuz*, *fuz*, or *fuz urus*) is a standard method to select community priestesses, a divine name for the baby, etc. To choose community priestesses people write the name of each candidate on a separate piece of paper and place the pieces on a tray. They then shake the tray. If the same piece(s) drop out of the tray, for instance, twice out of three times, the person(s) whose name(s) is(are) on the piece(s) is(are) supposed to be selected by gods to become the community priestess(es). The divine name of a new-born baby is chosen in the same way.

7. The present dominance of the shaman seems to reflect recent social changes, restructuring (or disintegrating) of traditional social units such as kin groups and communities, and this leading to the weakening of the community priestess' authority (see Lebra 1964: 97-98; Sakurai 1979: 139-146; also note 32).

8. There are a few male shamans in Miyako. Although Lebra (1964: 94) indicates physical defects as the general characteristic of male shamans in Okinawa, those in Miyako are physically normal. They are not homosexual (or transvestite), either. Miyako people do not consider male shamans to be abnormal as shamans.

9. *Ukamagam* is also called *fnukam*. For the sake of consistency, in this article I use the word *ukamagam*.

10. The year of 1971 has the worst record for rainfall. It rained only 162.0 mm for 185 days (from March 15 through September 16).

11. In some communities (e.g., Uruka), community members are by birth affiliated with one (or some) of the community *utaki* and receive the god(s) of the affiliated *utaki* as their *mau* (Kamata 1976). I will discuss local variations below in the section on "Soliciting Divine Support."

12. This paper discusses beliefs in the Miyako area, but occasional references are made to those held in other areas of the Ryūkyūs to illustrate that some beliefs are common properties of Ryūkyūan culture.

13. TS's version of the origin myth is very similar to the official version which appears in *Miyakojima Kiji Shitsugi* 宮古島記事仕次 [Documents on Miyako Is.] compiled in 1748. Most of the Miyako people are familiar with the motif of the progenitor couple.

14. Even if more than two major gods are worshiped at an *utaki*, there is only one *mutuibi*; others are *nakadui*. For instance, the progenitor couple, Kuitsunu and Kuitama, and their eldest daughter reside in one *mutuibi* at the Tskasayaa Utaki.

15. However, there are several *utaki* which require the priestesses' permission before one enters (e.g., the Upaaruz Utaki of Ikema Is., the Akazak Utaki of Shimoji).

16. It is believed that people lose their souls when they are frightened and that those who lost their souls tend to face misfortunes. Prolonged states of soul loss may lead to one's death. See discussion below in the text.

17. *Tuyumshuu* (or *tuyumya*) is a title used to refer to Miyako chiefs during the 14th and 15th centuries.

18. For more detailed information of YM, see Sasaki (1983: 8-9, 118).

19. NT identifies the moon with the descending sun (*uri tida*).

20. The same term, *kam*, is used to refer to both gods and ancestors. But the siblings clearly make a distinction between the two. Ancestors are much less powerful and lower in rank than gods.

21. See the discussion concerning the concept of soul in the text.

22. Here I use the single form, soul, to designate all the souls of a deceased.

23. According to NT, death causes pollution and endangers people because the boundary between this world and the afterworld becomes weak and dead souls try to penetrate this world. It is interesting that his explanation shows similarities to that of Mary Douglas (1966): something which falls in between is regarded by people as dangerous or polluting.

24. This contradicts social obligation and sometimes causes criticism among people; shamans do not attend funerals of even their close friends and relatives. However, in general, the concept of *busoozu* is persuasive to explain one's absence at funerals and memorial services.

25. *Sungam kakarya* (or *gusoo zas*) is a kind of shaman, specializing in death related rituals. Sakurai's (1973: 191-192) interpretation is that a dead soul is divided into portions indefinitely. The portions remain in those many places the dead person once visited and lived (e.g., *utaki* the dead person frequently visited during his or her lifetime, the place in which the dead person met a fatal accident, the hospital room in which the dead person died, the gravel on which the corpse is laid in the tomb, and so on). Therefore, the dead person's family must (theoretically) send all the portions of the dead soul to the afterworld. NT's explanation is different. For instance, when a person had hardships in some places, his or her sense/feeling of regret remains in these places. To describe this state, such an expression is used as "One's soul is confined to the places." The family of the deceased must conduct rituals to clear away his or her resentment. However, NT thinks this is different from the division of the soul.

26. *Jofu* is a high quality textile made of hemp.

27. When NT states that he is a *mmarikaadzu* of Toganishuu, his greatgrandfather, or that the great-grandfather's soul transmigrated into him, NT intends to say that he is responsible for compensating for Toganishuu's neglect of distant ancestral matters rather than to say that he is the latter's reincarnation.

28. Here I am concerned with ideological aspects of a shaman's initiation process. As for actual experiences of Ryūkyūan shamans, see Yamashita (1977: 109-260) for an Amamian case; Lebra (1964: 94-96), Ōhashi (1980), Sakurai (1973: 213-233), and Sasaki (1978: 413-422; 1983: 14-17) for Okinawa; and Sasaki (1978: 422-430, 432-434; 1983: 8-9, 12-13) and Takiguchi (1986a) for Miyako. In the Amamian case, the rituals involve such activities as identifying an ancestor shaman's relics and searching an apprentice's protecting god (Yamashita 1977: 255). In Okinawa, an apprentice engages in visiting many sacred sites, pacifying ancestors, identifying the "correct" genealogy by tracing ancestors back as far as possible, and so on (Ōhashi 1980: 27-35).

29. Not all the apprentices are lucky enough to receive a mother shaman's help. Some mother shamans may help an apprentice receive *mau*, but do not do more than that. Some may even belittle the apprentice, saying that the latter's symptom is an ordinary insanity. Shamans, in Miyako as well as in Okinawa, tend to emphasize that they are self-initiated (see Lebra 1964: 95; Ōhashi 1980: 29). In Miyako, the term 'mother shaman' refers to either a male or female accomplished shaman *vis-à-vis* an apprentice. This may be related to the fact that most of the Miyako shamans are female.

30. Variations are seen mainly in the process of absorbing divine power from sacred sites. Some shamans, especially those in rural areas, do not visit many sacred sites. Their pilgrimage is limited to those in their own communities.

31. The word *ukamagam* is literally translated as hearth gods. I used the word kitchen gods rather than its literal translation for the following reason. In earlier days, a primitive hearth made of three stones was believed to represent the *ukamagam*. The

primitive hearth has already disappeared. Nowadays, each house being equipped with a gas oven, the *ukamagam* is symbolized by the *kooru*. The word kitchen gods becomes appropriate when we look at the roles of the *ukamagam*. The most important one is to function as the messengers to higher *ting* gods. The *ukamagam* also take care of a family's food so that the family does not face food shortages. Therefore, I translate the *ukamagam* as the kitchen gods—the gods who reside in and rule the kitchen.

32. For instance, in the field report published by the Board of Education, Ueno, it is stated that “gods reside in twelve directions and its center is located in Nobaru-dake” (The Board of Education, Ueno 1986: 7).

33. Handelman (1968) and Landy (1974) emphasize the shamans' adaptive ability to new situations. According to Handelman, “[T]he shaman may not simply adjust to a new set of situational determinants but can actively adopt, modify, and synthesize new ideas and conceptions” (1968: 354). Landy characterizes traditional curers as “cultural brokers” who can adapt themselves to “changes accompanying acculturation threats and opportunities” (1974: 103). For Okinawan shamans too, scholars stress their adaptive ability. Lebra states that “shamans have displayed a greater adaptability than other traditional religious functionaries” (1964: 93) to recent modernization and industrialization. Shamans satisfy societal needs, operating as folk therapists and “interpret(ing) and reformulat(ing) (traditional beliefs) in such a way as to make sense in terms of the contemporary cultural milieu” (1964: 98). Sakurai's observation, similar to Lebra's, is that shamans are very sensitive to newly arising societal needs and eager to absorb novel elements (1979: 140). NT and TS siblings seem to be this type of shaman, exercising their adaptive ability to integrate traditional beliefs.

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