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# RAIN RITUAL ON HATERUMA

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## I

The present article, a third preliminary study on the religious and social aspects of the South Ryukyuan island culture of Hateruma, is, like the other two<sup>1</sup>, based mainly on data collected during a period of field research carried out between April and December of 1965<sup>2</sup>. A short introduction may serve to elucidate the general situation and the scope of our research<sup>3</sup>.

Hateruma is a small (14.96 sq.km), rather isolated coral island belonging to the Yaeyama group. Its situation at 24° 4' N.L. and 123° 47' E.L. makes it the southernmost island of the Ryūkyū archipelago and therefore of the whole Japanese culture area. In 1965 its population counted about 1300 people spread over five villages: Fuka in the West, Naishi and Mae as the central villages, Minami and Kita in the East. In the vernacular they are distinguished as Irī (West), Nāsī and Mē, and Arī (East), the villages Minami and Kita being taken together. The latter division is the most relevant with respect to the socio-religious structure.

Religious life is concentrated for the most part around:

1. The 'house' ('household') – the *hī* (J.*ie*) – as basic social unit, or

1. 'Hateruma no kamigyōji ni tsuite' (On the ritual events of Hateruma), *Okinawa bunka* (Okinawan culture) no. 23, 1967, pp. 25–40; 'The ritual invocations of Hateruma', *Asian folklore studies*, vol. XXVI–2, Tōkyō 1967, pp. 63–109. Hereafter to be quoted as Ouwehand I and II.

2. Supported by the Netherlands Organisation for the Advancement of Pure Research (Z.W.O.). These data could be checked and supplemented by Mrs. Shizuko Ouwehand-Kusunoki during a second stay on Hateruma in August, 1967.

3. This introduction follows the somewhat modified text of the author's report 'Gods-dienst op Hateruma' (Religion on Hateruma), *Yearbook Z.W.O.*, The Hague 1966, pp. 112–117. See also the Introduction in Ouwehand II, pp. 63–74. For the transcription used in this article, cf. the remarks in Ouwehand II, pp. 74–76.

groups of related houses and the relations of these houses with their dead (*uya p'sītu*) and – thirty-three years after their death – the ancestors (*uya buzī*) and ancestor gods (*uyān*). This is expressed particularly in the close linkage between the house, the yard, and the family grave (or graves), and the periodically recurring religious ceremonies performed in front of the house altars of the *uya p'sītu* and *uyān*, at the graves (e.g. tending of the grave, washing and disposal of the bones), and at the stone places consecrated to the deity of the domestic hearth and the house yard. Within this framework there are also certain rituals connected with the health of the individual members of the house, with the warding off of adversity for a particular house, and the rituals associated with the building and completion of a new house.

2. The (formerly strongly endogamous) village and its village shrine (*utsi nu wā*), the priestess (*sīka*) of this shrine, and the house (*mutu-hī*) from which the priestess ideally but not always actually, descends. This whole complex, so important for the social and religious life of the village community, is in essence traceable to the structural principle, characteristic for Hateruma (and the entire Yaeyama group), of the brother-sister (*bigirī-bunarī*) relationship. This principle means not only that until the moment of her death the oldest sister continues to lead the *uyān* worship within the house to which she belongs by birth but also that, according to the ideal pattern, the oldest sister of the head of the most important *mutu-hī* in a village (i.e. the house, which in the mythical and/or legendary respect is considered to be that of the founder of the community) fulfills the function of the village priestess. Thus, the *mutu-hī* and the village shrine are very closely related, and in the villages Fuka and Minami still form a single complex surrounded by walls and trees. The priestess fulfills the sacred function of intermediary between the *uyān* and the human community, which feels its fate to be mainly determined by these innumerable *uyān*. The inheritance of the function is preferentially – as could be expected – assigned to the oldest daughter of the oldest brother of the priestess.

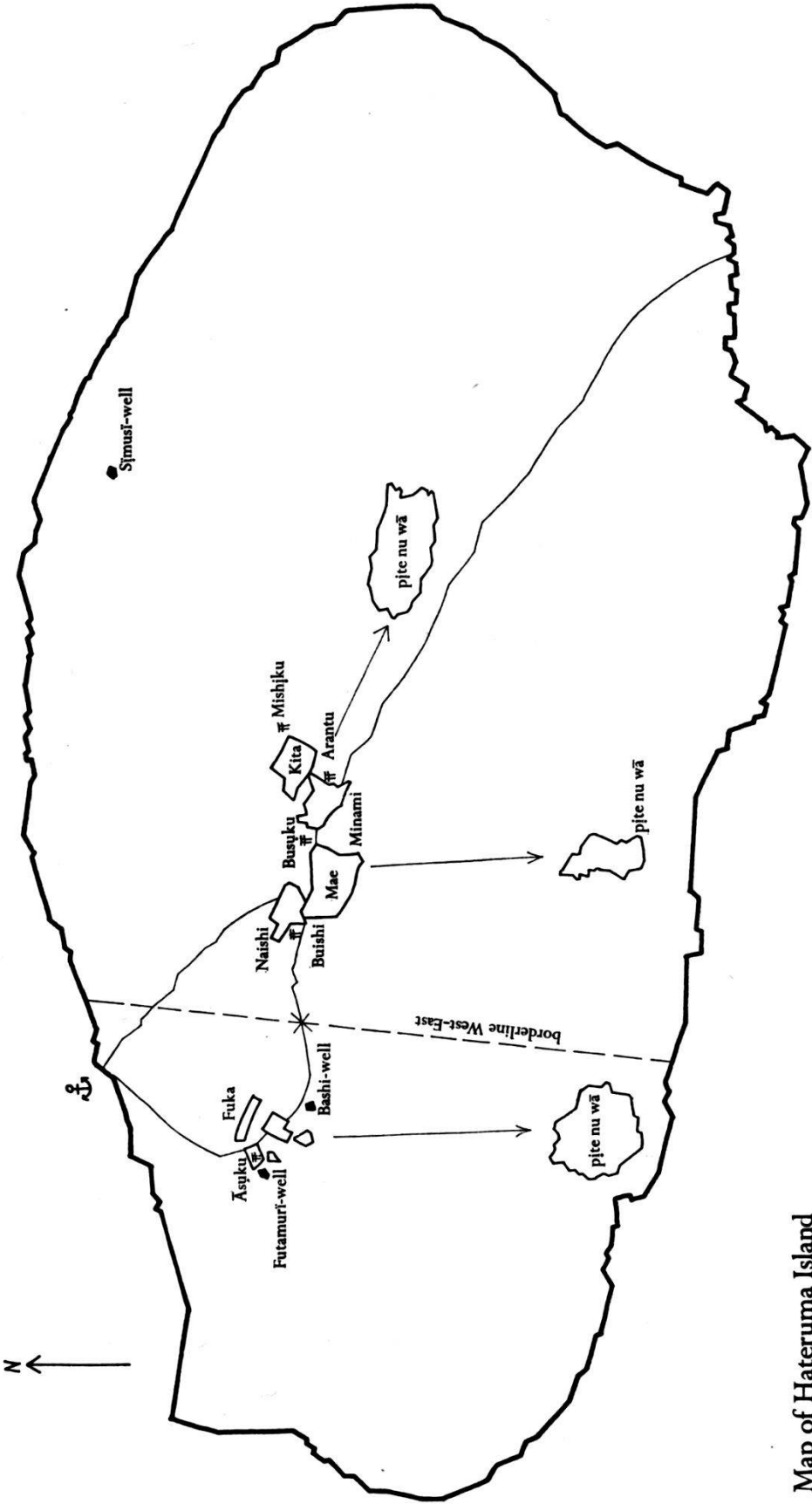
A cycle of agricultural rituals – numerous even today – is centred on the village shrines and occurs in all the villages on fixed days of the religious year<sup>4</sup>. These rituals (*tōchimē*, consisting primarily of invocations of and prayers to the *uyān*, the bringing of offerings and burning of incense, the performance of ritual journeys, and the holding of seclusions) are led by the priestesses and occur in the presence of the mainly female members of the cult-groups, the so-called *pana nu fa*, connected with each *utsi nu wā*<sup>5</sup>. For the great majority of the rituals, the presence of men and boys is strictly prohibited. They are also forbidden to set foot in the sanctum (*masōmi*) of the *utsi nu wā*, and three large sacred jungle-like groves (*pīte nu wā*, or field *wā*, supposed to be the abodes of certain important *uyān*, connected with the village shrines of Fuka, Naishi/Mae, and Kita/Minami) may only be entered by men three times a year. It need hardly be said that this restriction to women causes great difficulties for any male investigator, and explains the indispensability of my wife's collaboration in this research. Because she succeeded in gradually winning the confidence of the priestesses and was then able to participate actively in almost all rituals and retreats, it became possible for the first time to collect important material on this aspect.

3. Lastly, in close relationship with the points discussed under 2, a third group of religious events can be distinguished, i. e. those concerning the entire island. This group comprises on the one hand – and predominantly – ritual journeys made by the priestess of the Āsuku shrine and/or by her female cult-group members, taking a course from West to East (and back), during which the other shrines are visited and the ritual

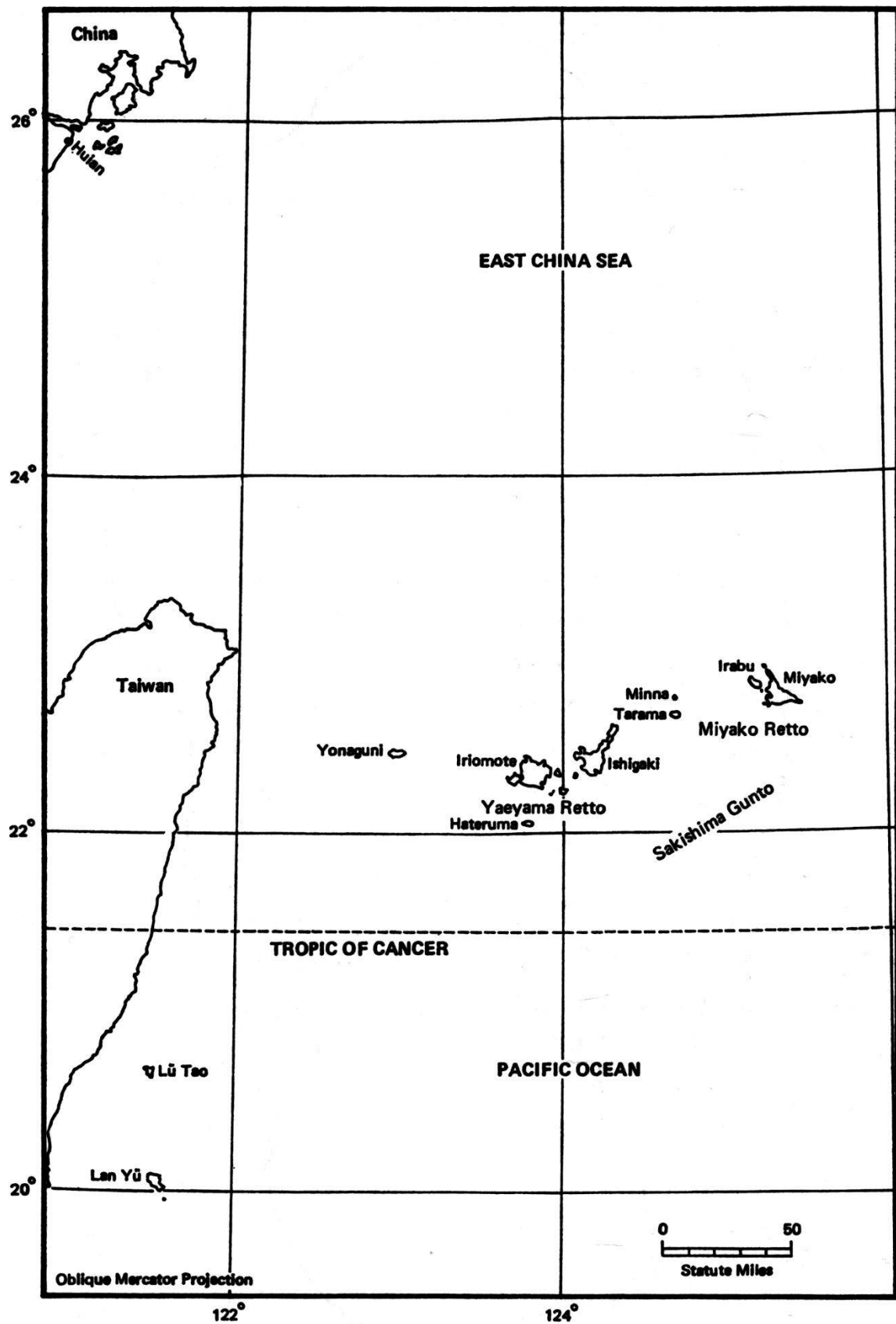
4. A complete cycle of these rituals has been described in Ouwehand I.

5. The five main *utsi nu wā* of Hateruma are the following: *Āsuku* (sometimes also: *Arasuku*, The New Enclosure, Fuka village); *Buishi* (The Great Stone, Naishi village); *Busuku* (The Great Enclosure, Mae village); *Arantu* (The New Origin, Minami village) and *Mishiku* (The Sacred Enclosure, Kita village). Cf. Ouwehand II, pp. 67, 68.





Map of Hateruma Island



Map of the Southern Ryukyus  
 (From R. J. Pearson, *Archaeology of the Ryukyu Islands*, Honolulu 1969.)

'traffic' between the important sacred wells in the West and in the East plays a dominant role, while as a counterpart, starting from the East and going to the West, certain journeys are made by men, under the leadership of some specially appointed man or of the head of the easternmost house of Hateruma.

The cycle of rituals referred to above extends over a period of about nine months and coincides with the ancient agricultural year, which began with the autumn ritual (*sisin*) in October and ended with the rituals of thanksgiving for rain (*amijiwā*) in June. These nine months are roughly divided by the people of Hateruma into three periods, each lasting about three months, i. e. the 'white summer' (*sisantsi*), when the *susuki* grass with its white plumes is in bloom, the 'young summer' (*baganatsi*), and lastly the 'south-wind summer' (*pēnatsi*, after the monsoon has shifted from the North to the South), which are respectively related to the sprouting of the crops (mainly wheat, millet, and rice), the successful growth of these crops, and then, as the last, the time of ripening and harvest. Most of the rituals are repeated (in the same or closely similar form but with a different function) three or even five times per cycle, but clearly increasing in intensity and frequency with the approach of the 'sacred' harvest time, until the final culmination in the great harvest festival (*pūrīn*)<sup>6</sup>.

The rituals themselves can be systematically grouped according to those connected with rainfall; with calm favourable weather (both on land and at sea, since Hateruma lies in the zone of the annually recurring typhoons) for the crops; and finally the rituals more directly related to the growth of the crops and the harvest.

The three hot summer months, the so-called 'empty' months between June and October, are reserved especially for the events mentioned under 1, connected with the worship of the dead. This always

6. Ouwehand I, pp. 37-40.

involves a period of mourning of varying duration, depending on the degree of relationship with the deceased and the nature of the event itself. This period is considered relatively unclean, i.e. one in which participation in uyān worship (and therefore agricultural rituals) is forbidden. This is also the reason why the worship of the dead is preferentially concentrated in these three 'empty' months.

## II

Against this background, we can now turn to the main subject of this article: the rain ritual.

Hateruma is an island without rivers; the porous coral limestone is covered by a layer of humus which in many places is extremely thin and easily eroded. The supply of drinking water, for both man and animals depended through the centuries on a few natural springs and a large number of dug wells. But in times of drought the ground-water level sank so deep that many of these wells became dry, with calamitous effect. Only in recent years has the chronic shortage of drinking water been relieved by the use of concrete rain-water reservoirs. For agricultural purposes, and particularly for the irrigation of the rice paddies, however, the farmer was entirely dependent on rain. The unceasing concern about water for the food crops (especially wet rice) is reflected in the important part still played by the rain ritual on Hateruma.

Despite the fact that the cultivation of such food crops as wheat, millet, and rice was almost entirely replaced between 1961 and 1963 (and perhaps permanently?) by the commercial production of sugarcane, the tenacious force of the folk religion proved to be so great that most of the old rituals were still celebrated in the traditional way. In 1965, however, there was a distinct and understandable tendency to reduce the *number* of rituals (and especially those in which men were involved). It is in fact a remarkable phenomenon that these religious events, which are specifically related to the cultivation of rice, have persisted so long. Under the present circumstances, they have of course lost their func-

tion. Their form is becoming increasingly weaker, and only the *nature* of the event, which is extremely closely related to the nature of the uyān worship, continues to retain its vitality. This is clearly evident, for instance, from the fact that in the accompanying, still unabbreviated although no longer always completely understood religious texts of the priestesses, all the traditional events are still mentioned even though the ritual itself is no longer performed.

In Japan proper, rain rituals (J. *amagoi*, H. *amagui*)<sup>7</sup> are practiced only on the rare occasions of severe drought. Unlike the situation on Hateruma, there is in Japan virtually no element of integration into the folk religion. For Japan, six forms of *amagoi* can be distinguished – six ways, sometimes combined with each other, to obtain rain<sup>8</sup>:

- a) *Komori*, retreat (seclusion), combined with certain forms of abstinence and probably also with prayers and songs.
- b) *Amagoi odori*, ritual rain dances. In Kishū, for instance, villagers form a ring-dance around a crab placed in the centre, after which the crab is placed on a rock in the sea.
- c) *Morai mizu*, the receiving of holy water, for instance deriving from the thunder god (Mito, Ibaragi prefecture), from a particular shrine, from a holy grove, or the like. By means of this water, it is hoped that rain can be obtained.
- d) *Kami o okorasu*, the angering of the gods, for instance by throwing unclean objects such as stones into rivers or ponds.

7. As a more or less literal translation of *amagoi*, 'rain prayer' (invocations in order to obtain rain) is to be preferred above the usual English 'rainmaking'. Nevertheless, *amagoi* includes more than just 'prayer'. One could describe it as the whole complex of prayer, songs, dances, retreats, and various magico-religious practices, meant to invoke rain and probably best to be summarized under the name of *rain ritual* as a general term.

8. See *Minzokugaku jiten* (Folklore dictionary), ed. by the Folklore Research Society under the supervision of Yanagita Kunio, 14th ed. 1957, pp. 9–11; Seki Keigo, in: *Sanson seikatsu no kenkyū* (Studies on mountain life), ed. Yanagita Kunio, 2nd ed. 1938, pp. 528–532; Yanagita Kunio, *Bunrui saiki shūzoku go-i* (Classified vocabulary of ritual customs), 1963, pp. 296–303. For an extensive account of *amagoi* practices in Iwashimizu (near Nara), see Geoffrey Bownas, *Japanese rainmaking and other folk practices*, London 1963, pp. 110–130.

e) Practices such as *onna no sumō*, wrestling (*sumō*) of women, or *hyaku masu arai*, the washing of wooden rice measures.

f) *Sendataki*, the building of huge bonfires on high places. This is usually done as a last resort, after all other forms of *amagoi* have failed to produce the desired effect. The entire community takes part, and the practice may be considered a form of *kyōdō kigan*, community prayer<sup>9</sup>.

Of these six possibilities, strictly speaking only two are (or were) used on Hateruma: the *komori* (H. *kumuri*) and the *morai mizu* in the form of the fetching of holy water from other islands across the sea (J. *mizu tori*, H. *mizī turī*). However, rain prayers and ritual journeys of groups of singing women are forms of rain ritual peculiar to Hateruma and, furthermore, from time to time the whole island community was or is involved in certain forms of *kyōdō kigan*.

In 1964/65 the following rituals were actually performed:

1. *AminigĒ – asanigĒ I* (morning-prayers, wishes for rain), also called: *sīsumizī amamizī nu nigĒ* (wishes for the white water, the rain water), beginning on a *tsuchinoe-ne* day<sup>10</sup> and lasting for three days. 1964. 12.5–7.

2. *AminigĒ – asanigĒ II*, beginning on a *tsuchinoe-inu* day and lasting for three days. 1964. 12.15–17.

This second *asanigĒ* ritual was (is) eventually followed by two full days of *sūnigĒ*, the community wishes formerly involving the whole population of the island.

3. *Mīga kumuri*, the three-day *kumuri* or *kumuri sōzī* (= J. *shōjin*, abstinence), beginning on a *kanoto-tori* day. 1965. 1.7–9.

9. *Minzokugaku jiten*, pp. 144, 145; Yanagita, *Bunrui saiki shūzoku go-i*, pp. 257 ff.

10. The days on which ritual events must take place are immutably fixed according to the Sino-Japanese sexagenary system. In this system sixty possible combinations of one of the ten elemental 'stems' preceding one of the twelve zodiacal 'branches' recur regularly during the course of the year. Three times a year the *dates* (changing annually, according to the *lunar calender* still in use on Hateruma) are determined by the priestesses together with the local officials of the island. In the present article these dates are converted into those of the Gregorian calender.



4. *Isika kumuri*, the five-day retreat, also beginning on a kanoto-tori day. 1965. 3.8-12.
5. *AminigĒ – asanigĒ III*, like the first and second *asanigĒ* (see above) sometimes followed by two days of *sūnigĒ* (II), beginning on a *tsuchi-noe-inu* day. 1965.4.14-16.
6. *Nanga kumuri*, the important seven-day retreat, beginning on the evening of a kanoto-tori day. 1965.5.7-13.
7. *Amijiwā*<sup>11</sup>, the 'rain-worshipping' (i.e. 'rain-thanking') ritual. Two days of rain-thanking beginning on a *mizunoe-tatsu* day. 1965.6.7-8. The second day is indicated as *yunigĒ*, the 'yu' wishes, i.e. wishes not only for prosperity, for a good harvest, but also and especially for *abundant rain* to provide prosperity and a good harvest in the next year.<sup>12</sup>

It is evident from this summary that in the first two quarters of the agricultural year the rain rituals are equally distributed (i.e. eight days in each of the three-month periods), but that the number increases with the approach of the harvest, reaching as many as fourteen in the last quarter.

As the last of the series, the *amijiwā* ritual *once* formed the logical conclusion of the entire agricultural cycle, and took place twenty days after the harvest festival (*pūrīn*). For this reason it was also called *atu-pūrīn* (after-*pūrīn*). In recent times, however, this rain-thanking ritual is performed immediately after the *pūrīn* festival because of economic considerations. It has therefore become the penultimate ritual in the cycle, although it should be the last.

1 (2,5). The three *aminigĒ – asanigĒ* rituals take place, as the name indicates, on three successive days *before noon*. Early in the morning the priestess purifies herself by washing her hair. She then greets the deity of the domestic hearth ('fire deity', *p'sī-na-kan*), worships the house-

11. *Amiji-wā*, probably *amimizī-wā* (J. *ogamu*, to worship > *ugan* > *uan* > *wā*).

12. For the religiously very important 'yu' concept, see Ouwehand II, p. 107.

uyān briefly at the *buzasike*-altar in the Northeast corner of the 'first room' at the easternmost side of the house, and leaves the house and the house-yard by the route passing around the sacred eastern corner of the *nāfuku* (the coral-stone wall in front of the house, which protects its entrance)<sup>13</sup>, dressed in a fresh loose kimono (for very important rituals the priestess would wear a white kimono of coarse linen). Holding in her hand a *zibagu* (J. *jūbako*) box containing the offerings as well as other things, she then takes the prescribed route to the village shrine. The ritual performed for this occasion in the *utsi nu wā* itself is relatively simple. After making short greetings in front of the shrine well (*mutu nu kā*) and the *buzasike*-altar of the shrine house (*wā nu hī*), the priestess passes through the *pettsa-hī* (entrance gate) to enter the sanctum (*masōmi*), where the actual ritual (*tōchimē*) for this day is performed<sup>14</sup>, ending with a *koppana* offering. *Koppana* is the collective term for the combination of *rice* (about three *gō sika-n-pana*, i.e. the priestess's rice offering, the rice or *panagumi* formerly having derived from a special field reserved for rice grown for ritual purposes) and *incense* (*kō*, *kōmutu*; in this case a ribbon of six incense sticks) offered to the uyān on the stone altar in the *masōmi*. On the return journey the priestess again greets the altar in the *wā nu hī*, the sacred shrine well, and then, passing via the eastern entrance to the dwelling house, the *buzasike* in the first room. During the rest of the day she refrains from ordinary work<sup>15</sup>. The wishes

13. The religious implications of the house-plan, the house-yard, and, in this connection, the meaning of the *cardinal points*, have been discussed by T. Mabuchi, 'Toward the reconstruction of Ryukyuan cosmology', in: *Folk religion and the worldview in the Southwestern Pacific*, Tōkyō 1968, pp. 121 ff.

14. For a description of the *utsi nu wā*, see Ouwehand II, Fig. 1 and pp. 68, 69. The *tōchimē* (the word itself is related to J. *tōtoi*, exalted, sacred) comprises the *sīsarīgutsī* (the words addressed to the uyān) as well as the offerings. The *sīsarīgutsī* consist of a short introduction, followed by the ritual invocation (the *pan*) of the uyān, the wishes (*nigē*) made to the uyān, the *pē agirun* (J. *hai o ageru*, to pay respect) and, lastly, a short closing sentence. Cf. Ouwehand II, pp. 70-72.

15. To avoid defiling the sacredness of their office and arousing the wrath of the uyān, the priestesses adhere strictly to these and other prescriptions. In this connection it should also be mentioned that the *utsi nu wā* must be cleaned every first and fifteenth day of the (lunar) month.

for rain are given expression not only in the wording of the *nigĒ* but also in the arrival on the second day of two female cult-group members who as *mizī machi* ('water sprinklers') or *mizī nu fa* ('water children') sprinkle water at certain prescribed places of the own *ugan paka*, i.e. the territory of the shrine<sup>16</sup>. The water, which comes from the sacred shrine well, is collected with a *bura* (J. *hora*, trumpet shell) used only for religious purposes and is transported in *kanabarīn* (dried and evacuated round gourds). During the retreats and at *sūnigĒ*, these 'water journeys' have a much more elaborate form; we shall return to them in the discussion of these ritual events.

2 (5). In times of extreme drought and only then, the second and third *aminigĒ* – *asanigĒ* are followed by *sūnigĒ* lasting two days. The element *sū* (J. *sō*, *subete*, whole, all, general) in this term conveys in itself that a large part of the population, including the men, is supposed to participate in these rituals and that there is thus involvement of the whole community. As mentioned above (p. 16), there is at present a tendency to limit such *kyōdō kigan* as much as possible. Since 1964/65 was, furthermore, not an abnormally dry year, we were unable to attend a *sūnigĒ*. The ritual has not fallen into disuse, however.

The *Āsuku* priestess is the one who decides, from case to case, whether a *sūnigĒ* for the whole island should take place. On the one hand this may be seen as a confirmation of her primacy in religious affairs, which is also expressed in other decisions, but on the other hand there was formerly a rational basis for this pattern. The most important and the very best rice paddies were situated in the low-lying western part of the island, and evidence provided, for instance, by religious texts

On these days, too, the rain-doors of the first room in the priestess's house must be left slightly ajar at night to facilitate the entrance of the *uyān*. During these nights the priestess abstains from sexual intercourse.

16. Cf. Ouwehand II, pp. 97, 98; and for a demarcation of the *paka* boundaries, the map on p. 102.

clearly indicates that the island water was thought to flow from East to West. The rather dry and 'infertile' eastern part of the island has the same relation to the much wetter and 'fertile' western part as millet to rice and, in the final analysis, as *bigirī* (brother/East) to *bunarī* (sister/West).

The *sūnigĒ* is characterized by a high degree of religious activity, the main points of which can be briefly described here. As could be expected, the religious 'water traffic' is the most important component. On both days, before noon, the already mentioned *mizī machi* visit *a much larger number* of water-sprinkling places than during the *aminigĒ* – *asanigĒ* rituals, distributed over the entire shrine territory. The procedure, which requires the whole morning, is extremely important for our understanding of the *paka* demarcation and thus for the religious topography of the island. As the afternoon approaches, the women return to the village shrines.

Meanwhile, the *ōsha p'sītu* ('people of the Osha', i.e. the officials, together constituting the island's Administrative Board)<sup>17</sup> have made their round of visits from East to West, stopping at each of the village shrines, where the priestesses and a number of cult-group members receive them.

As a counterpart to the *female* activities taking place before noon, during the afternoon there are water journeys of *male* members of the cult groups. On both days of *sūnigĒ* two men from Fuka chosen in turn (and belonging to the *Āsuku* cult-group) start out for the East, each carrying a *kanabarīn* filled with holy water from the *Futamurī-gē*, the sacred well in the western part of the *Āsuku* shrine. One of them offers this water successively at the shrine wells of Buishi, Busuku, Arantu, and Mishiku, after which they proceed together to the most important sacred well in the northeastern part of the island, the *Sīmusī-gē*. They

17. A building in Naishi village used by the officials of the former Royal Government, was called *Ōsha*. The present *Kōminkan* (Public Office, headquarters of the island officials) in Naishi is still referred to as *Ōsha*.

then descend via the south stairs of this well<sup>18</sup>, and make an offering of water from the second kanabarīn. After both gourds have been refilled with Sīmusī water, the two men start out on the return journey. One of the gourds holding Sīmusī water is emptied into the Futamurī-gē; the water in the second gourd is offered by the Āsuku priestess in the Āsuku-masōmi.

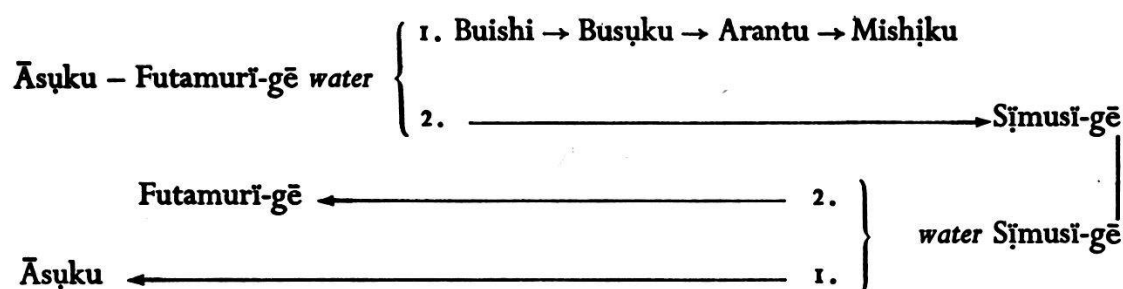


Fig. 1

Late in the night of the first sūnigē day, this West-to-East journey (Fig. 1) is reciprocated by a similar journey in reverse, starting in the East and going to the West (Fig. 2).

Beginning with Mishiku in the northeast, a male representative of each shrine and belonging to the shrine's cult-group departs with a kanabarīn of holy water in the direction of Āsuku. In each village the men join each other until there are four men (representing Mishiku, Arantu, Busuku, and Buishi) travelling together to Fuka. They pass three times

18. The Sīmusī-gē is situated in a region where remnants of former villages are found. At least part of the population of East (Northeast) and Central Hateruma originally settled in Sīmusī, from where they moved to the present villages.

The religious importance of the deep, never dry Sīmusī well, about which there are many legends, still persists. Three stairs, hewn out of the coral-stones, lead down to the water. The northern stairs are used exclusively by the inhabitants of Kita (on whose shrine territory the well is situated). The southern stairs remain reserved to the people of Fuka. In the folk belief a subterranean passage (*tōsī*) to Fuka and the Futamurī well is assumed. The 'religious traffic' between those two wells, which are also indicated as 'bigirī' (Sīmusī) and 'bunarī' (Futamurī), thus carries additional significance.



around the Bashi well<sup>19</sup> situated to the southeast of Fuka, and then offer 'their' water in the masōmi of the Āsuku shrine. On the return journey the kanabarīn are refilled with water from the Futamurī-gē, which the four men walk around nine times, after which each of them returns to his own village shrine where the priestesses await them and offer the holy Futamurī water to the uyān in their masōmi.

Accompanied by at least one female and several male cult-group members, the priestesses then pass the night in the shrine house.

Water Mishiku Arantu Busuku Buishi

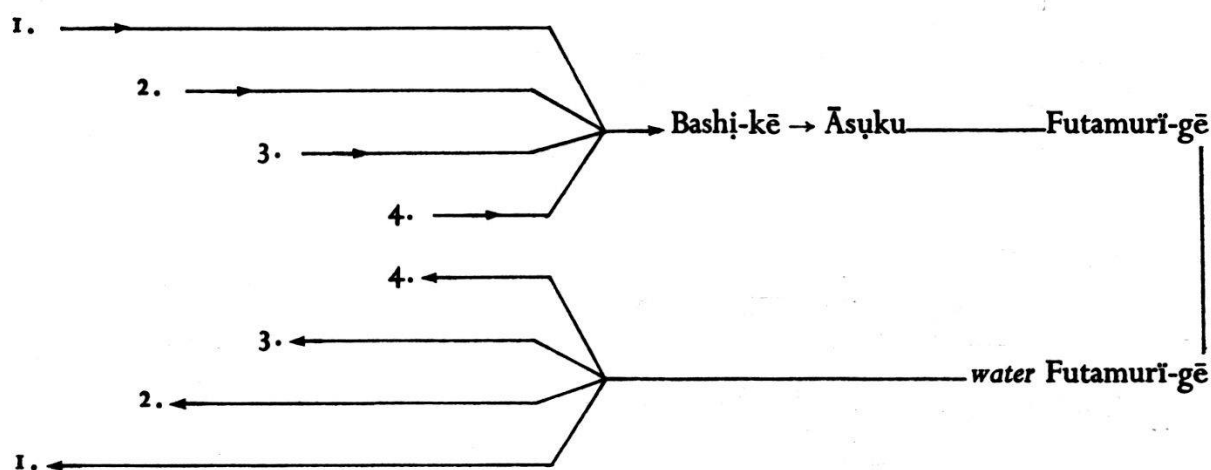


Fig. 2

What is striking with regard to sūnigē is not only the part to be taken by men – even though they must take care on their water journeys never to tread the *kanmitsi* (J. *kami no michi*, 'paths of the gods') reserved to the

19. The Bashī-kē is often used as a 'station' on the way between Fuka and the other villages. This is mainly due to the belief in underground water passages running from the shrine wells of Mishiku, Arantu, Busuku, and Buishi to this Bashī-kē. Cult-group members of these shrines who live in Fuka therefore do not have to go the whole way to the mutunukā of their own shrine in order to fetch holy water for religious purposes, but can conveniently use water of the Bashī-kē. In the same way Āsuku cult-group members living in other villages use the water of a special well west of Naishi village that is thought to be connected with the Futamurī-gē.



women – but also that here too, in the last instance, West-East connections based on structural principles reach clear expression.

Formerly (according to several informants, for the last time around 1955), what occurred on both days was not the journey shown schematically in Fig. 2 but the so-called *fusamara* ritual. Unfortunately, the latter has never been investigated and adequately described. For this it is now too late. The only thing we still can do, is to re-assemble the available information into an incomplete picture of limited value.

On both *sūnigē* days in every village there appeared out of the *fusamara*-grove (*fusamarayama*) a pair of *fusamara* (one male and one female) represented by masked young men. These youths were dressed up in a *mino*-like (*mino*, a kind of cape, in Japan proper often made out of rice straw) garment made of *māni* (*Arenga engleri* Beccari), palm leaves, vines, and dried banana leaves; their masks were made from gourds smeared with ritually burnt charcoal and their wigs of *shūru* (J. *shuro*, *Trachycarpus fortunei* Wendl.) fibres<sup>20</sup>. They used *māni* sticks as canes and were followed by two young men as companions, the *tumu*, each of them carrying a gourd containing water from the shrine well. Thus, moving from shrine to shrine and from East (Mishiku) to West (Āsuku), ten *fusamara*<sup>21</sup>

20. Josef Kreiner had such a mask made for him in Fuka, now kept in the Museum für Völkerkunde in Vienna. For a description and text figure, see the exhibition catalogue *Das Profil Japans*, Vienna 1965, p. 266 (no. 1338); this description mentions a hat (head gear) made of *kuba* (J. *birō*, *Livinstona subglobosa* Martius) bark.

21. *Fusamara tūgara* (J. *jittō*). The use of the numerative *-gara* (J. *-tō*), normally restricted to the counting of big animals such as lions or cows, indicates the non-human character of the *fusamara*. It seems likely that they are to be taken as strange visitors from another world, or as *marebito*-visiting deities (thus Kreiner, in his 'Some problems of folk religion in the Southwest Islands (Ryūkyū)', *Folk religion and the worldview*, o. c., pp. 106 ff.). The root *mar-* (in e. g. *fusamara*, *fusa* [futsa] meaning 'grass, herb' [-clad]) is often related to *mar-* as in H. *marin* (*marirun*) – to be born, and H. *maryōrun* – to die (of old people), and thus to concepts of life and death, life out of death which seems not inappropriate with regard to the *marebito*-visitors. But a relationship between such masked visitors (they appear in more spectacular form on other islands of the Yaeyama group even today) and young men's societies or so-called secret societies (*Geheimbünde*) as assumed by Kreiner and others (see, e. g., Kreiner, 'Akamata-Kuromata, Eindrücke von einem Maskengeheimbund im südlichen Ryūkyū', *Mitt. der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien*, vol. XCV, 1965, pp. 117–123, and the literature mentioned

and ten tumu finally assembled at the Futamurī well. Joined by Fuka villagers, they walked around this well nine times. The water from one of the gourds they had brought with them was offered here, the water in the second one being destined for offering at the Āsuku-masōmi. On arriving at the shrine, they were received by the priestess.

While singing the Āsuku rain chant<sup>22</sup> and slowly circling around the priestess nine times, the fusamara, tumu, and villagers were sprinkled with water by means of a bamboo broom held by the priestess. After having refilled their gourds with water from the Futamurī-gē, the fusamara and tumu of Buishi, Busuku, Arantu, and Mishiku now set out on their way back, going eastward. At each ugan the group became smaller until the last two fusamara and tumu reached their home shrine, viz. Mishiku. The same ritual (offering water, singing the rain chants of the respective shrines, sprinkling of water by the priestess) was repeated in each village, after which the fusamara vanished into the fusamara-grove, where they undressed and left their sticks and masks behind.

3 (4, 6) The three-, five-, and seven-day retreats (kumurī, kumurī sōzī) are extremely important events. The priestess – and with her at least one, but preferably two (to reach the odd number three) elder female cult-group members serving as *basī nu sika*, ‘side-priestesses’ (i.e. assistants), in principle remain day and night in the shrine and shrine house. If they are forced to leave the precincts for some urgent reason, they avoid contact with other villagers, and especially men, as much as possible. During the kumurī days, men may not approach the shrine; even young boys are excluded; and the priestesses, who pass the time between their sacred duties by sewing clothing or plaiting mats and baskets (formerly, the classic occupations were spinning and weaving

there), needs, in my opinion, further and better investigation. For Hateruma no such ‘secret societies’ or any remnants of them have been discovered.

22. The text of this chant, on this occasion also called *fusamara-pan*, is a shortened, ‘male’ version of the *amagui nu pan* sung by the priestesses during their retreats; see below, pp. 31 ff.

*asa*, hemp), even avoid the sewing or mending of men's or boy's garments.

In the shrine house the sacred fire is kept burning day and night. It is kindled with rice straw deriving from the *panagumi* rice field of the priestess and is fed with fire-wood from the *pīte nu wā*. At night there must always be one woman who remains awake to feed the fire and to renew the incense in the incense burner of the shrine altar whenever necessary.

The importance of these days is immediately evident from the nature of the offerings, which are presented thrice daily (when the first light begins to appear at dawn, shortly before noon, and early in the evening). They are summarized in the *nigĒ* of the *Āsuku* priestess: '... the nine incense sticks, the sacred sticks are offered; the washed rice, the clean rice is offered; the nine *gō* of rice, the sacred rice is offered; the rice wine, the sacred rice wine is offered ...' The actual procedure is, however, more complicated. A short description of the morning offerings may be appropriately given here.

The rice for the offering (*panagumi*) is provided by: 1. the priestess herself (*sika-n-pana*), 2. the *mutu-hī* or *tunimutu*, i.e. the main house from which the priestess ideally descends, and 3. the village (each house contributing a certain fixed share). The incense (*senkō*) is always burned as 9 sticks on behalf of the priestess and 9 sticks on behalf of the village. The white rice wine, *misī* (J. *miki*), which is kept in two large jars, is supplied by the priestess and by the *tunimutu*. This wine is a somewhat thick, white, fermented and therefore slightly alcoholic drink made with ground rice and water. The fermentation process, which takes several days, is induced at present by the addition of sugar. Formerly, young virgins with strong unblemished teeth previously cleaned with salt were allowed to chew a small amount of rice fine and then spit it into the liquid, so that their saliva would start the fermentation process.

In the morning the first thing to be done is the preparation of the 'washed rice, the clean rice' (*aragun*). A portion (*kumata*) of *sika-n-pana*,

of tunimutu rice and of village rice are washed nine times with water from the shrine well in the 'horned bowl' (*sīnuzara*), a large wooden bowl with long curved handles used only for ritual purposes (photo I). The washed rice is then stirred with a *kina*<sup>23</sup> leaf and divided over three ordinary tea-bowls. In each of these bowls three *kina* leaves are inserted between the arangumi and the side of the bowl. A large tray holding these three bowls and three mounds of offering rice (the *kumata* of the priestess, the *mutu-hī*, and the village) and a second tray with two small spouted *misī*-pots (*zokka*) and two wooden bowls half-filled with *misī*, are now brought into the *masōmi* (photos III and IV). The two sets of nine *senkō* (i.e. two portions consisting of one and a half ribbons of six sticks each) are lit, the priestess begins her *tōchimē*. During the long *nigē* the *basī nu sīka* sitting beside her now places the three times three *kina* leaves with some arangumi on the offering-stone, after which she takes between thumb and index finger, three times in succession from each of the three mounds of panagumi, the *patsī* (J. *hatsu*), the first grains – which are intended for the *uyān* – and offers them. Lastly, three small portions of *misī* are taken from each bowl and poured over the stone and the bowl is filled again from the *zokka*. This is repeated twice, so that here too the offering is made nine times. The *tōchimē* is concluded with *pē agirun* ('to pay respect'), in this case with the maximum number of 99 *pē*<sup>24</sup>. Only after this do the priestesses themselves drink from the *misī*.

23. The *kina*, probably a kind of *kuroki* (*Maba buxifolia* Persoon), is a shrubby tree with thick, smooth, rather small, oviform leaves. It is regarded as the most sacred tree, to be compared with the Japanese *sakaki* (*Eurya ochnacea*).

24. For the *pē agirun*, see above, p. 20, note 14, and Ouwehand II, p. 72: 'What is concerned here is in fact a ritual 'counting' up to 33 (3 times 1 through 10 plus 3) or to 99 (3 times [3 times 1 through 10 plus 3]), the latter being used only at very important rituals...'. In the *uyān*-worship the uneven numbers (3, 5, 7, 9) play a certain role; the number 9 is considered especially sacred. Even numbers are avoided as much as possible, since they are especially related to matters connected with death and/or worshipping of the dead. The ribbon of six incense sticks mentioned above (p. 20) is an exception. But then, incense originally had only to do with (Buddhist) services for the dead. That its use at agricultural festivals



The importance of the retreats is evident not only from the offerings but also from the elaborate nigĒ. A remarkable point is the difference between the nigĒ of Āsuku (West) and Mishiku (East). Besides being appreciably longer, the Mishiku nigĒ is primarily concerned with rain, whereas the Āsuku nigĒ has to do with agricultural matters. The explanation of this difference must probably be sought in the fact, already touched on (p. 22), that rain water is seen as flowing from East to West: the East is indeed drier and less fertile, and the best rice fields, which thus receive the 'eastern' rain water, lie in the West.

A translation of the most important parts of these two nigĒ follows. The texts speak for themselves.

*Āsuku*: '... we pray to thee [uyān] for the tilling season, for the plowing season; O please, let the old fields, the good lowland fields, let all the bordered fields, all the wet rice fields be tilled well; please, give strength to the roots, to the stems; O please, let the sprouts and the leaves be beautiful; let the colour of the leaves be beautiful; please deign to give prosperity to the island, O please, *give fortune of rain every five days, every ten days, during the day and during the night*, and by doing so, please help us for the planting season; O please, let the berths of the seedlings, the small berths and the large ones, the rectangular rice fields, let all the bordered fields, all the [wet] rice fields be planted well; please, give strength to the roots (etc., see above). When the young summer, the season of ripening comes, please let the stems grow powerful like the stubborn susuki grasses; O please, put big ears, long ears into the great stems, the long stems; please deign to give us fruits as hard as stone, as hard as metal, swaying full over the paths, swaying full all over the rice fields.

[And then] when the fifth month, the south-wind summer, the harvesting summer comes, on the day of the sacred [harvest] festival, the high festival, the people of the yama, all the people, and the divine sisters,

originated under alien influence is unequivocally demonstrated by the fact that the burning of incense during uyān-worship *in the field wā* is strictly forbidden.

the exalted sisters will be gathered together; and she who rubs the hands in prayer, who utters the divine words (i. e. the priestess herself) will take the lead and offer up to thee the grateful thanksgiving, will offer up to thee the humble wishes.'

The content of the *Mishiku nigĒ*, to the contrary, is entirely dominated by: *sĭkurĭ yu ya sĭsumizĭ nu yugabu amamizĭ nu yugabu yari-ōri*, i. e. [the obtaining of] a good harvest means (presupposes) the good fortune of white water, of rain water.

And now, the text (for the seven-day retreat) itself:

'... the coral island at the western edge (i. e. Hateruma) is an isolated island, a secluded island; the good fortune of rain has long breaks, comes with long intervals; [therefore] when the time for the three sacred days, the high days came, [we] retreated for three days [and nights], staying within the holy enclosure; during the day praying the prayers, the wishes, the three (at morning, noon, and evening), and at night lying down, we kept the holy fire burning, praying for the white water, the rain water; when the sacred days, the high days of the five-day retreat came, we chose the women of sacred number, of high number (i. e. the 'side-priestesses'); staying within the holy enclosure before thee, O uyān who protects us at the five holes, before thee who is seated at the seven holes<sup>25</sup>; during the day praying the prayers, the wishes, the three, and at night lying down, we kept the holy fire burning, praying for the good fortune of rain, for the prosperity of the crops. And now, since the sacred days, the high days of the seven-day retreat have come, we [again] choose the women of the sacred number, the high number; staying within the holy enclosure before thee, O uyān ... (etc., see

25. The mentioning of 'the five holes, the seven holes' is a frequently recurring feature. Here as well as in the *Mishiku* rain chant treated below (pp. 32 ff.), heavenly 'holes' as seat of the rain master are probably meant. But this is not always the case. For instance, in the *Āsuku* invocation, cf. Ouwehand II, pp. 77, 82 (line 41), 'holes' (*kumurĭ*) in the sharp, pointed coral rocks along the coast are meant. The word *kumurĭ* itself indicates a shallow place, a hollow where the water stays behind and 'retreats'; cf. J. *komorimizu*, and *komori* (*kumurĭ*) in its more general meaning of 'retreat'.



above) ... we keep the holy fire burning. Thus, praying for the white water, the rain water, for the prosperity of the crops, please deign to give us the white water, the rain water we pray for *every five days, every ten days, during the day and during the night* (cf. the *Āsuku nigĒ*); please, let it fall without interruption, like the water from the gourds, like the water from the dipper; please, let it be plentiful for the sake of a good harvest. Riding at the edge [of the mountain] of origin (i. e. the sacred Ufumutu or Umutu mountain on the island of Ishigaki) is the master of the rain, seated at the peak is the master of the water; riding at the edge of the white clouds is the master of the rain, seated at the edge of the summer clouds is the master of the water; the master in the Southwest, master of the rain, the mistress in the Northeast, mistress of the rain, please, bring them together, the couple, let them have intercourse; please, wet the [mountain of] origin, wet the high peak and let the water of the divine brother of Kunōra pour down; be it two dippers, be it even one dipper full of water, please, let it fall down for the sake of the divine sister (of Hateruma). Please, let the large rice fields, let all the fields be filled with water; please, let the water left over from the large rice fields, from all the fields, flow into the well of origin (*mutu nu kā*, the shrine well), please, fill the holy well; please, let the water left over from the holy well serve the people, let it flow as far as the borders of the paths of all the fields, in all the regions, for the sake of prosperity of the crops ...'

Another typical *kumurī* feature is formed by the *rain chants*<sup>26</sup> performed by the priestesses and their *basī nu sīka* in the immediate vicinity of the shrine well, after the morning rites have been completed. It is an

26. The *kumurī* chants are indicated as *amagui nu pan* or as *ami fuchā*, *invocations* (*pan*) or *supplications* (*fuchā*) for rain by the priestesses themselves, and never as 'chants' or 'songs'. Comparison with the ritual invocations, treated in *Ouwehand II*, indeed reveals the invocational character of these *kumurī* texts. Nevertheless, they are essentially melodic; they are not really recited but chanted. This is why we chose to distinguish them by using the word 'chant' in the sense of a 'measured monotonous song'. The same holds true for the *kanshin* chant, treated hereafter, pp. 38, 39; see also above, note 22.

extremely impressive event that must never be witnessed by men. Formerly, at least some parts of the texts were known to the villagers, because they recurred in the fusamara chants. But they also have a 'secret' part not intended for men. It was only because of the mediation of Mrs. Ouwehand that this part too could be recorded and analysed. The trance-like devotion with which the priestesses perform these chants can be judged from photo V accompanying this article.

We may take the Mishiku version as example once again. The chant consists of three parts. *The first part*, which has a slow, sustained melody, is actually composed of nine times two inseparable lines followed by a refrain (*ami yu tabōri*: please, give us rain) after each line, which is meant as an invocation of the uyān of 1. the Great Mishiku (shrine), 2. Kunōra Miyoshiku (i. e. the former village of Miyoshiku near Kunōra > Kun nu ura, Komi Bay, the place of origin on the East coast of Iriomote, from which the Kita villagers are supposed to have come) and 3. the sacred Mount Umutu on Ishigaki. This part ends with the lines: 'the white clouds, the riding clouds will become rain, will become water; please, let the clouds rise into the sky, let them rise above our island.'

They form the transition to *the second, secret part*, having the following text (equally provided with the refrain 'ami yu tabōri' after each line):

She got with child without knowing the father,  
 she got pregnant without knowing the man;  
 there was nowhere to go,  
 there was no way to enter somewhere;  
 to the edge of the well she went,  
 at the edge of the water she whiled;  
 [there] she stretched her arms,  
 [there] she stretched her legs;  
 the month of giving birth arrived,  
 the month of delivery arrived;  
 [the child] stretching its arms,  
 [the child] stretching its legs, was born;

the newly born child sat down,  
 the delivered child sat down;  
 the child that sat, [now] crept,  
 the child that crept, [now] stood up;  
 the child that stood up, [now] walked;  
 it was a divine child indeed,  
 it was an exalted child indeed;  
 when it ascended into the middle skies, the father became known,  
 when it ascended into the high skies, the man became known;  
 it climbed up to the five [heavenly] holes,  
 it climbed up to the seven [heavenly] holes;  
 it sat at the five [heavenly] holes,  
 it sat at the seven [heavenly] holes;  
 it became the master of the five [heavenly] holes,  
 it became the master of the seven [heavenly] holes;  
 for the rain, we [priestesses] ask thee,  
 for the rain, we [priestesses] beseech thee;  
 O please, [work] for [the people of] the island,  
 O please, [give thyself] to [the people of] the land.'

The birth of a wondrous child and its connection with water is a well-known theme of Japanese folk tales and legends; in the Ryukyus, however, the theme is much less common. Out of whom the rain-child is born and by whom it was conceived is not mentioned, but a mysterious, divine union between an earthly being (a '*bunari nu kan*' or even a priestess as a divine intermediary?) and a deity can be easily imagined.

A similar, but much shorter version of this part of the rain chant is known for the village of Shiraho (Ishigaki)<sup>27</sup>. There it lacks the reli-

27. Cf. Kishaba Eijun, *Yaeyama koyō* (Traditional songs of the Yaeyamas), vol. II, Naha 1970, pp. 526–532; see (and hear) also *Okinawa ongaku sōran* (A complete survey of Okinawan music – 16 LP records), Tōkyō 1965, Commentary, p. 207, Record CLS 5036, for a rather corrupt version of the same Shiraho chant.

gious integration that is still strongly evident on Hateruma. It is not certain just why this part of the chant is rather well known in Shiraho. It seems likely, however, that it was transported from Hateruma and survived through the centuries in Shiraho too. All but a few of the entire population of Shiraho were wiped out by the great tidal wave of 1771. Compulsory immigration of people from Hateruma made up these losses, and the present population of Shiraho is mostly Hateruman in origin<sup>28</sup>.

*The third and last part of the rain chant begins with the following lines, concluded with the refrain 'ami yu tabōri':*

'Please, [let the rain fall down] without delay, without interval;  
please, [let the rain gush forth] as from a gourd, as from a dipper;  
please, [let the rain fall down] in streams;  
please, let the well of origin, the sacred well be full, let it overflow [with rain water];  
please, let the seedling berths be full, let them overflow [with rain water];  
please, let all the rice fields be full, let them overflow [with rain water].'

The chant then ends with the singing (in a much more rapid tempo and with a different melody) of fourteen names of places past which the water flows from East to West, the water-way from Agatakotsi (West of the Mishiku shrine) to the Bashōtsi gully in the western sea. The refrain changes, and now runs: *hari nu yunganasī*, i. e. 'the streaming, wonderful fortune of rain'<sup>29</sup>.

The rain chants of all shrines have the same or almost the same wording, except of course for the place-names. Thus, the Busuku chant

28. See Kishaba Eijun (and others), *Yaeyama rekishi* (History of the Yaeyamas), 1954, pp.264-273.

29. The term *yunganasī* (*yu-n-ganasī*, *yu nu kanasī*) is difficult to translate; *-ganasī* (*-ganashi*), literally 'the lovely one', is an old Ryukyuan honorific. The concept of 'yu' must here be interpreted as 'fortune of rain'.

mentions only the water-way names of the Busuku shrine territory; in that it is somewhat more explicit than, for example, the Mishiku chant. The Āsuku chant ends by relating the names of important fields and regions in the Āsuku paka, above all in its western part, and then goes on to mention the Hateruma water-way in its *reverse* direction, viz. from West to East.

Lastly, the kumurī sōzī days are marked by a very intense activity of the mizī machi, the 'water sprinklers'. In each territory a much wider circuit of water places, including the pīte nu wā, is visited, but in addition, journeys are again made from Fuka, by two mizī machi, to the Buishi, Busuku, Arantu, and Mishiku shrines (photo II) and also to the Sīmusī-gē. Conversely, women from Mishiku, Arantu, Busuku, and Buishi offer their holy shrine water at the Bashi and Futamurī wells and then return to their own shrines with water from the Futamurī-gē.

Thus, even today the kumurī days form the climax of the rain ritual which reaches its end with amijiwā.

7. As remarked above (p.19), at present the amijiwā ritual or atu-pūrīn takes place immediately after the great harvest festival (pūrīn). In its external forms and the sequence of its events, amijiwā seems to be a more or less exact, albeit perhaps slightly abbreviated, repetition of pūrīn. The resemblance is accentuated by the fact that the former is held immediately after the latter. In earlier times, when there was a twenty-day interval between them, the similarity must have been much less apparent. Both of the rituals are indeed essentially thanksgiving celebrations. The distinction between them lies in the fact that *at pūrīn* all the rituals of the past agricultural cycle *except the rain rituals* are mentioned in the nigĒ of the priestesses<sup>30</sup>, and thanks is given for the beneficial results of these rituals. This is indicated by the word *shūbi*, i. e. literally 'head and tail', 'beginning and end', 'from the beginning to the

30. Cf. the scheme, numbers 2-4, in Ouwehand I, p. 39.



end'<sup>31</sup>. At *amijiwā*, to the contrary, what takes place is the *shūbi*, and therewith the thanksgiving pertaining only to *the foregoing rain rituals*, i.e. the events mentioned above (pp. 18, 19) under points 1–6. It is clear that quite apart from the resemblances with *pūrīn*, at *amijiwā* emphasis is placed on the element of rain.

Since a complete description of the *amijiwā* ritual would require repeated reference to the great harvest festival, we shall restrict ourselves here to the material in which, in our opinion, the rain character is expressed most effectively.

In the *amijiwā nigĒ* of the priestesses special reference is made to the '*kan nu buna, ui nu buna*', i.e. to the 'divine sisters, the exalted sisters'. Who are these 'sisters'? They are the so-called *kanshin*, the divine guests, the *mizī sika nu panda*<sup>32</sup>, the water priestesses, who have a special role to fill on the first day of (*pūrīn* and) *amijiwā*. At the end of the morning rites in the *Āsuku* home shrine and in the *pīte nu wā* related to *Āsuku*, nine women chosen from among the *Āsuku* cult-group members set out on the sacred rain journey across the island (photo VI). In the texts they are referred to as the 'nine, the seven, the five divine women'. But this does not mean that there must be twenty-one women in all or that it is a question here of nine, seven, or five women. The numerical indication is purely symbolic, the uneven numbers three (or a multiple of three, e.g. thirty-three or ninety-nine), five, seven, and nine being – as we have seen<sup>33</sup> – very important. On the other hand, it does not seem out of the way that a tripartite division is sought with respect to the divine women. Although in this special context its purpose and function are not entirely clear, it is conceivable that the division into the 'nine, the seven, the five (women)' represents the division of the island into West (*Irī – bunarī*), East (*Arī – bigirī*), and Centre (the

31. Cf. Ouwehand II, p. 72, note 11.

32. All women indicated by the epithet *panda* fulfill a divine function, are concerned with ritual matters, and are therefore held in special esteem and treated with the utmost respect. This is expressed, for instance, in the honorific language used to address them.

33. Cf. above, p. 28, note 24.





I. The Āsuku priestess washing panagumi in the 'horned bowl' for the preparation of the aragun-offering.



II. Two mizī machi from Fuka visit the Busuku shrine during the kumurī days.



III. Kumurī morning-offerings in front of the Busūku shrine altar.



IV. The Āsuku 'side-priestess' with kumurī morning-offerings in the Āsuku-masōmi.

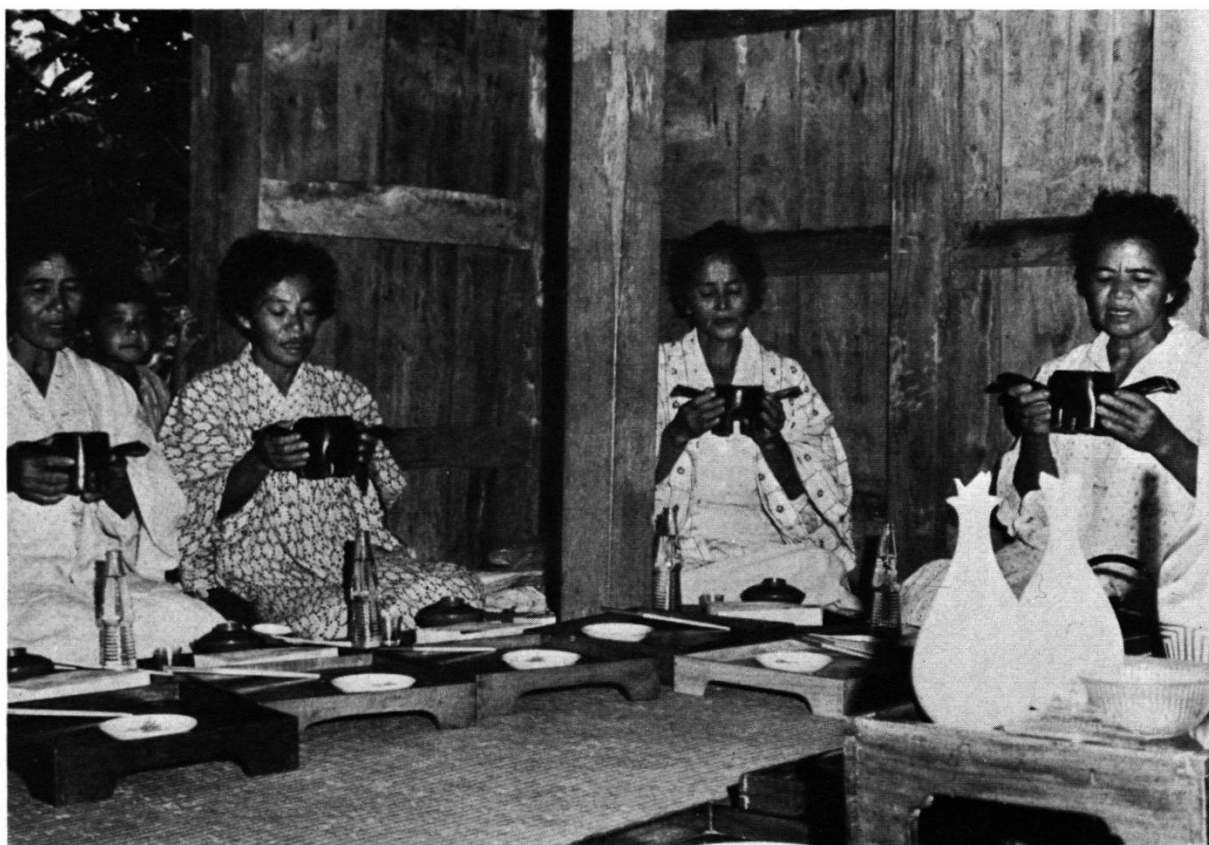


V. Busuku priestesses singing the kumuri rain chant.



VI. The 'divine guests' (kanshin) in the Busuku shrine grounds on their journey eastward.





VII. Kanshin singing the sūnuzara chant while holding the 'horned bowls'.



VIII. The nine kanshin, swaying the kuba fans and singing the kanshin chant on their way back to Fuka.

two villages of Mae and Naishi in their bigirī–bunarī relationship), a triad which is also expressed in other elements and may in a certain sense be called functional.

Whatever the case may be, it is certain that the kanshin form three groups of three women each, according to age. When they are received in the village shrines on the outward journey over the island, the women of one of these groups are presented with a tray holding nine *manzī*, a second group one with seven *manzī*, and the last group one with five *manzī*. What is concerned here is a very ancient and very important offering, made in this form only at pūrīn and amijiwā. In the centre of the tray there is a bowl, the *budū*, the 'great body', containing a mixture of garlic (H. *p'sīru*), *sakunā* (J. *chōmeisō*, 'long-life herbs', a kind of mugwort?), sprouted beans, and sesame seeds, bordered by a row of nine, seven, or five crab (H. *kupan*) legs, respectively. Around the *budū* there are grouped eight, six, or four bowls (so that with the *budū* the numbers again amount to nine, seven and five) containing sprouted beans and *sakunā*. The *budū*, which may be regarded as *shintai* (the 'divine body', the numinous symbol in which the deities are thought to be present throughout the ritual), must never be touched by men.

For their journey through the villages the kanshin preferably wear white or whitish hempen kimonos, the *ōgin* (J. *uwaginu*) and tied around their heads a narrow wreath of rice-straw originating from the *kēmasī*, the 'beautiful rice field' of the Āsuku priestess; in the right hand they hold the *kupa-n-pāon*, the fan made of kuba palm leaf.

On this day the kanshin themselves are to be regarded as divine messengers, as bearers of the divine essence, as *yorimashi*<sup>34</sup>. No one may cross their path, no one is allowed to speak to them. On the outward journey they visit all the village shrines, where they are received ceremoniously and present their rice offering. The main element in this ceremony repeated in each village is the singing of three chants, i.e. the *sīnuzara*

34. For the *yorimashi* concept, see *Minzokugaku jiten*, o. c., p. 667.



(often pronounced *shimizara*), the *nagazara*, and the *gujufu* (photo VII). The names of these typically *pūrin* chants, the texts of the first two of which are modified for *amijiwā*, derive from: 1. the 'horned bowl' (*sīnuzara*), already mentioned above (p. 28), from which *misī* is drunk during the chanting (photo VII); the chant itself has to do with the rice harvest; 2. the rather deep (long) wooden *misī* bowl (*nagazara*), for celebrating the millet harvest; and lastly 3. the celebration song known throughout the Ryūkyū archipelago, the *gujinfu* (J. *gozen*[-style]), during the singing of which *gushin*, the strong, distilled *awamori*, is drunk from ordinary porcelain tea-bowls<sup>35</sup>.

The role of the divine guests as *mizī sīka nu panda* reaches its clearest manifestation on the return journey, between the *Mishiku* shrine in Kita village to the home shrine of *Āsuku*. During this journey the women – ceaselessly swaying the *kuba* fans as they implore the *uyān* to bestow rain water, continually moving forward with the stream of the water from East to West (great care being taken to avoid either walking or looking backward) – now perform the *kanshin* chant (photo VIII).

This chant comprises eighty lines, all sung to the same melody and all followed by the same, well-known refrain: *ami yu tabōri*. The invocational character of the chant (*cf.* above, note 26) is immediately apparent from a prayer offered by the *kanshin* leader at the beginning and end of the journey and also several times during it: 'Uyān, thou divine brother at *Irī-myōdagi*, uyān, our master at *Narī-myōdagi*<sup>36</sup>; uyān at the edge of the clouds, master of the water, uyān at the rising edge, master of the rain. Since the day has come to wish for the next year's, the next sum-

35. The *pūrin* texts of these chants are to be found in the student's publication *Jitchi chōsa hōkoku* (Field research reports), Asia Society of Waseda University, 1964, pp. 47–49; for the *gujufu*, see also Shimabukuro Seibin, *Ryūka zenshū*, 1968, p. 114 (song 521).

36. Concerning *Irī-myōdagi* (*Narī-myōdagi*), the explanation in Ouweland II, pp. 77, 83 (line 46), 86, probably needs correction. It does not seem at all out of the way to suppose a correlation with the two peaks *Irī*-(*mizudaki*) and *Arī*-(*mizudaki*) on the island of Ishigaki. Both are situated to the East of the *Ufumutu* mountain plateau, and in the immediate vicinity of the sacred mountain itself. However, the problem of these names has not yet been definitely solved.

mer's white water, the rain water, we, the nine divine women, the seven, the five women have been chosen and have started out on the sacred, the high journey. Please, bless the divine festival wishes of the five yama, the three yama<sup>37</sup>; please, let us as divine messengers return to the origin shrine (i.e. Āsuku); please, grant that good wishes may be offered up to thee.'

During the journey from Mishiku to Āsuku, the kanshin again stop at the five village shrines and address the priestesses with the words: 'to her who rubs the hands in prayer (*shiziribe*), please give rain; to her who utters the divine words (*kansisaribe*), please give rain', after which they are received by the priestesses near the shrine precincts and briefly regaled with misī. This is called the *sakankai* (J. *sake mukae*).

The text of the kanshin chant then mentions thirty places at which the kanshin women stop to implore the uyān to send rain. These are mainly sacred places, i.e. fields, road crossings, ground plots where heroes or officials once lived, and in general also regions referred to in the ritual invocations (*pan*) of the priestesses. By the time the short dusk has fallen, the kanshin have passed Naishi. On the way to Fuka they now approach the invisible but well-known boundary between East and West, which is also the borderline of the shrine territory of Āsuku. Here, at the Biratsī-kotsī<sup>38</sup>, at the foot of the slope (Biratsī nu ugarī), a leap formerly had to be made over a deep cleft in the coral formation. This cleft, which is said to have extended across the whole island as far as Cape Takanā in the Southeast and was therefore named Takanā-barī (J. *ware*), is no longer visible. But where the road to Fuka crosses this particular place, the kanshin still sing: 'For the sake of the uyān at Takanā-barī, please give us rain; we now cross over the Takanā-barī, please give us rain.' It is an important point, 'the point at which an attempt is made to ward off the

37. Cf. Ouwehand II, Āsuku pan, line 18, and the remark on p. 84.

38. *Kotsī* indicates an elevated piece of ground from which water flows to fields situated at lower levels; the Biratsī-kotsī is supposed to have been appreciably higher in earlier times than it is now.

danger of an approaching typhoon by addressing first the uyān in the West and then those in the East, at Arī-p'singasī; directly to the East of this point lies the Nēma-field, millet from which must be offered at Cape Takanā; over this border, before the harvest festival, no rice was to be transported along the main road from the West to the East and no millet from the East to the West'<sup>39</sup>. Just after the boundary has actually been left over, the serious mood is momentarily abolished. Here, on their own territory, the kanshin can relax, and they use this opportunity to squat down by the wayside and to relieve themselves for the first time since beginning their long journey.

Upon reaching the Āsuku shrine, the kanshin are ceremoniously received and greeted by the Āsuku priestess. The division into three units described above is again clearly evident in the threefold salutation, the priestess each time addressing herself to the oldest of the groups of three kanshin.

The first amijiwā day ends with the *kanbudurī*, the divine dance, which is danced and sung by the three youngest kanshin in the shrine house and is attended exclusively by women members of the Āsuku cult-group. The deities are now assembled and must be entertained with song and dance. The men remain outside, but within the shrine grounds. Only after the conclusion of the *kanbudurī*, when the *dūran*, the gong, has been struck, does the *maṣibudurī* (J. *maki-odori*) take place. This dance, which is performed by men and women together in a free, improvised, and increasingly frenzied rhythm and which marks the end and the climax of the first day of pūrīn and amijiwā, at one time had a highly orgiastic character and continued far into the night.

Kanbudurī and maṣibudurī are both essential elements of the pūrīn celebration; for amijiwā, minor changes are made in the *kanbudurī* text sung for pūrīn<sup>40</sup>.

39. Ouwehand II, p. 99.

40. For a (not entirely correct) rendition of these texts, see *Jitchi chōsa hōkoku*, o.c., pp. 48–50.

We could conclude the preliminary discussion of the rain ritual on Hateruma here<sup>41</sup> if it were not necessary to devote a few words to the *mizī turī* mentioned in passing on page 18. This ritual, which is known in various forms throughout the Yaeyama group, had been in disuse on Hateruma for several successive years. The ritual itself is one to be performed by men. This and the fact that it required a boat trip in small *kuribune* across the always treacherous ocean – a journey which was not without danger and involved a great deal of time – probably contributed to its falling into neglect. According to Sakai<sup>42</sup>, the *mizī turī* still took place in 1954. Three times a year (the first time at the end of the eleventh month/beginning of the twelfth month; the second at the end of the twelfth or beginning of the first month; the third in the third month, all counted in lunar months), always on a favourable day with calm weather and thus concentrated in the period most important for the growth of the crops (between the eleventh and third lunar months), a number of young men chosen in a fixed sequence from among certain families whose traditional function it was, started out across the water in their fragile boats.

After a ceremonial departure led by all the priestesses at the beach of Mishiku on the northwestern shore of the island, the first journey – during these journeys no word was to be spoken – took them to the eastern coast of the large mountainous island of Iriomote, from which the greater part of the Hateruma population may once have come. Here, near the former village of Haimi in the southeast, and then further to the North, at Nakama and Komi, water was fetched from sacred wells and brought back to Hateruma, where it was offered at the village shrines. At each of these wells, small stones (the so-called ‘water children’)

41. The publication of the complete text material (in transcription and translation), which would require very much more space and time and is too highly specialized to be of general interest, can preferably be omitted here.

42. Sakai Usaku, ‘Haterumajima chōsa hōkoku’ (Hateruma field report), *Nihon minzokugaku*, vol. 2/2, 1954, p. 53.



were also collected to be buried in the shrine grounds of Hateruma<sup>43</sup>. The second journey was even longer, the destination being the main island of Ishigaki. There, sacred water was to be fetched from a place at the foot of the religiously so important Ufumutu, the Great Origin Mountain. On the way back, another stop was made on the East coast of Iriomote to visit the same wells again. The third and last mizī turī journey consisted of a repetition of the first.

All this was done not only to insure an adequate supply of rain water for a good harvest but also to renew the bonds between, on the one hand, Hateruma and the 'land of origin' East Iriomote, and on the other Hateruma and the sacred mountain, the Umutu (Ufumutu), where the clouds gather and fill themselves with the 'white water, the rain water'<sup>44</sup>, a mountain of the utmost religious importance for the entire Yaeyama group and particularly for Ishigaki itself.

A certain role was (and is) of course played here by the semi-official religious organization and the traditional hierarchy of the priestesses all over the Yaeyamas, as can also be seen from many other events. But what role – and it may perhaps be the main role – is played by Mount Umutu in the religious *structure* of the Yaeyama group can only be determined by a detailed comparative study. Unfortunately, the proper time and occasion for such a study seem already to have passed.

43. For the numinous powers of stones, see, e.g., Ouwehand, *Namazu-e and their themes*, an interpretative approach to some aspects of Japanese folk religion, Leiden 1964, pp. 117 ff.

44. Thus in the Āsuku invocation (pan) we find: '*kunōra miyoshiku mutu nu sīsī taki nu sīsī*', i.e. '(uyān at) Kunōra Miyoshiku, at the *top* of origin, at the mountain *top*'. Ouwehand II, pp. 77 (line 49), 83, 86, translates *sīsī* as 'ground'; it should read 'top, summit, peak'; cf. Ishigaki: *tsizī*, Kuroshima: *sizī*.

Concerning the Ufumutu on Ishigaki, we find in the same pan the lines (47, 48): '*kumu ya pana oru uyān ami nu nusi; garī ya pana oru uyān mizi nu nusi*', i.e. 'uyān at the edge of the clouds, master of the rain; uyān at the edge of the Kārē (mountain), master of the water'. Ouwehand II, pp. 77, 83, 86, translates *garī ya pana* as 'rising edge'. However, it seems more probable that what is meant is Kārē mountain, some four kilometres northwest of Ishigaki city in the immediate vicinity of the Ufumutu. Clouds seem often to be 'riding' on its summit and at its foot, hidden in green, the sound of small streams and wells is heard. It is here that the mizī turī takes place. Cf. Miyara Tōsō, *Yaeyama go-i* (Yaeyama vocabulary), Tōkyō 1930, p. 66, and Kishaba Eijun, *Yaeyama minyō-shi* (Yaeyama folk songs), Naha 1967, pp. 101–103.