

THE UNITY OF GOVERNMENT AND RELIGION IN THE RYUKYU ISLANDS TO 1,500 A.D.

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Introduction

Nothing definitive has been discovered to clarify the question of the origin of the people of the Ryūkyū Islands. Though these islands appear to have shared in the Chinese and Japanese cultural traditions for at least three thousand five hundred years,¹ the similarities between the Ryūkyūs and Japan are far more basic than those between the Ryūkyūs and China. It now seems agreed that Okinawan and Japanese dialects are branches of a common language and that separation took place at least one thousand years ago.² The points of similarity in the creation myths of the two countries and the parallels which can be seen in religious practices point to a common origin or to deep interpenetration between the two at a very early period. A well-known Okinawan scholar makes the statement that if one takes from Okinawan religion the elements of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism which have influenced the ancient

1. Clement W. Meighan, "Early Prehistory," in Allan H. Smith, ed., *Ryūkyūan Culture and Society* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1964), p. 13.
2. Yukio Uemura, "Ryūkyūan and Japanese Dialects," *ibid.*, p. 37.

faiths of Okinawa, the remainder closely resembles the ancient Shintō of the Japanese nation.¹ This resemblance has led to the practice of calling the old religion of Okinawa, "Okinawan Shintō".

It is further interesting that the concept of the unity of religion and government expressed in the Japanese term, *saisei itchi*, is used by Okinawan scholars to describe particularly the village period of Okinawan history,² which is really a period of pre-history for which there are no written records, and hence no dates to be given. This is conceived of as a period when a village founder ("root person") combined with his political authority the religious authority of a female member of his family, usually a sister, whom he would appoint as priestess for the village, thus ruling the village, determining the times of planting and harvesting by divination and conducting religious festivals, praying for an abundant harvest and for the prosperity of the village. This policy of combining the political and religious authority was followed through the period of the feudal lords (possibly 1000 A.D. to 1300 A.D.), and came to a climax in the policies of King Shō Shin (1477 to 1526 A.D.), who successfully centralized the government at Shuri and established his authority over the entire Ryūkyū Chain by a number of very astute moves, one of which was the appointment of his eldest sister to the position of chief priestess for the entire kingdom.

It will be the purpose of this paper to trace briefly the politi-

1. Fuyū Iha, *Iha Fuyū no Senshū* (Selected Works of Fuyū Iha), (Naha: Okinawa Times sha, 1961), vol. I, p. 226.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 221.

cal and religious structure through the three periods just mentioned—the village period, the feudal period and the kingdom period to the reign of Shō Shin, sustaining the thesis that changes in the pattern of administrative authority on the local, feudal and national levels brought politically-inspired changes in the religious structure. But it will also be our purpose to criticize the hypothesis of Kensaburō Torigoe in his recent study,¹ namely, that developments in Okinawan religious history are to be understood *solely* as changes produced by individual political rulers to serve political ends.

As we proceed, two important aspects of the development of Okinawan history should be kept in mind. The first is that the bringing together of the Ryūkyū Archipelago as a political unity is relatively late. The process began in 1264 A.D. under King Eiso, at which time Kume Island, the Kerama Islands and Iheya Island were made to give tribute to the king of Okinawa. All these islands are a part of what is known as the Okinawa Group. Under King Bun'ei in 1390 A.D. the Saki-shima Group, including Miyako and Yaeyama to the southwest, were brought into a relationship of tribute to Okinawa. But it was not until about 1500 A.D. under King Shō Shin that all these islands were really brought into subjection to the central government. The Amami Group to the northeast of Okinawa had to be subjected three times, once in 1466, and again in 1537 and 1571 A.D. Therefore, the map of the Ryūkyū Kingdom was not really complete until well into the 16th century.

Furthermore, without time to develop this unity as a kingdom,

1. *Ryūkyū Shūkyōshi no Kenkyū* (A Study of the History of Ryūkyūan Religion). (Tokyo: Kadogawa Shoten, 1965). 670 pp.

the Ryūkyūans were conquered by the powerful Satsuma Clan of Kyūshū in 1609 A.D. and dominated by them until the complete disappearance of the kingdom under the assumption of administrative control by the Japanese government in 1879, at which time the king of Okinawa and his nobles were removed from Shuri and taken to Tokyo. Immediately upon the conquest by Satsuma in 1609, the Amami Group was made a part of Satsuma domains and was thus cut off from the Ryūkyū Kingdom only a very short time after its full participation in that kingdom. In this way the outside pressure from Satsuma became decisive for economic and political life and had a tremendous restraining influence on the development of Okinawan culture and religion.

The second point which must be noted is closely related to the first, namely, that the writing system of Okinawa was introduced from Japan in the middle of the 13th century, and the earliest documents which provide an important source for the study of Okinawan history, the anthology of ancient songs known as the "Omorō Copybook" (*Omorō Sōshi*), were gathered between the years 1532 and 1623. By the latter date the heavy hand of Satsuma was felt throughout the Ryūkyūs, and a great creative period seems to have been cut short. With the exception of this collection and the "Account of the Ways of the Gods in Ryūkyū" (*Ryūkyū Shintōki*), written about 1606 by a Japanese Buddhist priest named Taichū Ryōtei (1552-1639), almost all the literature produced in Okinawa was composed after the Satsuma invasion of 1609. How much must be attributed to political influence and the presence of Satsuma in Okinawa is hard to determine. That there are revisions of some of the

material to fit the historic situation, no one doubts. This makes the study of the ancient and medieval periods of Okinawan history very difficult, leaving much to the imagination of scholars.

Tomb and monument inscriptions and the writings of cultural anthropologists, linguists and archaeologists help us to reconstruct the unrecorded past and infer certain historical developments of the political and religious structures.

I

The Relationship Between Government and Religion in Three Historic Periods

The village period

There are no dates which can be given for this period, but it is envisaged by Okinawan historians as developing after the introduction of rice to the islands. This was a great revolution in the way of life, for it brought agriculture to the fore and made necessary living in settled locations. There are many villages which from ancient times have not changed their location.¹ Ordinarily slightly elevated ground was chosen for its convenience to fresh water sources and for the accessibility to level ground which could be used for rice paddies. A high point in the village was selected as the sacred grove and the village gods were worshipped there.²

It is the thesis of Dr. Torigoe that the location of the sacred

1. Shunchō Higa, *Okinawa no Rekishi* (History of Okinawa), (Naha: Okinawa Times sha, 1959), p. 15.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

grove (*utaki* or *o-take*) determined the location of the village. He claims that often the location of a suitable spot for a sacred grove was a more important consideration than the character of the soil or the suitability of the location for fishing.¹ The village was not to be built until the sacred grove was selected. And this fact is spoken of in one of the ancient folk songs:

Ano mori no mori no naeshi, Shimatachi mo yotashi tageya
Kono mori no mori no naeshi, Kunitachi mo yotashi yagesa
Goha kuwa uchikakete, Nanaha kuwa uchikakete
Itsutsu hoki kirihanachi, Nanatsu hoki kirihanachi
Itsutsu narimono mochiyosete, Nanatsu narimono yuisagete.²

Dr. Torigoe interprets the song as follows: "The foot of the woods chosen as the sacred grove is indeed a beautiful spot to build the village. Drive in the hoe and cut with the ax and open up the land. When the village is built, bring each one his own musical instruments for the celebration."³ He finds further evidence for the establishment of the sacred groves as being prior to the building of the village itself in the ancient mythology of Okinawa recorded in "The Mirror of the Ages of Chūzan" (*Chūzan Seikan*), Chūzan being the name for the Central Government at Shuri. This record says that the establishment of the country began with the founding of seven sacred groves which are the principal groves of the islands, and then was followed by the establishment of all the groves and sacred places of all the islands. But whether or not this record is historically accurate

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1. Kensaburō Torigoe, *Ryūkyū Kodai Shakai no Kenkyū: Shūkyō to Seiji* (A Study of the Ancient Society of Ryūkyū: Religion and Politics), (Tokyo: Nippon Shuppan Haikyū Kabushiki Kaisha, 1944), p. 25.
 2. Torigoe, *Ryūkyūan Religion*, p. 56.
 3. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

and whether or not its ancient tradition is politically inspired is open to debate. It is interesting that according to this account the first sacred grove was said to have been established at Hedo, or Hendo, at the northern tip of Okinawa. This may represent the attempt to support the thesis that the Okinawan people were originally from Kyūshū and migrated southward, reaching first the northern tip of Okinawa and moving southward to open up the rest of the country. The regent, Haneji Chōshū, who had responsibility for compiling these documents, was under considerable pressure to reconcile the interests of the Okinawan Kingdom and those of Satsuma. It appears that the listing of the groves with Hedo at the head of the list represents a part of his attempt.

Other scholars indicate that the original village sites were probably chosen for the availability of water and for relative physical safety, as well as for good paddy land, as we have already noted. But it is obvious that the village sacred grove was very important and that this was indeed an age of *saisei itchi*.

In order to trace the development of this unity it is necessary to go back to a very primitive belief in the brother-sister relationship which is distinctive of the Ryūkyū Islands, though there may be traces of it in Japan's creation myths.¹

Throughout the Ryūkyūs a man's eldest sister is his guardian *kami* (*onari-gami*).² This special tie is extolled in ancient song and ritual. One ancient song, for example, goes:

1. Douglas G. Haring, "Chinese and Japanese Influences," in Allan H. Smith, ed., *Ryūkyūan Culture and Society* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1964), p. 44.

2. Haring, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

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Ominari ga tesahi, mamoru kandai mono
Hikimawachi tabare, Yamato made mo.

The Japanese translation given by Dr. Torigoe is:

Shimai no tenugui wa waga shugo (mamori) kami nareba
Ware o higo shi tamae, Nihon e itte made mo.¹
("If my sister's hand towel is my guardian kami,
It will shelter me even though I journey as far as Japan.")

A lock of hair or a handkerchief might serve as the symbol of the presence of the sister-*kami* with her seafaring brother, and various happenings during the voyage were taken as omens of the presence of the sister-*kami*. The following song is typical:

U-fune no takamoto ni shiratori no ichon
Shiratori ya aranu, n-omenai u-suji.

In Japanese this would be:

Fune to takatomo ni shiroi tori ga todomatte iru,
Iya, shiratori de wa nai.
Shimai no mi-shinrei na no da.²
("On the stern of the ship a white bird has landed.
No white bird! It is the living spirit of sister-*kami*.")

It is this ancient faith which is still very active in many places which is assumed to be the background out of which grew the system of village priestesses known as the "root-*kami*" (*nigan*). Whether the sister-*kami* may be traced to the female shaman system of Siberia and Central Asia, as suggested by Dr. Torigoe,³ or whether the origin may be found in Southeast Asia or South China, a suggestion made by Dr. Douglas Haring as needing

1. *Ryūkyūan Religion*, p. 236.
2. *Loc. cit.*
3. *Ryūkyūan Religion*, p. 231.

further investigation,¹ it is evident that this faith is quite basic in the early development of village religion in the Ryūkyū Islands.

With this sister-*kami* faith there is a precedence in ancient Ryūkyū of the female over the male. The word for brother was *wekeri* and the word for sister was *onari*. The combination word for brothers and sisters, which is in Japanese *kyōdai shimai* (brothers-sisters), in Ryūkyūan is *onari-wekeri* (or the more modern form, *wunayi-wikiyi*), putting the sisters first in the combination. Other combination words also place the female first, probably indicating the influence of this primitive female spiritual dominance.

English	Japanese	Ryūkyūan
Men and Women	Danjo	Winagu-wikiga
Male and Female	Shiyū	Mimun-wūmun
Husband and Wife	Fūfu	Mitu (Meoto)
Nephew and Niece	Seimei	Mi-wikkwa
Grandfather and Grandmother	Sofubo	Fāfuji

In each case the male comes first in the Japanese combination, but the female first in the Okinawan combination word. Likewise, female *kami* take precedence over male *kami*, and the respective servants of these *kami* in the village, namely, the *omina-ri okude* and the *omikeri okude*, follow the same pattern.²

The ancient songs indicate the same pattern of female dominance. In an ancient song for the wedding ceremony on Kuda-ka Island the following words are found:

Wenago mǰguwa asaba (Onna no ko o umaba)
Kimi no miya daiiri (Kikoe-Ōgimi no go-hōkō o)

1. Op. cit., p. 50.

2. Iha, *Selections*, vol. 3, pp. 402, 403.

Wekega miguma nasaba (Otoko no ko o umaba)
Shuri ga nashi miya dairi (Koku-ō Denka no go-hōkō o)¹

This might be translated: "If a girl is born, she will perform the service of Chief Priestess; if a male child is born, he will perform the service of the Great King." This clearly points to a time when the female ruled over religious matters and the male over political matters, the position of the female being foremost. The thought was that the sister-*kami* received the words of the *kami* and passed them on to the brother, and the brother performed his tasks accordingly.

The practice of giving some token to one's brother to symbolize the presence of the sister-*kami* to guard him on his journey evidently persists to the present day in some places. Fuyū Iha says that an old family from Okierabu which had lived in Kagoshima for many years told him that on occasions when their son departed for a trip, the father always instructed the sister to give the brother some token, a handkerchief or something. On one occasion nothing was available, but they had just finished lunch, so the sister gave the brother her chopsticks as a token of the living spirit of the sister-*kami*.²

This magico-spiritual superiority of the sister over her brother and her function as his guardian-*kami* is reported in recent anthropological studies of village life in the northern district of Okinawa and in Yaeyama.³ This appears to function in keeping the woman's spiritual affiliations with her native family,

1. Iha, *Selections*, vol. 3, pp. 402, 403.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 404.

3. *Okinawa no Shakai to Shūkyō* (Okinawan Society and Religion) ed., Seijin Kona, (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1965), pp. 352, 353, 356, 360.

even though she moves away from home when marrying, and she continues to perform her native family's ancestor worship and protect her brother spiritually. In the absence of a sister, a father's sister or the daughter of the father's brother takes the sister's place in Yaeyama,¹ and similar patterns probably exist elsewhere, though many variations in family practices are evident.

It appears that all females may have originally possessed the character of a shaman in ancient Okinawa. In Kudaka Island there remains to the present day a ceremony involving all the women of the village, which is a "coming-of-age" ceremony for girls. It is held every thirteen years, tests young women for qualifications for becoming a shaman, and pictures a period in Okinawan history when all the females of a village were in some sense priestesses.²

As society developed, it is theorized, the practice of recognizing all women as priestesses changed. The founder of the village, known as the "root-person" (*ninshu*), appointed his sister as the priestess of the village, known as the root-*kami* (*nigan*). She had the responsibility of performing the religious functions for the village, most of which centered in the sacred grove. As other families moved into the village and were recognized by the priestess as having a "blood-relationship" with the gods of the grove, each family appointed its own priestess to serve under the root-*kami* of the village as a helping priestess (*okode* or *kaminchu*). Thus in time the practice of

1. *Okinawa no Shakai to Shūkyō*, pp. 352, 353, 356, 360.

2. Torigoe, *Ryūkyūan Religion*, p. 270.

having all women participate in the village festivals, vestiges of which can be seen in Kudaka and Kerama Islands, vanished, and only the officially appointed representatives of the various families participated.¹

Though it does not make much difference to the development we are tracing, it should be noted that there is some confusion about the use of the terms *nigan* and *ninchu*. Dr. Torigoe takes them to be village priestess and village chief, respectively. Other scholars identify both terms with the village priestess. Though it anticipates our argument a bit, it is probably necessary to elucidate the development about which we are speaking with a quote from a letter written by Mr. Eishō Miyagi of the Yokohama National University to Dr. Douglas Haring and translated by Dr. Haring:

The forerunners of the *norō* were the *omenai* or *unai-gami*, otherwise called the *unari-gami*. When the village communities were formed, the chief, the *omekai* or *uki*, who established the *ujizoku* (氏族) or clan, performed the administrative tasks. It is thought that village order was maintained by the unification of ritual and administration; and one of the chief's sisters assumed the ritual roles as *omenai*. These positions were hereditary. In Ryūkyū this house was called the *nimuto* (根本), *nīyā* (根屋), *mutoyā* (本屋), *nigamiyā* (根神屋), *ufuyā* (大屋), *uinoyā* (上屋), etc.

The woman who performed the rituals was called *ninchu*, or *nēchū* (根人), and the *ninchu* ranked above the *kaminchu* (神人) who was an assistant in rituals. These terms, *ninchu* and *kaminchu* are in current use in Ryūkyūan village communities.²

The *norō* referred to here were evidently the priestesses of the feudal period onward and will be dealt with in the next section of this paper. What is evident here is that the sister-*kami* is thought to have become the village priestess, presiding over the

1. Torigoe, *Ryūkyūan Religion*, p. 305.

2. Op. cit., pp. 48, 49.

rituals of the village in connection with the sacred grove.

But there remains the confusion over terminology. The quote above assumes that the *nincho* refers to the village priestess. At present I favor the thesis of Dr. Torigoe that the *nīya* or *nīdukuru* (根所) was made up of two components, the “root-*kami*” (*nigan*) who was the priestess for the village, and the “root-person” (*nincho*) who was the administrator of the village. The “root-person” administered the village on behalf of the *kami* and the “root-*kami*” or priestess spoke for the gods of the groves, giving explicit practical instructions as to what policies should be followed as well as conducting the ceremonies connected with the agricultural life of the village.¹ In support of this position, Dr. Torigoe quotes from the “Ryūkyū Country Records of Origins” (*Ryūkyūkoku Yūraiki*, 1713) in which in an old religious poem the *nincho* is referred to as the *makiyo no ogoro* and also as the *kudanomoriyaikyo*. He says that the *makiyo* or *kuda* means village (*mura*) and *koro* means man; thus the meaning is village man or village chief.² He concludes that the sister-*kami* faith developed into dual authority representing both religious and political aspects in the ancient villages of Okinawa, and that evidences of this system can be seen in Japanese mythology as well as in the myths of ancient Okinawa.³

It is interesting at this point to note the creation myths of Okinawa and their similarity to those of Japan, for they may both reflect the ancient brother-sister rule which is here envisaged. According to Japanese mythology, the god and goddess who

1. *Ryūkyūan Religion*, p. 80.

2. Loc. cit.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

created the land of Japan were Izanami and Izanagi, brother and sister, and from them was born Jimmu Tennō, the first Emperor of Japan, who appeared at Hyūga near the southeast tip of Kyūshū Island. There are many scholars, including Fuyū Iha, who believe that the origins of the Okinawa people may be traced to roughly the same locale. However that may be, the mythology of Okinawa possesses many points of similarity.

One must remember that the creation myths were not reduced to writing until the beginning of the 17th century. The earliest is included in the "Account of the Ways of the Gods in Ryūkyū" (*Ryūkyū Shintōki*), written by a Buddhist priest of the Jōdo sect, Ryōtei Taichū, about 1606. According to his account, two deities appeared, a female deity called Amamikyū (note that the female comes first) and a male deity named Shinerikyū. They built huts side by side. Amamikyū became pregnant due to a passing wind, and three children were born. One was the first lord; one was the first priestess (*noro*); and the other was the first of the common people. The fire which they needed for their livelihood was obtained from the Dragon Palace, which was believed to be at the bottom of the sea.¹

The second version of the creation myth is to be found in the "Mirror of the Ages of Chūzan" referred to above. This was compiled by the Regent Chōshū Haneji (or Shō Jōken) in 1650. According to this myth, Amamikyū was sent by the lord of heaven to earth to find a suitable place for the gods to dwell. The boundaries of the islands were not settled, so she returned to heaven and brought back with her earth, rocks, plants and trees and then

1. George H. Kerr, *Okinawa, The History of an Island People*, (Third Printing; Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1960), p. 36.

created the Seven Sacred Groves, and then the groves of the many islands and lands. Myriads of years passed, and there was no person, nor was there any divine law or morality. Amamikyū returned to heaven and asked the Lord of Heaven for the seed of mankind. The Lord of Heaven replied, "As you know, there are many gods in heaven, but there is no god to send; but someone must be sent." Therefore, the Lord of Heaven sent two of his children to earth, a female and a male. They are called the two pillar *kami* (*nihashira no kami*). These *kami* begat three sons and two daughters: the first king, the first noble and the first farmer; the first high priestess (*kikoe-ōgimi*) and the first priestess (*noro*).¹

There is a third version of the creation myth in the "Chūzan Genealogy" (*Chūzan Seifu*) from about 1701. This record says that the two pillar *kami*, Shincerikyo and Amamikyū, came down from heaven, and that separately the Prince of Heaven (*Tenteishi*) appeared and gave birth to three men and two women, as above.

Thus we have three patterns of creation which compare in this way:²

1.	2.	3.
<i>Shintōki</i> (1606)	<i>Chūzan Seikan</i> (1650)	<i>Chūzan Seifu</i> (1701)
Amamikyū Shinerikyu	Tentei	Tentei
	Amamikyū	Amamikyū
Three children	Female <i>kami</i> Male <i>kami</i>	Shinerikyo
noble, <i>noro</i> , commoner	king, high priestess,	king, high priestess,
	noble, priestess,	noble, priestess,
	farmer	farmer

1. Kanjun Higashionna, *Nihon Rekishi Shinsho: Ryūkyū no Rekishi* (New Books on Japanese History: The History of Ryūkyū), (Tokyo: Tōbundō, 1957), p. 2.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

The influence upon the second mythology of the political and religious structure which existed in 1650 is evident. It is probable that Taichū's construction of 1606 is the least corrupted. It is certainly the simplest. And it is noteworthy that it probably represents the mythology of the period before the centralization of the kingdom when feudal lord and *noro* priestess together ruled over the common people. The precedence of the female *kami* is probably an indication of the prominence and power of the *noro*, and hence of the *nīgan* who preceded the *noro* in the period of village organization.

Fuyū Iha sees in the creation myth of the *Shintōki* evidence that in the middle of the ancient period there came from the northeast into Okinawa a people possessing a feudal government. He theorizes that they conquered the previous people who lived in the Ryūkyūs from ancient times and that the conquering people used the priestly system of the conquered in governing the lands. Therefore the *kikoe-ōgimi* or high priestess of the kingdom period is nothing other than the development of the *onari-gami* of the clan period.¹

There is little evidence for such a conquest, and other historians consider the feudal period as an outgrowth of the village period occurring as a natural political development. It is conceivable that the natural competition of villages and clans for farm land and fishing locations caused friction which led to armed conflict, and the armed conflict to the appearance of feudal barons and growth of fiefs.

1. Iha, *Selections*, vol. 3, pp. 415, 416.

The Feudal (Anji 按司) Period

The designation of this period by Okinawan historians is made with the use of the word *anji*. I have taken the liberty of calling it the feudal period, though this must be taken in a rather loose sense and not thought of as corresponding with the Japanese feudal period. The developments which signal the beginning of this period probably appear some time after the year 1000 A.D. The process was probably a rather long one, during which village chiefs led their people in competition for available resources. Villages which were strong and rich would then dominate several villages which were weak and poor.¹ The suggestion has been made that the "root-person" of a strong village became the feudal lord of the developing fief, but this was not necessarily always the case. Even from among the commoners there were probably strong men who for a time served some village leader or feudal lord, and after a period of meritorious service seized some opportunity to thrust the leader aside and assume a position of leadership as ruler of an area.² In any case, it appears that there were many violent and lawless leaders who came forward during the beginning of this period, so that it was a period of turmoil, change and confusion.

A radical acceleration of the change to full-fledged feudalism appears to have taken place with the introduction of iron into Okinawa from Japan. There are many traditional stories about iron being procured by some great leader, such as Shunten (1184-1237), and about this being the basis for his favor with

1. Higa, p. 22.

2. Higa, pp. 47, 48.

the people. These stories probably reflect the importance which was attached to the introduction of iron for the development of agriculture and the waging of war between the rival clans led by the *anji*. There are many castle sites in Okinawa which are the remnants of the feudal period. For example, in the Shimajiri district of southern Okinawa, almost every hill of any size is known as the site of a former castle, and at many of these sites some remains of castle walls can be traced. The castles were probably built between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries,¹ though the rise of the political leaders known as lords (*anji*) may have preceded the castle-building period. Or the castles may represent the armed fortresses of the greater lords, known as "world masters" (*yo no nushi*), who ruled over several lesser lords. According to an Okinawan scholar, Seiyū Torihane, who has made a special study of the castles of Okinawa, the castles were the dwellings of the feudal lords, and the building of stone castles in Okinawa predates such castles in Japan by one hundred fifty years.² He points out that it was only seventy or eighty years after castle-building had ceased in Okinawa that the building of stone castles finally began in Japan.

This feudal period brought with it changes in the system of priestesses and in the form of worship in the sacred groves. The political and religious development of this period has been described by an Okinawan historian as follows:

The period of village life was a period which one should call a period of "unity of government and religion" (*saisei itchi*), for agricultural production had a deep relationship with the village priestess and the village

1. Ibid., p. 21.

2. Higa, p. 50.

headman (*nīgan* and *ninchu*). But when the feudal period came, the center of power moved to the lords (*anji*), the religious festivals transcended the boundaries of the village, and one priestess (*noro*) came to perform the rites for two or three villages. The *kami* of the clan of the lord became the most powerful *kami* within the fief (*majiri*), and to serve this *kami* as priestess (*noro*), a priestess (*kaminchu*) of the house of the lord was chosen. On what is thought to be an old tomb inscription in the neighborhood of Esu in Gushikawa village, there are these words: "On the left, elder brother, the lord of Esu; on the right, younger sister, the chief priestess (*noro*)." According to this, although we do not know the period, we can understand that the younger sister of the Lord of Esu became chief priestess, that is, the revered *noro* who could be placed alongside the Lord of the area. A close relative of the political ruler came to perform the religious rites, so that the same practice of a later period when the queen or sisters of the king became the great High Priestess (*kikoe-ōgimi*) appears to have been performed from the period of the feudal lords. In the case of the village festivals, the songs sung by the village priestesses (*nīgan* and *noro*) were thanks to the gods and prayers for a bountiful harvest, the peace of the village and safe voyages, but when the feudal period came, most of the songs came to praise the feudal lords and to applaud the rulers.¹

The appearance of the *noro* in the feudal period must be considered as a development from an earlier period, according to this quotation, and not as the creation of the feudal period. But as the village priestesses (*nīgan*) of an earlier period served their brothers, the village chiefs, so the priestess of the fief (*noro*) served the lord of that fief (*anji*). This transition from the village period to the feudal period is seen as a transition from a dominantly religious period to the feudal period of armed might, so that the beginnings of male dominance are to be traced to this time. There is some indication that in the early feudal period the priestesses stood at the head of clan warriors and shouted curses at opposing forces to defeat or drive them away.² Later

1. Higa, p. 48.

2. Zenchū Nakahara, *Ryūkyū no Rekishi* (History of Ryūkyū), (Tokyo: Ryūkyū Kōdoshi Kenkyūkai, 1953), p. 22.

it was recognized that men who had superior weapons held power, and men began to be the center of society.¹

The castles of this period were usually built on high points, for obvious reasons, and it appears either that they were built on the sites of sacred groves, which would be natural, since the groves also tended to be on high places, or that a grove was established immediately within the castle walls. Within these feudal groves a place known as the *tun* or *tono* (殿) came to be central, and there the God of Fire was worshipped. In this way, the *noro* came to be considered particularly a worshipper of the God of Fire. There may have been some differences originally in the various areas of Okinawa in the matter of which *kami* were to be considered the chief *kami*, and one gains the impression that there is a great confusion among scholars at this point.

In any case, the grove of the castle evidently changed somewhat, since it had to be smaller than the original village grove to fit within the castle walls. Its pattern was the same, though smaller, but its meaning had changed. Instead of being a worship place for the benefit of all the villagers, it became a religious site symbolizing the authority of the feudal lord, guaranteeing his safety and guarding him personally.² In addition, however, the priestesses of the fiefs had the authority to call together the priestesses of the villages to perform the usual ceremonies for the area.

Of great interest in the study of this period is the dominant role played by the worship of the God of Fire centering in the *tono* of the sacred grove. This has been described as being

1. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

2. Torigoe, *Ryūkyūan Religion*, p. 154.

about one and one-half *ken* by two *ken* (9 ft. by 12 ft.) in size. Inside the *tono* there is an altar of about half a *tsubo* (28 sq. ft.), ashes are spread, and on the left as one faces the *tono* there is the representation of the God of Fire, the *umichimun* (*omitsumono*) or the Three Sacred Objects, and on the right in the form of a tripod three stones are stood and a pan is placed on a small board. This is called *ugamu-ga-nashii*. And this is where the *noro* perform their priestly functions. It is said to compare with the sanctuary (*shinden*) of the Japanese Shinto shrine.¹

The form of a primitive kitchen hearth is obvious here. Therefore it is reasonable to suppose that the God of Fire was originally a household *kami*, rather than a village *kami* worshipped in the sacred groves.² According to tradition, fire was considered very important in ancient Ryūkyū, as in many other lands, and it was carefully guarded in the household hearth and never allowed to go out. Furthermore, it was a symbol of the perpetuity of the family. If perchance the fire did go out, a coal was obtained from a neighbor's house and brought back by the housewife to her own house in her hand on a small mound of salt to avoid defilement. When houses divided and branches of the family moved to another place, fire was taken from the original house to the new house and kept perpetually going in the hearth at the new location.³

1. Genshichi Shimabukuro, "Okinawa no Minzoku to Shinkō," (Religion and Customs in Okinawa), *Minzokugaku Kenkyū* (Journal of Ethnology), vol. 15, no. 2 (1950), p. 50.
2. Zenchū Nakahara, "Taiyō Sūhai to Hi no Kami" (Sun Worship and the God of Fire), *Nihon Minzoku Gaku Taikei* (Outline of Japanese Folklore), (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1962) vol. 12, p. 164.
3. Torigoe, *Ryūkyūan Religion*, p. 156.

It is doubtful, therefore, that the God of Fire was symbolized originally in the ancient village sacred grove. Fuyū Iha indicates that the God of Fire was worshipped in the groves, but Zenchū Nakahara takes issue with this, saying that in neither the "Ryūkyū Country Records of Origins" (*Ryūkyūkoku Yūraiki*, 1713) nor in the "Book of Female Officials" (*Nyokan Osōshi*, 1709) is there any record of the God of Fire being worshipped in the village groves.¹ The addition of the *tono* to the grove of the castle was a development of the feudal period, and probably represents the attempt of the feudal lord to establish the chief *kami* of his household faith as the most powerful *kami* of the fief.

The connection between sun worship and the worship of the God of Fire becomes very important at this point, for if the worship of the God of Fire is identified with sun worship, we may have an instance of the various local *kami* of newly amalgamated communities being welded into a totality through the elevation of one particular deity over all the rest, that deity being one that particularly evinces the greatest regularity in behavior, such as the gods of heaven and the stars.²

There is a question here, however, of which comes first, that is, whether the God of Fire evolves from sun worship, or whether sun worship grows out of the worship of the God of Fire. Torigoe, because of his thesis that the religious development of the Ryūkyūs is always contingent upon political development, indicates that during this period the Fire God came to be thought of as the Sun God. He traces this development by stating

1. "Sun Worship and the God of Fire," *op. cit.*, p. 174.

2. Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1964), pp. 20, 21.

that the village “root person” became the feudal lord of an area in the process of time and that he brought his dominant household *kami* with him to his new position. This *kami* was the God of Fire. Inside the castle the *tono* became the center of the worship of the clan of the feudal lord. The *noro* priestess was the sister of the lord appointed to preside over this form of worship. And in the course of time, due to the necessity of giving divine support to the position of the feudal lord as the absolute ruler of the area, there was a change in the attributes of the God of Fire. He came to be thought of as the Sun God. This was a politically motivated change brought about by the lords. Thus the “king fire” idea emerged under the political aspirations of the rulers and they came to be called in ancient songs *teda* or *yedako*, meaning “Sun” or “Child of the Sun” and hence came to be thought of as possessing the authority of the Sun God.¹ Furthermore, it was in this way that in all of the Ryūkyūs the *tono* came to be used as a center for the worship of the Sun God, the three stones representing the ancient hearth became symbols of the Sun God, and these symbols were used as political symbols later in all the area offices of the central government.²

The development of this worship is traced somewhat differently by Zenchū Nakahara in the article previously cited. In his interpretation, it was the ancient sun worship which appears first. He reasons that fire came to be thought of as a kind of incarnation of the Sun God, and that the increasing fear of fire with the building of homes closer together and the introduc-

1. *Ryūkyūan Religion*, p. 218.

2. *Ibid*, p. 219.

tion from the continent of China of the hearth worship of Taoism in the 14th century had the effect of changing the original sun worship into fire worship centering in the kitchen hearth.¹ Thus the prayers of the Sun God (*terukawa*) in the ancient songs gradually became prayers to the household Hearth God.

We cannot decide here which came first, the worship of fire or of the sun. What seems fairly evident is that the worship of the Sun God did become dominant during the feudal period, and that this fact is reflected in the ancient songs of the *noro* in which the feudal lords and later the kings of Okinawa were extolled by applying to them the name of the Sun God. It is worthy of note that it is not only the lord of one area who is given the name of the Sun God, but those from various areas, indicating that this form of worship was rather widely diffused and did not represent simply the clan deity of one particular area. Torigoe's individualistic thesis that "the development of religious concepts in political and individual"² seems to break down at this point, but we will discuss this later. Sun worship was widely known from Northern Japan to Southeast Asia, and therefore it is not surprising that it should be practiced in the Ryūkyūs, nor that the word for sun, *teda*, should come to be used for the absolute rulers of the feudal fiefs.

I suppose that the matter of calling the lords who were the rulers of areas *teda* meant that they were the highest authorities of the land. There appear the names, Sun of Meiso (*Meiso no teda*), Sun of Tanahara (*Tanahara no teda*), Sun of Tamagusuku (*Tamagusuku no teda*) and others.³

From what has already been said, one may surmise that

1. "Sun Worship and the God of Fire," p. 173.
2. *Ryūkyūan Religion*, p. 670.
3. Higa, "Sun Worship," op. cit., p. 170.

there was an ancient tradition of sun worship in Okinawa. One cannot help thinking of the Japanese mythology of the Sun Goddess in this connection. Whether or not this worship was a part of the sacred grove worship before the feudal period is still a question, but in some way the worship of the Sun God became dominant in the period of the feudal lords and was presided over by the *noro* appointed by the feudal lords. And one need only note the names of the lords and later kings to become aware of the political significance of this worship.

As one begins to study the various areas, however, it becomes difficult to determine the relative role of the Sun God in the pantheon of the *kami*, for there are those who would discount the assertion that the Sun God is dominant. This claim comes particularly from those who study the northern area of Okinawa and the sacred groves of that area. One student of this area says that the God of Fire was not necessarily considered the chief *kami* of that time. The chief *kami* were rather the *kami* of the heavens and the ocean, and the God of Fire or Sun was simply a mediator *kami*.¹ He reasons that there was some question about the prayers of the people reaching heaven. But the smoke rising from the kitchen hearth gave assurance that the God of Fire could carry the message of the household to heaven, and furthermore, as light reaches a distant point instantaneously, so does the God of Fire reach the distant lands of the sea *kami* (*Nirai Kanai*). This is evidenced in the fact that the *noro* of the northern area gathered three or four days before

1. Shinji Miyagi, "Yambara no Utaki" (The Sacred Grove of Yambara), *Nantō Ronsō* (Treatises on the Southern Islands), Zenpatsu Shimabukuro, ed., (Naha: Nippōsha, 1937), p. 99.

a given festival to pray to the God of Fire, and not directly to the guardian *kami* of the area. In this way the God of Fire came to be thought of as a mediator *kami*, carrying the prayers of the people to the *kami* of heaven and sea.¹

Others have also suggested that the mediatorial function of the Sun God arose from the observance of the sun rising and setting, apparently coming up from the Eastern Paradise (*Nirai Kanai*), the dwelling of the *kami*. out of the ocean each day. Thus one Okinawan scholar relates the God of Fire or Sun to the ancient Japanese faith in the *kami* who controls or knows all about rice (*mi-toshi no kami*) in the "History of the Age of the Gods" (*Shindaishi*), and as the Lord of the Eastern Paradise (*Nirai Kanai*) in Okinawan mythology. In brief, this is the *kami* who appears from the paradise at the bottom of the sea to visit the villages during the festivals. Many monuments and ancient songs speak of the *kami* coming up from the ocean rather than down from heaven. This may be the reason for taking the three symbols of the God of Fire (composing the *tono*) from the seashore.²

Though there is some confusion about the Sun God being the the chief *kami* in all the areas, it seems clear that this *kami* dominates the south and central portions of the island. According to the "Ryūkyū Country Records of Origins" (1713), there were three hundred ninety-nine *tono* in the south, one hundred fifty-one in the central part of Okinawa, fourteen in the Kerama Islands, a short distance from Naha, and only two in Kunigami, which in this case seems to mean Onna Son. Nothing is said

1. Loc. cit.

2. Iha, *Selections*, Vol. 2. pp. 243-247.

of the area further north.

This may be further evidence that the God of Fire or Sun was not the chief *kami* in the northern area, but was a mediator *kami*, and that the worship of this *kami* was introduced somewhat later than in the south. In the north it appears that there is another element in the sacred grove known as the *kamiashiage* where the *kami* of heaven and sea are welcomed. Iha says this is a center for the worship of a god which is now largely forgotten, but different from the God of Fire. And whereas there are many *ashiage* in the groves of the north, there are none around Shuri, which uses the *tono* instead.

The *kamiashiage* was usually built in the outer court of the sacred grove some distance from the inner shrine. It is a low-pillared shed without walls or floor and having a thatched or tile roof. It may be roughly 13 feet by 18 feet in dimensions, and inside the *kamiashiage* there is placed a board about one foot in width and 12 feet in length which forms a seat for the *kami*. This is called the *tamotoki*. On the day of the festivals the *noro* and the *kaminchu* sit with their backs to the *tamotoki*, waiting for the visit of the *kami*. This place is a public shrine, and is built on the left side as one faces the entrance to the inner shrine. Here people pray, the *omoro* (sacred songs) are sung, the divine dances are performed and the feasts of the priestesses are held.² The suggestion has been made that these buildings were called *ashiage* because they were probably originally built in the sea a short distance from land in order to welcome the *kami* from across the waters, and that they were later moved to land and

1. Iha, *Selections*, Vol 2, p. 285.

2. Shimabukuro, "Religion and Customs in Ryūkyū," loc. cit., p.50.

hence called *ashiage* (“to lift the feet”).¹

In some places these two elements are used side by side, and in still other areas they are mixed, as in Kushi of the northern area, where there is a song referring to both in the same way: “This sacred *ashiage*, this sacred *tono*” (*kono mi-ashiage, kono mi-don*).²

It seems that both the *ashiage* and the *tono* are simply a building or an altar, and the contents of the beliefs surrounding them have been largely forgotten.³

Because we have been moving in a period for which there are few historical records it has been difficult to establish with clarity the nature of the *kami*, but what appears fairly clear thus far is that the original sister-*kami* tradition which appeared in the village period in the form of the village priestess or *nigan* became in the feudal period the *noro* system used by the feudal lords to establish their control of the fiefs. In the central and southern areas of Okinawa, the worship of the Sun God or the God of Fire apparently was predominant.

As we move into the kingdom period of Okinawan history, the historical records of the Central Kingdom will give us much more information than for the previous two periods.

The Kingdom period (1187 to 1500 A.D.)

In all there are five dynasties recorded in Okinawan history. The first king of whom we have any historical record was Shun-

1. Shinji Miyagi, “Yamahara no Mura” (The Village of Yamahara), *Ryūkyū* (The Ryūkyū), (Naha: Ryūkyū Shiryō Kenkyūkai), no. 4, (November 30, 1956), p. 17.
2. Iha, *Selections*, Vol. 2, p. 289.
3. *Ibid.*

ten(1187-1237). There is an interesting tradition which says that he was the son by a nobleman's daughter of Minamoto no Tametomo, who had either escaped from Taira captivity or been driven south from Japan by a sudden storm. The tradition was first recorded by the Buddhist priest, Taichū, who included the story in his *Shintōki* of 1606. It is also recorded in the *Chūzan Seikan* of 1650. It will be remembered, however, that this is a period in which there was a conscious attempt to establish an historical relationship to Japan, and this may represent a part of that attempt.

In the *Chūzan Seikan* a prehistorical or mythological dynasty is added which appears to be patterned after Japanese traditions. This was the Tenson Dynasty, supposedly having 17,802 years of history, but spanning only twenty-five reigns, which would make each reign an average of 720 years in length. Following are the Shunten Dynasty (1187 to 1259), the Eiso Dynasty (1260 to 1349), the Satto Dynasty (1350 to 1405), the First Shō Dynasty (1406 to 1469), and the Second Shō Dynasty (1470 to 1879).

It will be immediately evident that the idea of monarchy in Okinawa followed more closely the Chinese idea of the ruler than the Japanese. This is the moral interpretation of kingship, that is, that the mandate to rule through one family is valid only so long as the king is virtuous. When the king fails the people or is wicked, he deserves to be overthrown.¹

Of further interest to students of Okinawan history is the fact that the records of all the dynasties except the last one seem to

1. Kerr, p. 45.

be lost. In the oldest records, which are principally those of the last dynasty, all the changes of dynasty are called abdications in favor of a new ruler, whereas there is some evidence that each change was as matter of fact, a revolution of sorts.¹ The records of each dynasty, if such there were, were destroyed by each succeeding dynasty, it appears. As one example, the entombed remains of the kings of the First Shō Dynasty in the "Heavenly Mountain" (Tenzan) of the Mawashi District of the Capital at Shuri were removed for fear they might be discovered. They were concealed in an unknown spot.² It is somewhat remarkable, therefore, that the ancestral tablets of the previous dynasties were at last enshrined in the official shrine of the Second Shō Dynasty, but this seems to have occurred at the urging of the very powerful *noro* of that period.

It should be further noted that between the reigns of King Tamagusuku (1314 to 1336) and that of Shō Hashi (1422 to 1439) there were three kingdoms on the main Island of Okinawa, all competing for trade with China and official recognition of the Ming Emperor. They were the Northern Kingdom (Hokuzan), the Central Kingdom (Chūzan), and the Southern Kingdom (Nanzan). This division has been traditionally interpreted as the result of a rebellion against the authority of King Tamagusuku which split the country into three powerful factions, but some scholars think this was a later interpretation of the facts and that the so-called "kingdoms" were simply three powerful feudal areas which were contending for supremacy and which were finally brought together under King Shō Hashi

1. Torigoe, *Ryūkyūan Religion*, p. 21.

2. Iha, *Selections*, vol. 2, p. 281.

of the Central Kingdom in 1429. It was in the reign of Shō Hashi that the Emperor of China first conferred upon the king the family name of Shō (pronounced Hsiang in Chinese), sent rich gifts of lacquer and embroidered ceremonial robes to the king, and gave to the kingdom a great lacquered tablet upon which were inscribed the characters for Chūzan.¹

Though this was the beginning of a "Golden Age" for the Kingdom of the Ryūkyūs, the centralization of power in the hands of the king at Shuri and the subjugation of the Islands of Amami, Miyako and Yaeyama in a complete sense did not take place until the reign of King Shō Shin (1477-1526) who is perhaps the most outstanding political figure of Okinawan history.

It is well to remember that during the period when Okinawa was emerging from the chaos of the feudal period into a more centralized state, the *norō* system was also developing. The kings prior to Shō Shin evidently made great use of the priestesses, and the authority of the *norō* was very great. For example, when King Shō Toku (1461 to 1469) returned from the conquest of Kikai Island, he was met at Tomari Port by a widow of some status who brought fresh water from a spring to refresh the king. This act of kindness was rewarded by the king by appointing the widow the "Great Mother of Tomari" (*Tomari no o-amu*), which was a title for the leading *norō* of that time. Possibly the title of *O-Amu* had existed from the time of Shō Hashi, who did much to unify the nation.²

1. Kerr, p. 89.

2. Fuyū Iha, *Kō-Ryūkyū no Seiji* (The Government of Ancient Ryūkyū), (Tokyo: Kyōdo Kenkyūsha, 1922), p. 48.

The descriptions of the *norō* of this period are of great interest. They evidently possessed tremendous authority both locally and in the centers of political authority. They led the area festivals, presiding over the functions of the *nīgan* and performing the chief rites. The *norō* often proceeded to festivals on horseback, wearing the pure white robes of their office and the long necklaces with the curved jewels (*magadama*) which had been conferred on them at the time of their investiture. There is an ancient record indicating that a queen named Sakai Isoba ruled the people on the Island of Yonaguni, and ancient Chinese documents speak of many queens in Kyūshū, which may indicate their observation of the powerful position of the *norō* of Okinawa during this period.¹

This position of authority comes to the fore in the account of the way in which Shō Shin came to power in 1477. When his father, Shō En, died, the young prince was only fourteen years of age. By an evident agreement among the nobility, Shō Shin's uncle, Shō Seni, was placed upon the throne. But Yosoidon, the queen mother, was not content to see her son set aside. At the time the older sister of Shō Shin was chief *norō* at the royal court. She received a message from the *kami* instructing Seni to abdicate in favor of Shō Shin.²

According to the records, the deposing of Seni happened in this way. In the second month of the year (1477) the Glorious God, Kimitema (or Kimitezuri), was to appear and confirm the appointment of King Seni to the throne. According to the *Chūzan Seikan*, Seni sat for his investiture with the young Prince

1. Iha, *Selections*, vol. 1, p. 231.

2. Kerr, p. 104.

Shō Shin standing by his side. Following the ancient custom, the priestesses (*kimi-gimi*, *kami-gami*) were to appear before the royal shrine facing east, but on this occasion they proceeded from the palace grounds into the shrine area and stood facing west, contrary to custom. This greatly startled the nobility and caused apprehension in the entire company. The message of the *kami* came through the chief *norō*: “The play of the beloved child of the king who is in the palace of Shuri Castle, the beautiful play.... And what splendid dancing!”¹ The play refers to the festivities of the gods (*kamiasobi*), and the saying meant that it was surely the prince who must on this solemn festival occasion “dance with the gods”, i. e., be invested as king succeeding his father, Shō En. King Seni, who had been on the throne for six months prior to the ceremony, immediately abdicated in favor of the young prince. This event is a rather clear indication of the authority of the chief priestess. She and her company of priestesses were more powerful than the government officials and court nobility, who had approved the temporary accession of Seni until Prince Kume Nakagusuku (Shō Shin) would come of age to rule, or their authority was skillfully used from behind the scenes to accomplish this immediate purpose.

King Shō Shin (1477-1526) was undoubtedly the greatest ruler in the history of the Ryūkyū Kingdom. A monument to commemorate his reign was erected in the palace grounds indicating the eleven distinctions of his reign:

1. Buddhism was patronized by the king and temples were built.
2. He loved the people, lightened taxes, and brought strife to an end.
3. Royal control was asserted and confirmed in Yaeyama and Miyako.

1. Torigoe, *Ryūkyūan Religion*, pp. 372, 373.

4. Private ownership and the use of arms were done away.
5. Law and order were established throughout the country.
6. Shuri was beautified with parks.
7. Places of amusement and pleasure were provided at Shuri.
8. Works of art were introduced at the palace and music was patronized.
9. Relations with China were strengthened.
10. Chinese utensils and books were introduced.
11. A palace in the Chinese style was built at Shuri.¹

Fuyū Iha opines that King Shō Shin, in spite of his greatness, insured three hundred years of peaceful slavery to Satsuma by taking away all the weapons of the lords (point four).

One of the most impressive of the king's accomplishments is not listed on the monument. It was the appointment of his own sister as the first Chief Priestess of the Kingdom (*kikoe-ōgimi*), and the appointment under her of three Great Mother Priestesses to rule the Islands of the Okinawa Group, which were divided into three districts for this purpose. These three priestesses were known as *o-amushirare* (大阿母志良礼). The meaning of the name appears to be, "Great Mother Who Rules," for *o* is "great," *amu* is "mother", and *shirare* is interpreted as meaning *osameru*, "to rule".² The *o-amushirare* in turn controlled all the priestesses of the areas of their responsibility. In some cases the *noro* who were already in the various areas were left in their positions, but in another area *noro* were also appointed for places where none existed or where the government felt in need of religious representatives. One can imagine the clashes which must have occurred as a result of this policy, and yet there proved to be a very effective welding of the entire country together as a religious unit.

1. Kerr, pp. 105, 106.

2. Iha, *Selections*, vol. 1, p. 228.

The Shuri *o-amushirare* had responsibility for areas in south-eastern, central and northern Okinawa, and for the Islands of Ie and Iheya. The Gibo *o-amushirare* had responsibility for the priestesses and rituals in the Shuri-Naha area, a large part of central Okinawa, the Motobu Peninsula and the Kerama Islands. And the Makabe *o-amushirare* ruled over the religious functionaries of the southwestern section, part of the central section, part of the northern section of Okinawa, and over Kume Island. In order to keep the nobility from returning to their areas to worship at their ancestral shrines, three “worship-from-afar” shrines (*yōhaijo*) were established in the vicinity of Shuri, and the custom of performing the worship for the respective localities at these three shrines was instituted. It is interesting that the areas administered by the *o-amushirare* did not correspond to the areas of the three kingdoms, Northern, Central and Southern. King Shō Shin undoubtedly desired to avoid all possibility of the regrouping of the powerful nobles and the religious authorities of these areas, and so there was the dividing of the old “kingdom” areas or powerful fiefs and the mixing of the areas together under the supervision of these powerful priestesses in order to hold all together under the central authority of the state.¹

The chain of authority in the system of *noro* priestesses was as follows:

- The Great High Priestess (*kikoe-ōgimi*)
- The Three Governing Great Mothers (*o-amushirare*)
- Local Area Priestesses (*noro*)
- Village Priestesses (*nigan*)

1. Torigoe, *Ryūkyūan Religion*, p. 316.

Family Priestesses (*Kaminchu* or *Okode*)

This brief outline does not take into account the entire hierarchy serving special functions under the *kikoe-ōgimi* at Shuri nor the many area priestesses who were especially appointed by the *kikoe-ōgimi* in such places as Kume, Iheya, Miyako and Yaeyama.

The power and authority of the *noro* system appears in the many functions performed by the *noro* and in the divine messages which came through them to guide the affairs of state. There was, for example, the message which came to the *kikoe-ōgimi* when King Shō Shin was projecting an invasion of Yaeyama in order to compel the submission of the people to the rule of the central government in 1500. She received a message from the *kami* which indicated that if the High Priestess of Kume Island (*kiminae*) would accompany the troops of the king, a victory would be assured. In that period it seems to have been the custom for the priestess to go in the forefront of the marching troops to perform a special ceremony, praying for the victory of the feudal lord or king in battle. In a number of records of the battles there are accounts of *noro* preceding the troops, dancing and singing and shouting curses at the enemy. The incident in the year 1500 on the occasion of the invasion of Yaeyama seems to be alluded to in the fifth chapter of the first volume of the "Omoro Copybook", the meaning of which is: "The noble priestess wearing helmet and armor and girded with a great sword goes before the *noro* advancing (on the enemy)."¹ The battle was won and the victory was attributed to the power of the priestesses as well as to the king's troops.

1. Iha, *Selections*, vol. 3. p. 417.

One of the most significant moves of King Shō Shin to which we have already referred was the removal of the sacred grove of the palace outside the palace walls, where the *sonoi yamu utaki* was established. Thus the clan gods of the Shō family could be worshipped by all the people. There were evidently three symbols of the *kami* (*shintai*) in this *utaki*:

1. The *O-suji no o-mae* (the ancestral *kami*)
2. The *O-hibachi no o-mae* (the God of Fine)
3. The *Kane no mi-o-suji no o-mae* (the God of Metals)¹

It was the record of this move on the part of the king which first led Fuyū Iha to consider carefully the matter of the relation of religion and politics in the Ryūkyūs. A Japanese scholar brought to his attention the importance of the action of the Emperor Shūshin in the year 58 B.C. in moving his shrine outside the palace so that it became the center of worship for all the clans and not just his own. Iha was surprised that his own interpretation of Ryūkyūan history so closely paralleled that of his friend, Dr. Kawakami of Kyoto. It was from this point that Iha moved back into Okinawan history to theorize that in ancient times the area of religious faith and political organization were the same, whether it be that of the family (*kazoku*), clan (*ujizoku*) or nation (*minzoku*). He further theorized that as families formed into clans, clans into tribes and tribes into nations that the ancestral deity of the strongest family becomes the clan deity, the clan which is the strongest makes its *ujigami* the *kami* for the tribe, and the tribe which is dominant makes its shrine the center of worship for the nation. In this way, the ancestral spirit of *kami* of a certain family becomes at last the center of

1. Iha, *Selections*, vol. 1, p. 227.

worship for the nation. In the Ryūkyūs the culmination of this process was realized in the reign of King Shō Shin.¹

It is this thesis which Dr. Torigoe picks up in his recent work so often cited in this paper. He repeatedly rings the changes on the theme sentence, "The development of religious concepts is political and individual."² By this he means that the evolution of religion does not mean, as Radin says, the attempt of a class of priests to enhance their own position and that of the village elders, nor is it, as Durkheim says, a product of society as a whole. Rather religion must be interpreted as the creation of, or development induced by an individual ruler in order to establish his political authority. And by the same token, when the religious authority exceeds its proper function and seeks to control the political authority, or when the religious authority or system ceases to be useful in governing, it is then downgraded or put in its place by the political ruler.³

The latter point is supported by the fact that King Shō Shin, after bringing his sister to power as the *kikoe-ōgimi*, introduced Confucian ethics and Buddhist ceremonies. It was not long after his reign that the Regent Chōshū Haneji found reason to try to further curb the authority of the *norō* system.

From this time forward the old faiths were more and more challenged by official policies and the events of history. From time to time they were resurgent in power, and even today they show an amazing resistance to change in the rural areas of Okinawa, but the climax of the development of the union between

2. Iha, *Government*, p. 5.

1. *Ryūkyūan Religions*, pp. 48, 49, 670, etc.

2. *Ibid.*

government and religion in the Ryūkyūs was experienced in the reign of King Shō Shin.

While agreeing with the thesis that the policy of government-religion unity is evident in the three periods of Okinawan history which we have discussed and that it is a very important element both in the development of politics and religion in the Ryūkyūs, it remains for us to criticize the over-simplification of Dr. Kensaburō Torigoe's approach to the problem.

II

Critique of Dr. Kensaburō Torigoe's thesis.

For a period of twenty-seven years Dr. Torigoe has made an extensive study of Ryūkyūan religion. His book, "A Study of the History of Ryūkyūan Religion," is the fruit of that study. It is well documented and provides the most complete study of the subject of Okinawan religion yet to be produced. No thorough critique of such a monumental work can be presented in brief. Yet I believe it is possible to suggest certain lines of criticism of his thesis that, "The development of religious concepts is political and individual," a phrase which has been briefly explained already. It will be my purpose in the closing section of this paper to explore briefly the following points:

1. The political will of the ruler is not the only decisive element affecting the origin and development of religion in general nor of Okinawan religion in particular. The comfort function of religion in meeting the individual needs of people and the social integrative function of ritual in an agrarian society are obvious factors which point beyond the will of the individual

ruler to other creative and developmental forces which were at work in the history of Okinawan religion.

2. The employment of the divine names of the kings of Okinawa by Dr. Torigoe to illustrate the ruler's use of the worship of various areas to establish their authority is an example of forcing facts to fit the thesis, since there is a lack of consistency in the evidence which exists, and existing evidence is not adequate to the burden of proof laid upon it.

3. The resistance of the ancient religions to government pressure and their persistence to the present time indicates that they are not dependent on individual rulers for their origin or continuance, but that they are deeply rooted in the family, village and communal life of Okinawa, and that as they continue to serve some social and individual function long after their political function has expired, they undoubtedly served these functions long before they were consciously employed by political rulers to serve certain ends.

The creative and developmental role of forces other than individual and political

We have already indicated that there is a great similarity between the ancient religion of Okinawa and Japan. Scholars are continually drawing a comparison between the two countries. There are gods of the mountains, seas, fire, water, wind, and so forth. When one begins to study these, he finds many conflicting traditions and customs. These traditions and customs undoubtedly became widespread long before they were used consciously in a political way. In fact, Fuyū Iha, who was the first to explore the political significance of Ryūkyūan religion,

mentions the fact that belief in the *kami* was widespread throughout the islands and lands, and when the time came for the unification of the country, the political rulers then made use of the already existing religions: "In this way the inhabitants of the Okinawa Islands had the same religious beliefs, and so the politicians who unified politically the thirty-six islands used this common feature and unified the area religiously, that is, spiritually."¹

In an article in the Okinawa Times Newspaper for May 4, 1965, Kinpuku Shinzato reviewed Dr. Torigoe's book and said that although he feels the thesis and method which run throughout the work are clear and valuable, he is left with the impression that they do not grasp the whole of the subject. He thinks that along with the relation between politics and religion, one must also study the relation between agriculture and religion to make clear the real motives for the development of Okinawan religion.²

This impression is confirmed by another scholar who, writing some years before the thesis of Torigoe was developed, says: "Regarding Okinawan Shintō, I think we should make its background the farming and fishing activities and so forth—the customs which have a deep relationship to human life."³ The same writer seeks to subtract from Okinawan religion all those features which were political inspired and which may be con-

1. Iha, *Selected Works*, vol. 1, p. 227.

2. "The Study of the History of Ryūkyūan Religion," (a book review), p. 8.

3. Genshichi Shimabukuro, "Okinawa no Minzoku to Shinkō" (Religion and Customs in Ryūkyū), *Minzokugaku Kenkyū* (Study of Ethnology), vol. 15, no.2, (1950), p. 62.

sidered later additions from the outside in order to get to the basic elements in the ancient religions. He questions the thesis that the ancient religions of Okinawa can be attributed to the village founders, and says that one must look behind this political organization for a deeper motivation.¹

Of course, from one point of view it is precisely the farming community of ancient Japan or Okinawa to which the term *saisei itchi* can be applied. Planting and harvesting are the most important occupations, and hence the matter of avoiding errors in agricultural pursuits was the most important thing in daily life. In this situation it is the unique sacred function of the leader or ruler to reveal the suitable time for planting and harvesting. It is true that because of these realities the Japanese character for "sacred" (*sei*) also originally means "emperor" or "sage" (*hijiri*). But *hijiri* originally meant "to know the day" (*hi o shiru*). Thus to know the day for planting and harvesting is to govern properly, and it is in the ancient farming community that the festival (*sai*) is really government (*sei*).²

But this is not the same as saying that the individual will of the ruler gives rise to religious development, which is what Dr. Torigoe seems to mean. Nor is the development of religion a mere matter of political expediency, a creation the purpose of which is to sustain the ruler in authority. The deeply felt need of the entire community must be taken into account.

1. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

2. "Saisei Itchi" (Government - Religion Unity), *Daihyakka Jiten* (Encyclopedia), (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1932), vol. X, p. 310.

An example of forcing facts to fit the thesis.

An example of forcing the facts to fit the theory is found in Dr. Torigoe's discussion of the names of the *kami*, Kimimamon and Kimizeuri. He says that these were among the *kami* of the sacred groves which came to have special political significance. Although the Sun God was the chief *kami* in the kingdom period, Kimizeuri was the *kami* of the groves who appeared once after each king's accession to the throne to congratulate him, recognizing the king's authority to rule. Kimimamon, on the other hand, was the *kami* who directed the king in times of important decision. But neither of these *kami*, says Torigoe, were products of the people's religion. They were the fabrication of the rulers to justify their position. Their names do not therefore appear in the festivals or at the groves of the villages but only in the sacred groves and at the festivals of the rulers.

In order to prove this thesis, reference is made to the "Ryūkyū Country Records of Origins" (1713) which relates the appearance of Kimimamon at the Kobō Sacred Grove of the Northern Kingdom. The assumption is made that later when the Northern Kingdom was subdued and became subservient to the Central Kingdom, the king of the Central Kingdom appropriated the chief guardian *kami* of the Northern Kingdom in order to consolidate his control over the area.

The first step in the proof that this was indeed the case is a reference to the appearance of Kimimamon at the Afuri Sacred Grove in Hendo, the northernmost village on the main island of Okinawa. Now the Afuri Sacred Grove had a special significance for the King of Okinawa. Every year in the first month

of the year a messenger was dispatched from the king to obtain water (called *sude mizu*) from the spring at Hendo to offer to the king. Furthermore, the historian of the royal court (presumably Chōshū Haneji in 1650) in relating the creation myths of Okinawa lists the Afuri Sacred Grove as the first of seven principal groves to be established in the islands. We can therefore appreciate the close connection of Hendo with the Central Kingdom. Torigoe concludes that the name of Kimimamon was invoked at the Afuri Sacred Grove because the king of the Central Kingdom had adopted the chief *kami* of the conquered Northern Kingdom as his guardian deity.¹

Furthermore, claims Torigoe, one can see a change in the tradition in the "Ways of Gods of Ryūkyū" (1609) written by the priest, Taichū. In this record, the name of the Kobō Sacred Grove disappears and only the name of the Afuri Sacred Grove appears. The name of the *kami* is changed from Kimimamon to Kimitezuri. This means that the tradition of the Northern Kingdom has been changed and attributed to the Central Kingdom. But why should there be a change in the name of the *kami*?

The name of Kimitezuri appears for the first time in the Second Shō Dynasty in the fourth year of the reign of Shō En. At the time of his accession to the throne the records simply state that the guardian *kami* (*shugo no kami*) appeared to give Shō En his divine name. Later on in the fourth year after his accession to the throne and his recognition by the Ming Emperor as a Shō, even though he was not related by blood to the

1. Torigoe, *Ryūkyūan Religion*, p. 487.

previous Shō Dynasty, the *kami*, Kimitezuri, appeared to congratulate the king and give him a promise of a myriad of years. This *kami* was undoubtedly a political invention to give sanction to the new dynasty, and this is the reason the name of the new *kami* appears in the record of 1650 in relation to the Second Shō Dynasty, and the name of Kimimamon disappears. Kimitezuri now comes to appear at important junctures to guide the king in his decisions concerning policy.¹ Thus in the Omoro Copybook, at last completed in 1623 during the Second Shō Dynasty, the name of Kimimamon appears very little, while the name of Kimitezuri is used often. Torigoe concludes that an old *kami* revered by a previous dynasty gives way to a new *kami* which serves the purpose of the new dynasty. Now *kami* are the artificial creation of government policy according to the demands of the situation.² They are not widely known among the masses nor worshipped in their festivals. There are only two or three examples of the name of Kimimamon being used in the village festivals. There was no time for the worship of these *kami* to reach the masses, for the developing culture of Okinawa was greatly hindered by outside pressure in the form of the Satsuma Invasion of 1609.

Torigoe then takes Chōshū Haneji to task for saying in the *Chūzan Seikan* of 1650 that Kimimamon is a *kami* of the sea and Kimitezuri is a *kami* of heaven, but that sometimes Kimimamon is a generic name for the *kami* and that Kimitezuri is just one of the *kami*. He claims that Haneji evidently did not understand the history of these *kami*. His great mistake was the failure to

1. *Ibid.*, p. 489.

2. Torigoe, *Ryūkyūan Religion*, p. 491.

distinguish between them. It was unfortunate for the *kami* of Okinawa that Haneji was the only one in history to outline their character. Because there was no distinction between the *kami*, no elaborate mythology developed, and Haneji missed the chance to become the Hesiod or Homer of Okinawa.¹

There are a number of points in the above argument which must be criticised. First, Torigoe says the *kami* are simply political creations because Kimimamon appears first in the Northern Kingdom and then afterward in connection with the Central Kingdom. But the evidence he cites seems inadequate because:

1. He appeals to the same record, the "Ryūkyū Country Records of Origins" of 1713, for both the appearance of Kimimamon at the Northern Kingdom and at Hendo, which had a close relation with the Central Kingdom. How can it be shown which is earlier? Or if it is assumed that the record of the Northern Kingdom is earlier, although a part of the compilation of 1713, how can one demonstrate the kind of political connection between the two which Torigoe assumes?

2. It might be just as well to say that the name of Kimimamon and Kimitezuri are the same *kami* and that the names are used interchangeably.² Another scholar lists two *kami* with the name Kimimamon, and says that Kimimamon was the guardian *kami* who appeared to the *noro*, who then passed on the instructions of the *kami*, whereas Kanai Kimimamon was a *kami* of the sea who appeared four times a year, once in each

1. Ibid., p. 492.

2. Iha, *Selections*, vol. 2, p. 255.

season, and guarded the nation's fortunes.¹ This is quite different from Torigoe's statement that this *kami* appeared at certain important junctures to reveal policy to the king. There is at least some tradition of a regularized seasonal appearance, which leads one to believe there were and are regular rituals belonging to the worship of this *kami*. Still another scholar reinforces this impression when he quotes Arai Hakuseki on Okinawan religion: "Arai Hakuseki, a noted scholar and statesman in the Tokugawa Regime, mentions in his brief history of the people of the Loo Choo Islands that it was quite customary for the people there to worship the Sea Deity, Obotsukakuraku-no-Kimimamon by name, when he got angry, by breaking their arms and pulling out their nails, in order to appease him."²

3. There is no adequate evidence to show that the worship of Kimimamon was at first confined to the Northern Kingdom, so that there would be political significance in the adoption of this *kami* as one of the chief *kami* of the Central Kingdom. The evidence already cited, as a matter of fact, points in quite another direction. In addition, the tradition of Kimimamon appears in the same record of 1713 in connection with festivals on Kudaka and Iheya Islands.³ One might just as well assume that the Central Kingdom took the use of the name from Kudaka or Iheya, for the first king of the First Shō Dynasty came from

1. Genshichirō Shimabukuro, *Densetsu Hoi Okinawa Rekishi* (History of Okinawa Supplemented by Traditional Stories), (Naha: Okinawa Soseki k.k., 1932), p. 32.

2. Genchi Katō, *A Studō of Shinto, the Religion of the Japanese Nation*, (Tokyo: Meiji Japan Society, 1926), p. 153.

3. Torigoe, *Ryūkyūan Religion*, p. 496, footnote 57.

Theya originally. He could have come by the worship of Kimimamon quite naturally.

4. If one examines the divine names of the kings of Okinawa, he discovers that there are four kings bearing the name of Kimimamon in some form. In the Satto Dynasty, King Satto (1350-1393) was named O-Mamon, and King Bun'ei (1396-1405) was named Naka nu Mamon. In the First Shō Dynasty, King Shishō (1406-1421) was named Kimi Shi Mamon, and King Shō Hashi (1422-1439) was named Sejitaka Mamon.¹ Torigoe's thesis does not explain why King Satto bore the divine name, O-Mamon, at a time when the three principalities or kingdoms in Okinawa were very much divided. One would think that if the thesis is correct, then the name Kimimamon would not be attributed to the king until the subjection of the Northern Kingdom at Nakijin. The subjugation was accomplished by Shō Hashi in 1407 before he became king of the Central Kingdom, but he is the last one to bear the name of Kimimamon, whereas three kings before him bore that name.

As for the next point made by Torigoe, namely, that in the tradition of the "Ways of the Gods of Ryūkyū" (1609) the name of the Kobō *utaki* disappears and only the Afuri *utaki* is mentioned, and that the name of the *kami* is changed from Kimimamon to Kimitezuri, there is great uncertainty. How can he assume that the record of 1609 corrects one compiled in 1713? There is no textual criticism employed to support this assumption.

The last point made is that the change of names from Kimi-

3. Ibid., pp. 423, 424.

mamon to Kimitezuri is a politically motivated change brought about by the Second Shō Dynasty. But this assumption is not adequately supported. Torigoe has to assume that the interpretation of the historian, Chōshū Haneji, in 1650 was wrong in identifying the *kami*, that there was not any confusion originally in the identification of the various *kami* of heaven and sea, and that the collection of songs in the Omoro Copybook is biased in favor of the Second Shō Dynasty, but not altogether so, since the name of Kimimamon does appear there. It should be further noted that although Kimitezuri is assumed to be the most powerful *kami* for the new dynasty, the *kami* who congratulates and confirms the king on his accession to the throne, no explanation is given of the failure to use the name of this *kami* in the divine names of the kings of the Second Shō Dynasty. As a matter of fact, there is no consistency in the use of the divine names of the kings which would bear out Torigoe's thesis, the name of the Sun God appearing in the case of Eiso (1260-1299) and Shō Shitatsu (1445-1449) of the First Shō Dynasty; Shō Gen (1556-1572), Shō Ei (1573-1588) and Shō Nei (1589-1620) of the Second Shō Dynasty.¹

We conclude that the attempt at a thorough-going political interpretation of Okinawan religious developments breaks down in this instance, and this observation leads one to feel that it probably breaks down at other points as well.

Persistence of the ancient faiths

There have been a number of attempts by the government of

1. Torigoe, *Ryūkyūan Religion*, pp. 432, 434.

Okinawa to do away with certain elements of the traditional religions of Okinawa, to modify or rationalize them, or to destroy their authority. These attempts have been notably unsuccessful. This suggests to me that they are deeply rooted in the communal agrarian society of Okinawa and were not as subject to the whims of the rulers of history as the thesis of Torigoe suggests.

We have already noted that in the reign of King Shō Shin, when the *noro* system reached its greatest development and political use, there was an attempt to patronize more ethical faiths such as Confucianism and Buddhism from the continent of China and from Japan. Later, after the Satsuma invasion of 1609, which is said to have stopped short the creative period of the development of Okinawan religion and dealt a "death blow" to the old religion, the Regent Chōshū Haneji (1666-1675) called this old religion "superstition". He suggested that the king ought to cease his pilgrimages to Kudaka Island and to Chinen to worship at the Saiha *utaki*, for it is not only dangerous for the king to do so, but "Satsuma will laugh".¹ Confucianism came to the fore in the form of greater male dominance and the teaching of ethical ideas. The king's pilgrimages were stopped in 1673, but not the widespread practice of the old faiths.

Further attempts were made by Saion, a great scholar and statesman of the first half of the eighteenth century in Okinawa, to suppress the old religious practices and to reinforce the teach-

1. Zenchū Nakahara, "Koyū Shinkō no Otoroc" (The Decline of the Particular Religions), *Nihon Minzokugaku Taikai* (Outlines of Japanese Folklore), vol. 12, p. 154.

ing of Confucianism. In spite of tremendous success with many political and economic policies in Okinawa, he seems to have had little success in changing the practice of the old religions.

In spite of repeated attempts by the government to introduce Confucianism, the influence of the ancient shaman (*yuta* or *mi-ko*) on Okinawa appears to have been much greater. The system of village priestesses and *noro* became somewhat hereditary, and because many of them seemed to lack the special divining power which was originally one of their necessary qualifications, diviners arose to take their place in the everyday life of the people.¹ These diviners were more vigorously opposed by official policy than was the *noro* system, which continued to have a High Priestess (*kikoe-ōgimi*) until the end of the kingdom in 1879.

The diviners became very strong in the reign of Shō On (1795-1802). Even though classical studies (*kokugaku*) had been introduced into the country from Japan and education stimulated, there was a great increase in the practice of the shaman. Many new *kami* were born within the castle at Shuri. According to the monuments, there were many strange events taking place, such as the wedding of certain *kami*. At this time, the uncle of the king, Shōzu, became Prime Minister. He threw out all the god shelves from the palace at Shuri and punished the diviners (*yuta*). The judiciary issued orders saying that although the practice of the diviners had been previously forbidden, it had arisen once more to deceive the people, conducting many rites and leading many pilgrimages, so that superstition had become

1. Iha, *Selections*, vol. 1, p. 242.

rife. It further states that although it was a good thing to make pilgrimages to shrines and groves, to be led astray by false teaching and to worship anywhere at all was a hindrance to the government. Therefore these practices must be stopped. The police were ordered to apprehend not only the diviners, but also anyone hiring them, including the nobility. From this order, one may assume that the superstitious practices referred to may have been especially prominent among the upper classes.¹

While these practices were somewhat different from the regular priestly rites at the groves and shrines, these events illustrate the powerlessness of the government to control certain religious developments or to suppress ancient beliefs.

Even today, almost ninety years after the Japanese assumption of administrative control on Okinawa and twenty-one years after the Second World War, the practice of the ancient religions is surprisingly widespread. The impression that many of the old practices have largely declined is held by Zenchū Nakahara, who gives the following reasons for their demise:

1. The sacred groves have been largely destroyed (by the Second World War).
2. The scattering of villages and populations has made the old worship, centering in the *noro*, impossible.
3. Many of the yearly agricultural rites have been rejected because of the radical change in crops.

Undoubtedly his analysis has considerable validity, yet a survey conducted by the writer of this paper in 1965 in six different areas, including Okinawa and four outlying islands, indicates that there is considerable vitality remaining in the old practices.

1. Iha, *Selections*, vol. 1, p. 245, 246.

2. "Decline," *Outline of Japanese Folklore*, p. 158.

Out of four hundred and sixty-six respondents to a religious survey in these areas, forty-three per cent said they had at some time hired a diviner.

To me these statistics mean that the old religions are still performing some function in the village life of Okinawa and in the personal lives of many people. In spite of government policy, the crises of history and the modern process of secularization, the old religions possess great vitality in many places. In the light of this fact it seems clear that the developments in religion in Okinawa cannot be explained upon the basis of the needs and decisions of individual rulers.

Conclusion

The close connection of religion and politics in the history of Okinawa has been traced through three major periods. It has been shown that some major developments in the religious sphere were politically motivated and that there is a striking parallel between Japanese history and Ryūkyūan history in this regard.

While it is evident that religious developments in Okinawa have been deeply influenced by the policy of the political rulers, I think it has been shown that the situation is more complex than the thesis of Dr. Torigoe would suggest. I find it difficult in the light of the evidence to credit any such simplistic view of the origin and development of religion. A broader consideration of the socially integrative functions and of the individual defense functions of religion on the communal, family and personal levels would in my estimation provide a much more adequate framework for understanding the development of Okinawan religion. I think it has been shown that the communal

and individual functions of religion in Okinawa both predate and outlast its specifically political usefulness. I would conclude, therefore, that the unity of government and religion in the Ryūkyū Islands which has been traced through the village, feudal and kingdom periods to 1500, represents the use made by political administrators of an already existing religious system to serve their political ends. Religion served as a useful tool of the rulers, but the *kami* were not mere political inventions.

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