

PAANTU:
VISITING DEITIES, RITUAL, AND HERITAGE
IN SHIMAJIRI, MIYAKO ISLAND, JAPAN

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For all my teachers

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When you study islands you find that no island is just an island, after all. In likewise fashion, the process of doing this research has reaffirmed my confidence that no person is an island either. We're all more like aquapelagic assemblages... in short, this research would not have been possible without institutional, departmental, familial, and personal support. I owe a great debt of gratitude to the following people and institutions for helping this work come to fruition.

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Katharine R. M. Schramm

PAANTU: VISITING DEITIES, RITUAL, AND HERITAGE
IN SHIMAJIRI, MIYAKO ISLAND, JAPAN

Legal instruments like national heritage designations frequently utilize a one-size-fits-all approach, but understanding the questions about how heritage is affected, conceptualized, and constructed requires local engagement. The local protective rite of Paantu Punaha, located in the town of Shimajiri on Miyako Island in southern Okinawa Prefecture, Japan, was designated as national Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 1993. This event exists at the center of a nexus of longstanding folkloristic interest in Okinawan ritual as well as the growing popularity of the ritual's central figures, the mud-covered visiting deities known as paantu. This research explores the economic and social realities that affect the ongoing practice of Paantu Punaha, while also looking at the influence of the system of intangible cultural heritage designation and its effect on the town of Shimajiri.

This research investigates how local conceptions of ritual meaning and practice exist as ritual, but also as cultural heritage. Residents' interpretation of ritual meanings intersect with contemporary concerns about social change, while their ritual understandings of Paantu Punaha come into conflict with visitors' understandings, viewed through both action and discussion. As a national Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property, it is possible to see the processes by which the paantu became designated heritage, and how it intersects with the experiences of people within Shimajiri. Through the ways that Shimajiri people identify problems and solutions that their community faces, it becomes possible to see how heritage is conceptualized and utilized locally.

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Nmyaachi (Welcome!): A Note on Orthography

Miyako Japanese can be liberally sprinkled with words from Miyako's endangered indigenous language, called "island tongue": Sumafutsu/Sumavutsu, or "Miyako tongue": Myaakufutsu.

Okinawan languages have been transcribed into Japanese for centuries using katakana phonetic script. However, many of these languages have sounds that do not exist in Japanese, and so linguists in Japan utilize various adaptations of katakana to represent them. For example:

トウ = tu

ドウ = du

While English orthography works passably well for representing Sumafutsu, certain sounds pose a challenge to pronounce as well as transcribe. One such challenge is the fricative/sibilant Z, a sound which resonates harder on the palate than the Japanese "zu." I render this linguistic katakana representation into English like this:

ス° (ス° イ) = Zz (Zzi)

キ° = Kz

Ex. ス° イマツス° イサリ = Zzimazzsari

On contemporary Miyako, many of the younger generation are softening this hard sound to the more sibilant, Japanese "su," a shift that lifelong Sumafutsu speakers pointed out to me, and which is easily heard. Today, Zzimazzsari (the ritual warding of the town) is called Sumassari (and written in katakana as スマッサリ), but while this may reflect changes in pronunciation, it may also reflect the differences between the spoken word and what researchers

believed they heard during fieldwork.¹

Sumafutsu possesses long and short vowels as well as doubly stressed consonants (e.g., *paantu*, *Sumassari*). In order to maintain the distinctiveness of local words in English text, I opt to show long vowels from Sumafutsu as a repeated vowel (e.g., *paantu*; *Satiparou*), in contrast to how I represent the Japanese, with a macron over long vowels (e.g., *kôbaiten*).

In addition to Sumafutsu, many Miyako residents are familiar with words from Shuri Okinawan, which is primarily spoken on Okinawa Island and generally represented with phonetic katakana script.² For cases of where language origin may be unclear, I use these abbreviations:

Jp: Japanese

Myk: Miyako (Sumafutsu)

Oka: Okinawan (Shuri)

Representations and translations of words and names in particular evidence considerable variation. In the following example, drawn from different literature discussing Paantu Punaha, the name of the spring Nmarigaa (from Sumafutsu) is written first in katakana. The following word uses *ateji* (assigned logographic *kanji* characters that are then read with the original pronunciation) that convey partial meanings of the original name. Next, the two sets of *kanji*

¹ Much of the phonetic transcription by Japanese as well as foreign linguists (notably Nikolai A. Nevsky, who published both in Japanese and Russian) over the past century displays a large amount of idiosyncrasy. See (Nakasone 2004) for a lengthy discussion and demonstration of various methods of katakana transcription. See (Kabanoff 1993) for some background on Nevsky and translations of some of his research which includes some Sumafutsu transcriptions.

² By doing this, I do not mean to overlook the utilization of katakana as a political tool to highlight “foreign” words within Japanese texts or its use in reifying outsider identities. This issue is complex, and the use of katakana, hiragana, and Chinese characters (*kanji*) as identity building tools is significant. Use of local language can be used to obfuscate as much as clarify, connote insiderness as much as outsiderhood, and how words and their meanings are given, explained, and translated can vary substantially.

with hiragana text show alternate translations/readings of the name. Finally there is my romanized version, which lacks logographic references, just like the katakana script.

ンマリガー = 産井 = 生まれ川 / 生まれ井戸 = Nmarigaa

In contemporary Shimajiri, the maps created locally, the signage, and even a large stone sign recently erected near the entrance to Nmarigaa utilize katakana, as much a declaration of local culture and linguistic roots as anything else. I hope my transcription methods that highlight Sumafutsu also works in English to honor their choices.

Glossary of Frequently Used Miyako Words

This is not a complete glossary of all Japanese, Miyako, or Okinawan words that appear. While I will occasionally insert an English gloss on these terms, many of them are specific to the Japanese/Okinawan context, and some titles and organization names are best left in Japanese. While I define these words at first appearance, those that appear in more than one chapter appear in this quick reference list.

Terms:

Bôhan (Jp) 防犯: the volunteer security force

Bunkazai (Jp) 文化財: cultural property, more commonly used in Shimajiri than cultural heritage (*bunka isan* 文化遺産)

Fujinkai (Jp) 婦人会: women's association

Jichikai (Jp) 自治会: self-governance committee, or town council

Kaichô (Jp) 会長: leader of an organization, often appended to the name of the organization to indicate the person in charge, or to indicate that a person is the leader of the organization, Ex. Miyara Tamotsu is jichikaicho. I refer to him as Miyara-kaichô.

Kami (Jp) 神: a deity, including those that inhabit the landscape and those like paantu that visit; specific deities referred to respectfully as kamisama 神様

Kôbaiten (Jp) 購買店: the cooperative grocery store

Kyaan (Myk): leafy vines traditionally used for paantu costuming

Matsuri (Jp) 祭り : worship of the kami; can refer to large multi-sited festival events as well as small ritual events

Rôjinkai (Jp) 老人会 : the organization of retired persons and older

Tsukasa (Myk) 司: divine priestesses, also known locally as *mizumai* ミズマイ

Tuma/tumu (Myk) 供: assistants to tsukasa

Utaki (Oka) 御嶽、御岳: sacred grove; holy site

Uyagan (Myk) ウヤガン、祖霊神、祖神 : ancestor rituals carried out by the tsukasa

Yamadakai (Jp) 山田会 : the organization of middle-aged people, usually in their 40s and 50s

Chapter 1: Intermediaries, Peripheries, Methods, Theories

The story of the paantu begins at Kubama.

On a gusty, overcast August morning, parents and children assembled at the Shimajiri Port under the auspices of the Paantu Village Children's Association, the children's group of the local elementary school. One of the parental leaders called everyone to attention and explained that the task of the day was to pick up trash. The children would pay particular attention to important, valuable places like Kubama, the beach where long ago the mask of the paantu washed ashore. A *yuta* provided instructions to the town upon its discovery, and that was how the paantu and its ritual came to be in Shimajiri.³

This brief explanation finished, representatives of the volunteer security patrol cautioned the children about the danger of the high waves and dangerous trash, everyone received rubber gloves and trash bags, and we hiked as a group up the hill to the keeping-place of the *uya-paantu* mask. This small building, a holy place, stands near a set of stairs leading down the steep, *adan*-overgrown coral limestone slope to Kubama beach.⁴ The parent leader explained again to the children and adults that we would ask the deity of the place for safety while we worked to clean this special place. She instructed us to offer a prayer, not in the routine petition with our hands together, but in Okinawan style, with palms flat and lifted up. The children took this in stride

³ A *yuta* is a type of shaman, a part of contemporary Okinawa as well as its past.

⁴ *Adan*, or pandanus, are sometimes called "screw pine" for their twisting trunks. This dissertation utilizes both the words "sacred" and "holy" to describe aspects of place and practice. While I realize that there is a large scholarly corpus debating the finer points of meaning surrounding these two terms, this research does not pay exceedingly close attention to these differences, in large part because my collaborators do not make a clear distinction between them, and also because the Japanese word frequently utilized to refer to these, *shinsei* 神聖, is translated as sacredness and holiness. The word utilized to refer to worship places, *haisho* 拝所, implies the action of worship, respectful posture, gesture, and making reverence. As places where kami are considered to be, action and *shinsei* entwine.

alongside the older community members present, but many of the younger parents expressed surprise. The leader demonstrated, dropping to one knee as she offered a brief invocation, her hands lifted above her head. Everyone else stood watching, with their hands at their sides. Through the window of the door of the keeping-place, the uya-paantu mask could be seen in the shadow of the far wall.

As the prayer ended, we all discovered a problem with the cleaning plans—the tide was too high. In fact, as we turned to look down the stairs to Kubama beach for the first time, we realized that there was no beach there at all, only the craggy coral limestone hillside being pounded by the waves. There was plenty of trash washed ashore back down at the coast by the port, however, and picking it up and sorting it took a few hours amid the the drizzle and spatter of rain.

As stories from the field go, “How We Didn’t Go to Kubama,” is most memorable for its mundaneity—a grey, damp morning that turned into a parent-led scrub-down of the community center. Hardly the stuff of legend, definitely the flavor of fieldwork. I relate this narrative because it concerns a location that is intimately associated with the ritual life of the community, a first step in an ongoing exploration of the interconnectedness of people and place to ritual and heritage.

Kubama itself takes its name from the arrival of the first paantu mask, an oblong wooden shape with a slightly defined nose, a semicircle mouth, and two oval eyes underneath the sweeping line of glowering eyebrows. It washed onto shore some indeterminate number of centuries ago wrapped in leaves of the *kuba* クバ, or Chinese fan palm. Kuba and *hama* 浜, or beach, combined to make the name Kubama. Noticeably, it is a place where no kuba grows, a short, cupped segment of sandy, pebbly ground between the land and the sea. It has little that

remains of its history save the memory of the singular discarded wrapping of the original paantu mask. Kubama is also the site that triggers remembering, a site where lessons can be taught and rituals recalled, a place that demonstrates physical and metaphorical liminality as it disappears and reappears from under the waves.

Unlike the breathtaking white sand beaches on the windward side of the island, ever popular in the tourist brochures, Shimajiri lies on the lee side of the island, where the winds and current deposit the floating detritus of the sea, and have for hundreds of years. What cleanup



Kubama, 2012. Photo by author.

effort would make these beaches lovely? A storm, the unending wash of waves, and the trash returns, plastic and glass and other less identifiable materials. My first time at Kubama, my guide pointed to a plastic drink bottle in the sand. “It’s from China, Taiwan maybe,” she told me. Skeptical, I looked closer to find that she was right—all Chinese lettering. But who could say

where the other junk comes from? Ropes and nets from boats and the battered Styrofoam UFOs of destroyed buoys litter the sand, tangle in the concrete blocks placed along the shore to buffer the coast by the port. Ghost crabs skitter through it all with apparent unconcern. Once, walking along the seashore, I bent to pick up an iridescent rainbow ribbon, utterly untouched by the water, the remains of a popped balloon still caught on one end. It was beautiful and terrible at once, a tragic commentary on life and death, like the occasional bodies of sea turtles that wash ashore, dead from eating the trash out in the ocean.

While today's ecological concerns connect with broader implications of pollution, global warming, and oceanic acidification, imperiling the coral seas and their biodiversity, historically the things washing in from the sea held the potential both for harm and help. For example, the arrival of castaways from the sea could have very real threats to economy, culture, and health (Kiyomura 2008, 162–63).⁵ Yet at the same time, in the context of premodern Japan, arrivals from the same intermediary ocean space could be considered “things which mediate between the world of *uchi* (inside) and the world of *yoso* (outside), between men and gods, between the *ke* (secular) and the *hare* (sacred) or between ‘this world’ and the ‘other world’” (T. Yoshida 1981, 96). As Sakihara Mitsugu argues, on Miyako in the period between the 12th and 14th centuries, fish were also considered to be drifting things (*yorimono*) that arrived as a gift from the deities of

⁵ Shipwrecks were not uncommon on the hazardous coral reefs surrounding the islands in the 18th and 19th centuries, and the generosity of islanders to those in need was documented on numerous occasions by Western visitors, but likely caused strain on already impoverished communities. At the same time, islanders had to be constantly vigilant against seeming collusion or unapproved trade with foreigners because of Japanese influence (See (Kerr 2000, 231-235-243-274). W.H. Rosser's 1870 *North Pacific Pilot: The Seaman's Guide to the Islands of the North Pacific, With an Appendix on the Winds, Weather, Currents, &c., of the North and South Pacific* notes that “There is no inducement for a vessel to visit Ty-pin-san [Miyako]; neither wood, water, nor any other necessities could be procured. A few pigs, fowls, and sweet potatoes might be obtained for cabin use, but this would hardly warrant the risk and detention on such a dangerous coast” (Rosser 1870, II:129).

Nirai Kanai, the paradise across the sea. Reflected in weir-fishing practice at that time, the arrival of fish depended on the good relationship of the local priestess with the kami (Sakihara 1987, 76–77). The paantu mask arrived in the same manner, as a gift, or a visitor from across the sea.

Kubama is a liminal site that links land and sea, mundane and sacred. Contemporary island scholars conceptualize the ocean as an intermediary zone of connection between terrestrial islands and marine environments—an “aquapelago,” or better, “aquapelagic assemblage”—to describe human cultures’ relationships with and towards the ocean as a form of transportation, of industry, and of sustenance (Hayward 2012, 5–9). In other words, the ocean influences human connection with the environment, linking to other people, places, and even to a numinous other as well.

Declared a deity after its arrival on Kubama, the paantu mask and its ritual of Paantu Punaha developed into what is considered today as Japanese intangible cultural heritage. Today, Kubama activates memory by linking to the history and reality of visiting protective deities, and participating in the care of a community provides an opportunity to reflect on local ownership of history, even as it may provoke moments of self-conscious surprise. But like the overcast day at the nonexistent beach, we acknowledge where we stand—metaphorically and literally—and we move onward to the work that awaits us.

Intermediary Ethnography, Marginal Discipline

Like Kubama, to a certain extent, this dissertation also exists betwixt and between. This is an ethnography, literally a writing about people, that seeks to translate between lives and culture in one place and describe it in ways that can be understood outside of that place. Famously described as “writing culture,” ethnography is a creative as well as a documentary act,

where the ethnographer is both a part of and influences the outcomes of the situations that she observes, documents, and experiences (Marcus and Clifford 1986; West 2007, 75–85). In what follows, I examine the relationships between ritual and heritage, and how those two broad categories are neither self-evident nor easily defined, but how they come into their own through the actions of people.

This dissertation is also work of folkloristics, the study of folklore, a field that in the United States has grown out of the dialogue between the approaches of literary philology and anthropology, but which is fundamentally interdisciplinary, bridging numerous disciplines and methodologies (Zumwalt 1988). Folkloristic ethnographies, in contrast to ethnographies that emerge out of cousin disciplines like anthropology or sociology, tend to address matters of aesthetic and expressive culture. Art is unmoored from its associations with elite practice and returned to the people—all people—who make intentional decisions in their everyday lives that communicate in ways that emerge out of and carry on tradition.

While short, programmatic statements cannot do justice to any field of study, folkloristics approaches communication as something that can be understood and appreciated within and by a group, convey and evoke emotion, and require skill (Pocius 2003, 55–60). Thought of in terms of action and art, folklore may be succinctly defined as “artistic communication in small groups,” with all the complicated connotations held within each of those terms (Ben-Amos 2000, 14).

Elliott Oring suggests that most folklorists embrace some or all aspects of an orientation toward their subject that includes the “*communal* (a group or collective), the *common* (the everyday rather than the extraordinary), the *informal* (in relation to the formal and institutional), the *marginal* (in relation to the centers of power and privilege), the *personal* (communication face-to-face) the *traditional* (stable over time), the *aesthetic* (artistic expressions), and the

ideological (expressions of belief and systems of knowledge)” (Oring 1986, 17–18). In contemporary efforts to more effectively define the way that people communicate with others as well as themselves, utilizing media that are not face-to-face, Simon Bronner suggests a definition of folklore as “traditional knowledge put into, and drawing from, practice” (Bronner 2015, 9). This reflects contemporary folkloristics research influenced by the methodological and theoretical approach of performance studies and praxis, both of which place especial stress on individual choices made in and through the process of doing (Bauman 2000, 50–52).

Folkloristic studies of religious folklore may focus on the material, as in the cases of commissioned paintings for answered prayer (Primiano 2012), carefully constructed temporary dwellings like Sukkot (Berlinger 2013), or in the provision, display, and ritual use of mass-produced objects sold at a botánica (Morales 2009). Religious folklore may be verbal, found in the ways that people speak about their own religious and personal experience (Lawless 1993). Religious folklore can also be found in the performance of numerous kinds of religious rituals, which can contain multiple genres simultaneously, including the materiality of costume, food, and shelter, the verbal components of speech and song; the musical performance of various instruments or voice; and the physical movements of dance, prayer, or meditation (Sciorra 2015; Reed 2001; Jackson 2005; Berlinger 2013; Magliocco 2002; Noyes 2003a). As Bowman and Valk summarize, “In the tradition of folklore and ethnology, the stress, the overriding interest, is on what people in a variety of cultural, religious and geographical landscapes do, think, and say in relation to what they believe about the way the world is constituted” (2012, 5).

Paantu Punaha

The particular cultural, religious, and geographical landscapes at play in this dissertation

occur in the small town of Shimajiri, on Miyako Island, Okinawa, far to the south of mainland Japan. Shimajiri's ritual of Paantu Punaha happens for two consecutive days in the early autumn, featuring three mud-covered, rowdy visiting deities known as paantu. After morning prayers at sacred locations by local divine priestesses, the three deities share a drinking ritual with local men at places of historical and religious significance, then proceed around town to muddy everything and everyone (the newer the better) in order to drive away evil and protect the town. Paantu Punaha has become increasingly famous since its designation in 1993 as a national Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property by Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs, or Bunkachô.⁶ Listed under the title, "Miyakojima Paantu," Paantu Punaha shares the designation with one other very different purification ritual from elsewhere on Miyakojima (called Satiparou) that also features a masked figure known as paantu (Agency for Cultural Affairs 1997a).⁷ Unlike Satiparou, the "Shimajiri paantu" now occupies an iconic place in island advertising and the tourist trade, provoking new challenges for the community of Shimajiri.

Shimajiri provides an ideal case study for bringing together two often-separate orientations to ritual within folkloristics, that of ritual analysis, and that of cultural heritage. While these two orientations frequently acknowledge one another, they are not always in conversation, a topic I will take up in more depth below. By bringing both of them together, my dissertation shows that within Shimajiri, people clearly understand their traditional event simultaneously as both ritual (a culturally recognized genre of action) *and* heritage (an

⁶ Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property: *jûyô mukei minzoku bunkazai* 重要無形民俗文化財
Agency for Cultural Affairs: Bunkachô 文化庁

⁷ Interestingly, the Agency for Cultural Affairs' online database describes both Paantu Punaha under the classification of "folk custom" (*fûzoku kanshû* 風俗慣習) and "annual events," (*nenchû gyôji* 年中行事) not "religious festival (belief)" –*sairei* (*shinkô*) 祭礼 (信仰), which is another category utilized for other customary religious events in Okinawa (Agency for Cultural Affairs 1997b).

intentional process of cultural conservation). These two simultaneous but distinct ways of knowing influence local practice both inside of and outside of the ritual itself, and provide some idea of the complex processes by which people apprehend, experience, and utilize their culture.

Okinawan Ritual, a Central Periphery

Spanning most of the Ryukyu Archipelago, Okinawa Prefecture has been and continues to be a place perceived to have strategic value militarily to the United States and Japan, as well as ecological value for its unique subtropical ecosystems. For these reasons alone, recent scholarship that considers the local and political dimensions of Okinawan identity continues to be important. Unlike most journalism on Okinawa, this scholarship stresses the multiple and nuanced ways that Okinawans articulate differential identities, which include insider-outsider, local-national, mainland-diaspora, and generational perspectives (Cf. (Bhowmik 2008; Roberson 2009; Keyso 2000; Tanji 2006). They also look closely at how Okinawan identity is expressed and performed in negotiation within communities (Cf. (Siddle 2003, 8–16; Inoue 2007, 208–27). This includes ritual as a site of the negotiation of identity as well, where ritual performance invokes memory and continues to establish relationships to ancestors (Nelson 2008); where the symbolism at play within ritual makes clear the relationships that local communities nurture with local deities that inhabit the landscape (Røkkum 2006, 148–218); and where religious ritual invokes Okinawanness in order to make the ritual appear more effective (Allen 2002b).

Fewer authors consider how ritual may also be a site where the complicated negotiation of state power and local lives occurs within the system of heritage politics. Tze May-Loo argues that the production of Okinawan heritage itself is a political powerplay, where local action to safeguard valued heritage challenges the nationalist conception of heritage as the representation

of Japan as a whole (Loo 2014, 4–16).

In the early 20th century, however, the opposite was true. Okinawan ritual occupied a central place in the scholarly discourse that developed the field of Japanese folkloristics, or *minzokugaku* 民俗学, yet many of these scholars were motivated by a more nationalist search for identity, seeing Okinawa as a contemporary window into a historical understanding of Japanese identity. As summarized by Michael Dylan Foster, “Minzokugaku might be characterized as a discipline driven by nostalgic sentiment, informed by a desire to incorporate aspects of the past into the construction of life in the present” (2009, 139). Concern about the changing cultural milieu spurred early 20th-century folklorists to search for surviving archaisms and links with Japan’s ancient past. One place considered ideal for these early folklorists to find these aspects of the past was Okinawan ritual, which garnered substantial interest because of its female-centered religious hierarchy, believed to reflect a much earlier, purer form of Shinto.

However, it is unclear how much interest mainland Japanese scholars would have had in Okinawa had they not come into contact with Okinawan scholars. Yanagita Kunio (1875-1962), considered the founder of Japanese folkloristics, met and had correspondence with Iha Fuyû (1876-1947), considered the founder of Okinawan Studies. Iha and other Okinawan intellectuals aimed to push back against Japanese education policies that effectively erased Okinawan history from the classroom, in order to make sure Okinawans maintained the memory of their culture and history (Christy 1993, 624). The historical nature of their research certainly influenced Japanese folklorists, and in turn, Japanese folklorists mentored scholars in Okinawan studies, such as Higa Shunchô (1883-1977), who also eventually worked alongside American scholars like George Kerr to aid him in writing his history of Okinawa during the American occupation

postwar (Kerr 2000, xiv).⁸

Perhaps due to this historical focus, Yanagita Kunio continued to stress the unchanged nature of Okinawan culture and its potential for research even postwar, and urged his colleagues to pursue folklore research in Okinawa as a way of preserving or documenting vanishing traditions that could be the source of Japanese identity (Yanagita 1953; Inoue 2007, 73–79).⁹ While mainland folkloristics shifted their focus to identifying disappearing cultural traditions, postwar Okinawan Studies tended to generate essentialist regional scholarship that considered an unchanging idealized past the location of authentic practice and identity (Inoue 2007, 87–93).

However, as cultural anthropologist Inoue Masamichi argues, returning historical change and political power to the study of Okinawan culture in its specific, local, cultural forms provides a corrective to essentializing scholarship (Inoue 2007, 96–97). Indeed, part of the reason that Okinawa continues to be so vital for studying now is its historical centrality to the discipline of folklore in Japan, but also but also the ongoing interest in Okinawan heritage and culture and how it intersects with contemporary political and economic endeavors.

Linked with the push in the 1980s and 1990s to revitalize rural areas through the creation of *furusato* (hometown) came an increased interest in local folklore, particularly as a source of

⁸ The mainland folklorists' relationship with Okinawan intellectuals did not always mesh. At times, folklorists urging the preservation of local dialect, custom, and craft came up against scholars who viewed such things a hindrances toward full incorporation and acceptance by the Japanese state (Christy 1993, 623–27).

⁹ Melek Ortabasi complicates this, however, arguing that Yanagita's process of connecting the past to the present required searching for the Japanese other within the self, making an essential Japanese national identity difficult to find (Ortabasi 2014, 130–33). Yanagita and other folklorists, notably Minakata Kumagusu (1847–1941), were influential in their goals of not just preserving but restoring the voices of the common people to the study of history, and in the case of Minakata, directly challenging government consolidation of local shrines that would erase locally transmitted history and practice (Figal 1999, 203–9).

revitalization in the form of festivals, museums, and tourist attractions (Robertson 1988, 504–14; Knight 1997, 152–53; Ivy 1995, 98–122; Creighton 1997; Hashimoto 1998; 2003). With this renewed interest in local traditions, interest in Okinawan culture and music exploded into national popular culture, an “Okinawa boom” that peaked in the 1990s, but whose influence continues to be felt (Gillan 2012, 149–75).

Japanese folklorists (like folklorists in many other places) have been key in urging the preservation of heritage, documenting local traditions, and in many cases ushering them into the national system of designated heritage—while at the same time critiquing the nationalist tendencies of their forbears. Contemporary Japanese folklore research embraces critical engagement of its own past and methods, such as Takanori Shimamura’s multicultural model for Japanese folkloristics:

Multiculturalist folklore studies, which seeks to understand contemporary society through its affinity with “tradition,” is based on a new paradigm that thoroughly attends to the politics of difference associated with gender, class, group affiliation, region, individuality, or any other factor, and to the various relationships among such differences. This paradigm challenges the reification, institutionalization, and the essentialization of “culture” or any other kind of categorical boundary, and is premised on the indiscriminate deconstruction of all ideology (including whatever the paradigm [sic] itself may engender). (Shimamura 2003, 211)

This approach requires a critical engagement with the field as a self-evident place of study and genre as a categorical truth, even as it critiques the assumed nature of a “group,” nation, or culture. Shimamura traces the folkloristic impulse as being less guided by grand outside theory. In a similar fashion to theory in American folklorists, multiculturalist folklore studies

emphasizes concern with what people do and how they do it, modestly theorizing between high theory and practice, or “humble theory” (Noyes 2008, 40–41).

Why Paantu Punaha?

This dissertation follows these multiculturalist and humble theoretical approaches into this investigation of ritual and heritage. The Miyakojima Paantu makes the ideal case study, as both the ritual of Paantu Punaha and the figure of the paantu figure prominently into local conceptions of knowledge and identity. As a historically marginalized location where politics tend to fall outside the dominant narratives of Okinawan politics and identity, the rural areas of Miyakojima caught the attention of Japanese researchers postwar for its wealth of traditional religious practices. Even contemporary scholarship pays attention to the symbolic and philological roots of the Paantu Punaha, for example linking to reconstructions of ancient religious practice to explain why rituals persist with visiting deities called from within the earth, and others that are called from *Nirai Kanai*, the otherworld over the ocean (Yoshinari 2003, 65–70). However, part of the problem with this kind of research is that it posits a kind of ideal former ritual state, an original ritual form. Ethnographic documentation of a local ritual event often becomes an authorized description, or can be utilized by local government in “a social context in which culture is an object of design and elaboration, and where there is a routine and strategic projection by the local of state of communal representations both to local citizenry and to the wider nation” (Knight 1997, 157).

The role of scholarship and government in affecting cultural practice may overlook the real process and struggle of communities with change, and their own attempts to preserve or safeguard their culture. Rural Japan faces an ongoing, decades-long crisis of depopulation, and

efforts to monetize and popularize traditional culture for the purpose of reviving rural economies have only reaped partial success. The 1993 Important Intangible Folk-Cultural Heritage designation worked significantly to popularize Paantu Punaha, leading to a rise in the numbers of tourists and media, while at the same time ensuring the continuing involvement of ethnographers with the community.

Personal Peripheries

I am inextricably part of this research, and moreover, retain full responsibility for whatever successes and errors get written. This dissertation primarily concerns the desires and ideas of people from Shimajiri, and I hope that I do them justice. But in order to discuss who I am and how I got to Miyako, I find Deborah Kodish's writing on the stance of the folklorist useful. Kodish writes that folklorists must have activist ideals, whether their work is geared more toward research or public practice. Part of these ideals require, in Kodish's words, attention to "authenticity, authority, and place" (Kodish 2011, 32). Authenticity has to do less with outside descriptions of identity but with the internal ability of people to self-describe and self-identify in relationship to community; authority is given to the people with whom folklorists work; and place brings together people with particular knowledges who deal with particular conflicts. As folklorists, we must interrogate our own roles in research, with attention to privileges and structures, to racial and cultural assumptions that comprise the core of our own interior work, while our exterior work seeks to validate, work alongside, and acknowledge the voices and experiences of others. "Activist practice is not only out there; it is always in here, too: in us" (Kodish 2011, 33).

So, what drives a white American woman to go and research a local Okinawan men's

ritual? I had a basketful of assumptions. I wanted to study the genre of festival, full of food, music, and in the case of certain events across Okinawa, tug-of-war ropes made of rice straw on a giant scale, accompanied by Ryukyu Kingdom-era costumed figures. I was fascinated by festival scholarship looking at the multiplicity of participant perspectives, the multi-sited, multi-sensory activities that comprise festival involvement, and in turn how these become the basis for invoking assertions of identity and the politics of power (Vogt 1955; Noyes 2003a; Bauman and Stoeltje 1989). In an environment fraught with the defense of local identity and community, especially Okinawan political identities in relationship to the national Japanese state and the American military presence, I was interested in seeing for myself how local traditions and cultural events articulate local identity, cement affiliations, and challenge official histories as well as structures of authority (Allen 2002a; Schnell 1999, 208-259-300; Comaroff et al. 1993, xix–xxix; B. Stoeltje 1996).

I naively determined, due to Okinawan religion being overly studied by Japanese folklorists, that I would buck tradition and study festival, whose underlying religious rationale (I sagely reasoned) was only one aspect of the overall event. It was mostly not-religious, at least in my limited conception of religion. What wasn't to like about a fertility festival imbued with symbolic political imagery? Yet as I pursued this investigation, one thing was missing: I craved the sense of the numinous.

Had I been studying in a world without Internet, I might never have run across a mention of Paantu Punaha, a visiting deity ritual. Arresting video footage showed an incredible spectacle of mud-covered, monstrous shapes and screaming children. It was striking to me how not-Japanese it seemed. Many visiting deity figures in Japan possess iconic, brightly painted masks with fierce tusks or horns, and copious amounts of rice-straw costuming. The paantu, in contrast,

were covered in muddy vines and appeared to hold their own flat faces on, as if they clenched their own muddy hands with their mouths. Most importantly, the paantu lit in me a personal and academic inspiration—they were incarnations of the numinous, gods walking among people.

Several times during my research, people said to me that perhaps the paantu had brought me, intended that I be there. I'm uncomfortable with that, and not only because I don't possess the same relationship to the paantu as people in Shimajiri. Rather, a visiting deity like the paantu can be expected to bring hope and health, and drive away malign influences. A visiting researcher is a much more risky proposition—they frequently need to be placated, rarely bring good fortune, and inviting one inside can have negative, unforeseen consequences. In Okinawa, the power relationships between deities and people seem fairly clear compared to the power dynamics between people.

My own identities took substantial interrogating in the field. As a white American in Okinawa Prefecture, most Okinawans assumed that I was involved with the U.S. military, which has a large presence on Okinawa Island. On Miyako, there was no U.S. military presence, at least since the Reversion of Okinawa to Japan in 1972. As an environment that had experienced relatively little local intervention by the United States military, I hoped that my presence on Miyako might be viewed with fewer colonial connotations.

But as an American, in particular, I cannot ignore the legacy of Okinawa's occupation in the aftermath of World War II. In postwar research, U.S. academics expended a lot of effort to stress the discontinuities between Okinawa and Japan, both to justify their ongoing occupation and to discourage Okinawans from wanting to rejoin the Japanese nation (Cf (Inoue 2007, 79–87). I was intensely aware that I landed astride the imperialist legacies of two traditions of research—the Japanese folklorists' interest in Okinawan religion, and the Americans'

manipulative encouragement of localized identity.

As an English-speaking, white American, I was aware that my face and my language opened doors and connoted prestige in ways that other non-native Japanese cannot access. People tended to assume my competence (despite many fumbles), allowing me to take advantage of a cultural permissiveness that opened up many opportunities.

However, while my white American status may have opened some doors, my cisgender woman status closed others. My research was caught at a crossroads between my gender and that of the paantu tradition-bearers, all of them men. I had hoped that I might balance this exclusion through contact with Shimajiri's divine priestesses, but I learned when I arrived that the last of them had passed away a decade earlier. No "female half" of the formal ritual practice remained. Most people assumed that my partner, Tim, also a PhD student at that time, was the one doing the research because of his gender. In addition, we came to Miyako together with our two young daughters, aged five and four months. As a result, I often felt as if my roles as a researcher, a folklorist, and a professional clashed with my public image as a baby-toting, breastfeeding mother and wife. Evening hours spent enjoying the company and banter of the young men's association, or *seinenkai* 青年会, often ended when they asked that I trade off with Tim. I would never be, could never be, "one of the guys."

As a result, I never received any hoped-for insider status so that I could be part of the men-only aspects of Paantu Punaha. Instead, I learned that my perceived limitations actually had permeable aspects—gender didn't barricade me from all masculine activities. More importantly, my identity as a mother provided me with almost-instant local connections with other mothers. Our baby made a great conversation starter, and when she left my arms for hours during an event, both Tim and I learned to trust in our community. My American status proved to be less

foreign than I'd feared as well, as a number of Shimajiri families have American in-laws and grandchildren. Generational changes meant that I, as a working mother and wife, shared a lot in common with other young women and their families, too. We were all in a constant state of negotiating our relationships with one another, with the concepts of foreign and native, the roles of men and women, and of course the friendships that we shared. We had histories, assumptions, and more inequalities besides, but in acknowledging my own background, I hope that this work does less to harm than to convey the perspectives and voices of the people who opened their lives to me.

Method

As an ethnographic form of engagement with a community and its rituals, this work came to fruition through thirteen months of participant observation from March 2012 to April 2013. Formal interviews constitute the recorded core of my field data, supplemented by many pages of fieldnotes and a copious amount of amateur photography. As any form of human engagement with other humans, the constructedness of the "field" and the limitations of recorded data, experiences, and other data requires acknowledgement; what was worthy of recording and what my fieldnotes capture in terms of my own attention and memory certainly reflect my personal and theoretical assumptions (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2001, 354–55). For my part, the bulk of my participant-observation involved trying to figure out how to live in Shimajiri and have a good relationship with people while I was there, trying to become attuned to what was important to them.

I focused my research on Paantu Punaha by attending various meetings and events under the fluorescent lights of the community center, the Paantu no Sato Kaikan (the Paantu Village

Hall), the humidity of summer evenings eased slightly in the one air-conditioned meeting room. These included gatherings of the *jichikai* 自治会, or self-governance committee, a kind of town council where the central elected officers discussed and made planning decisions. I also attended meetings of the *seinenkai* 青年会, or young men's association, the group whose members performed the role of the paantu.

Town festivals, gatherings, field days, and other events affiliated with Miyajima Elementary School and its Parent Teacher Association also gave me many opportunities to participate in community life. Despite the fact that Miyajima did not have enough children enrolled in kindergarten the year that we lived in Shimajiri for my daughter to attend as a student, the parents of the PTA and the Paantu no Kodomo-kai often extended invitations to us to participate in school and informal parent-teacher gatherings.

I waited for months before scheduling formal interviews, trying to figure out who to talk to, trying to let relationships develop organically. However, my own expectations hit numerous roadblocks. Once interviewed, usually a formal affair where I had a list of open-ended questions and an audio recorder, most people felt that they had given me ample information, and did not see the point in additional questions. Some connections never emerged, a vital aspect of fieldwork in Japan, where the recommendation from one person gets you in the door of another. This, too, is part of fieldwork.

I learned somewhat late in the game that I needed to be ready to not follow my own ideals of protocol. I needed to leap into action when opportunities presented themselves, not necessarily insist on individual interviews when the group was already assembled, not hesitate to ask for follow-ups, and not wait persistently to make a personal connection before I tried to do something as big as interviewing individually. In the end, I swapped out my idealistic "We Will

All Be Best Friends” model for something more akin to the folklore field survey model, and knocked on more doors, called people out of the blue, and just asked people directly if they might talk to me.

However, one area that I did not anticipate for its richness of participant-observation was my involvement with Shimajiri’s children. I received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Indiana University for research interviewing adults about Paantu, but because of my notion of community ritual as affecting all members of the community, I also received IRB approval to interview community children, limited to seven years and up with their caregiver’s consent. In addition to the adult community members who gave me incredibly valuable insights through formal interviews and casual conversation, most of the children of Miyajima Elementary School spent hours at our apartment over the course of our stay in Shimajiri, making a mockery of any attempt to keep straight my multiple roles as a serious academic researcher armed with audio recorder, notebook, consent forms, and Important Questions, and as the parent of a smiley, butterball infant and sensitive, rambunctious kindergartener whose own culture shock I was utterly unprepared for. Though the minors of Shimajiri are described in these pages with changed names, initials, and scant identifying information, I remain grateful for all the things they brought to this research.

My best attempt to remain lawful under the eyes of the IRB was not to record any audio material when children were present without formal consent or caregiver oversight. Disappointingly, though in retrospect not surprisingly, the interviews I managed to conduct with community minors turned out short and of poor quality. In the presence of their parents and myself during the formal interview, children became shy and withdrawn versions of themselves, nervous of the audio recorder and nervous of saying the wrong thing, quite a contrast to their



Poster masterminded by one of my teen informants for the Miyako Triathlon, 2012. Photo by author.

shouting and screaming in play, literally bouncing off the walls of our small apartment, and their informal schooling of our daughter in everything from games to rhymes to the most popular TV shows.

The older minors in town didn't spend as much time around the younger children. The high schoolers rarely had time to get together because of school and other demands; once I was surprised when the young man behind the counter at the gas station half way to the city turned out to be a Shimajiri high schooler working a part-time job—he knew who I was, but I had never seen his face! A fellow mother and neighbor wrangled a group of high school girls for me to chat with one evening, but as virtual strangers, they offered thoughts hesitantly. However, the junior high school boys spent more time around town, slowly growing away from their younger local cohort, and we saw a lot more of them. I got to speak at length to two junior high boys who were

great interviewees—smart, thoughtful teenagers who clearly had spent a lot of time thinking about and participating in paantu. One was an artist, leading his classmates in putting together a prizewinning painted billboard to cheer on the Miyako Strongman triathlon athletes; it featured a paantu prominently, hand to its mouth to create the piercing, jubilant sound of the finger whistle. One of my junior high school informants had such an interest in the research that he took pictures for me in 2012 during the ritual. In 2014, I watched him, now of high school age, take charge of the younger junior high helpers, already demonstrating a lot of practical knowledge and leadership. If I may speculate a little, if either of these boys decide to stay in Shimajiri, someday they will be the ones future researchers will talk to about Paantu Punaha.

Theoretical and Methodological Orientations

The ideas of vernacular religion, ritual, and intangible cultural heritage provide the orienting methodological and theoretical frameworks that inform this research, but the degree to which they productively come together also has ramifications for the effectiveness of scholarship examining vernacular ritual practice.

Vernacular Religion

As an orienting stance toward my fieldwork as well as my thoughts toward fieldwork, I cite Leonard Norman Primiano's definition of "vernacular religion," where the vernacular is not conceptualized in opposition to formal or official religious regulations or teachings as "unofficial" or "folk" religion, but rather is a praxis-based form of research that examines "religion as it is lived: as human beings encounter, understand, interpret, and practice it" (Primiano 1995, 44). Religion, he explains, is not an objective "thing" that may be studied; rather

it is lived, at every level. Any theoretical framework or methodology brought to bear on fieldwork of lived practice must also be evaluated by whether or not it takes this into account (Primiano 1995, 37, note 2).

Primiano's approach stresses individual lives of individual religious practitioners, and in particular, how religious worldviews evolve through individual practice. He cautions that the analysis of large communal events without the consideration of individual perspectives can lead to generalizations about belief as well as about community (Primiano 1995, 48). In other words, he reorients the study of religion on people, "not 'religion' or 'belief' as abstractions" (Primiano 2012, 384).

Belief is a problematic aspect of religious study. Sabina Magliocco presents the argument that belief may be studied only through the contexts where it appears, where it is both integral to and a product of performance. Belief in the abstract contains numerous disturbing corollaries, including the establishing of the scholar as the arbiter between true and false, effective and noneffective, rational and irrational, folk and folklorist (Magliocco 2012, 10–11). Additionally, Western approaches to belief often entwine the related idea of faith. However, where faith is the acceptance of the truth of certain religious ideas, "belief does not require the acceptance of a coherent set of propositions, because the propositions behind it may lack coherence, and they may not even be accepted in every circumstance by the believer" (Magliocco 2012, 11).

Referencing Stanley Tambiah, Magliocco frames belief instead as "participatory consciousness," a form of relating to and making sense of the world that involves the senses and emotions, a form that occurs simultaneously with "causality," marked by rational detachment. Rather than a binary of either rational thought or belief, these two modes of knowing exist side by side in all people, and belief may be recast as "a state of conviction that is reached in a

different way, with different evidence” (Magliocco 2012, 11–12). Her work stresses that belief is emergent and context-dependent, something “both integral to the success of the performances and a product of them” (Magliocco 2012, 22).

Ritual

The performance context of emergent belief and personal experience in this research is ritual. “Ritual” tends to indicate an area of study long-dominated by the objectification and bounding of its subject by religious scholars, anthropologists, folklorists, ethologists, and others, offering contending perspectives of analysis, description, definition, categorization, and function of ritual and ritualized activities. However, ritual is best conceptualized not as an object, but as an event. Religious studies scholar Catherine Bell, in her sweeping theoretical overview of how the term ritual is used and how a better reorientation of studies of ritual might be achieved, emphasizes that ritual is fundamentally a way of knowing, in short, a means of embodying and negotiating relationships of power (Bell 1997, 207).

In some ways, ritual is a customary genre of activity as well as a method of study. The cultural specificity of ritual and ritualized behaviors makes attempts to classify ritual as a universal category less successful. As a method, reading a set of behaviors as ritual or ritualistic bounds the area of inquiry as well as implies the use of ritual theory to interpret that inquiry. However, one commonality among ritualized actions is that those that participate in them identify them as special modes of behavior, marked by language use, setting, costume, and so on. At the same time, rituals are part and parcel of broader contexts of social life and other events, and cannot be considered entirely separate from them either. Human intention marks rituals apart from everyday contexts, but is still dependent on everyday contexts to achieve its special status

(Cf.(Bell 1997; Grimes 1990, 9–15).

While later in this document I will discuss ritual, and to some degree explore the nature of ritual and how it is perceived, this research does not attempt to develop a new definition of ritual as an etic theoretical term. As Ronald Grimes reminds us,

Definitions, after all, are seldom the actual engines of research. Only in rare cases do scholars define the term ritual formally and then illustrate methodological and theoretical consequences of carrying out research on the basis of this formal definition. Rather, definitions tend to rest in splendid isolation—a definition proposed at the beginning of the work is left without further reference or development. (Grimes 2011, 11)

While I do engage with ritual theory as a means to understand what Paantu Punaha as a ritual is doing, I am more interested in exploring how how people understand and find meaning in their own rituals, particularly when their public production makes them an object of reflection by both ritual practitioners and non-practitioners.

Cultural Heritage

Contemporary folkloristics recognizes that all individuals share cultural traditions with others, and, especially due to the influence of performance studies, are able to recognize that traditions evolve, transform, and in some cases, die out. For folklorists and others concerned with the human impact upon culture as well as the effects on real people when cultural practices are threatened, conserving culture is just as important as environmental conservation. In discussing the work done by the New York based public folklore organization City Lore, Steve Zeitlin says that “The dissolution of communities is real and costly, and cultural conservation is a preventive

medicine that can keep neighborhoods and communities from falling apart” (Zeitlin 1994, 227).

The production of heritage is one form of cultural conservation that seeks to validate, valorize, and recognize cultural traditions, and by doing so provide a means to empower people and their communities to maintain their own meaningful practices.¹⁰ Efforts to promote and produce heritage may take effect through legislation, governmental funding, local groups, and legal maneuvers, among many other possible forms.

Each instance of heritage production involves power relationships that operate at local, regional, and national levels, those that constitute as well as transform cultural practice. In many cases, defining, fixing, and preserving heritage has a complex and even contradictory relationship with the evolving and creative production of that heritage (Kuutma 2009, 10).

The word “production” explicitly recognizes that heritage is not a thing or bounded object, but rather a process. Laurajane Smith reorients the approach to heritage as not an object, but instead as a way of knowing, a simultaneously performative, contextual, political, and embodied process of remembering and expression (Smith 2006, 44–84); (Smith and Logan 2009, xii).

Two problematic aspects of this process of remembering and production are *community*

¹⁰ Many of the same issues surrounding tradition that folklorists have been theorizing and addressing for decades would do well to be heeded by heritage studies. The short, conceptual formulation that “tradition is the creation of the future out of the past,” (Glassie 1995, 395) sounds remarkably similar to recent attempts to summarize heritage, such as “a mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 7). Dorothy Noyes describes three different ways of approaching tradition in Western thought, “communication, ideology, and property,” and where they dovetail with other related issues like authenticity, group, and appropriation (Noyes 2009). A number of perspectives on the similarities and differences between tradition and heritage also exists, for example, as an activity an order removed from living groups and traditions to focus on the tradition alone (Thornbury 1994, 217), or as local production versus outside orientation toward authorized sources (Grydehøj 2010, 78). Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues that heritage often links economics with the idea of displaying culture, adding to meanings that the heritage alone never held. Heritage production doesn’t actually restore traditions or turn back time, but instead creates something new, taking from the past and adding values like “pastness, exhibition, difference, and, where possible, indigeneity” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 7, 150).

and *property*, both of which will play a major role in the following pages. People utilize conflicting social and political aspects of community and heritage in order to claim, challenge, and define authority for themselves (Crooke 2010, 27).¹¹ This activity highlights the complexities of community, which is neither unified nor easily defined, yet whose definition becomes a power struggle when heritage becomes a way to fix a given community identity in place (See also (Noyes 2003b; Bendix 1997; Waterton and Smith 2010).

Tied closely to conceptions of community is the idea of property. Heritage connotes ownership, itself often problematic. As Michael Brown succinctly critiques:

If we turn culture into property, its uses will be defined and directed by law, the instrument by which states impose order on an untidy world. Culture stands to become the focus of litigation, legislation, and other forms of bureaucratic control. (Brown 2003, 8)

In addition to conserving culture, concern over issues of intellectual property rights also spurred the development of legal means to protect intangible cultural heritage within international and national domains.

Intangible Cultural Heritage Bureaucracies

Internationally, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) occupies a central place in the development of international agreements to support

¹¹ One form of authority that haunts folklore studies and intangible cultural heritages studies alike is authenticity, which can be viewed as a system of legitimation that validates both subject and authenticator (Bendix 1997, 7). Critiques of authenticity as a validating principle are important and force cultural studies to come to terms with its use and abuse. An alternate approach that suggests a possible (if partial) rehabilitation for the term is with the idea that authenticity is both a quality and a relationship. Glassie reflects that the place that folklorists study is within the action of relationship, “moments of authenticity, when individual commitment brings social association” (Glassie 1995, 401). In terms of heritage, authenticity denotes the kind of relationship a community or individual has with their past.

and protect cultural heritage, and this place is reflected in the scholarly discourse around heritage as well. Member nations of UNESCO ratified the 1972 World Heritage Convention in order to recognize various forms of culture worldwide as universally valuable, with particular focus on monuments and architecture. The 1972 convention and other global UNESCO endeavors promoted the idea and awareness of cultural heritage, so that UNESCO member countries would evaluate and support cultural traditions existing in their own countries (Seeger 2009, 114). After decades of development and negotiation, the UNESCO Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage was ratified in 2003. This new convention included the protection of non-material forms of culture, with the intent of incorporating local communities into the decision-making process in order to rebalance the previous power dynamic where heritage experts decided what was worthy of inclusion into lists of valuable world heritage.¹²

Whereas UNESCO bureaucracies and decision-making mark global heritage concerns, national-level heritage management and designations come with a certain amount of variance. Yahaya Ahmad argues that there is little real consistency between definitions of heritage among different UNESCO countries despite the 2003 Convention: “While the scope of heritage has broadened to include environment and intangible values, and has received agreement from the international communities, the finer terminology of ‘heritage’ has not been streamlined or

¹² See (Aikawa-Faure 2009) for the evolution of the terminology and the complex discussions behind the scenes toward the ultimate drafting of the 2003 convention, (Akagawa 2015) for Japan’s role in helping develop the considerations of “heritage” beyond material objects and in particular the practice of architectural rebuilding; (Blake 2009) as to the complexities of community involvement in safeguarding heritage as opposed to top-down bureaucracy; (Hafstein 2009) argues for the similarities of heritage generally and bureaucratic list-making: “Both depend on selection; both disembody their objects from previous contexts, rendering them discontinuous in some aspects from their surroundings; and both recontextualize them with respect to other objects similarly selected, according to them a generality and a value that is derived from the authority of the persons or institutions that sanction the selection....As defined by UNESCO’s Convention and its activities in this field so far, intangible cultural heritage is a list. Intangible heritage *is* a mechanism of selection and display. It is a tool for channelling attention and resources to certain cultural practices and not to others” (Hafstein 2009, 108).

standardised, and thus no uniformity exists between countries” (Ahmad 2006, 299).

In the Japanese heritage bureaucracy, a complex array of designations for cultural heritage has developed over the last century, each with numerous subcategories. These heritage categories are:

- Tangible Cultural Properties
- Intangible Cultural Properties
- Folk Cultural Properties
- Monuments, Cultural Landscapes
- Groups of Traditional Buildings
- Conservation Techniques for Cultural Properties
- Buried Cultural Properties

Of these eight, three are considered intangible: Intangible Cultural Properties, Intangible Folk Cultural Properties, and Conservation Techniques for Cultural Properties (Akagawa 2015, 55–58). Paantu Punaha falls into the category of Important Intangible Folk-Cultural Property, designated at the national level. However, many of these heritage categories are replicated at lower governmental levels as well, meaning that there are clusters of cultural properties designations at the prefectural, city, and even village level, throughout Japan (Hashimoto 1998, 36–38). As individuals and communities negotiate the legal frameworks for designation as a cultural property at any of these levels, they also may interact with the commercial aspects of tourism and promotion of their heritage, and local preservation societies and town councils often serve as the center of local authority about the tradition in question and how to manage it (Cf. (Creighton 1997; Hashimoto 1998; Hirayama 2001).

Ritual Interpretation vs. Ritual as Heritage

It is fairly easy to see how the study of people and their practices easily dovetails into the study of the legal protections of those practices. However, in contemporary western folkloristic scholarship approaches to ritual tend to fall into two major theoretical orientations that acknowledge one another, yet tend not to focus on one another. They are ritual interpretation, and ritual as intangible cultural heritage.

In ritual interpretation, on-the-ground ethnographic engagement utilizes theory from various sources to make clear complex layers of ritual meaning. I include here not only the idea of formal ritual analysis (utilizing a Lévi-Straussian structural approach, for example), but all work that strives to interpret personal and ritual meaning, through close attention to ritual practice, as well as other related genres that intersect with ritual. Examples of these types of ritual analysis and interpretation include work like Beverly J. Stoeltje's exploration of power through the form, production and discourse of rodeo (B. J. Stoeltje 1993), how gesture conveys not abstract concepts but embodied relationships within a Santería ritual context (Mason 1994) and Kay Turner's exploration of women's worldviews reflected in their home altars (K. Turner 1999). This orientation emerges out of a long history of theoretical and methodological concerns on how to differentiate (or not differentiate) the practice of religion between folk and institution (cf. Goldstein 2015; 1995; Primiano 1995; 2012), and how to effectively engage with aspects of religious belief as scholars, practitioners, and ethnographers (Cf. (Goldstein 1983; Hufford 1995). Ethnographies of this kind often find common theory and productive discussion with work that emerges from cultural anthropology and religious studies.

In work that examines ritual through the lens of intangible cultural heritage, researchers critically examine local perspectives on ritual events that have become "designated" through

national laws and international treaties. Much contemporary work in folkloristics finds researchers investigating local traditions and how they interact (or don't interact) with policy connected to intangible cultural heritage designations. Examples of work on ritual as it interacts with intangible cultural heritage include how heritage bureaucracies can disempower heritage practitioners (You 2015; Zhiqin 2015), how heritage designations introduce economic complications and complexities (Yun 2015), and how global policy takes on local form and how it affects local perceptions of practice (Foster 2011; Foster 2015a). These perspectives in turn are closely aligned with the work being done in areas such as heritage studies, a subfield that has largely emerged post-UNESCO-Convention, and generally recognized as flowing out of human and cultural geography, historic preservation, tourism studies, and legal studies.

In folkloristics, the division between interpretive/analytical ritual studies and ritual as intangible cultural heritage can be explained partially by which rituals find themselves in conversation with legal protection, and which ones possess institutional religious presence. In discussions of religious folklore in the past, analyses of meaning and practice tended to be examined through the lenses of official or institutional religious practice and "folk" religious practice, a distinction that Leonard Norman Primiano denounced—there can never be a truly idealized or perfect practice of religion; all practitioners engage their religion individually in practice (2012, 384). However, the bureaucracies of various institutionalized religions do have considerable sway over perceptions of what constitutes authorized religious practice for religious initiates, *even if* we acknowledge that such influence is never monolithic. It is, if you will, a built-in heritage system for vetting, authorizing, and promoting forms of religious practice. While the dictates of religious bureaucracies cannot produce idealized religious practice, their influence is not insignificant to the ongoing individual processes of interpretation and negotiation that

emerges into vernacular religious practice.

However, this folk/official distinction persists into the way that religious ritual is often considered intangible cultural heritage by legal mechanisms like the 2003 UNESCO Convention, in part because religious practices without institutional bureaucratic influence also tend to be the ones that fall into danger of disappearing with changing economies, and thus become prime candidates for designations of heritage from outside the community. As Christina Bortolotto puts it, “what was formerly known as ‘folklore’ by UNESCO was an important stage in the shift toward the idea of intangible heritage” (Bortolotto 2007, 21). However, complications arise when the idea of authority for submitting, vetting, authorizing, and promoting forms of religious practice is bound up both in the community(ies) of practice and the many-layered bureaucracies that decide which practices become officially designated heritage.

However, the separation of the two orientations in folkloristic ritual scholarship seems to be growing, in large part because of the urgency of heritage-based issues over the last decade in the wake of the 2003 Convention. One excellent example of work that fully includes both approaches is Dorothy Noyes’ *Fire in the Plaça: Catalan Festival Politics after Franco* (2003a), which spends considerable time on ritual interpretation as well as the complications arising on the ground from local actors meeting state and external expectations. Noyes in turn draws on Barbara Kirshenblatt Gimblett’s *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998), where she interrogates the growing heritage industry, providing a foundational work for scholars’ engagement with heritage as practice and concept in folkloristics.

As heritage as a field of study grows more and more important, it tends to overlook folkloristics’ decades of research in concepts they seem to be discovering anew, such as

tradition, community, and identity. In the tradition of humble theory and vernacular religion, close attention to ritual analysis and interpretation restores attention to the deep personal connections and concerns that communities struggle with alongside their negotiation of local ritual into heritage bureaucracies. This simultaneously opens up lots of theoretical angles examining how ritual meanings impact not only approaches to heritage, but also concerns about intellectual property, open access, sustainability, and how to see that these issues are dealt with equitably.

Exploring Ritual and Intangible Cultural Heritage

Heritage may be an evolving relationship that people have with their past, but each place and past are conceived of in changing ways. The particularities of how each place and person engages with their heritage results in varying emergent expressive culture and action. At its most fundamental, this research is about choices. The idea of intervention in cultural processes has been around for a long time, and not just at the level of international or national politics.

In *The Conservation of Culture*, David E. Whisnant makes the case that simply calling attention to cultural forms is not enough, and calls for public folklorists—those folklorists working primarily with people to document and promote their traditions—to recognize the difficult decisions being made by people that choose to continue to practice tradition, the “pain or cost” that such choices require. He notes:

...most people have to contend daily with the seismic shifting of cultural, social, and tectonic plates, as a result of which the challenge of surviving as individuals, families, and communities frequently raises the cost of relatively rarefied cultural discriminations and choices beyond the point of diminishing returns. It might in

fact be possible to argue that most people (especially those with limited incomes) are continually squeezed between cultural preferences and economic and social realities. (Whisnant 1988, 234–35)

Legal instruments like national heritage designations frequently utilize a one-size-fits-all approach, but understanding the questions about how heritage is affected, conceptualized, and constructed requires local engagement. In short, “Ethnographic and cultural historical case studies are particularly pertinent as answers: only such micro approaches, in fact, can properly reveal the local specificity of a global heritage regime” (Bendix 2009, 255). My own research in this dissertation attends closely to the economic and social realities that affect the ongoing practice of Paantu Punaha, while also looking at the influence of the system of intangible cultural heritage designation and its effect on the town of Shimajiri.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 2, “Place, Community, Religion,” introduces Miyako Island (Miyakojima) as a place, and describes where it fits in the flow of Okinawan and Japanese history. Then I turn to Shimajiri, the place where the ritual of Paantu Punaha takes place, and give the background of Miyako vernacular religious practice, and the place of visiting deities within that practice.

Chapter 3, “Ritual Time, Ritual Meanings,” deals with the ritual of Paantu Punaha itself, looking at it both in its present-day iteration and past performances to describe how people in Shimajiri interpret the meaning of the ritual. In particular, this chapter investigates how meanings intersect with contemporary concerns about social change.

Chapter 4, “Understandings and Making Understood,” focuses on the issue of understanding, particularly between Shimajiri residents’ and tourists’ understanding of Paantu Punaha. Here, I use the Grimes’ conceptual framework of ritual criticism as a form of reflection

on ritual in the service of practice to address the conflicts between ritual participants.

In Chapter 5, “*Bunkazai* as Process,” I explore Paantu Punaha as an Intangible Folk Cultural Property of Japan, particularly the processes by which it became designated heritage, and how it intersects with the experiences of people within Shimajiri. Through the actions and discussions of the ways that Shimajiri people identify problems and solutions that their community faces, it becomes possible to see the many ways that they think about “heritage” (or *bunkazai*).

In the conclusion, I offer a few thoughts on intangible cultural heritage and ritual in Shimajiri, and return briefly to contrast Paantu Punaha with the “other paantu” of Nobaru, to explore an alternate scenario of how ritual and intangible cultural heritage intersect.

Chapter 2: Place, Community, Religion

As George H. Kerr says in his classic history of Okinawa, the relationship of the Miyako Islands to the rest of the Ryukyus from the 1500s onward was significant but simultaneously “outside the mainstream of Okinawan history,” (Kerr 2000, 119). However, this peripheral position at the edge of kingdom, empire, and country led to the development of distinct regional and local characteristics on Miyako, including language and culture.

One such cultural form is the ritual of Paantu Punaha. In order to encounter this event in its specific context, I locate the small town of Shimajiri on the northern edge of Miyako, where it intersects with broader historical, cultural, and religious contours. As Laurajane Smith reminds us, “Heritage is about a sense of *place*. Not simply in construction as sense of abstract identity, but also in helping us position ourselves as a nation, community or individual and our ‘place’ in our cultural, social and physical world” (Smith 2006, 75). This chapter explores multiple aspects that contribute to this sense of place and give context to Paantu Punaha: physical location, political and historical influences, and religious practice.

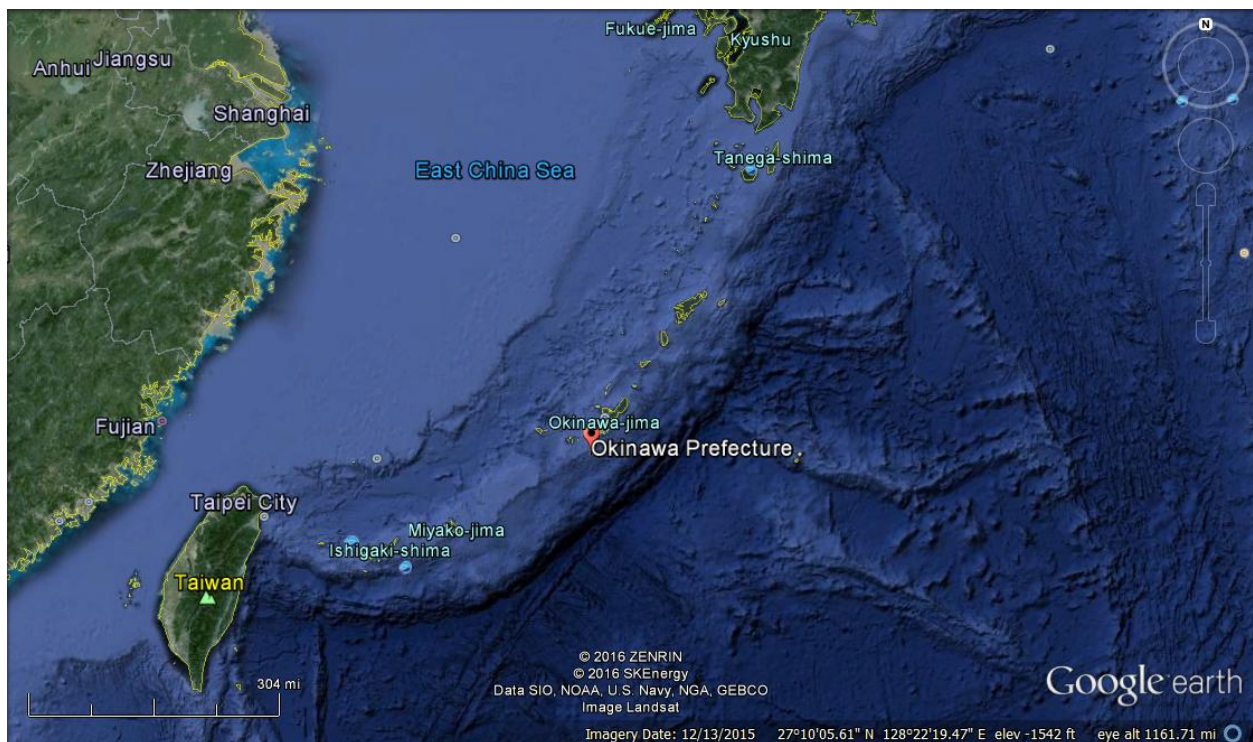
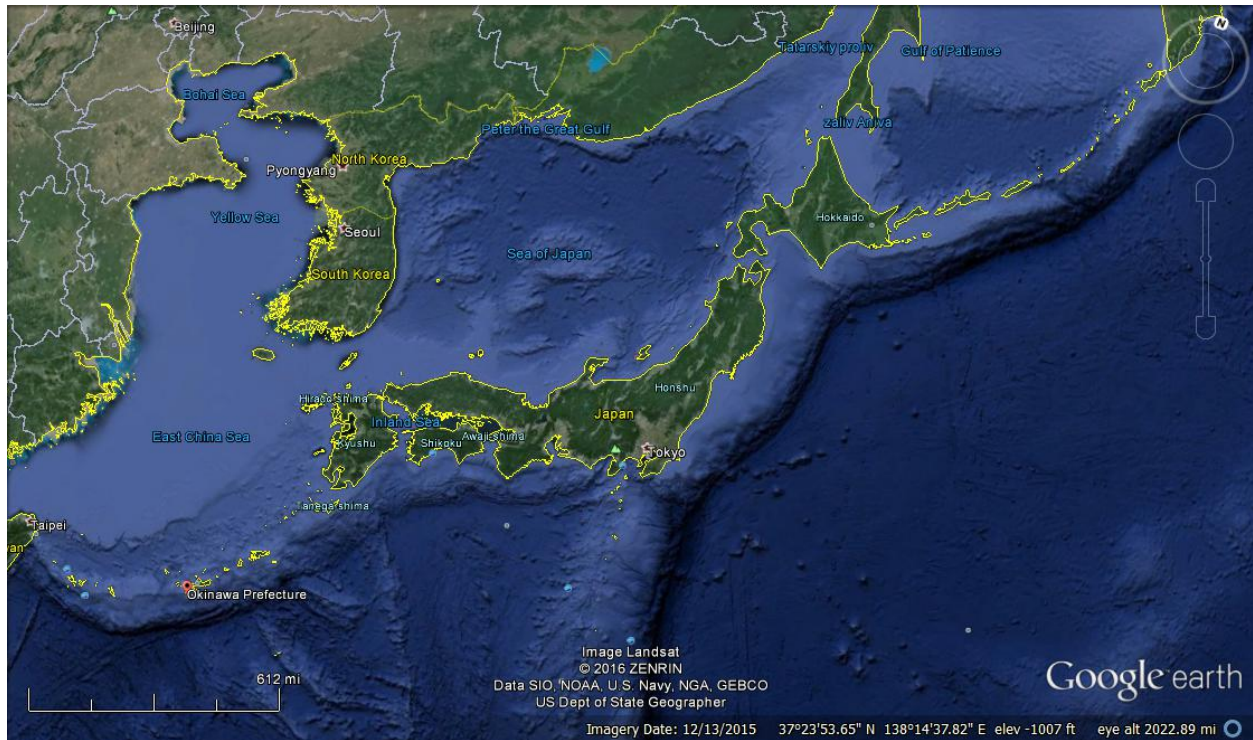
When I first came to Shimajiri, I arrived as a visitor by car, was shown around various historical landmarks in the quiet of the day, and never spoke to a single person in town. Dissatisfied with only making contact with spaces, I had little conception of Shimajiri as a place. As Dorothy Noyes writes, attempts by a researcher to bound community and regard it as a self-evident place or an object of study can be counterintuitive to a more fluid network approach that examines varying densities of criss-crossing social ties both within and outside of a given physical location (Noyes 2003b). The network approach holds true for Shimajiri as well—

numerous people that regard Shimajiri as their hometown have spread out across the island, the country, and the world; my informants, their experiences, and their families reflect this reality.

Yet at the same time, patterns of traditional religious practice in Shimajiri and across Miyako rely heavily upon a physical, localized connection; indeed, in many cases they cannot exist apart from them. Embeddedness in the context of Shimajiri calls to mind the work of Feld and Basso in their explorations of the ramifications of place. In Casey's introduction to their book, he notes that "place integrates with body just as much as body integrates with place," in other words, the place itself acts upon the individual just as much as the individual acts upon the place (Casey 1997, 22). Apprehended physically, sensibly, a sense of place incorporates a lived reality which includes the microrelations of power experienced by and negotiated within the larger collective social organism, within the political reality of Okinawa, of Japan, and the world.

Where is Miyakojima?

Miyako Island (Miyakojima, 宮古島) may be considered both part of the continuum of Japonic cultures and languages that track upward through the Ryukyu Archipelago to the northernmost Japanese islands, as well as a unique set of conditions on that continuum.



Politically, Miyako has existed as part of the periphery of the development of both Japanese and Okinawan monarchies, and has dealt across the centuries with the government of local warlords,

the Ryukyu Kingdom with its tribute state status to China, Imperial Japan, contemporary Japan, and the United States. Positioned on vital maritime trade routes for many centuries, the culture of Miyako has likewise been influenced by contact with the peoples of Southeast Asia,¹³ China, Korea, and Japan. Just as today the uninhabited Senkaku/Diaoyu islands are linchpins in a power struggle over territorial boundaries between the much larger political entities of China and Japan, Miyako and the rest of the “outer islands” have long been part of similar political moves by greater powers to expand and maintain territories for economically viable resources and ease of movement.

Miyako has a place in a narrative about Okinawan history that takes many forms, but maintains some general contours.¹⁴ Most versions that focus on the lead-up to modern Okinawa follow political events that began more or less with the unification of Okinawa Island in 1429 and the subsequent establishment of the independent Ryukyu Kingdom based at Shuri Castle in Naha, on Okinawa Island. As a tribute state to Imperial Ming China, the kingdom expanded to unite all of the Ryukyu Archipelago under one government. In the 1500s, Shuri Castle became the center of a flourishing golden age of Chinese-inspired bureaucracy and architecture, at the

¹³ The Ryukyu Kingdom had trading contact with countries that include Malacca, Java, Sumatra, and Siam, among others in the so-called East Indies. To what extent the trading vessels from all of these various countries put in at Miyako's major ports is unclear, but in the 14th century the Ryukyu Kingdom was engaged in diplomatic correspondence with many of these nations, and certainly Miyako sailors traveled on many of these trading vessels as well.

¹⁴ The following history draws on the following sources, which include George H. Kerr's broad (if somewhat problematic) classic history on Okinawa that begins in prehistory and ends during the American Occupation (during which it was originally published)(Kerr 2000), Gregory Smit's compelling history of the complicated internal negotiations of power and identity throughout premodern into modern Okinawa (Smit 1999), Alan Christy's insightful and influential article about the relationship of Okinawan people and intellectuals with the imperial Japanese state (Christy 1993), Gavan McCormack and Satoko Oka Norimatsu's book about contemporary protest movements in Okinawa, with especially relevant focus on the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dispute (2012); Miyume Tanji's overview of historical and present-day protest movements in Okinawa (Tanji 2006), and Steve Rabson's excellent examinations of Okinawan experiences with mainland Japan over time and in particular during wartime ((Kerr 2000; Christy 1993; McCormack and Norimatsu 2012; Rabson 2013).

center of a far-flung trade network that mingled cultural imports from Southeast and Northeast Asia. However, the location and success of Okinawa led in time to the invasion and subsequent domination of the Ryukyu Kingdom by the Satsuma Clan of southern Japan in 1609. Rather than having its government completely overthrown, the Shuri state entered into a dual tribute system to both China and Japan, where careful diplomatic balance kept trade relations open with China and allowed the kingdom to operate autonomously, despite Japanese oversight. However, this system demolished the kingdom's trade-wrought wealth, even as it maintained Okinawa's unique cultures and languages. The Japanese state became increasingly wary of incursion by Western imperial forces in the Pacific; it saw the Ryukyus as a boundary that it must control.¹⁵

With Commodore Perry's forcible opening of Japan to trade in 1853-54 and the internal political shifts within Japan before and after the Meiji Restoration in 1868, the stage was set for Japan's annexation of Okinawa in 1872. In short order, this resulted in the deposition of the king, the disenfranchisement of the nobility, and the establishment of a new set of hierarchies as Japan began to enact colonial policies within the newly established Okinawa Prefecture, requiring Japanese dress, language, and the adoption of state Shinto. In the decades of Japan's Imperial expansion, Okinawans endured many hardships, including disease, famine, and discrimination. Okinawa's involvement in Imperial Japan ended during World War II during the the horrors of the Battle of Okinawa, the largest land battle on Japanese soil during World War II. Referred to afterward as the Typhoon of Steel, this months-long, multi-island Allied invasion wiped out over a third of the population of Okinawa Island and tens of thousands of military. As part of surrender agreements at the end of the war, Japan offered up the Ryukyu Islands to the United

¹⁵ These kinds of incursions included the Opium Wars (1839-1842; 1857-1860), where first Britain and then a coalition of Britain, France, Russia, and the United States forced China to open ports for trade and grant them substantial extraterritorial rights.

States, which took over the administration of the islands. While the United States military governance resulted in some stability post-1945, the forcible removal of land from farmers to provide space for military bases and the lack of accountability for crimes committed by soldiers resulted in clashes between Okinawans and U.S. military. Protests grew during the Vietnam War, a period in which the U.S. and Japan arranged the return of Okinawa to Japan in 1972. However, this return had disappointing results for many, as the bases remained largely intact. Even today, the bases provide a staging ground for U.S. military action worldwide, and resistance to their presence draws on concerns about religious beliefs and practices, economic and structural inequalities between mainland Japan and Okinawa, and ecological and environmental health.¹⁶

The above historical summary distills vast swaths of upper-level political decisions that are held to be formative moments. On closer inspection, they dissolve into many perspectives, thoughts, and actions. Indeed, although much of this narrative is familiar across Okinawa and in Western publications, it tends to focus on Okinawa Island, the “main island,” and tends to relegate islands like Miyako to a peripheral status, a position it has held for many centuries.

The people of medieval Japan and the Ryukyu Kingdom could travel south from Kyushu to the islands surrounding Okinawa Island without losing sight of land. Once past Okinawa Island, however, there were 280 kilometers of open ocean to cross until landfall on Miyako, 850 kilometers from Kyushu, and halfway to Taiwan from Okinawa (Kugai 2012, 10). Relevant to

¹⁶ I remain aware of the tendency to cast the history of Okinawa in terms of victimization. While this region may certainly be viewed through this lens without too much trouble, it ignores the activities and voices of action and resistance with Okinawa itself (Hook and Siddle 2003, 8–14). For scholarship that specifically engages with the multivocality of Okinawan political voices of protest, see Tanji Miyume’s historical overview of antibase protests (Tanji 2006), and Inoue Masamichi’s in-depth engagement with the Henoko Bay protests (Inoue 2007). Gerald Figal notes another tendency to cast the unified Ryukyu Kingdom before the Satsuma invasion as a peaceful golden age, which “necessitates downplaying a history of conflict and distinctions throughout the Ryukyus,” ignoring the fact that Shuri imposed its rule by military force as well (Figal 2008, 107).

their position vis-à-vis these major power centers, the Miyako island chain and the subsequent Yaeyama island chain became known collectively as the “Sakishima,” or the “islands ahead;” alternatively, the “outer islands.”

Miyakojima

The Miyako island group (Miyako Rettô, 宮古列島) consists of eight islands—Miyako, Ikema, Irabu, Shimoji, Ôgami, Kurima, Tarama, and Minna (which is uninhabited). Due to the Kuroshio Current, these islands experience surprisingly cool winter weather and hot, humid summers that shimmer under the subtropical sun.¹⁷ Unlike the mountainous volcanic landscape that forms the major islands of the Japanese archipelago, referred to as the *hondo* (本土) or “mainland” through most of Okinawa, the mostly-flat Miyako islands developed from millions of years of coral limestone growing gradually up out of the seabed atop a layer of impermeable clay, and are surrounded still by living coral ecosystems. Miyakojima itself is shaped roughly like a triangle, and accounts for 70% of the total landmass of the island group. The third-largest island in the Ryukyus, Miyakojima is roughly 159 square kilometers in area (about 61 square miles), yet its highest elevations are only 113 meters above sea level (Kugai 2012, 11).

¹⁷ Winters drop to the 50s (13-15 degrees Celsius), dipping occasionally into the high 40s while the summers average temperatures in the 80s (28-32 degrees Celsius), and humidity that hovers most of the season between 80% to 85%.



Like limestone plains elsewhere, the Miyako islands have only slight variations in elevation, and are prone to bouts of drought which amplify the negative effects on crops because of how quickly rainwater seeps away into the ground. Natural underground fresh water reserves and outgushing natural springs are responsible for the existence of habitation at all; however, their limited locations and susceptibility to dry conditions have made life harsh for Miyako's inhabitants for centuries (Tokuyama 2008, 113).

Drought is not the only hallmark of Miyako weather, however. From late spring to early autumn, Miyako residents consider their island a “typhoon Ginza,” an area presumably frequented by typhoons as much as shoppers frequent the busy Tokyo neighborhood.¹⁸ Of the

¹⁸ The Japan Meteorological Agency classifies as a typhoon any tropical cyclone that sustains winds of 118 km/h or over, as does the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale used in the United States. However, in Japan, any sustained rotating tropical storm or depression is called a “typhoon” and given a number, regardless of its windspeed. I never heard a tropical depression or tropical storm referred to in everyday speech as *nettai-teikiatsu* 熱帯低気圧, which may be more meteorologically correct, but which may still produce wind or wave warnings.

average 25 typhoons that form every year, Miyako sees roughly 4 per year that pass within 300 km of the island (Kugai 2012, 13).¹⁹ Tornadoes and waterspouts are also not unknown. Despite these hostile weather patterns, the coral reefs surrounding the islands help to buffer its inhabitants against tsunami, storm surge during typhoons, and waves amplified by stormy weather.

Administrative Changes and Influence

Ancient Miyako history and archaeology demonstrate the importance from at least the 12th century of the far-ranging trade networks that moved through the archipelago (K. 下地 和宏 Shimoji 1986, 1–2). By the 1500s, the changes brought by Shuri rule resulted in numerous improvements that benefited the populace, such as ship-building, blacksmithing, irrigation, and forestry, as well as the importation from China of the sweet potato, a food which would become a staple throughout the Ryukyus.

However, the Shuri administration on Miyako established new sets of inequalities between locals and government officials, and during the two and a half centuries of Satsuma influence leading up to the modern era, the outer islands endured not only terrible taxation and endemic poverty, but also bouts of epidemic disease, including typhus, cholera, and malaria (Kerr 2000, 227–28, 324). The Sakishima, including Miyako, were also struck particularly hard by droughts, typhoons, and tsunami which contributed to widespread deaths throughout the Ryukyus in the 1800s (Sadoyama 2012, 176). During the 1600s, the Sakishima, particularly

¹⁹ Without tall mountains to serve as a windbreak during these storms, Miyako island boasts one of Japan's top land windspeed records—85.3 meters/second during the ruinous Typhoon No. 2 of 1966 (Kugai 2012, 13).

Yaeyama, were considered sufficiently harsh (or at least distant) to be used as places of exile for political dissidents in the Shuri Kingdom (Kerr 2000, 166; Smits 2010, 12).²⁰ Their reputation continued up into the modern era, when the population of Okinawa was exhorted in the lead up to the 20th century by the Japanese government to take up residence in the Sakishima to solve issues of overcrowding, but most Okinawans chose instead to embrace international emigration to more profitable areas (Kerr 2000, 478–80).

While Japanese governance did begin to create some advantages for Okinawa as a whole after 1872, foremost among them the end of the dual tribute system, the village-based poll tax on Miyako continued up until 1903 (Kerr 2000, 554). The profitable sugarcane production took a major hit during a massive fall in the world sugar prices in the 1920s, which had devastating consequences for farmers on Miyako and the rest of Okinawa, resulting in further starvation often called *sotetsu jigoku*, or “cycad hell,” where the sotetsu cycad palm was boiled to remove its toxins and produce a barely edible starch, fatally toxic if the toxins were not fully removed (McCormack 2010, 15).

Miyako and World War II

One of the most significant differences of the Miyako historical experience is its escape from annihilation in World War II. While the Japanese military forces on Miyako were bombed repeatedly, and much of Hirara City went up in flames, the Battle of Okinawa did not engulf

²⁰²⁰ Jun'ichiro Suwa notes that throughout Japan the phrase *shima nagashi*, “literally ‘throwing away to an island,’” was a commonly used phrase for exile, conceptually isolated and separated from a cultured center (Suwa 2012, 12). While there are particularly famous cases of exile to some of the northern Amami islands, made legendary in the *Tale of the Heike* (an epic about the Genpei War, 1180-1185), on Miyako, local legends have it that fleeing Taira family members got all the way to Miyako during this same period. This was explained to me as why Miyako has a great and distinguished character in addition to its more common “barbaric” historical associations. Elsewhere in Okinawa and in mainland Japan, it is possible to find variants of this local legend, too (Sakamaki 1967, 117–20).

Miyako like it did Okinawa, although many families were affected by relatives' deaths on the Okinawan mainland. During the postwar period, the United States military kept a small radar base near the highest point on Miyako, at Nobaru, which was ceded to the Japanese Self Defense Forces (Jieitai 自衛隊) upon Okinawa's reversion in 1972.

The relative lack of intrusive American military presence on Miyako has resulted in the absence of military-oriented businesses and base culture which so strongly mark certain areas of Okinawa Island. The visibility of active protests, which are far from united in aim and scope in Okinawa,²¹ is fairly low on Miyako, with the presence of controversial military vehicles like the Osprey tilt-rotor helicopter and other ordnance limited to the tiny base at Nobaru.²² However, with North Korea firing missiles overhead and the escalating dispute between the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands between Japan and China, Miyako has appeared more frequently in national news. In November of 2013 the Self Defense Forces dispatched anti-ship missiles to Miyako in order to demonstrate their power. For some Miyako residents, however, dislike having Miyako serve as a gate to bar the open ocean between themselves and the main island of Okinawa (*Miyako Mainichi* 2013).

Contemporary City Government

Today, Miyakojima City unites the entire Miyako island group under its governmental oversight. This is a relatively recent development (2005), entailing a consolidation of Hirara

²¹ A position in contrast to most narratives about anti-base protest; see (Tanji 2006)

²² See the New York Times article discussing the Osprey issue (Fackler 2012), and "U.S. helicopter crash heightens anti-base protests in Okinawa," from the *Asahi Shimbun* (AJW by *The Asahi Shimbun* 2013).

City, Shimoji Town, Irabu Town, Gusukube Town, and Ueno Village.²³ Contemporary moves by the island administration to brand and promote Miyakojima include the high profile Miyako All-



Miiya. From <http://www.city.miyakojima.lg.jp/soshiki/shityo/kikaku/tyousei/2012-0903-1617-15.html>

Japan Triathlon, the Strongman, begun in 1984, which draws athletes from all over the world to compete. The more recent Miiya-kun island mascot (“image character” イメージキャラクター), a running five-year-old boy bedecked with a Tarama-style dance hat, carrying a mango, with the Miyako flag motif of sun, earth, and waves on his shirt, also promotes the island’s support of agriculture, culture, sports, and tourism

(Miyakojima-shi 2012). In addition, the recent initiative to brand Miyako as “Eco Island Miyakojima,” with attention to conservation of

natural resources and beautification, includes sponsoring green housing and ecotourism as well as fostering an island-wide environmental consciousness (宮古島市 Miyakojima-shi 2008; 宮古島市 Miyakojima-shi 2014).

Miyakojima City today retains many distinctive Miyako art forms, many of which developed in tandem with historical hardships, such as *kuichaa*, a circle dance performed in several variations across Miyako to celebrate having the poll tax turned in. With numerous local variants in dance and song, the island’s contemporary Kuichaa Festival showcases the various

²³ However, these designations are still used to describe regions of Miyako, perhaps useful given that there is a Shimoji area (formerly town) as well as a Shimoji Island, which also was home to Shimoji Town, but was administrated previously by Irabu Town on Irabu Island.

groups. Another art form linked to the old taxation system is a shimmery, gauzy ikat hemp cloth called Miyako Jôfu (宮古上布), whose painstaking creation is said to be the invention of a noblewoman from Miyako, made first as a gift but which quickly became a tribute demand.²⁴ Today, Miyako Jôfu may still be found, with workshops available to try the difficult weaving technique it requires, and lengths available for purchase, if money is no object. Numerous ritual events linked to agricultural and protective rites also continue to be held, such as the week-long dance festival on Tarama Island, the giant tug-of-war as part of the annual Miyako matsuri, folk song singing contests, and lion dances across the islands.

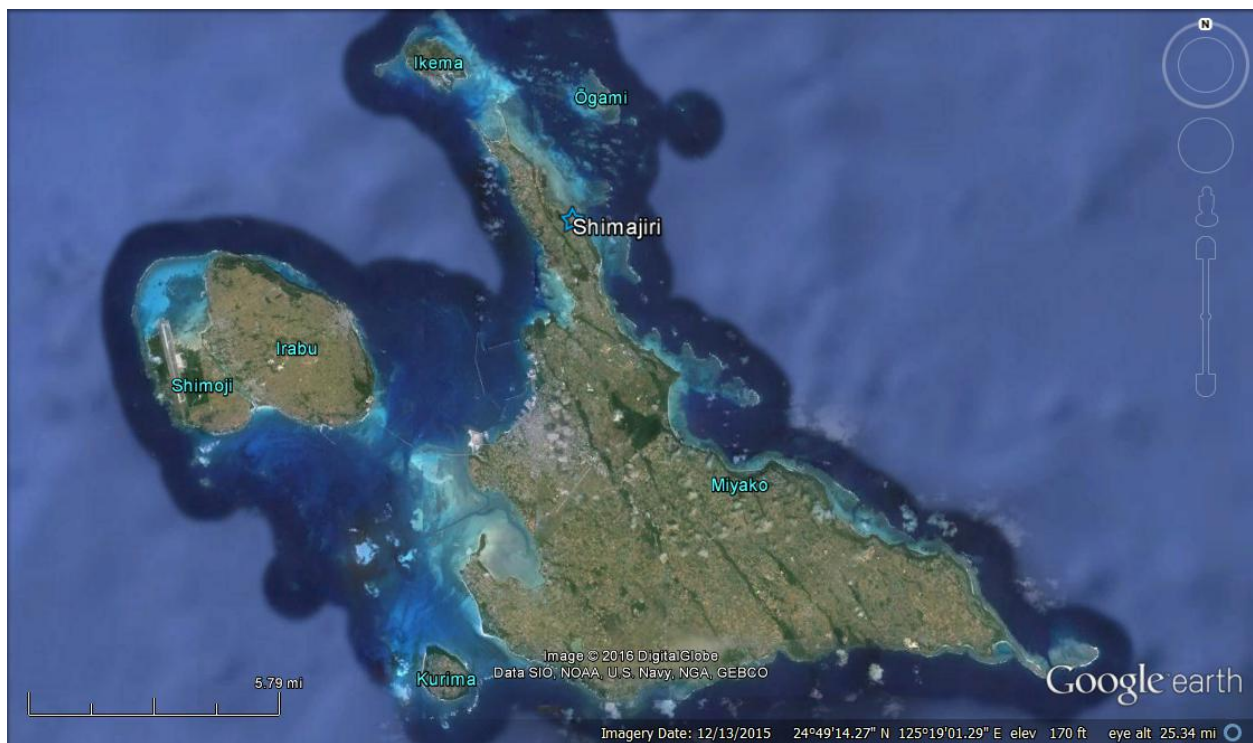
Roads into Shimajiri

Part of Miyakojima City, within the Hirara administrative district, is Shimajiri, a small community of about 300 people living toward the northern end of Miyako. Situated on low, coastal land, most of the town proper is located only 12 meters above sea level, and has a small port that supports local fishermen as well as a ferry that goes to the small neighboring island of Ôgamishima. In early summer, from the hill where the road to Shimajiri meets the highway stretching to the northmost end of the island, the concrete slab houses of Shimajiri appear to cluster at the bottom of a wide bowl verdant with the green, swaying jungles of sugarcane, the ocean peering over its rim. The sky is vast, the clouds off the ocean ever shifting, the moods of the sky and the sea inflecting the land with their colors, and the salt-wind eats away at any new thing, reducing metal to rust with surprising speed. When cane juice is reduced into the

²⁴ Ikat is a technique that moved north to Okinawa from Malaysia, and is accomplished by dyeing individual threads (on warp and/or weft) and arranging them just so on the loom prior to weaving, as opposed to dyeing or printing the cloth after it is woven. The overlay of the dyed threads result in patterns that seem blurred at the edges from where the threads are slightly unevenly aligned. Hence, the Japanese term "kasuri," which can also mean blurred, brushed, grazed, or scratched.

regionally popular raw, “black” sugar, offered in small pieces as a snack or sweet treat, the molasses-sweetness retains a hint of sea saltiness.

There are many roads into Shimajiri from other locations on Miyako, including a “new” road built within the last decade or so that cuts a straight, broad path through the sugarcane fields between Nanseien Prefectural Hospital and the coastal road to Karimata, with a wide, curbed sidewalk along one side for pedestrians, commuting school children, and the ubiquitous triathlete joggers. It crosses the road that connects to Highway 283, the Karimata Sen (Karimata Line). The “old” narrow road into Shimajiri winds along the outside of the sugarcane fields in a



circuitous parallel to the “new” road, passing the rows of family tombs built on the hills edging the fields. Many of these date within recent memory. Shimajiri used to utilize a single long tomb (*nagabaka* 長墓) for the entire village. Today’s gravesites resemble small stone houses, often possessing a paved courtyard where the family, relatives, and friends gather to celebrate during Jûrokunichi (16th of the first month of the lunar year).

Transformations of Shimajiri in Living Memory

Roads and tombs make an awkward connecting metaphor as I attempt to reach out to Shimajiri's past. In the spring of 2013, I asked Ikema Sadao, a Shimajiri native now in his 80s, what he recalled of the Shimajiri of his youth. The roads were the first thing he mentioned:

When I was a child, all the roads were muddy. The east road was also a mud road--roads so muddy that turning around would take your sandal off. In the east, that was where our road was, our house was a way off from the others, and in back there weren't any houses, just muddy roads. Also, there were two-wheeled carts pulled by horses. Those carts had metal wheels. The wheels were about 10 cm wide, and the cart was about a meter and 30 cm tall. Since they were pulled all around through the mud, the roads were all uneven. Since those ruts were somewhere you stepped, if you turned around there in sandals, it was enough to take your sandal right off.

In the years during World War II, poverty, danger, and illness were endemic to Miyako, but are personally recalled by the older generation. Populations shifted, with fathers and sometimes grandfathers departing to work for the Japanese military. Meanwhile, the households left behind had to manage the farms. Historically, Shimajiri engaged primarily in rice agriculture, supplemented with fishing. Many shallow wells provided the needed water to flood the paddies. However, during the war there were few resources. "There was hardly enough food to eat because things were so poor; it was a time when there was nothing.... Most of Shimajiri was that kind of place," explained Ikema Sadao.

Like elsewhere in Okinawa, Shimajiri residents turned to whatever food sources were available, including the starch from the sotetsu palm, a starvation food used only when

necessary, because of its inherent toxicity and terrible taste. Thousands during the war and in previous time periods died from having to turn to sotetsu starch for survival. Ikema recalled how the children in Shimajiri looked like the ones shown on TV—thin, with huge bellies from the lack of food.

Starvation posed one danger, but American air raids posed another. Against fire, Miyako's traditional thatched houses proved exceedingly fragile:

All the houses were thatched (*kayabuki* 茅葺). When I was small it was *kayabuki*.

They weren't big houses like this one... And the war, that must have ended about Showa 20 [1945], that's right. They were doing it then.²⁵ Then the American, what's it called, firebombs, because of those, the *kayabuki* went up in flames. If one house caught fire, another one would burn up. Because they were thatched grass.

More deadly than firebombs, however, was illness. In the same pattern as the epidemics that swept through Miyako during the 1800s, the illnesses during and after the war were just as severe, and killed many. Malaria in particular raged across Miyako, with a recorded 46,231 people catching the disease in 1947—roughly half the island's entire population. In Shimajiri alone 492 cases dropped the number of men able to work to only 212 (Tomori 2012, 443–44). Between war and illness, Ikema Sadao lost both parents, caught malaria himself, but then survived to take care of the family farm as well as his siblings.

For Ikema and other survivors of his generation, the transformation of their lives as well as Miyako within a single generation is like night and day. The mud roads were paved and new

²⁵ The Battle of Okinawa farther north began in early April of 1945, and lasted 82 days. Japan surrendered in August 1945, nearly two months after its end.

ones were created, better for the fast-paced car traffic—not a single horse remains in Shimajiri today for farmwork or transportation. All the kayabuki are gone, replaced with fire-and-typhoon-resistant concrete slab housing. Electricity and running water arrived during the postwar period, ending dependence on the old wells. Other changes have come as well, particularly in the ways that people in Shimajiri make a living.

Contemporary Economics

Agriculture continues to dominate the landscape in Shimajiri, although the types of agriculture have changed. Many farmers of Ikema's generation have prospered with the



Updated poster: Sugarcane is Sumazu (Shimajiri)'s Treasure. 2014. Photo by author.

conversion of rice fields postwar to sugarcane production.²⁶ Since sugarcane has proved a good investment, many farmers actively seek out new ways to change with the times. Local farmers came together to mechanize and corporatize their management of local sugarcane production in 2001, taking the motto, “Sugarcane is Miyako’s treasure” (サトウキビは宮古の宝) (Okinawa sôgôjimukyoku nôrinsuibu 2007, 7). Other farms in town have successfully embraced newer luxury crops, like mangoes, a crop which has rapidly become emblematic of the island.

Rice farming endures only in the paddy at Miyajima Elementary School, where the children of Shimajiri prepare, plant, and harvest the field as part of their educational experience. While this practice is not uncommon throughout the rest of Japan, on Miyako, it is the last school to maintain a paddy field. Members from the older generation of farmers come at harvest to instruct the students in how to cut the rice by hand and bind it, sharing their knowledge from a previous agricultural era.

Over the last decade or so, a sizeable number of Shimajiri farmers have also shifted their attention toward raising beef cattle to be sold as “Miyako beef” (*Miyako-gyû* 宮古牛 or *Miyako wagyû* 宮古和牛). Because of the lack of available space, cattle spend most of their lives secured in small cowsheds until they are sold to be fattened up and slaughtered. While precise numbers of cows or farmers involved is not entirely clear, by 2007, there were thirty-five members of the Shimajiri Japanese Beef Production Section Meeting (*Shimajiri wagyû seisan buhai* 島尻和牛生産部会), a local division of the Miyako-wide association for promoting and improving Miyako-raised wagyû (Okinawa sôgôjimukyoku nôrinsuibu 2007, 7).

²⁶ The immensely powerful Central Union of Agricultural Cooperatives (JA, or 全国農業協同組合中央会 *Zenkoku nôgyô kyôdô kumiai chûôkai*), begun in postwar Japan, provides generous insurance for crops that may fail, and guarantees the price if world markets fluctuate.

Apart from agricultural production for outside sale, most people in Shimajiri with land to spare plant vegetables, and it is common to see rows of *niira* (garlic greens, Jp: 菰 *nira*), trellises for the healthful, bitter *gôya* and the cactus-like stalks that produce dragonfruit, tangy-sweet green banana trees edging the cane fields, and spindly-trunked papayas, the fruit of which is picked when green and cooked. It is also common to see a host of other familiar plants like eggplant, peppers, carrots, and lettuces, which thanks to Miyako's relatively gentle climate are grown year-round by farmers as well as in backyard vegetable gardens.

In addition to gardens that supplement local tables, fresh fish is brought in daily to the port by local fishermen. Some deliver their catch to the Shinzato fish shop, where it is prepared and then offered for sale at the general cooperative store in the form of sashimi, simmering pieces, or tossed in dressing. Fishing is also a popular hobby among people in town, with the young men in particular often gathering to fish off the wharf in the evenings after work.

However, agriculture and fishing for most of Shimajiri, while evident and widespread, are not full time professions. As in many rural communities throughout Japan, many young people depart for better opportunities, and those who remain cannot make a living from full time agriculture (see also (Schnell 2005)). Most working residents of Shimajiri are employed outside it, some at office jobs, many (especially the younger generation) working for various tourism-related businesses, including hotels, stores, and resorts, or leading scuba, snorkeling, sightseeing, and deep sea fishing tours. Some of these tourist businesses are based in Shimajiri itself, and offer opportunities like sea kayaking through the nearby mangrove forest preserve with a knowledgeable eco-guide, deep-sea fishing, and hiking, snorkeling, and cookouts at nearby Ôgami island.

Shimajiri and Community

The word “community” in the context of reference to Shimajiri is somewhat problematic, and I would like to explore those issues here in brief. While a broad understanding of community may imply certain values and moral obligations shared within a network of social connections (Feintuch 2001; Noyes 2003b), in the Ryukyu Islands, the idea of the community is often expressed as *shima*, a word which implies a physically bounded space that provides a significant social identity, origin, and ties culture to the physical landscape. Shima is a word that can mean *island* in common parlance, as well as a term used differentially to contrast neighborhoods, villages, or islands.²⁷ Jun’ichiro Suwa writes that shima “connotes the island as a lived world; it signifies not simply a piece of land but a space generated by livelihood or cultural conduct” (Suwa 2012, 13). Historically in Okinawa, for many centuries leading up into the early years of the 20th century, the village was its own taxable unit, which enforced social and physical boundaries, and resulted in a largely self-sufficient, endogamous group (though not isolated or disconnected from other village units), organized around shared resources and possessing its own religious spaces, rituals, and locally differentiated dialect (Suwa 2007, 7–10).

Shimajiri’s name appears to reference this type of shima, which is a morphing of the community’s own name for itself in native Miyako language—Sumazu.²⁸ *Suma* is the equivalent

²⁷ Suwa also notes how the designation of a place as “shima” or “tô” generally have the connotation of peripherality, a lack of historical connection to power centers. This may have something to do with 7th century Japanese conceptions of the nation as one united country connected by water, not cut off by it. Hence, the four “main islands” of Japan are not called shima, but instead their names index provinces, countries, and a “circuit” (or road) (Suwa 2012, 16).

²⁸ Ryukyuan languages are considered today to include six distinct, mutually unintelligible systems of communication. While all are Japonic, in the same way that the Romance languages have Latin for their underlying structure and root words, the grammatical structure and available phonemes available change dramatically between them (Motonaga 2012, 23). On Miyako, the language is called Sumafutsu or Sumavutsu, literally “island tongue,” and remained the primary mode of communication up until Japanese attempts to stamp out “dialect” use. Still spoken today, primarily among the elderly, Ryukyuan languages are all considered endangered by UNESCO.

of the Japanese shima, 島. *Zu*, however, means “head,” making Sumazu literally “island head.”

However, the second half became *jiri* (or *shiri*, 尻), a name which went on the records during the 1600s, making the location’s name literally “island end.”²⁹ As a lived community located at the outer edge of an island, both interrelated meanings of shima—that of the bounded space as well as the bounded community—are present.³⁰ Yet despite over 400 years of “official” designation, *Sumazu* persists in the conversation of those who speak Sumafutsu, and the “old name” of Shimajiri is known by the generations who don’t.³¹

In describing Sumazu/Shimajiri as shima as Suwa does, I indicate that for people here, the conception of community reflects the interweaving of social networks with physical space, conceived through and expressed by distinct cultural practices like ritual (Suwa 2007, 9–10). At the same time in contemporary Shimajiri, changing social, environmental, and economic realities

²⁹ The southernmost Shimajiri district of Okinawa Island appears to have little relation to this Shimajiri, despite both sharing the same writing of their names. *Shiri/jiri* also is the kanji used to refer to human rear ends. “Island butt” may be reading too much into this, however.

³⁰ Shimajiri has existed as part of numerous administrative designations, which can grow very confusing in attempting to label its status in English. For example, at the outset of the 20th century, Miyako was still divided into 3 major *magiri* 間切, administrative districts containing several *mura* 村, often translated as village or hamlet. The 3 *magiri* were Hirara, Sunakawa, and Shimoji. Shimajiri at this point is listed as a *mura*, as part of the Hirara-*magiri*, which contained 15 village units. In 1908 the *magiri* system was ended, and Hirara became a *mura*, with 18 subdivisions called *aza* 字, or village sections, although some sections actually contain more than one named community.

There are some fluctuations of the number of *aza* pertaining to each village subdivision, such as when Tarama becomes its own *mura* in 1913 with its own administration separate from Hirara. In 1948, Hirara-*mura* becomes a Hirara-*shi* 市, or city, and Gusukube-*mura* becomes Gusukube-cho 町, or a town/municipality. City, town, and the four remaining *mura* (Shimoji, Ueno, Irabu, and Tarama) continue to contain their *aza* subdivisions. Shimajiri-*aza* remains part of Hirara-*shi*.

In 2005, the city, town, and all villages save Tarama merge to become Miyakojima-*shi*, which contains 41 *aza*. Tarama-*mura* remains separately administered. This complicated what to call Shimajiri—a village? hamlet? town? Despite the complicated nature of “community,” referring to Shimajiri as a community seems apropos. But confusion ensues anyway. A postal label should still read, Miyakojima-*shi*, Hirara (aza optional) Shimajiri (Miyakojima shishi hensan iinkai 2012, 4–5).

³¹ For an interesting juxtaposition, Kiyomura Kōnin listed the Shimajiri Utaki in his landmark first book on Miyako history as 島尻 with “Sumazuu” すまずう as its pronunciation (Kiyomura 2008, 10).

result in changes to the performance and reception of traditional religious practice.

“Traditional Religion”

What I have referred to up to this point as traditional Okinawan religious practice has received the attention of many scholars, particularly folklorists, for whom the study of Ryukyuan religious practice was foundational in establishing the discipline of folkloristics in Japan.³² In brief, the complex of indigenous religious practices found throughout the Ryukyu Archipelago, often referred to as Ko-Shinto or Ryukyu Shinto, centers on the ritual supplication of local deities (*kami* 神) in highly diverse and locally differentiated forms.³³ The *kami* inhabit sacred groves (*utaki* 御嶽, 御岳) and can bring prosperity and health by defending against detrimental spiritual forces that cause misfortune and illness.³⁴

³² Discussions of "folk religion" generated a lot of scholarship but tended to serve nationalist aims. For example, Orikuchi Shinobu's work on ritual included contributions to linguistics as well as explorations of Ryukyuan ritual. Both Orikuchi and Yanagita Kunio believed that Ryukyuan religious practices could be seen as historical forms of contemporary Shinto practice. For extended discussion of the foundational (and problematical) era of Japanese folkloristics, see (Kawahashi 2005, 453–62; Christy 1993, 625–26; Christy 1995; Ivy 1995, 74–97)) to name just a handful.

³³ *Kami* is often translated as "god," but does not share the omnipotent, dualistic nature found in most Western conceptions of deity. *Kami* may be unpredictable, both benevolent and malevolent, based on how they are appeased (or not). See Norman (Havens 2006, 19–31), for extended discussion of the historical development of ideas surrounding *kami* and their historical development in tandem with concepts of buddha and other systems of governance/philosophy/religious practice.

As Nakamatsu Yashû explains, a *kami* is anything that can impart or attach spiritual power (in Okinawa called "seji" [Jp: *reiryoku* 霊力). In Okinawa, a *kami* is definitionally something that shares its power in a beneficial way. Something that does not impart its power or is not beneficial is something other than a *kami*. He also notes that having the ability to impart this spiritual power does not make *kami* all-powerful. When prayers or illnesses cannot be answered, people don't get angry at the *kami*; rather, they consider that the problem was simply too big for the *kami* to handle (Nakamatsu 1990, 13–15).

³⁴ *Utaki* (Jp: *otake*) are most often natural features of the landscape, including stones, hilltops, natural springs, and caverns, occasionally linked to a major deified historical figure. While in recent decades some major *utaki* have incorporated mainland Shinto shrine architecture, such as the iconic *torii* gateways, most *utaki* have little or no architecture present, creating a space which might be overlooked. (However, in terms of location, *utaki* often are liminal spaces, out of the norm to a certain extent, whether on high ground or low, water or cavern.)

Ko-Shinto exists side-by-side with other religions on Miyako, the most prominent being Buddhism, although residents of Shimajiri quickly identify the religious diversity present in the town and the island. Other religions include numerous Christian denominations, various sects of Buddhism and Shinto, and “new religions,” such as Ijun and Kōfuku no Kagaku (幸福の科学, or Happy Science), all of which interact with Ko-Shinto in different ways.³⁵

However, the conceptual category of “religion” itself is problematic, as the imposition of religion as a category by political forces creates value hierarchies which have real consequences, particularly in regard to colonial history. In Japan, the term *shūkyō*, (宗教) often translated as “religion,” became a form of affiliation, not belief, with a particular regulatable social institution (Josephson 2012, 256; Kisala 2006, 6–8). In Okinawa, Ko-Shinto practices have been denounced at times as superstition, a status label that has led to marginalization, essentialization, and also (often misguided) theorization about religion, Japanese-ness, and belief (Kawahashi 2005, 453–54; Gillan 2012, 43–48).

When people are asked about these indigenous practices as *shūkyō*, confusion ensues, because there is no social institution like a Shinto shrine, Buddhist temple, or Christian church with which one’s affiliation with these practices is marked. More often, these vernacular practices are referred to as *shinji* or *kamigoto*, both of which are written with the kanji for “god”

³⁵ The diversity of religions on Miyako is extensive; this is not an exhaustive list. I list the religious affiliations I have personally come into contact with or heard about from others. For more on Ijun, see (Reichl 1993). For more on Okinawan vernacular and historical religious practice, see William Lebra’s classic work on Okinawan religion (1966); and Kawahashi Noriko’s work on contemporary women’s religious practices (1992; 2005; 2006). While Nakamatsu Yashū may be accused of inserting a timeless, essential quality into his examination of Okinawan religion and belief (see (Inoue 2007), Nakamatsu’s book *Kami to mura* (1990) is also a must-read for students of Okinawan religion.

and “event/work” (神事).³⁶ Both are words also used to refer to Shinto rituals, but do not mark an organizational affiliation. In Okinawa as in mainland Japan, the wide array of “folk” religious practice is often disassociated from the idea of religiousness because of the lack of institutionality; instead, they tend to be viewed as “social customs” (Kisala 2006, 9).

However, there is a clear affiliation present: that of the physical environment itself. In Okinawa generally, local religious practices centered upon multiple sacred groves in any given village, sometimes affiliated with certain village subdivisions, which were attended to in rituals conducted primarily by women priestesses.³⁷ The institutionalization of this hierarchy of divine priestesses (Oka: *norō* /*nuru* 祝女; Myk: *tsukasa* 司) during the Shuri Kingdom served to legitimize and protect the king, as well as exert control in the supernatural realm side by side with shifts in the political hierarchy.³⁸

Historically, the three communities of Shimajiri, Karimata, and Ōgami Island maintained a special relationship, with the *tsukasa* in the three communities gathering several times a year at Ōgami’s sacred mountain *utaki* for ritual ceremonies. Though the old hierarchy is gone today, local priestesses in many places continue to be community leaders that support their own communities as well as ritually link neighboring communities, despite the lack of

³⁶ 事 is a very flexible character, connoting various meanings in a wide array of circumstances, including thing-ness or a matter concerning something, like an incident or event, certain circumstances, or work. It is used to form gerunds and also indicate forms of pretense.

³⁷ In Okinawa and on Miyako, these priestesses are referred to as *kaminchu*, a word literally meaning “god-person.” Likewise, performing rituals may often be referred to as “kami [o] yaru,” literally, “doing/being a god.”

³⁸ See Norman Havens 2006 for an overview of the debate surrounding the similar historical governance system in Japan, in the centuries before the sixth century CE (Havens 2006, 19–21).

During changes brought on by the Satsuma Occupation, the office of the high priestess at Shuri (*kikoe ôgimi*, or *chifijin*) was first demoted, then abolished during the Meiji Restoration (Kawahashi 1992, 37–48). However, the local village priestesses continued to receive a steadily dwindling form of state support until 1939. World War II and the subsequent occupation of Okinawa by the United States interrupted the apparatus of State Shinto from replacing all priestesses with Shinto priests, and transforming *utaki* into shrines (Kawahashi 1992, 49).

institutionalized or governmental support (Kawahashi 1992, 63).

This lack of support does create difficulty in finding qualified women to be tsukasa who are willing to deal with the strenuous demands of the position. Many communities now lack tsukasa, which means they choose to handle their relationships with local kami in changing ways, a topic I will explore at length later.

Despite the disappearances of local priestesses, women still occupy a central role in religious practice, and the relation between mundane and divine realms tends to be considered within women's purview (Kawahashi 2005, 462; Wacker 2003, 346–55). Tsukasa may conduct high power rituals and communal rituals, but women conduct everyday household ritual practices, such as tending offerings to the household deities as well as the ancestors in the Buddhist altar (*butsudan* 仏壇).³⁹

Other ritual specialists that aid people in maintaining their relationships with the kami and ancestors include *yuta*, or shamans, who perform divination, instruction, and ritual supplication (Takiguchi 1984, 53–70; Wacker 2003, 344). While their services tend to be sought only for particular occasions, and certainly not by everyone, they continue to be necessary, particularly for the installation or movement of shrines to household deities.⁴⁰ Unlike tsukasa, a

³⁹ While this may be a typical situation for Okinawan households that affiliate themselves with Buddhist ritual practice, for other households with different religious affiliation this may vary. Ijun, for example, encourages household deities, but frowns on *yuta* visitation, yet also recognizes women leadership roles. Christian denominations tend to frown on ancestor and deity worship apart from the Christian God. While anecdotal, my limited experience among Miyako Christians demonstrated a very strong female organization of church activities, and women comprised an overwhelming majority of church attendees (though not in ordained pastoral positions).

⁴⁰ Household deities may include hearth/fire deities, deities of wealth, and a household protector deity (Takiguchi 1984, 50–53). These vernacular religious practices resemble in many ways vernacular religion in China and Taiwan, where local deities are members of a bureaucratic hierarchy. Thus, the kitchen gods "report" to the gods of heaven about the goings-on of the household. For more discussion of similarities and differences in vernacular practice of local deities and ancestor rites in East Asia, see (Shahar and Weller 1996) on Chinese society and its relationship to gods; introduction especially useful in depicting alternate views of ritual supplication; (Grayson 1996) on Korean local mountain spirits with comparison

yuta may be male or female, and is possessed temporarily by deities, instead of having a constantly indwelling divine presence.⁴¹

Men and Gods

While historically women occupied the primary religious roles in a community, and many places consider only divine priestesses to have a special relationship to an indwelling kami, divine priestesses could have male assistants, with some regional variations (Wacker 2003, 342). These assistants were limited in the roles they could take, and could be excluded from utaki and forbidden to view certain rituals along with the rest of the men in the village (Mabuchi 1980, 3). Today, the diminishing of tsukasa and noro presence mean that men, often the village headman or leader of the town self-governance committee (*jichikaichô* 自治会長), may take over responsibility for rituals to propitiate the kami.⁴² However, the male priest and the divine priestess are not interchangeable categories (Kawahashi 1992, 101).

And yet historically, as in the present, there was an opportunity for men to become gods. Through masked rituals, often in tandem with or sanctioned by the priestesses, young men donned masks and became a source of blessing as well as purification for a community.

Visiting deities, or *raihôshin* (来訪神), is a term utilized by Japanese folklorists to describe a category of deity that appears in many ritualized manifestations throughout the

with Chinese and Japanese versions; and Brashier's case study using Baishi Mountain rites in early centuries of CE, Han Dynasty, which highlights the intricacies of relationships that include the place of mountain gods in hierarchies of deities as well as bureaucratic systems, where ritual conceptions can be seen as *both* automatic, "resonating" cycles based within a conception of yin and yang, and simultaneously a relationship to anthropomorphized spiritual forces (Brashier 2001, 202).

⁴¹ For a much broader understanding of yuta and their relationship, contemporary and historical, to people in Okinawa, see (Takiguchi 1984; 1990; Lebra 1966).

⁴² Male practitioners in Shimajiri utilize the same vocabulary for ritual practice--"kami o yaru," to "do" or "be" the god.

entirety of the Japanese archipelago, in which young men assume the role of a deity, oftentimes utilizing masks and bizarre or frightening costumes. Distinguished from the tutelary or local deities that are always present within the community, *raihôshin* come briefly, usually once a year, and then return from whence they came, a location which may be conceived of as somewhere overseas, a well, or even the land of the dead below (Mabuchi 1980, 6–7).⁴³ While many of these rituals seem to be tied primarily to the instruction (through the terrifying) of children as to adult social order, they also provide a space for the inversion and maintenance of that same social order. In some instances they may be considered a rite of passage (Foster 2013, 306) with knowledge of preparing and enacting the ritual transmitted generationally within the male sphere, sometimes on the order of a secret society (Akamine 1999, 63–64).

Much theorization behind the concept of *raihôshin* is legacy of the founding fathers of Japanese folkloristics, Yanagita Kunio and Orikuchi Shinobu. In particular, Orikuchi's conceptualization of the *marebito* functioned as a means to theorize ancient beliefs surrounding foreign others and their potential for blessing and good fortune, and the subsequent ritualized practices attached to those beliefs. Fusing the physically present with the religious imagination, "the *marebito* is an outsider with magical and transformative powers, a mystical Other granted temporary admission into the community," (Foster 2013, 308).

In Okinawa, folklorist Akamine Masanobu explains, visiting deities come in two varieties: female-led embodied possession of visiting deities, and male, symbolic representation of visiting deities. In the first, divine priestesses wear particular robes and may wear head or face coverings, but they do not wear masks, because the manifestation of the *kami* which they embody is expressed through the priestesses' songs, chants, and dances. The priestesses do not

⁴³ Sometimes "Nirai Kanai," a paradise-like land over the sea from Ryukyuan mythology, is invoked here.

directly confront their spectators. In the second, masked visiting deities often have their appearance during harvest time and do directly confront people, often shouting at them or physically engaging them, doling out punishment as well as ostensibly bringing practical good fortune that benefits a communal society (Akamine 1999, 63–65).

Historically, Shimajiri had both such visiting deity rituals, each occurring within a ritually specific part of the calendrical ritual cycle. Uyagan 親神 was a time when the founding ancestors were summoned, entertained, and sent back over the course of several weeks by the local *mizumai*, or village tsukasa and their assistants. During Paantu Punaha, the third annual ritual visit to the village founding houses by the *mizumai* to drink sake with the senior man in each household was broadened greatly in scope by the addition of Shimajiri's mud-covered visiting deities, the paantu (Ôshiro 1985, 7–8).

The paantu is embedded in the history of Miyako, in its physical landscape, and its traditional religious practice, and also reflects the very present-day concerns of Shimajiri residents. Multiple perspectives come into play about its origins and purpose, its function and its meaning. The following chapter will delve into these issues at length, moving out of historical time and into ritual time, between this world and the other.

Chapter 3: Rituals and Realities

The official documentation in the Ministry of Culture's database of nationally recognized cultural properties summarizes Paantu Punaha as follows:

Originally, the word "paantu" meant monster or fierce god. In Shimajiri, this ritual event is called Paantu Punaka. Punaka is a supplicatory rite at which the paantu deity appears....

In Shimajiri, Paantu Punaha is held on auspicious days during the first ten days of the 9th month of the lunar calendar....

First of all, the event of Sumafusara is held (which has protective meaning, with a ritual rope [*shimenawa*] encircling the town like a chain) to drive out evil spirits and epidemic. Pieces of pig bone are placed in the rope, which is hung at several places that serve as entrances and exits for the town. The matsuri begins after the tsukasa return from prayer at two founding houses (*mutu*). In the evening, the young men gather at an old well called Nmarigaa ("birth spring") east of town, and the three who have been chosen to be dressed as paantu are wrapped in vines, which is tied with the same rope as used for Sumafusara.

It's thought that the basis for the paantu appearing from the well has an underlying idea that the well leads to the paradise over the sea called Nirai Kanai. Then, on top of the [paantu's] head, a single stalk of tied susuki grass is inserted; in one hand a staff made of *danchiku* (a kind of plant); in the other hand the mask is carried and covers the face. The three paantu go to the worship place at Motojima/Mutuzuma (the old village), and then visit the present community's

mutu and houses, then go around putting mud on people. In newly-built homes and homes with babies in them, they are welcomed in order to bring good luck.

(Agency for Cultural Affairs 1997a)

The above summary gives the general contours of the three-day affair, combining a one-day ritual purification called Sumafusara/Sumassari, followed by two consecutive days of Paantu Punaha. Summarized from the official report submitted to the Agency for Cultural Affairs in 1985, it matter-of-factly describes belief, meaning, and practice. It's a very thorough document. More importantly, it has reentered the community as a form of local memory, which means that the written record and contemporary experience both shape the way people interpret the ritual, much like this chapter does. During my fieldwork, my many questions were often referred to this extensive and authoritative documentation, but a document such as this one cannot convey the complexity of a living ritual that is embedded in the lives of a people and community.

In this chapter, I will describe the ritual of Paantu Punaha and how it is carried out, both in the present-day and in the past. As noted by Suwa, ritual is one of the performative activities that actively constitutes understanding of symbols, action, and place, investing the lived environment with meaning and even agency of its own (Suwa 2007, 9). In contemporary Paantu Punaha, it is possible to see how the idea of unbroken tradition takes shape within the real situations of cultural and social change.

Overview

Shimajiri's annual ritual calendar traditionally featured three *punaha*, or a visit by the local priestesses and their main assistants to offer prayer at three historical house sites belonging

to the households that founded Shimajiri (Myk: *mutu*; *mutuyaa*).⁴⁴ The senior man of each house with men from the neighborhood gathered with the priestesses to share a round of alcoholic beverages, and the men remained afterward to eat together.⁴⁵ Also referred to as *satu nigai* 里願い, “village entreaty,” or *satu matsuri* 里祭り, “village worship/festival,” the ritual of *punaha* served to petition the resident kami for the good health of those dwelling within the community (Ôshiro 1985, 6).⁴⁶ *Punaha*, also sometimes written *punaka*, reflecting Sumafutsu’s fricative edges, indicates a large garden or courtyard, with the simultaneous connotation of the ritual or event held in such a place (Ôshiro 1986, 21). The places where *punaha* is held in Shimajiri are linked to their *satu*, a word that can mean village, but also refer to a community subdivision. In Shimajiri, the three *satu* subdivisions with their *mutu* are:

Direction	Satu	Mutu
North (<i>ui</i>)	Uisatu	Tumazuyaa / Tumajjaa
East (<i>agaz</i>)	Agazsatu	Upuyaa
South (<i>pai</i>)	Paisatu	Tsutsumutu / Tsutumutu / Paimutu

(Ôshiro 1986, 9)

In addition to the three existing *mutu* in present-day Shimajiri, *punaha* also occurred in the historical site of the town of Shimajiri known as Mutuzuma.

⁴⁴ *Mutu* alone does not reference the house. *Mutuyaa* does. (*Yaa* is “house.”) In Japanese, *mutuyaa* is rendered 元家. For more on Okinawan traditional households and founding houses (with emphasis on Okinawa Island), see Tanaka 1975, 19–21; 258–259.

⁴⁵ This is a practice similar to that found in Shinto rituals, where food offered to the gods is taken and consumed afterward by a gathering of people, called *naorai* 直会 (Ôshiro 1986, 21; Mogi 2006). The alcohol, although not explicit in the official documentation, is most likely awamori (Ryukyuan rice liquor), straight or diluted.

⁴⁶ In an article by the Ryukyu University Folklore Research Club, the authors record and translate numerous *kamiuta*, or the chants/songs used by the *tsukasa* during certain rituals at Mutuzuma. One of the lyrics translated by the student researchers reads, “the deities are coming to [are present at] the *punaha*” (神がプナハにいらっしゃる), suggesting that the *punaha* is a special part of overall ritual practice, and that the ritual is not simply in honor of the kami, but actively invites them in (University of the Ryukyus Folklore Research Club 1972, 86).

During Paantu Punaha, the punaha had additional participants: the paantu, one for each *satu*. *Paantu*, a word from Sumafutsu used throughout Miyako, refers to a nonhuman being, often with the connotation of the monstrous or fearful. In its Shimajiri incarnation, it implies both the monsterlike and the divine. Masked, covered in vines and mud, these deities not only participated in punaha with the senior men, but once the initial visits to the *mutuyaa* were complete, the paantu expanded their range beyond the property of the founding houses to the entire population of the community, anointing community members and dwelling places with mud for their health and protection (Ôshiro 1986, 8).

The two consecutive days of Paantu Punaha follow immediately after Sumassari, a day where the community is cordoned off against illness and evil.⁴⁷ However, Sumassari is not considered part of Paantu Punaha, but rather a separate event that occurs prior to it. In Shimajiri, Paantu Punaha may also be referred to as the “Paantu Matsuri” (Paantu Festival), or simply shortened to “Paantu” as a shorthand for the whole event. Here, I will use both Paantu and Paantu Punaha to refer to the ritual event, and lowercase paantu to refer to the deity figures themselves.

In what follows, I will describe the major participant groups within Shimajiri that carry out or interact with Paantu Punaha. With the cast of characters complete, the action begins with detailed accounts of Sumassari and Paantu Punaha from the year 2012. In order to look at changes in both rituals over time and how those changes are interpreted by the community, I examine accounts of the rituals from over the past forty years, and see how perceptions of change elicit concerns over tourism, promotion, depopulation, environment, and maintenance of

⁴⁷ This is described in the earlier documentation as “Sumafusara,” which is a Miyako term that is more like a genre of purification ritual. The Shimajiri word (which may also simply reflect local dialect for this activity) is Sumassari. I will discuss more on Sumassari and Sumafusara below.

the ritual.

The Participants

The key organizing bodies of Sumassari and Paantu Punaha in the past were the contingent of priestesses and their attendants (known collectively as *mizumai*), the young men's association, or *seinenkai* 青年会, and the town council, or *jichikai* 自治会. Today, the event is accomplished through the efforts of the *seinenkai* and *jichikai*, which incorporate assistance from other organized groups around town, such as the *bôhan* 防犯, or local volunteer security force.

The Jichikai 自治会

The Shimajiri Jichikai, or “self-governance group,” consists in principle of every person living in Shimajiri. This includes landowners as well as those who rent apartments from the city-administered apartment complex (referred to as the *danchi* 団地), which included even me while I lived there. The *jichikai* leadership oversees the community's finances, activities, and the co-operative general store, the Shimajiri *kôbaiten* 講売店. At annual meetings, all Shimajiri residents are invited to review the finances of the town and elect new representatives, who include the managers of the *kôbaiten* and the major officer positions of the *jichikai*, such as its leader (*jichikaichô*, often referred to by his title alone: *kaichô*), vice-leader, treasurer, and so on. While women may rotate into management of the *kôbaiten*, all the decision-making members of the leadership at present are men, and women infrequently attend their meetings. The leadership plans and manages various local events and oversees the maintenance of public properties, and they serve as the point of contact for governmental agents from larger administrative levels as well as for media inquiries.

In 2012, the jichikaichô was Miyara Tamotsu. A middle-aged Shimajiri native, Miyara-kaichô possesses a dry sense of humor. He works in a city office by day and sometimes farms sugarcane on the side. He leads meetings in a businesslike, polite manner, although even he cannot escape the joviality that proves infectious with certain other jichikai members. While his name, Miyara, originates from Ishigaki Island, his forebears came to Shimajiri far enough back that they had a house at Mutuzuma, which he remembers going to with his family as a child to do cleaning, though it is gone now. Whether by virtue of his position or his lineage, he also finds himself in the role of head lay priest, tasked with ritual maintenance as well as community leadership as previous religious decision-makers and ritual leaders have vanished.

The “regulars” in the jichikai meetings all come from Shimajiri families and tend to be over forty. Most work in blue-collar professions, from farming to auto repair to construction. They all claim to be cousins of one kind or other; family ties are complex. Nearly all of them evidence some type of male pattern baldness, a trait that they say is characteristic of Shimajiri men. (They enthusiastically received my partner as a fellow *pagi*, or bald man.) Endless jokes at the expense of bald pates and jibes built on a lifetime of knowing one another flow along with the presence of awamori, a potent Ryukyuan rice liquor, that concludes business at most meetings.

The Seinenkai 青年会

The Shimajiri young men’s association, or seinenkai, opens to local men once they turn twenty. At one time, marriage or turning thirty signaled graduation from the young men’s association and into the company of fellow older adults. However, as most young men leave town and island to seek employment, the seinenkai extended the age to thirty-five to maintain

dwindling membership, with little concern for whether members are single, married, divorced, or remarried. Significantly, almost all the young men in the seinenkai are firstborn sons under more of a sense of obligation and family pressure than their younger siblings to maintain their family homesteads; many have returned to Miyako after some time away after high school. Their professions include various positions in tourism, construction, retail, and even air transportation, with occasional participation in family agricultural endeavors.

While some seinenkai rely on sharp age differentiation and employ formal language between leaders and members, the Shimajiri seinenkai largely eschews polite language and conducts the business half of their meetings very informally. Shinzato Hidehiko, a former *seinenkaichô* (leader of the seinenkai), remarked that it was much more important to have a welcoming, informal attitude in order to attract and keep new members, although past generations were likely more formal. Youngest and/or newer members receive the lion's share of good-natured (occasionally instructional) hazing, while the older members who can provide experienced guidance tend to occupy the position of *kaichô*.

While Paantu tends to be the most involved time of year for members of the seinenkai, requiring the most sacrifice of work time, members also largely take charge of Shimajiri's summer evening festival, carrying out the setup and tear-down of a stage and tents, and helping to organize entertainment and food vendors. They regularly participate in many other events, such as Haarii (the festival of the sea deity), where they field several teams of dragon-boat rowers and raise money with a concessions stand. Members get together informally as friends, and participate in many other aspects of community life as well.

In 2012, Matsukawa Hiroyuki served as *seinenkaichô*. While somewhat taciturn in comparison to the more boisterous members of the group, Matsukawa-*kaichô* leads the group by

example: he volunteers for the role of paantu nearly every year. His endurance in the face of multiple days of planning, drinking, and running during Paantu may reflect his experience as a former Marine in the Japanese Self Defense Forces, as well as his experience as a participant in the Miyako Strongman Triathlon. In his mid-thirties, his presence, like that of several other members, pushes the upper boundaries of age limits for the group each successive year he remains, but his long experience makes him valuable.

The Bôhan 防犯

While the jichikai leadership and seinenkai plan and carry out Paantu Punaha, many groups within Shimajiri receive community funds for their events as semi-independent subsets of the jichikai's town membership. These groups include the firefighters group, the the "prime of life" group, typically for graduates of the seinenkai after age thirty until their mid-forties, the Yamadakai for older middle aged men and women (most likely named after a former neighborhood of Shimajiri, Yamadabara), and the old folks association, which sponsors activities for retirees over 60, most notably the gateball tournaments held on the field at the community center.⁴⁸ People from various age groups fill out Shimajiri's *bôhan* 防犯, or volunteer crime prevention group, a kind of neighborhood watch that works closely with local police.

In 2012, the leader of the security force was Hanashiro Hiroki, who held the seinenkaichô position the year before Matsukawa. In his mid-30s, Hanashiro spent ten years

⁴⁸ Firefighters: *shôbôdan* 消防団, "prime of life group": *sônenkai* 壮年会, Yamadakai: 山田会、old folks group: *rôjinkai* 老人会. For a discussion of the historical roots of these various age-groups and their relationships to divisions of labor on Miyako, see (Ômoto 1980) and Lebra and Maretzki 1963, 227–228; 235–236.

away from Miyako working construction on the Japanese mainland, joining the seinenkai soon after his return.

Many regulars within the jichikai leadership and seinenkai also served in the bôhan, so my encounters with members occurred outside of bôhan-specific gatherings. While most of the seinenkai members worked alongside the paantu during the ritual, the bôhan took care of many other aspects of crowd control—directing traffic, indicating parking, giving assistance, and blocking off roads, and if necessary, preparing to mount search parties or call ambulances. The local police officer (who is stationed in nearby Karimata) also attended Paantu Punaha both nights, directing traffic and making himself available to step in if any higher order crises presented themselves.

Other Groups

Many other groups coalesce around Shimajiri as well for social and practical ends, especially the *moai*, a group of trusted friends that sponsors an informal, interest-free loan out of the regular donations from its members.⁴⁹ In a round-robin style, members host social gatherings for the rest of the moai, and each member eventually receives the set sum of collected money. While a given moai generally meets once a month or less frequently, people frequently participate in multiple moai, and thus have many evening social obligations with varying groups of people. Several moai hosts invited me to come and socialize after the business aspect of the gathering ended.

⁴⁹模合 alt: *moai*. The moai is kind of rotating credit association; that along with the cooperative store are often found in Okinawan communities, and have a long history. For a history of both, and how they intersect with various community organizations as described above, see Lebra and Maretzki (1963, 230–235). Clifford Geertz also wrote on these kinds of associations throughout Southeast Asia, Africa, and East Asia, drawing on Embree’s research in Suyé Mura to discuss such organizations in mainland Japan (Geertz 1962, 250–51).

Other prominent groups in Shimajiri include the P.T.A. (parent-teacher association) and the Paantu no Kodomokai (the paantu children's group), which organizes the local children of Miyajima Elementary School for various events including town cleaning days, *eisâ* drumming performances, and other events with the assistance of the school teachers. One group noticeably absent from Shimajiri is a local *fujinkai*, or women's association. One used to exist here, but attendance dropped off to the point that it is currently defunct. However, local mothers organize many events for the P.T.A. and lead the Kodomokai. They also routinely open up these events for other women in town to participate. Naturally, members of these various groups often congregate outside of official group events, and many Hirara-based sports and activity clubs draw in community members as well.

The main groups mentioned above—the jichikai, seinenkai, and bôhan—play the largest roles in the organization and execution of Paantu Punaha, but members of these other groups form the paantu's local constituency. Not every person living in Shimajiri actively participates or has membership in these organizations (the very elderly in particular comprise a segment of the population that are present but rarely involved), but Paantu Punaha marks a time when all are notified of the impending matsuri, and everyone must consider how they will engage or disengage, because Shimajiri is going to be warded, purified, and then invaded by visiting deities, as well as hundreds of tourists.

Sumassari

In order to describe the contours of Sumassari and Paantu Punaha, I draw on my own fieldwork from 2012 to introduce contemporary practice. As described above, the purificatory ritual of Sumassari occurs the day before Paantu Punaha, with its date and time broadcast via the

town's intercom system, ordinarily used for island-wide announcements from the city government and workday break signals, as well as imminent warnings pertaining to natural and man-made hazards.⁵⁰ In 2012, Miyara Tamotsu, elected head of the jichikai, made the announcement inviting everyone in Shimajiri to the aging assembly hall (*shûkaijo* 集会所) at 8 am on October 8th to hold Sumassari.

The *shûkaijo*, also referred to as the old community center, sits on one of the main roads into town, and bears the technical name, "Shimajiri Agricultural Community Training Center."⁵¹ Currently in a state of disrepair since the building of the newer Paantu Village Hall, the *shûkaijo* only rarely serves as a gathering-place now.⁵² During Sumassari, the middle-aged and older men (*ojii*) of Shimajiri begin to arrive, dressed in sturdy work shirts and trousers. They begin to tidy the neglected parking lot and sidewalk along the side of the building and under the entryway awning, collecting fallen leaves and other debris using brooms and makeshift implements until someone brings in a leafblower. The men dump the accumulated junk over the low wall along the parking lot and into the empty field on the other side and burn it there. By this point about ten men have gathered.

As the cleanup nears completion, some of the men go to retrieve the rice straw stored at Miyajima Elementary School, kept there for Sumassari after the elementary students' harvest and threshing of the rice from the school's rice field. Once the straw arrives at the *shûkaijo*, the older

⁵⁰ This included such announcements as those important dates for voter registration, as well as incoming tsunami warnings. Somewhat unique to my time there were two separate missiles launched by North Korea, whose path was set to fly over Miyako. Residents were warned to stay indoors (which most people ignored). However, the surreal state of being under bomb threat was new to me, as were the constant reminders and updates about when the missile had been launched, what was being done about it, and what we should be doing about it. While most adults seemed to take the event in stride, a few elementary schoolchildren I knew in Shimajiri found the two days incredibly anxiety-inducing.

⁵¹ Shimajiri nôson kenshû sentâ 島尻農村研修センター

⁵² The origins and uses of the Paantu Village Hall (Paantu no sato kaikan パーントウの里会館) will be discussed more in Chapter 5.

men take the lead, settling on the ground in the shade of the awning with piles of rice straw, and begin the task of making the straw into thin rope.

The ojii make the straw rope with two strands; the palm of the right hand twists the two clusters of straw simultaneously by rolling them up against the left palm. The tension entwines the two strands leftward around one other, and additional straw is added so that the end straws poke out of the rope, making it look barbed. Properly done, the spines emerge in set intervals and numbers, either in threes or in an alternating pattern of one and three. Both the spines and the leftward twist make this rope unlike ordinary, right-twisted rope.



A handful of the
seinenkai augment the

Making reverse-twisted rope on Sumassari. 2012. Photo by author.

numbers of men, and members of the jichikai and seinenkai set up a tent awning and light propane burners underneath two enormous wok-shaped pots. While some of the older women (*obaa*) come by to exchange comments with some of the men present, they do not linger long.

The men create a makeshift cutting board for pork and vegetables with a slab of wood on a truck tailgate, then make broth and simmering sauces on a large scale, adding entire bottles of seasoning additions like sake and soy sauce. The younger men of the seinenkai departed soon after the tent setup, and set out to find vines needed to costume the paantu, accompanied by some of the junior high school aged boys.

After roughly an hour, the rope makers finish their ropes, attaching shorter lengths together until eight lengths stretch out along the shûkaijo parking lot. (Even my rope, painstakingly done under the tutorial of the ojii, made it into the mix.) Men from the jichikai distribute chunks of raw pork and bone in small, clear plastic bags, then divide up into groups of two to four to hang the eight ropes across the roads into Shimajiri. The three groups set out in different directions: toward Nanseien (southeast), toward Karimata (northwest), and another toward the north side of town and the ocean.

In 2012, I accompanied the group going southeast. At the old road into Shimajiri from Nanseien, the men attach the meat and bone to the center of a rope, keeping it in the plastic bag to keep birds from stealing it.⁵³ Miyara-kaichô lays down unburned incense sticks, a small jar of sake, an opened bag of salt, and some dried fish at an offering-site at the foot of one of the trees at the crossroad between this road and the main street. Everyone stands quietly while Miyara-kaichô offers prayers to the kamisama for a harm-free festival.⁵⁴

⁵³ Sometimes the plastic bag is used, and other years it isn't. In 2014, possibly due to the presence of an NHK team present for Sumassari, the meat and bone was affixed to rope without the bag.

⁵⁴ The rope's "official" name is *miipiitsuna* (Myk) which means literally "prickly rope." While the men know the word (and they explained the meaning to me when I asked about it), they don't tend to refer to the rope with this name or with the Okinawan word *hijainaa* (alt. *hijainna*), which also refers to this kind of boundary-marking ritual rope.

Based on other descriptions of Sumassari, the *miipiitsuna* is suspended from another such tree (most likely ironwood, *Casuarina equisetifolia*) with accompanying offering on the back road to Karimata, and the second rope is hung without any offering, in a similar fashion (Maedô and Tsukayama 津嘉山朝政

After the prayer, the men get out a ladder and stretch the rope across the old road, anchoring it to a tree on each side, fifteen to twenty feet above the ground. The plastic bag dangles close to the rope, and the bright sky makes the rope stand out in prickly profile. The men get back into the truck and head farther down the main road toward where the new road from Nanseien intersects it. Here, they attach the rope to streetlight posts, ensuring enough height to clear the city bus.

No women are involved in the ropemaking or offerings. Apart from a few older women dropping by to say hello early in the morning, a



Hanging the rope. 2012. Photo by author.

visiting observer from the prefectural government, and myself, there were no women present at the shûkaijo. Instead, a few women gather together to clean up the utaki (*satû utaki*) called Tsutsumutu (alt: Tsutumutu). They clear brush and set it to one side, but do not burn it because it belongs to the deity of the utaki. The women make offerings there of rice, incense, dried fish, sake, and salt, which serve to notify the kamisama there that it will have company the following day. Intermittent rain in 2012 prevented the women from enjoying more time together, and they returned home after they completed these preparations.

1976, 55). In 2012, I only accompanied the group going southeast, and do not know if the offerings on the other roads are still made or not.



Miipiitsuna against the sky. 2012. Photo by author.

In the meantime, the rope-hanging finished, men from the jichikai tend to the yard of the founding house site closest to the old community center (Upuyaa), mowing down grass to allow a cleared space for the men to gather there during Paantu Punaha. Men from the seinenkai and the jichikai also begin clearing the overgrown paths leading to a natural spring at the north side of town called Nmarigaa, another holy site, with a small offering area for the kamisama on the north side of the spring. At a glance, Nmarigaa appears to be an unassuming, stagnant pond, less than two meters in diameter and surrounded by overarching *adan* (pandanus) trees, rays of sunlight caught in its murky water. Literally meaning “birth spring,” Nmarigaa once provided water for residents’ first and last ritual baths—an infant’s first bath, and the washing of a corpse before burial (Jp: *ubuyu* 産湯, *yukan* 湯灌). Modern plumbing, hospital births, and professionalized burial practices have contributed to Nmarigaa falling out of regular use, save once a year for Paantu Punaha (S. 平良新亮 Taira 1985, 33). Mud from Nmarigaa covers the

paantu, and the transformation from man to deity takes place in this sheltered depression in the landscape.

Nmarigaa lies at the bottom of the tallest hill in town, referred to a mountain (*yama* 山) by locals. In the days of the Ryukyu Kingdom, the top of the hill was utilized as a lookout site for ships entering local waters.⁵⁵ The location also is a sacred space, an *utaki*. Hentona Toyoichi, a community leader in his 80s, explained the link between the mountain and the mud from Nmarigaa:

That place is Chira. Chirayama is a place of worship, and the leaves from it fall into Nmarigaa and become mud. The spring is born from the root of this holy place, so that is why it is called “birth spring.”

Once, Nmarigaa could only be reached by a footpath traveling past Chira, but the newer paved road running along the edge of the northern fields provides easier access, as does construction alongside the spring, which has resulted in a paved landing and steps that lead down the steep decline to the water, along with a platform crossing the marshy ground. Growing piles of vines at the landing attest to the efforts of the *seinenkai* to find costuming materials throughout the morning.

As midday approaches and the tasks of warding, cleaning, and vine-hunting draw to a close, everyone gradually returns to the tent outside the *shūkaijo* to enjoy the food that the men have made. Most people settle crosslegged on woven straw mats laid down under the tent in a rounded shape, accepting savory bowls of *shima-soba* in a hearty broth from the first cooking

⁵⁵ Miyako is incredibly flat compared to other islands in the Ryukyus, and high ground tends to be referred to as “mountain.” Chira, the mountain here, likely does not rise more than 20 meters above sea level. Chira is also referred to simply as “Tumi,” the local inflection of *tômidai* 遠見台, or watchtower.

pot, swirling with tied bits of kelp, simmered chunks of winter melon (*tôgan* 冬瓜), and tender pork ribs.⁵⁶ Slices of rich, miso-simmered pork belly from the second cooking pot compliment the soba.

In 2012, Sumassari fell on Health and Sports Day, a national holiday, so many people could participate who ordinarily worked, or at the very least stop in for a little while. In addition to the men, the junior high school boys helping the seinenkai, various neighborhood children playing around town, and neighbors on lunch break also stopped in. Around twenty men gather as a core group, eating and drinking. The women who work to clean the utaki, however, do not attend, and the visiting children eat quickly and continue their play elsewhere. Some of the junior high age boys linger around the margins of the adult gathering, running occasional errands for the men.

As accompaniment to the food, beer appears, as do large bottles of awamori, marking the transition into *otoori*, a form of drinking and speaking particular to Miyako that expresses hopes as well as prayers for the events at hand. While bearing similarities to the drinking styles particular to large gatherings throughout Japan, *otoori* has roots in the communal Miyako culture of sharing amid hard times. As a former jichikaichô explained to me, people in a house passed a single cup of alcohol from person to person if there were a bottle to share, so that everyone received some. In its current form, the person beginning the round of *otoori* fills a cup with awamori and stands, announcing, “I’m going to send around *otoori*” (*otoori mawashimasu*). The assembled participants, generally seated in a circle or around a table, fall quiet, and a speech

⁵⁶ While “soba” in the rest of Japan refers to narrow buckwheat noodles, “Okinawa soba” or on Miyako, “Miyako soba” uses wheat noodles, not unlike wide, thick ramen (thinner than udon). The broth of Okinawa and Miyako soba is generally pork-based, more similar to a ramen broth. I am told Miyako soba is distinctive from even Okinawa soba, but I have yet to determine the truth of this statement—Miyako noodles are made on Miyako; that’s good enough for me.

begins.

Often toast-like in form, speeches generally offer hopes or prayer pertaining to the welfare of those gathered and the community, thanks for work accomplished on the task at hand, and to personal reflection on the present moment. They tend neither toward the self-indulgent or the exceedingly long. The speaker holds the floor, and although some back and forth between circle members may ensue (an aspect that becomes more pronounced with successive ootoori rounds), it is rude to drown out the speaker with too much chatter. As the speaker finishes, he downs the cup he has poured for himself and everyone applauds. Then the speaker becomes the pourer, moving around the circle with the same glass, filling it out of the awamori bottle or pitcher (sometimes the awamori is cut with water, sometimes not) for the next person. (This makes ootoori somewhat hazardous—the recipient of the glass has very little say about how much alcohol they receive, and the general expectation is that they drink it all at once.) Ordinary conversation resumes within the circle while the pourer engages successive members of the circle in conversation; this may go on for some time until the pourer completes the round. At that point, the cup advances to the next person in line, or the pourer selects someone else to begin a round. In a small circle, one may expect to drink often and toast often. In a very large circle, additional ootoori may start simultaneously, sent around in the same or opposite directions.

In 2012, the men offered their especial hope and prayer (*oinori* お祈り) that everyone would remain safe and sound during the matsuri to come. They expressed the sense of carrying forward a community tradition side by side with sentiments of the simultaneous changes being wrought. One community grandfather stood and toasted to changing times, remarking that he could recall when the Sumassari ropes only crossed three locations, but now cross eight. He affirmed, as if recollecting, that sickness traveled from place to place, but Sumassari was put in

place to stop it. A while later, Ikema Sadao, in his eighties, remarked during his toast that the matsuri was no longer for Shimajiri, but for all of Japan. It was, in his opinion, Japan's number one matsuri.

Paantu Punaha: Japan's Number One Matsuri, Day 1

The day following Sumassari, the paantu make their appearance around 5:00 in the evening, but many preparations are underway before then. From the early morning, seinenkai members continue their search for *kyaan*, a kind of vine with wide, heart-shaped leaves. Kyaan once grew wild between the fields, but increased support for infrastructure and the building of stone walls between fields has made the vine increasingly scarce. In small pickup trucks, the seinenkai members drive out along back roads and untended fields, looking for it. Kyaan grows not too far from the ocean in wet ground, and can climb trees to great height. However, its scarcity means that other vines must be employed, and the seinenkai gather up all kinds, slicing off swaths of ground-growing creepers with hand scythes.

Once the greenery fills the bed of the pickup, the seinenkai take it to Nmarigaa, where it joins the vines collected the day before. By early afternoon, the seinenkai begin the task of emptying the water from the spring in order to access the mud at its bottom that will cover each paantu, as well as anoint many people and things in the hours to come. The seinenkai bring a water pump and an aging gas-powered generator, and put all their attentions into making the setup run. While the deepest part of Nmarigaa does not likely extend deeper than a foot or so, the prospect of emptying it by bucket alone does not appeal to anyone. As the pump labors to get the water up the hill and into the gutter along the back road, the seinenkai members form a circle to share cold beer in the shade.

Soon, Miyara-kaichô and other men from the jichikai arrive, and some of the men leave to go get the paantu masks: one resides in the utaki building at Mutuzuma known as Futsumutu, and the other two stay at private residences in town. The jichikai members offer a brief prayer when they take the masks down from where they hang to let them know that their services are needed, and bring them back to Nmarigaa.

At Nmarigaa, Miyara-kaichô leaves sake and salt at the offering-place next to the spring. The remaining men set out the vines in three rows, checking for quantity, and measure out sturdy string for tying on of the costuming. Meanwhile, other seinenkai members cut plants used for other pieces of the costume from the hillside near Nmarigaa. This includes the *maata* (alt: *maatu*), another kind of ward against evil usually made of a half meter long stalk of *susuki* (Japanese pampas grass) tied in a loop, and the *gushan*, made of a trimmed central stalk of a palm branch roughly a meter in length which the paantu may use as a walking stick, lash, or javelin.⁵⁷

As the spring finishes draining about midafternoon, junior high and high school aged helpers arrive, having finished with school. In 2012, this mud preparation coincided with the time that Miyara-kaicho politely bid outsider observers to depart, and the jichikai closed off the road toward Nmarigaa to nonparticipants, including news crews, photojournalists, and ethnographers.⁵⁸ However, in 2014, around five boys arrived earlier, so I witnessed their role in

⁵⁷ The specific plants used for the *maata* and *gushan* are flexible—the year I was there, they used *susuki* and palm, but giant cane (*danchiku*, mentioned in the description at the beginning of the chapter) or other grasses may be used as well.

⁵⁸ During the years of investigations by the Folklore Research Club, male students seem to have been allowed to observe, as well as male researchers during the Board of Education investigation. However, in 2012, the “big” investigation having been completed, even the Board of Education employees who had come out to do follow-up observations of the proceedings in Shimajiri were likewise not present for the costuming. My account here is based on the “official” investigation as well as numerous conversations with participants that year and in previous years. More discussion on the exclusion of outsiders and photography will follow in subsequent chapters.

the costuming process—readying the mud. Once the pump finishes, the mud at the bottom of Nmarigaa still retains a layer of water which must be scooped out by hand, and the mud needs to be mixed into a consistency suitable for coating the paantu. Armed with buckets, a pair of boys step gingerly into the goop of Nmarigaa in bare feet, sinking first to their ankles, then knees, and finally their thighs as they tread the soft bottom of the pool. Directed by the senior-most boy, they hand out buckets of mud to the boys on the platform next to the spring. These boys add the mud to larger buckets, which they stir, adding water when they deem it too thick. Some of the boys will remain as the costuming of the paantu begins.

In the hollow where Nmarigaa lies down from the road, with the parked trucks blocking the view from without, the transformation of man to paantu begins. The three seinenkai members who have agreed to be paantu that day tie a towel or bandana tightly around their heads and wear old shirts and shorts. They also wear running shoes—paantu must be fast. Assistants from the seinenkai and jichikai wrap vines around them in draping curtains tied tightly with string, trimming vines trailing below their knees. For the head, they select vines with the most attractive leaves, and wrap the head like a turban, with the ends trailing down the back. Then they tie a length of prickly rope from Sumassari around their waists, each with its own small piece of pork and bone attached. The assistants attach all the ties tightly, because loose string will allow the costuming to shift and rub skin raw, as well as allow vines to fall off. The heavy head costuming proves prone to slipping. Finally, the assistants help insert the maata firmly into the head vines. In this state, the three costumed men are known informally as the *midori paantu*, or green paantu.

At the side of the spring, the midori paantu cover one another with mud with help from other members of the seinenkai. Beginning from the head and working downward, they are



Uya, ffa, and nnaka paantu masks lie atop a bed of vines that will become costuming.
2014. Photo by author.

muddied everywhere but their faces. Finally, each midori paantu takes his mask and covers it with mud inside and out, completing the transformation into the three paantu: *uya-paantu*, *nnaka-paantu*, and *ffa-paantu*. Named the parent (or mother, sometimes called the *nma-paantu*), middle, and child paantu, in practice, the mud-covered masks are difficult to tell apart at a distance, and the paantu have no ranking system.⁵⁹

While the paantu transformation occurs out of sight, various television and newspaper

⁵⁹ Close up, the masks each have distinctive clues that tell them apart. Easiest to spot is the uya-paantu, with its distinctive swooping eyebrows and narrowed eyes. The nnaka-paantu and ffa-paantu are a little more difficult to tell apart, as they both seem to bear an expression of perpetual surprise, with lifted eyebrows and rounded mouths. However, the child paantu's chin is more rounded, lending it a youthful delight, the nnaka-paantu just seems pleased. When gripped through the mouth hole and covered with mud, however, there is the impression that perhaps they are held, or, perhaps, are gripping the bearers' hands with their mouths.

One account observes that the paantu were costumed as uya, nnaka, and ffa according to height, but I haven't found reference to this anywhere else (Maedô and Tsukayama 津嘉山朝政 1976, 58).

crews begin their setup at the end of the back road, lining up cameras at the edge of a grassy field to capture the first glimpses of the paantu leaving the area of Nmarigaa. Cameramen represent programs and publications from the mainland and Okinawa proper as well as local Miyako media. The crowd also includes serious hobbyists and independent professional photographers. Early arriving tourists and some children mill around nearby. The cameramen on the field share a collegial camaraderie; the old hands seem pleased to be here again, and the first-timers benefit from their experience. In town, the number of people in the street begins to grow as the bôhan closes off the streets to motor traffic.

Anticipatory tension builds as the time passes. Then, electric, it peaks—someone spots the paantu, and shouts erupt from the watchers. From a distance, the three paantu appear utterly inhuman, bulky and blackened with mud. The muddy maata bob over their oversized heads; they hold their masks over their faces with one hand clenched through the mouth. Highlighting the contrast, two mud-streaked jichikai members, including the kaichô, walk alongside them like a brightly clad honor guard. Together, they move past the bank of cameramen, though any in arms' length receive plenty of mud across their faces and down their necks, kindly avoiding the cameras, most of which are wisely covered with clear plastic.

The paantu plaster any children in reach, lunging out suddenly in short pursuit of older ones—the mud is fresh and so are they. But for the moment, the group maintains more purpose than pursuit, and together the paantu and jichikai members walk down the road toward Mutuzuma, followed after by a handful of more mobile camera carriers and curious observers. Once the paantu and jichikai members reach the road up the hill to Mutuzuma, the jichikaichô informs the crowd that they may not follow, and their group ascends the hill to go offer prayers there. Other seinenkai and jichikai members in the crowd remind the crowd to wait for their

return.

Mutuzuma marks the first of the paantu's formal stops, and is not open to outside observers save the few men from the jichikai and bôhan that accompany them. At the utaki, Futsumutu, at the top of the hill (where the uya-paantu mask is kept when not in use), they reportedly offer prayer and the paantu drink their first ritual alcohol. When the group reappears, they proceed on a return path back toward town, going up the hill road into Shimajiri. The media, visitors, and other observers follow, although those who go too near find that the paantu can turn and pounce very quickly. Tumazuyaa marks the second formal stop just past the crest of the hill into town, a house where the paantu enter the small patio area and are offered cups of awamori by the handful of resident men gathered there. After a round and a thorough mudding of the men there, the paantu begin to move in the direction of the next mutuyaa, pausing more often to



Paantu in the street before dark. 2012. Photo by KT.

pursue people.

Once the paantu hit the main street, chaos erupts as waiting children shriek and go flying. Eventually the paantu reach Upuyaa; five to ten Shimajiri men already seated in the yard offer them alcohol even as they methodically smear each person present with mud. As the paantu proceed onward toward the third mutuyaa, they take a route that allows them to muddy newly built houses, and take time to daub mud on babies offered to them, shake the hands of the elderly or infirm, and pursue targets in the crowd.

The paantu make their final proscribed stop at Tsutsumutu, where around ten to fifteen



men gather amid the trees, sitting on straw mats in the clearing. As before, the paantu are offered awamori during their brief visit, smear everyone with mud, and move on. From this point forward, the paantu can split up and move as they like.

For the next two hours the paantu will pursue and be pursued. They stalk the streets, chase down people, pick up small children, and sit on top of larger children and adults alike. They roll their mud-covered bodies along cars, surprise the unwary, and walk uninvited

Punaha at Upuyaa. 2014. Photo by author.

through unlocked doors. However, as night falls, the crowd swells, surrounding the paantu with a flowing tide of hundreds of people seeking to draw closer, but not close enough to be smeared with cold mud.

The first day of Paantu Punaha draws to a close: at 8 pm Miyara-kaichô announces the end of the matsuri over the loudspeaker system, requesting that all paantu report to the Paantu no Sato Hall. The paantu arrive surrounded by people of all ages wanting one last chance to see them. As the jichikaichô bids people to step away, reiterating that the event has ended and they cannot follow anymore, the paantu walk away down the road to the port accompanied by a pickup truck. Sometimes the paantu make their exit in the truck bed. The paantu and the truck disappear from view over the hill. For the visitors, Paantu Punaha is over.

Down at the port, the paantu go down to the ocean. With assistance, they cut off the string and vines and let it drift off into the ocean, washing away the mud from themselves and from the masks in the seawater. Men once again, the seinenkai members go home to wash up more completely and then return to the Paantu no Sato Hall where the jichikai, seinenkai, and bôhan members reassembled to heat up rich, savory broth with Miyako-soba, perfect to ward off the chill of the night as well as replenish the exhausted former paantu. Drinking continues until late, not only among the men, but also women involved elsewhere during Paantu, such as the Shimajiri vendors selling food to visitors, and female friends of the seinenkai.

Paantu Punaha: Day 2

On the second day of Paantu Punaha the seinenkai members meet again for a third round of looking for vines that can be substituted for the elusive kyaan. After some early morning searching, the members convene at the port to help some of the fishermen there unload nets of

small fish, shaking them out onto the concrete and pulling the stuck ones free. For their help, they receive a several buckets-full to use for their own festivities. Then the group, more fully formed, heads out to look for more vines, traveling in two trucks down bumpy back roads.

By noon, the group delivers the vines to Nmarigaa and breaks to eat. After lunch, the seinenkai return to the port, this time to gut the fish they worked to unload, trading conversation and banter that occasionally culminates with junior members getting tossed into the harbor. By mid-afternoon, the seinenkai finish their work there and set aside the prepared fish for the party that will follow later that night.

At Nmarigaa, preparations and costuming proceed with an entirely different set of seinenkai members taking the grueling roles of paantu. Along the edge of the back field, fewer media wait for them to emerge, but a larger crowd of visitors attends, possibly the result of the publicity in the newspaper and on television after the first day. In 2012, members of the media and hobby photographers took up positions at the edge of the field only to realize that the paantu had outsmarted them, and entered town at the other end of the back road. Since the paantu do not proceed to Mutuzuma or the three mutuyaa as a group, they may move freely around Shimajiri for the duration of the event.

The three mutuyaa still host punaha gatherings, but the paantu visit them as they wish throughout the evening, in whatever order they choose. For mutuyaa like Tsutsumutu and Upuyaa, where the groups of participants linger and grow into the night, the paantu anoint participants with mud over and over again.

Once the activities of Paantu Punaha have ended, the seinenkai and jichikai gather again at the Paantu no Sato Kaikan, where they host an after-party celebrating the end of another successful matsuri, laying out food and drink which includes a variety of contributions from

local vendors as well as the bite-size fish prepared earlier that day. Otoori begins quickly, offering the opportunity for everyone to thank everyone else for their hard work, especially the exhausted seinenkai members that served as paantu.

Historical Permutations

The above description summarizes the overall contours of the events of Sumassari and Paantu Punaha as they occur today. However, some significant changes have occurred within the last forty years. In 1985, the Hirara City Board of Education, Societal Education Section, compiled a report from the previous year's investigation of a local "folk event": the Shimajiri Paantu.⁶⁰ Funded with support of the national Agency for Cultural Affairs, the report served as part of the approval process for Paantu Punaha to be later recognized as an Important Intangible Folk-Cultural Property (Hirara-shi kyôiku iinkai 1985, 2). The Board of Education's document relies not only upon the assistance of prominent Okinawan folklorist Ôshiro Manabu, who was part of the 1985 investigation, but also upon several other firsthand accounts by the Folklore Research Club at the University of the Ryukyus during the early and mid-1970s, a time when the largely undergraduate club, comprising students from a broad spectrum of disciplines and folklorist faculty leadership, traveled throughout Okinawa undertaking full-blown ethnographic surveys of various communities. The group recorded details of ritual calendars, important events, demographic and economic information, kinship structures, occupational folklore, narratives including tales and legends, and vernacular religious expressions in public and private arenas. They published their findings in their own journal, *Okinawa Minzoku* 沖縄民俗 (Okinawa

⁶⁰ Folk event, or *minzoku gyôji* 民俗行事.

Folkways).⁶¹

These publications reveal a changing landscape of demographic and ritual practice during their time, describing some customs still known but no longer practiced. They also demonstrate ritual change between their time and today, particularly in the absence of the divine priestesses, the increased presence of the media, and the shifts in the constituency of the participants. Shimajiri residents respond to these changes in light of local concerns as well, where depopulation and environmental shifts influence their negotiation of meaning and meaningfulness.

Sumassari

The 1976 account of Sumassari by students from the University of the Ryukyus describes a ritual in the midst of technological and demographic change. They observe local commentary that Shimajiri had been growing outward for some time, as the shûkaijo and its utaki, Bunmyaa, marks where the outer boundary of the town (*buraku* 部落) used to be, so in former times men crossed the rope over the road there, and even hung the head of a slaughtered pig from the *deigo* (Indian coral) tree growing over the utaki.

The demographic data included by the survey team reinforces this perspective. The available data makes a jump between the turn of the century in the year 1897, then picks up again in 1960. In those years, the population of Shimajiri grew from 394 people to 663, nearly doubling the number of residents as well as the number of households. However, in tandem with

⁶¹ Early issues include no author attribution, a practice which changes to reflect the occasionally team-written components of later issues. Some narratives are rather charming travelogues, revealing much about the thrilling atmosphere of the folklore research boom of the time, but also about the studious young adults that were engaged in this work.

growth and a successful agricultural revival in the 1960s, by 1975 a new problem began to emerge—the disappearance of young people as they left to seek better jobs in town or elsewhere, giving rise to the feeling that not enough young people remained to do activities with groups like the *seinenkai* (Taira and Kakazu 1976, 1–2). The data begin to show a new trend as well—peaking in 1970 with 696 residents, Shimajiri’s overall population starts to fall, even as the overall population of Miyako Island begins to rise. By 1990, it had fallen to 485 (Higa 1990, 5). The rate of decline remains fairly steady, picking up into the present day. The present population of Shimajiri hovers around 300 people.

By the mid-1970s, Shimajiri residents bought pork for Sumassari instead of using a local animal (Maedô and Tsukayama 津嘉山朝政 1976, 56). Jichikaichô Miyara Tamotsu explained, “When I was a child, they butchered a pig in town. They did that, but now it’s too much trouble so we go and buy pork. That’s how we do it. Butchering is a real pain.” With the falling numbers of full-time agricultural workers (even those knowledgeable about how to butcher animals), the drop in available numbers of participants, the lack of time for those working other professions out of town, as well as the complete shift away from pork production in Shimajiri, buying pork is not just a convenience, but a necessity. However, the once-explicit link between the feast of delicious pork and the raw meat and bone hung from the warding ropes is less obvious when pork comes from storebought packages.

Sumassari appears to reflect broader regional ritual practice as well, with some elements, like left-twisted rope, serving warding functions in Japan (*shimenawa*) and Korea (*keumchul*) (Lebra 1966, 53–54). In both contemporary descriptions as well as historical accounts, Sumassari’s purpose is for purifying (*harai* 祓い) the community from evil and in particular to avoid illness (*mubyôsokusai* 無病息災). Individual elements—rope, pork, bone, and offerings—

were not generally given individual meanings when I conversed with people about them—yet each was deemed a warding element, or *mayoke* 魔よけ. As a category, most people assume that *mayoke* possess their own meanings even if not specifically known; asserting their purpose by naming them *mayoke* contributes to the overall reinforcement of the purification.

Sumassari appears to translate literally to “village decay,” implying spoilage or rotting, and occurs throughout the Ryukyus. Lebra describes *shimagusarashii* (Oka: *shimagusarasaa*) as having been a feature of village life on the Okinawa main island at set intervals as well as “whenever pestilence or contagion was rampant” (Lebra 1966, 148). In a similar fashion, *shimagurasaa* included priestesses that made prayer at the village entrances and major worship sites, while the men made left-twisted rope (*hijainaa/hijainna*) and butchered a pig or other large food animal. The meat was distributed among the villagers, and looped-grass wards dipped in the animal’s blood were affixed to the gate of each house as well as inside it, while the ropes were hung over the village entrances. “Bones and sometimes small strips of animal flesh were fastened to the *hijainna* in the belief that ghosts (*majimung*) or evil spirits (*yanamung*) that cause sickness would be appeased by the sacrifice and would not enter the community” (Lebra 1966, 148–49).

Kiyomura Kônin (1891-1929), considered the father of Miyako Studies, described the rite of *shimafusara*, where pork or beef is taken and eaten together by villages, and the bones are fastened to a *shimenawa* over every village entrance. The meanings he heard were that *shimafusara* was done as a prayer to avoid disastrous epidemics (*ekibyô sainan sake* 疫病災難避け), but also served as an incantation (*majinai* マジナイ) that drifting ships would stay away. Not only could drifting ships carry epidemics, but they could also carry great numbers of foreigners, who once in a great while might enter a village and become burdensome,

impoverishing it by taking advantage of its hospitality or looting it, or disturb local customs or morality (*fûzoku o midasu* 風俗を紊す). He concludes: “Avoiding these damages is totally reasonable!” (Kiyomura 2008, 162–63).

More recent interpretations of the prickly rope and its grisly attachment have less to do with appeasing illness-causing evil forces, and more with frightening them off. The documentation of Sumassari in 1984 focuses on the purificatory action of the hanging of the rope, noting that the spines and meat on the rope communicate a threat—if evil things cross the line, they will be similarly killed (S. 平良新亮 Taira 1985, 34).

Uyagan: the Mizumai & the Men

While Sumassari continued more or less in the same format, the absence of the mizumai—the divine priestesses and their assistants—demonstrate the most marked example of population contraction affecting ritual change during Sumassari and Paantu Punaha. Historically, the mizumai carried out various vital rituals throughout the year, and while opinions differ as to whether they participated in the punaha alongside the men and paantu in the distant past, their visits to the various mutuyaa in living memory occurred early in the afternoon, with the paantu paralleling their visits later in the evening. Around the turn of the 21st century, the last of the tsukasa no longer participated, due to illness, age, or death.

“The tsukasa at that time, they were really stern people,” Hentona Toyoichi recalled. In his 80s, he had lived through the war, and served as jichikaichô as well. He described the actions of the tsukasa on Sumassari:

At that time, they called the kamisama on Sumassari, the day of the eve of the festival, and the content of the old women’s prayer went something like: since the

date for paantu is selected today, as you have done for a long time, may you prevent bad things from entering. And that was the prayer that was done first, and then the rope was made.

On the morning of Paantu Punaha, the mutuyaa households prepared for the tsukasa and their assistants to visit. The women of the house cleaned up the yard and made offerings at the *ibi* (alt: *nibi*) to the guardian deity at one side of the yard. At Mutuzuma, a local woman tended the site of the ruins of a mutuyaa there (Motonaga 1985, 14–15). In some ways, this practice remains, though without the divine priestess involvement.⁶²

As mentioned previously, in 2012 the cleaning occurred on Sumassari because of the national holiday. At Tsutsumutu, where the former yard of a founding house remained when the owner rebuilt the house itself elsewhere, neighboring women arrived to help pick up the area and the jichikai members took care of cutting the waist-high grass. Two middle-aged women spoke with me there:

A: Actually, the *nigai* is tomorrow but today, everybody did the cleaning.

B: Today is like giving information. After we do the cleaning, we make our request to the kamisama. We do it early in the morning. You can't hold the event outside this place, if you just go off as you like the kamisama will get angry.

A: Those [offerings] are, more or less, incense, alcohol, rice...

B: ...Washed rice, and salt, right.

A: We do that, along with the cleaning, and then make the offerings while asking

⁶² It is not clear to me if the place the paantu visit at Mutuzuma and the mutuyaa that the tsukasa held their rituals are the same. Four buildings specifically for ritual use by the tsukasa are falling into a state of decay from lack of use at Mutuzuma, and while they were used for Uyagan and other rites by themselves and their male and female assistants, photography from this era doesn't show them around any such buildings.

that they please grant our prayer. That's it, the beginning.

The cleaning and making offerings at the utaki and mutuyaa mark the beginning of Paantu Punaha, notifying the kamisama indwelling in the utaki and at the mutuyaa that they will later have guests. In previous years, however, the tsukasa began preparations for the punaha visit several days earlier, offering their own prayers for divine protection. Hentona Toyoichi noted that calling on the kamisama took not only a lot of work, but also was considered dangerous: “There's no shield against gods that cannot be touched.”

In the early afternoon of Paantu Punaha, the tsukasa shifted from everyday life work to ritual work with a costume change, putting on fresh clothing, pinning back their hair, and each taking out their white robe of office (literally “god clothes,” *kami ishô* 神衣装) out of storage and placing them in a carrying cloth. The three divine priestesses and their assistants met on the road through town (Motonaga 1985, 15).⁶³

The route of the mizumai first went to Mutuzuma, beyond the hills that form the contemporary northern boundary of Shimajiri. At the mutu site, the woman that had prepared the site met them there with food and alcohol, and stood by while the tsukasa donned their robes and seated themselves on the ground. Offerings and prayer began with the *tuma* assistants carefully arranging the things brought by their hostess. Then the tsukasa chanted a short, poetic prayer, announcing their intention to the protective deity there of holding a ritual and asking for permission to do so. From this opening, they moved to the main prayer, naming first the deity of the place, then moving to the various names of the other surrounding deities, in praise as well as petition. At the end, they called for the kami to actualize the purpose of the ritual. For the duration of this longer prayer, the two assistants as well as the housewife sat quietly with their

⁶³ Or *tumanma*, or *utunma*, depending on its rendering. Jp: *otomo* お供。

hands pressed together. It ended less than ten minutes later, and the mizumai and the tuma each had a sip of sake, ate some of the food, and passed a little time in small talk before being seen off by their hostess (Motonaga 1985, 16).

The process of prayer and offerings repeated at the subsequent two mutuyaa, Tumazuyaa and Upuyaa, both private residences where the lady or head of the house emerged with tea and other refreshments for the mizumai. At Tsutsumutu, the neighborhood women came to join the mizumai with food as they conducted their prayers. At some of the mutu, the men arrived and carried on their drinking separately from the mizumai; at other times, the men arrived as the mizumai departed. In each place, the men also offered a drink of alcohol up to the kamisama at the ibi (Maedô and Tsukayama 津嘉山朝政 1976, 57; Motonaga 1985, 17–19). After the mizumai departed, the men remained to await the paantu.

Today, the offerings to notify the kamisama continue at Tsutsumutu as described above, where a group of local women tend the mutu site, perhaps because it is no longer an actual private residence, or perhaps because some of the neighbors trace their lineage there in some way. In contrast, at Upuyaa, no women or men of the house's lineage live there anymore, and the house remains empty save when its owners living across the island come to check in. Miyara-kaicho explained to me that "there's no point" in doing offerings in such cases, likely because of the close link between bloodlines and protective deities.⁶⁴ However, at least at Upuyaa, the

⁶⁴ As described earlier, divine priestesses in Okinawa not only take on the role of the goddess, but are considered to possess an indwelling divine presence. Historically, on the Okinawan mainland, the Shuri Kingdom's administrative, hereditary priestesses called *noro* replaced and reorganized the ritual specialists belonging to founding house lineages at the local level. Nakamatsu Yashû, Okinawan religious studies scholar, argues that on Miyako, a lack of *noro* presence meant that the daughters of founding houses continued to serve their communities as *tsukasa* 司, with the head of the founding house lineage acting as her male ritual counterpart, the *kanmangaa* 神守人 (Nakamatsu 1990: 49-51). He explains that the descendants of the mutuyaa bear this hereditary ritual responsibility because of their blood relationship to the founding ancestors that have been transformed into local protective deities (*soreishin* 祖霊神; *ujigami* 氏神). These protective deities share a blood relationship to the people within the

retired lay priest of the sea god stood and walked over to the south corner of the house as the punaha got going, and there he offered a glass of awamori to the house god, lifting his hands briefly in prayer.

The absence of the mizumai overall brings up a sense of loss, and the lack of their ritual action draws out a kind of resignation as well as regret. “We ought to have somebody do it more, it ought to be done....Ahh, that’s such a waste. Really, if it only remained, even now,” remarked Hentona Toyoichi. He is not alone. A number of men and women, older and younger, have a sense of loss surrounding Shimajiri’s divine priestesses, although for some it is mitigated by a sense of relief. For them, the stern, often frightening rites of the tsukasa are better off left in the past.

A number of people, when asked if there was any link between the paantu and the tsukasa, replied “no.” However, a former jichikaicho described it as two sides of the same matsuri: hard and soft. The “soft” aspect involved the tsukasa and their propitiation of the kami and prayers for protection. The “hard” aspect, in contrast, was the paantu.

Paantu Punaha: Changes

As far as most people are concerned, this hard aspect of the matsuri has changed very little over the years. The substance or content (*naiyô* 内容) remains consistent, particularly as to its underlying meanings. When addressing contemporary concerns, however, the media presence and increased tourist constituency most strongly affect local perceptions of change. In addition, demographic and environmental shifts also influence the performance of Paantu Punaha.

village, part of the reason why people trust them implicitly, like a child toward a parent, and why different bloodlines possess ties to different utaki (Nakamatsu 1990, 16–23).

The 1972 visits by the University of the Ryukyus' folklore survey team describe the influx of media, in particular their film cameras, lights, and 16 mm movie cameras, which drove back the shadows and annoyed the paantu (Maedô and Tsukayama 津嘉山朝政 1976, 58). About this time, the first streetlights were installed in Shimajiri as well, and the new visibility drastically changed the way that people perceived the paantu. Before the lights, the well-camouflaged paantu attacked suddenly out of pitch darkness and vanished back into it again, terrifying even adults (S. 平良新亮 Taira 1985, 47). With the streetlights, and in particular the film crew following, the paantu had their element of surprise compromised.

In the wake of the National Intangible Folk-Cultural Property designation in 1993, increased media attention expanded awareness of the paantu, and in turn, brought in additional outside attendees. Today, in addition to the many newspapers and television stations arriving to document the paantu, independent professional and hobbyist photographers range through town. On the roof of the kôbaiten, TV crews set up floodlights to fully illuminate the crowds clustered in front of the store and the street below. Outnumbering them by far, the ubiquitous cell phone cameras held up by the visiting tourists follow the paantu wherever they go.

Tourists

Visitors attended Paantu Punaha for decades prior to the national designation; however, their constituency appears to have changed substantially. Shimajiri residents recall visitors arriving from neighboring communities such as Karimata and Ôura. Tomori Mariko, in her late fifties, recalled, "Because we [she and friends] were from a neighboring town, sometimes we would come by bus to see the paantu, get muddy, and go home again. Why, I don't know, but we came here." As she and her friends looked over the photographs published by Higa Yasuo,

particularly the action-filled street scenes from the 1980s, they recognized with nostalgia the buildings that have since been torn down or remodeled, but noted that most of the faces of the young people pursued by the paantu came from outside Shimajiri. In the photos, cars motor freely through sparse pedestrian traffic, and the paantu run freely.

Today, in the interest of public safety, the jichikai closes off the streets to vehicles, and in high-traffic areas, such as before the kôbaiten, the crowds comprise not only people from across Miyako, but also large numbers of tourists visiting from the Japanese mainland. Shimajiri residents describe this as the biggest shift, necessitating the participation of a volunteer security force, the mobilization of assistants to help with parking, and numerous other changes to ensure the safety of the visitors, as well as the paantu themselves from the crowds.

Date Setting and Promotion

The increased tourist presence results not only from raised local and national awareness, but relates directly to changing employment patterns, depopulation, and the promotion of the event by tourist agencies, who make the upcoming dates of the matsuri known.

In the past, a male priest (*dansei shinyaku* 男性神役) known as the *sumaudayaa* or *pyuuzudasu* (日取り主, literally the “master of the date”) determined the dates for ritual events according to various aspects of the lunar calendar. A few days before the town held an event, a second assistant (*sumamaaryaa*) walked through town, announcing the day and time for the event (Shinzaki, Hanashiro 花城恵美子, and Matayoshi 又吉よね子 1976, 27). In the 1980s, the *sumaudayaa* first notified the priestesses after setting the date, and the town loudspeakers broadcast the announcement (Motonaga 1985, 13). Since the last setter of the date retired in recent years, the head of the jichikai, Miyara Tamotsu, now sets the dates for the various matsuri

in consultation with the jichikai leadership.

Rather than a few days ahead of time, they set the date about a month in advance, primarily so the jichikai and especially the seinenkai members can request time off of work. With fewer seinenkai members to spare, and none of them working agricultural jobs locally, everyone requires advance notice. In addition to employers, the early dates enable outside entities to know when Paantu Punaha will occur.

Future Young Men

Depopulation and the exit of young people from the community also alter the ages and numbers of people assisting with Paantu Punaha. While in the past, only a few seinenkai members turned up to handle the preparations and actualization of the matsuri, today, all available seinenkai members attend, and jichikai members also help out. A few junior high boys attend to help out on the day of Paantu Punaha, but in the past, the junior high and elementary school aged boys played a key role in assembling the costuming, gathering kyaan, carrying it over the hill road to Nmarigaa for the seinenkai to use, as well as retrieving the masks (Taira 1985, 32-34). Some years, the seinenkai even recruited junior high and high school students to serve as paantu when the men's numbers fell short. Jichikaichô Miyara Tamotsu recalled from his own youth that, "Junior high and high school students also did it. It's a little, well, that image is kind of bad, dragging whoever out and making them do it with the numbers so low."

"It gradually got worse," Fukuhara Kôyû, Shimajiri native, carpenter, and architect in his fifties concluded. He took the role of paantu once as a young man, and again at age forty-five. The inclusion of older men willing to take on the grueling paantu experience also reflects the lack of available young men from the seinenkai to take the role. Meanwhile, Shinzato Hidehiko, a former seinenkai leader in his early thirties, jokes that if there are no young men left to be

paantu, then all the old men will have to do it. He laughs, “I’ll probably still be in the seinenkai at forty-five.”

Fukuhara now describes his role as that of a coach, offering assistance and instruction to the seinenkai with the cooperation of the other members of the jichikai. In addition, the seinenkai today tries to mentor, recruit, and incorporate junior high school students as helpers rather than paantu. Many of the local junior high school students attend Karimata Junior High School, a ten minute bike ride up the road from Shimajiri. However, proximity does not ensure interest, and the seinenkai members speak to their younger brothers as well as to parents to ask that their boys attend. By the time students reach high school, school life, study, and part-time work consumes their free time, and the majority of high school students attend Paantu as audience members only.

Environment

In addition to depopulation, environmental changes significantly affect participation as well as actualization of the paantu. The ready availability of kyaan locally made participation by local boys more feasible in past decades, and a group was led on foot into the hills around town; now, the seinenkai take their small pickup trucks out of town and down back roads outside of town. However, costuming improvisation is consistent, too: storm damage to kyaan made finding good leafy vines difficult, and so alternate plants were used historically as well (S. 平良新亮 Taira 1985, 32). The old men explained that when the search grew difficult, they lopped off some potato vines. Quick-growing, the potatoes recovered, but from their tone, I expect that the farmers donating the vines remained in the dark about their donations.

Perceptions about the use of non-kyaan vines differ. J.C. Alvaredo, an American and Marine who married into a Shimajiri family, participated as a paantu in 2011, and remarked that

the kyaan used in pictures from before looked “much lighter,” even fluffy. Other seinenkai members told me seriously that the vines used now were much heavier. Matsukawa-kaicho explained his perspective:

Since kyaan is scarce, even if we find it, we mix it in. Since there’s hardly any, you know, [the rest are] fake...Real kyaan has leaves that the mud doesn’t stick to well. Since the leaves are heavy, and mud doesn’t stick so well... the ones we’re doing it with now have lightweight leaves, and the mud sticks easily...It’s heavy, but if you’ve got mud stuck to it, even when you smear somebody, it’ll last up to fifty times.

Evaluations of the paantu’s vine costuming also reflects environmental awareness. The disappearance of kyaan may stem from natural sources, as well as reflect the reconstruction of the fields around Shimajiri. When construction initiatives added stone walls and terracing to the fields, the kyaan growing wild in those intermediary zones disappeared. Local concern that kyaan has disappeared has led to several conversations within the jichikai about some way of reserving land on which to grow it specifically for the matsuri.

Construction around other intermediary zones also creates unforeseen effects and in some cases spurs on further construction. The road that now winds back along the field has only been paved for two decades, and before surrounding construction to reinforce the hillsides at the edges of the fields, Nmarigaa lay hidden in a depression between the fields and the wooded mountainside. Miyara Tamotsu elaborated:

Before, Nmarigaa was a place people couldn’t see from anywhere. Since it was below the mountain, you couldn’t see it, even from the road. The beautification,

well, they did a little land improvement, and it got so that you could see it from the road. That's why we thought, this it isn't very good, as we noticed that side of the mountain and where we made paantu also, and that's why we thought that it was no good there. Even now, the road has become so pretty, so you quickly—well, convenient things are convenient but, you know, it gets said that it was much better before, too. In the past, the area over there was a mountain, and a field— a mountainous field—you couldn't see anything, but now since taking mud out is easy to see, there's the thought that we should separate it a little.

Concrete stairs, handrails, and the pruning back of some of the surrounding vegetation made access to the spring much easier. In 2012, the jichikai decided to add two squared concrete pipes at the entrance of Nmarigaa, creating a visual barrier at the landing, and a flat, carved stone atop the barrier reading “Nmarigaa” (ンマリガー) in bold letters to the outside. They placed another squared drainage pipe in the marshy channel that feeds Nmarigaa, which provided a base for a platform directly next to the spring for carrying out mud extraction and the costuming of the paantu while allowing water to flow down the channel to the spring.

In previous decades, the midori paantu picked their way carefully down the hill to Nmarigaa, bundled up tight in their layers of vines, and entered the spring itself, sinking almost to their waists in the soft, churned mud. Then they daubed mud on one another from head to toe, with some help from their assistants. They emerged from the spring with difficulty, crawling out of the sucking mud, and struggled back up the hill until they reached the field path (S. 平良新亮 Taira 1985, 40).

However, the stairs and neat lines of concrete allowing for ease and safety during the seinenkai members' transformation and the building up of the hillside nearby may be at fault for

changing the quality of the mud. Unlike many old shallow wells around Shimajiri, which fell into disuse once the public water system arrived, the occasion of Paantu provided at least one annual visit so that the well did not become too overgrown or filled in. However, cutting back so much vegetation and surrounding the marshy ground with concrete seems to have resulted in far less vegetable matter falling into the water to decay.

Tomori Mariko discussed the issue with several friend at her home. One of them, another woman in her fifties or sixties, made a remark about the mud: “It used to smell worse, didn’t it?” Tomori explained to me, “The mud today is different from how it used to be. The old mud smelled so bad! Even if you got it on your hands and washed them, the smell would linger two, three days. It just soaked in.”

Numerous people note how the smell of the mud has changed, but the color of the mud also receives complaints. The older men drinking at the mutuyaa claimed that the mud today was just clay, drying grey. The paantu mud should be completely black, I often heard. At a jichikai meeting I attended, some discussion emerged as to whether they should begin throwing in handfuls of straw early in the year to help with the lack of organic matter in the mud. However, the sacred nature of Nmarigaa posed a problem as to the propriety of such a move, and ultimately the suggestion was tabled. In contrast, the seinenkai does not appear to regard the issue of the smell as terribly pressing. The mud still smells bad enough, and they claim the distinctive scent lingers in their skin at least a week after shedding the external trappings of the paantu.

Re-Creation and Maintenance

Maintenance of the site’s usability and the mud’s distinctive quality tend to be environmental concerns. However, the most important element of Paantu does not reside in the

mud or the vines, but the masks. While accounts differ as to whether one or two masks washed ashore on Kubama at that ambiguous prior historical period, eventually expanding to three, none of the masks currently in use date back to a historical original. The makers of the extant masks in the mid-1970s belonged to the generation of adults that lived through the war, and it seems that the nnaka-paantu and ffa-paantu masks survived from before the war, but American firebombing destroyed Futsumutu and the uya-paantu mask there. After a new uya-paantu mask was commissioned, the older generation deemed the previous uya-paantu mask more frightening (Taira 1985, 37-38).

Sometime in the 1990s, the much-repaired nnaka-paantu mask finally broke so that it had to be replaced. A break-in at Futsumutu around a decade ago (*haisho arashi* 拝所荒らし), resulted in the vandalizing of the worship place and the breaking of the uya-paantu mask. Despite the care in creating new masks, the contemporary replacements of the uya-paantu and nnaka-paantu masks stir up similar judgment as the postwar ones. Hentona Toyoichi explained:

At the officers' meeting, we asked who the best, most skillful carpenter was.

According to that, we called someone up....But the mask doesn't match at all. It doesn't look like it at all. The scariness of the face, it's totally different....The roundness, and the eye, the way the sweep up from the eye is done, and in addition, the roundness of the forehead is totally different.

Fukuhara Kôyû, a generation after Toyoichi, agrees that the newer masks don't have the same fear factor. As a local paantu expert and carpenter himself, he admits that he is waiting for the current masks so he can make ones closer in style to the old ones, whose broken pieces have retired to Futsumutu to rest on the shelf next to the current uya-paantu mask, and whose whole images linger in historical pictures.

The concern with historical accuracy informs many people's perspectives within Shimajiri to the changes they perceive in Paantu Punaha. Proprietary knowledge and strict guidelines for participation complicate relationships with the past, and make revival and renewal difficult in some instances, and easier in others: the jichikai can commission a new mask, even an unsatisfactory one, but cannot commission new tsukasa. Carrying ritual life forward requires a perception of necessity, as well as dedication and creativity to maintain the community itself.

Tradition as Change

The origin story of the paantu mask washing ashore at Kubama implies the transformation from the mask alone to a figure literally bound up in the environment along with the health concerns of the community. As some versions of the story relate, at the time the mask washed ashore, Shimajiri was in the midst of an epidemic. The paantu joined the intimate punaha and succeeded in driving away the illness, ensuring its continued presence in the community. The process by which vines and mud were deemed important, how the prickly rope and bone became part of the costuming, and how one mask became three can be guessed at but not known, attributed generally to the supernaturally charged advice of the yuta shaman at that time, perhaps on many occasions throughout the paantu's history.

No yuta live in Shimajiri anymore, yet it is clear that ongoing changes to Paantu Punaha reflect differences in technology, environment, employment, demographics, and perceptions of what comprises the most important parts of the ritual to keep, the important central meanings or actions, and what may adapt. In other words, tradition always changes; it is "volitional, temporal action," wherein individuals choose to co-create cultural forms at given points in time (Glassie 1995, 405). A recorded version may be accepted as a template, or even be regarded as

authoritative, but it will only be one point in an ongoing process, even if that process is attempting to remain as true as possible to the core of ritual practice.

As we have seen, in Shimajiri, attempts to keep up the content of Paantu Punaha in a changing context does result in some changes. Frequently action results in unforeseen complications, such as the field renovations altering the visibility of Nmarigaa, which create a cascading chain of new problems to address, or force into contrast the conflicting understandings of meaning and place. Nowhere is this conflict more pronounced than in Shimajiri's struggle to adapt to the influx of tourists in the wake of the surge in popularity the event experienced after its national Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property designation.

Chapter 4: Understandings and Making Understood

In 2014, in the wake of a completed Paantu Punaha, the *Okinawa Times* ran an article headlined, “Distress over Mud-Coating Deities: Miyakojima Paantu” (*Okinawa Times*, 2014). The article focused on the conflict and complaints generated by a few visitors to Paantu, and created a surge of consternation in Shimajiri as the bad press quickly jumped to national news sources. Internet commentary abounded, and even some foreign language news sources picked up the story. Several follow-up articles were published, including interviews with Miyara Tamotsu, the jichikaichô, and several prominent Miyako and Okinawa folklorists, which took an educational tone as well as stressed the ongoing welcome offered by the community of Shimajiri.

Without making unfavorable generalizations about all visitors, the overwhelming majority of whom come in good faith, I wish to focus on why these misunderstandings occur, and the action taken within Shimajiri to mitigate the sources of this conflict. Since the designation of the Miyakojima Paantu as a national Important Intangible Folk-Cultural Property in 1993, event marketing toward the tourist demographic and the paantu’s presence in nationwide media has grown, dramatically increasing the numbers of visitors. Such an increased visitor presence both alters the event dynamics of Paantu Punaha, and also shapes the attitudes of participants from Shimajiri. Each bit of “trouble” (トラブル) that occurs in the context of the ritual makes a strong impression:

There’s a lot of trouble, though. There are plenty of people who get angry when they’ve been muddied! Quite a few. Because Paantu Punaha is a ritual (*shinji* 神事) where you get muddy to have good health (*mubyôsokusai* 無病息災), the

paantu *have* to get people muddy! The tourists come, and the paantu go to get them muddy, but everyone is supposed to run away. But running, and getting caught, you know, where would they, I mean, you can be caught anywhere, and the people that run away get caught. That's the way it goes. One time, this happened. A woman complained to Miyakojima City! She said, "I was touched even though I told them not to." And because of that, people said things like, "Aren't the paantu just catching women?" That kind of thing is just, from our point of view, totally not it at all. Our thought is to catch people running away, you know? There's a lot of trouble like that.

—Hanashiro Hiroki, head of the volunteer security force

The tourists coming, well, that's a wonderful thing, isn't it? This town isn't all that famous, except that we have the paantu festival, it's our only selling point, apart from paantu we're not famous at all. This is a quiet place, but when the tourists come from all over, it's crowded, for this area. More than any other thing, it's a pleasure. ...Only, because of everyone running around, it's scary if someone gets injured. Last year, a tourist fell, and an ambulance came, an *ambulance*! But if people are drinking alcohol...that really causes problems. From the time before we begin, our prayer, our only prayer, is that things be free from accidents. But that time, rain also had been falling. Oh, when rain falls it's the worst, you know. The mud melts right off, and not as many people come to see. From that morning, there had been a lot of rain, and people were asking, calling up and the phone and things, asking, "Are you going to cancel paantu?" because the weather was so

bad. We said, “No, we’re doing it!”

—Miyara Tamotsu, jichikaichô

It’s always this kind of thing, when it gets dark, various problems come up, like people kicking the paantu. Almost every year there are some....Last year, somebody threw a rock at the paantu, and the year before that they were tripped.

—K.T., junior high school student

It’s dangerous. Everyone is running around. They run into things, and they’re okay, but it’s scary because everyone is so focused on running away so they don’t get muddy. It’s awful. When I saw it, I thought, ‘Oh, scary!’ The running people are scary; the paantu are scary. People scream, “Aaah! The paantu are coming!!!” I hear the yelling now and I just shut the door.

—Tomori Mariko, community grandmother

The previous chapter dealt with how ritual reflects contextual changes, in particular the concerns emerging from within the community of Shimajiri. This chapter moves that conversation a step further, to explore how Shimajiri residents interface with perspectives on their ritual from outside the community.

Obviously, an inside/outside binary to describe group identity is oversimplified. In this case, however, community members from Shimajiri often stress the differential extremes between insiders who understand, and those outsiders who don’t. For example, most articles as well as most people in Shimajiri explained that the cause of the trouble lay with people who

came with no knowledge of the event's meaning or the significance of being smeared with mud.⁶⁵ I don't believe that this means they believe outsiders are incapable of understanding, or that a variety of perspectives do not exist in the community, but examining reactions and counter-reactions as opposites is a useful tool in this instance to draw out the sources of conflict.

Cross-cultural conflict and understanding can be dealt with in various ways. Often, this takes the form of describing insider and outsider identities through various conceptions of group, including networks of relationships (Noyes 1995); the ways in which people express group affiliation (and disaffiliation) to various degrees (Coggeshall 1986; Bauman 1971); or by utilizing the concept of worldview (Toelken 1996, 263–66), which may reflect esoteric and exoteric descriptions of identity (Jansen 1959, 211), or “etic” and “emic” distinctions, the differences between analytical and cultural constructs (Dundes 1962, 101–4).⁶⁶

However, underlying this chapter is the notion of community and understanding as generated by shared experience. Culturally constructed understandings emerge out of what Barre Toelken calls the “educative matrix,” the array of experiences through which people learn various behaviors, whether those resemble work skills, speech patterns, skill sets, or cultural practices (Toelken 1996, 19–31). This kind of context-dependent, shared, social learning forms

⁶⁵ While only a mediocre barometer of public opinion, responses to an informal online poll conducted by the *Okinawa Times* resulted in 74 respondents, with 55% agreeing that visitors should understand (*rikai shite* 理解して) the meaning of the ritual before participating. The second largest percentage, 23%, responded that they couldn't even comprehend (*rikai dekinai* 理解出来ない) the complaints. A single vote was put in for: “I also understand the feelings of the angry people.” (“‘Paantu Ni Kujô’ ari? Nashi? 「パーントゥに苦情」あり?なし? [Should There Be or Not Be ‘Complaints about Paantu’?]” 2015).

⁶⁶ As Bauman points out, “The point is that folklore performance does not require that the lore be a collective representation of all the participants, pertaining and belonging equally to all of them. It may be so, but it may also be differentially distributed, differentially performed, differentially perceived, and differentially understood. As folk groups are generally conceptualized, all the members have an equal stake in their common folklore and are equally eligible to perform it, whereas in all of our examples the lines between performer and audience are clearly drawn, based on differences of identity” (Bauman 1971, 38).

the core of the “community of practice” (Lave and Wenger 1991). In the context of ritual, itself a form of learning through the educative matrix within a community of practice, the understandings of individuals interact with the broader social network. In the social context, shared experience generates and sustains the basis for understanding.⁶⁷ Understanding, then, has a reciprocal relationship with the community of practice, and this also includes understandings that emerge in “liminal” events (V. Turner 1979; van Gennep 1960) where ordinary interpretations are altered or suspended.

People’s understandings of Paantu Punaha can be garnered through their responses to the event, both in action and discussion. In the first part of this chapter, I use ritual theory to help elucidate what can be understood through the context of participatory ritual action alone where it intersects with the ongoing negotiation of understanding within the community. In the second part of this chapter, I examine the responses to Paantu Punaha as ritual criticism, or responses that influence ritual performance as ritual actors take into account the actions and reactions of various participants and observers. These responses are to a certain extent based upon the idea that explanations and understanding go hand in hand, and so sources of information available to visitors before their arrival in Shimajiri may shape their perceptions. Finally, I examine some of

⁶⁷ In a series of experiments, Wilkenfeld, Plunkett, and Lombrozo reassert how social processes as well as personal epistemology underlies how people consider others to possess understanding. Crucially, *knowing* why something happens is not the same as *understanding* why it happens. They suggest that people regard those whom they consider as understanding a given topic to possess more “explanatory depth” than those who only know about it. They also suggest that people do not attribute understanding when they perceive a lack of explanatory depth, but as depth increases, they are more likely to do so (Wilkenfeld, Plunkett, and Lombrozo 2016, 375). More importantly, people defer to those they consider as having the deepest understanding in the contexts where they require their expertise to solve a problem (2016, 391–92). In describing Shimajiri informants’ perspectives in the “understanding” camp, I am reflecting their perspectives that they possess the depth of explanation necessary for understanding, but I also recognize that they defer to certain individuals within their community as having the deepest understandings, a distinction that this argument regrettably glosses over.

the features of the “educative matrix” that comprises local understandings of Paantu Punaha.

Behavior and Restrictions

Apparently arriving with little or no prior context, social relationships, or experience of the ritual, some visitors seem destined to come into conflict with local understandings. Even visitors who have some knowledge beforehand find themselves unprepared. However, while matters of interpretation may be unclear, attentive participants can still clearly comprehend ritual practices and taboos (Bell 1992, 185–86). While those practices can be perceived in the present, those within the interpretive community of Shimajiri take into account that understandings of ritual practice have shifted over time, in many cases brought on by contact with visitors from outside the community.

Ritual Practices

Participants in the streets of Shimajiri can apprehend the basic format of ritual practice there: the paantu come, chase people who flee, and smear anyone they can reach with mud. Many visitors appear to arrive the clear intention of bringing themselves or their children to be smeared with mud, waiting in place while holding out their (often screaming) children to be literally taken in hand by the paantu. Older children, teenagers, and adults often recoil or run, when not prevented from doing so by the crowds. The fastest ones can sometimes escape, so this tension between attending, running away, and being caught may lead to the misunderstanding that perhaps the paantu don’t need to catch people at all.

Hentona Toyoichi, a community elder in his eighties, noted that the crowding during the matsuri had a great effect on how frequently the paantu caught people. When he was young, he

related, because everyone was so scared of the paantu, they made sure to give the deities a lot of space. “Even me, they were never able to catch me, even though I watched from the time I was a child. I’m a slow runner, but nobody who spotted me from far away could catch me.”

In contemporary experience, however, the paantu are expected to catch people. Hanashiro Hiroki, in his mid-thirties, reflected, “Everyone is supposed to run away. But running, and getting caught, you know, where would they—, I mean, you can be caught anywhere, and the people that run away get caught. That’s the way it goes.”

The marked contrast between these two perspectives reflects generational difference as well as the changed context of the matsuri. While in both instances the paantu’s role was to catch people, in previous decades the paantu relied on stealth and speed, and had plenty of space to recuperate out of sight. Today, crowding ensures the paantu’s near constant contact with visitors as well as the need to create a safe visitor-free zone for paantu recuperation. The crowding also results in the inability to flee easily, giving rise to the expectation not only that some people may be caught if they are inattentive, but that everyone who flees will most certainly be caught and



Crowding in for the perfect shot of the paantu. 2012. Photo by author.

muddied.

Ritual Restrictions

Visitors may observe Paantu Punaha's ritual taboos more than appropriate behavior due to their enforcement by the seinenkai and jichikai members. If ritual practices are behaviors one does, then a taboo may be most simply defined as a behavioral restriction. Like ritual practices open to the public, the restrictions enforced and perceived by participants during Paantu Punaha also show evidence of change over time. During Paantu Punaha, the three main behavioral restrictions are place-based, gender-based, and emotion-based, but differing enforcement measures by the seinenkai and jichikai result in different levels of perception of these taboos.

Visitors may perceive the strict place-based limitations during Paantu Punaha if they attempt to come down the road along the back of town to Nmarigaa. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the seinenkai close off the spring and its surroundings to outside observers before the transformation of the three seinenkai members into paantu. Participants are limited to the seinenkai and jichikai members, and no women are allowed inside. This place restriction is time sensitive. While the Shimajiri jichikai and seinenkai do not necessarily encourage visitors to Nmarigaa during the preparations for Paantu, they do permit a few early arrivals, male and female, generally consisting of film crews, photographers, and researchers. The jichikai leader makes himself present to answer questions in the capacity of Shimajiri's official spokesperson, and the leader of the seinenkai fields additional questions. The jichikaichô politely reminds visitors that after so many minutes, the area will be closed off. As the seinenkai begins their costuming process in earnest, pickup trucks block the back road from both directions, and any incoming visitors are met on the road and asked to leave the area. However, any other time

outside of these two afternoons a year, Nmarigaa is open for anyone to come and visit, and signs clearly marking its location were placed at the side of the road in 2012.

One former jichikaichô referred to this division as a “veil” (ベール), a division between the “open” side of the event, where the public may come and participate, and the “closed” side, dominated by male insider knowledge. He noted that in many ways, keeping the transformation off-limits was primarily so that the children didn’t know who the paantu were: “We don’t say who is doing paantu, and we also don’t say who did it, at least not for month or so after.”

Anonymity ensured the sense that the paantu were deities, not just people in costume. However, the veil itself also seems to vary in people’s interpretations and has changed over time: Miyara-kaichô noted that “The seinenkai have come to the point where they won’t show the making of the paantu... When all of us were younger, we did whatever we liked, and even though we were making deities, it wasn’t a big deal. But today’s young people won’t show anything.... They tell the TV people that they can only watch from far away, too.”

Emphasis on behavioral restrictions also appears to reflect changing cultural context. In the past, at least during the 1970s and 1980s, various outside photographers and ethnographers were permitted to be present for some if not all of the costuming process, falling safely on the side of the male gender binary.⁶⁸ This past flexibility, however, does not appear to have included allowing women to witness the transformation.⁶⁹ Naturally, the insiders know who the paantu

⁶⁸ The word “binary” is used deliberately here, with acknowledgement of the fluid spectrum of gender identification, to which a footnote will scarcely do justice. However, the male/female gender binary seems to dominate most traditional Okinawan religious practice and contemporary and everyday perceptions of gender. While cross-dressing in Okinawan state religion was not unheard of, the male-female duality in religious life dominated courtly as well as vernacular practice (Kawahashi 1992; 2000).

⁶⁹ Most older women I spoke with stressed that they never had any desire to go to Nmarigaa during Paantu; my question came across as somewhat odd, if not completely out of the realm of correct behavior during the ritual. For younger women, the idea that they would want to be part of this extremely masculine event was equally absurd.

are, have been, and will be the following night. Everyone else must tolerate anonymous rampaging deities. In many ways, the necessity for a veil between inside knowledge and outside participation has been heightened by the tourist presence, with the restriction of information achieved by the seinenkai asserting their authority and control over insider knowledge, including photography and video taken beyond the veil.

The second restricted location during Paantu is Mutuzuma, which is closed to those outside of the jichikai assistants and the three paantu as they make their ascent up the hill on the first day of Paantu Punaha. As this occurs just after the initial appearance of the paantu, excitement among observers runs high, and jichikai and seinenkai members generally have to tell observers that they must stay at the bottom of the hill road.

The third restricted location is at the shûkaijô, the old community center in the middle of town, where the paantu go for brief breaks away from the crowds and to re-wet the mud that



Seinenkai members and vehicle blockade. 2012. Photos by author.

covers them. A parked truck or outdoor tent screens them from view in its small parking lot as they stretch, down sports drinks, or have a quick smoke. Because of its central location, the seinenkai members manning the shûkaijô constantly remind the ever-changing crowds that people may not follow the paantu beyond the low wall around the building or beyond the blockade into the parking lot.

These place-based restrictions come with barricades of parked vehicles, policing by men of the security team wearing matching brightly colored shirts, or vocal seinenkai members that make themselves into a physical barrier when verbal instruction is not sufficient. Even if the rationale behind the place restriction lacks clarity, obvious verbal and nonverbal signals accomplish the taboo enforcement. While the activities of costuming, transformation, and prayer done in private in the sacred ground of Nmarigaa and Mutuzuma are symbolically dense, ritualized action, the barrier to viewing these transformative and sacred actions is accomplished through decidedly non-ritualized action.

The shûkaijô bridges the sacred and secular locations, providing for renewal with mud from Nmarigaa (ritual action) as well as physical renewal for the persons taking the role of paantu (non-ritual action). Its central location proves to be more permeable to intrusion by the quick photographer (although prohibition is attempted), as well as women. Like other transformative spaces, the shûkaijô is closed to outside observers. At the end of the night, the seinenkai and jichikai members prevent people from following the paantu to the ocean, where their last transformation occurs, from paantu to men again in the cold water.

Gender Restrictions

Unlike the restriction on place, the gender-based restriction tended to be less applicable to

visitors, although they could be observed. Women and men within Shimajiri knew about the central restriction on opposite-gender involvement beyond the veil, but visitors would be barred from intrusion regardless of gender. Some men of the jichikai actually used the word “taboo” (タブー) on a few occasions to refer to the division, and the assumption that all seinenkai and jichikai preparations were men-only and closed to women was often repeated. These perceived restrictions extended even to the accumulation of vines by the seinenkai in the days prior to Paantu Punaha, although in practice they proved to be more open.

The gender-based divisions at the three historical house sites (*mutuyaa*) also shows signs of change. Historically, the punaha drinking and socializing historically occurred among men only, with the women having separate or simultaneous women-only gatherings. The *mutuyaa* occupy both ritual and secular space simultaneously, and show permeability to the opposite gender as well as to outsiders. The men that gather for punaha frequently find themselves interrupted for interviews by roving camera crews and photographed by visitors and media. With the invitation of the assembled gathering, both male and female friends, Shimajiri natives as well



Mixed assembly at Paimutu. 2012. Photo by author.

as visiting outsiders, may enter and participate in the ootoori circles.

However, the awareness that these gender boundaries have only recently begun to give way may be revealed by the predominantly male joking in these spaces, providing an outlet to potential discomfort or criticism. I once heard an older man exclaimed, “A woman!” in shock on finding me at Upuyaa at the outset of the punaha, but subsequent women joined with no comment or repercussion, save of course the inevitable result of remaining any length of time in one of the places to which the paantu routinely return. “I thought you were a pretty girl, but now you’re a paantu!” laughed one older man when I appeared at Paimutu covered in mud. The circle laughed uproariously--I’d clearly gotten plastered, but the gentle nudge at my presence in a mostly male space, and the appropriateness of a paantu in that place coupled with the impossibility of my ever taking on the actual role of the paantu may have heightened the comic relief.

Anger: The Invisible Taboo

Applicable to insiders and outsiders, male and female alike, is the third major taboo during Paantu Punaha: anger. This emotion is forbidden because of its potential to bring misfortune instead of fortune, disaster instead of boon. However, this emotional taboo appears to be one that is completely inscrutable through simple observations of behavior, fading even farther into the background because of the social restriction on demonstrable anger in ordinary everyday interactions. Most people in Shimajiri appear to learn about this specific ritual taboo from family or friends before experiencing Paantu Punaha. When I asked a junior high-aged boy how he would explain his own photographs of the paantu if he were speaking to people in a place outside Shimajiri, he led off immediately with the caution that if they came, they shouldn’t cause

trouble. He continued with his hypothetical advice, “If it’s paantu, even if they get you muddy, you don’t get angry! That kind of thing.”

In an everyday context, someone assaulting another or their property with mud would justify an angry response. However, as Hentona Tadashi explains, one does not get angry with the paantu; rather, one *thanks* the paantu for the cold, wet gift of mud and their assault upon person and property, because ultimately the action of the paantu contributes to personal as well as communal good.⁷⁰ Shimajiri Yôko, a local resident, extends her ready hospitality even to the paantu every year, and she never locks her door, which ensures mud in her entryway, living



Shimajiri Yôko prepares to tackle post-paantu cleanup. 2012. Photos by author.

⁷⁰ This idea is not limited to Shimajiri. This idea may also be found in historical village vernacular religious practice and belief throughout Japan, where strangers to the place were feared, and their entry to a space considered “inside” marked a source of potential danger, spiritual and physical. Not limited to people, but including strange objects as well, these Other things could have the power to bless if treated well. But ignored or mistreated, they could have the power to hinder or curse (Yoshida 1981, 95).

room, even the walls. “But we don’t get angry. You can’t get angry,” she explained. During Paantu 2014 she returned after a brief trip to the neighbor’s and had a shock—a paantu sitting in her living room, watching television, waiting for her return. But unlike a tale of a mud-covered person calmly parked on her furniture, the paantu’s transgressive surprise provoked laughter in the retelling.

For the first-time observer, the emotional reactions to the paantu among the crowd tend to swing between two common observable poles: delight and fear, often some combination of the two. Not all people left to clean up the mess the paantu leave behind are necessarily delighted, however. As deities, paantu do not remove their mud-caked shoes before entering a house. They go where they like, and you can always tell where they have been. Mud in tatami never comes out. Curtains are permanently stained. Even outdoor walls bear the traces of paantu mud for more than a year.

Some local residents lock their doors—to houses and cars alike—as the prevention of mud may be deemed superior to the application of blessing. Many women express a fair amount of ambivalence, as they tend to be the ones stuck with the bulk of home cleanup. However, where there is not necessarily gratitude, there is at least a practiced resignation: they might not be happy about the paantu’s traces, but they aren’t angry about it. Even for lifetime Shimajiri men, the process of getting muddied doesn’t result in pleasure, necessarily. In the mutu, getting plastered could involve a cry of dismay, with some men doubling over to cover their faces, or a helpless laugh. Yet after momentary complaints after the paantu had passed, the muddee turned their attention to laugh at the next person.

Unlike the clear demarcations of place boundaries, there are no mundane or non-ritualized reminders about anger. It’s the easiest taboo to break, and anger results in the most

public complaints. Perhaps once a year, angered by the paantu's mud-slinging, some visitors respond with violence—hitting, kicking, or rock-throwing. For these, the trouble is handled with the quickest non-ritualized action possible—with Shimajiri men stepping in and calling the police.

Beyond the simple relationship between fear and anger, flight or fight, may be the recognition that this emotional taboo was never necessary, its necessity brought on instead by the presence of visitors who actively misrecognize what is happening. Kyoko Alvaredo, a Shimajiri native in her early forties, notes that during her childhood, going up to the paantu to touch it or hit it would have been unthinkable. As a *kamisama*, the paantu could not be refused or rebuked; they were sacred (*shinsei* 神聖). She noted that the children, particularly the girls, tended to be too frightened to even go outside. While parents might bring their children up to be touched, and some boys might taunt the paantu, other children were so afraid of the paantu they would “freak and freeze.” The frightening aspect dominated, something that was true for the divine priestesses' rituals as well as the paantu.

The students from the University of the Ryukyus may have visited Shimajiri during Kyoko's childhood. They note a similar scene in town, notably different because instead of a crowd of adults thronging around the paantu, instead it consisted of children who tried to catch the paantu's attention. However, an even more striking difference can be found in the memories of their informants:

They said that formerly, the paantu would appear around 4pm, and together with the *mizumai* would visit each neighborhood and receive a cup of alcohol from the older men. Also, that most of the middle-aged men would be disguised [*fun shi* 扮], and with that the ritual mood was even more holy [*shinsei*], and the middle of

town had the feeling of being completely renewed. (Maedô and Tsukayama 津嘉山朝政 1976, 58)

While the potential for earnest student researchers to be led on a bit in fun by the men they've come to study certainly exists, especially since no other accounts exist of neighborhood men donning any costuming (unless copious amounts of mud, neon bôhan vests, or jichikai t-shirts count).⁷¹ However, a rite of purification seems to increase the likelihood of a sense of sacredness and renewal. One of the most notable absences in prior accounts are warnings from Shimajiri residents about anger—one of the first cautions I received when I began researching. In this light, it is possible that ritual prohibitions once only existed as accepted local practice, but only began to become explicit once non-residents' participation increased dramatically.

Mixed Understandings: Ritual Criticism and Response

With the mixture of taboos plain to see and easily enforced, with others implied or only known to insiders, ignorance of the less-obvious taboo makes it the easiest to break, an invisible lesson impossible to learn until the boundary is crossed. Yet while visitor intrusion into taboo ritual spaces might result in a strong reaction from locals, visitors remain largely unaffected by place restrictions, in large part because of the distance and effort necessary to intrude into the well-barricaded sacred places. The ritual intrusion into visitors' personal space, however, impacts visitors directly (sometimes literally), and such intrusion demands some kind of reaction.

The general perspective within news media on the subject of Paantu Punaha as well as

⁷¹ In another place, the student researchers note the seinenkai told them that in prior times, the men dressed as paantu were actually naked underneath the costuming, but when they asked for details, the young men laughed and refused to answer (Maedô and Tsukayama 津嘉山朝政 1976, 58).

that articulated by locals assumes that the popularity of Paantu has resulted in greater numbers of people attending who lack the understanding of what is going on. In particular, tourists misunderstand the role of mud as a mark of purification and good health, which is a symbolic understanding, not a behavioral one. While some contextual clues are present, the ritual itself does not effectively teach visitors about its own purpose.

The commentary generated in the yearly aftermath of Paantu Punaha, from visitor complaints to community response, provides an opportunity to move outside of analysis of ritual practice alone, and into what ritual scholar Ronald Grimes calls “ritual criticism,” a separate domain from theory and interpretation. Ritual criticism differs from these two fields because it works to assess ritual “in an attempt to understand specifically in the service of practice” (Grimes 1990, 15–16).

Another way of looking at this is to utilize folklorist and performance theorist Richard Bauman’s work on “communicative competence,” or how effectively a performer (or in this case, ritual participant) does what is expected of them. The process of evaluation by others relies on intertextual connections between the current performance and others like it, the same thing as one ritual calling to mind another similar one (Bauman 2004, 8–10).

However, as folklorist Diane Goldstein effectively points out, understanding what comprises competence for a community relies upon understanding what is appreciated by that community (Goldstein 1995, 34–36). This approach becomes more complicated when multiple communities enter the evaluative process. Critical assessments may arise both inside of a practicing community as well as outside it, with the “insider” community often responding with counter-assessments in the context of ongoing internally oriented and externally oriented negotiations (Langer et al. 2011, 91–132).

This approach suggests that ritual activity is inherently reflexive to some degree, as its performance evokes considerations of its effectiveness, which also takes into account the actions and reactions of various participants. For the purposes of this chapter, I draw on the experiences primarily of Shimajiri residents, and gather perspectives from outside the community via blog posts and newspaper reports. Within the framework of ritual criticism and communicative competence, the evaluation of Paantu Punaha by local residents and visitors reveals differing understandings of what the ritual is, and should, do.

For Shimajiri residents, the assessment of how to mitigate complaints without loss of the central meanings of the ritual evokes a broad range of concerns, from environmental to educational, as well as a critical counter-assessment of the visitors themselves. The kind of assessments of Paantu Punaha by Shimajiri residents and visitors that I consider here do not only include discourse around the ritual, but the effects and actions taken as a result of those observations. Within Shimajiri, the ritual criticism and response of the jichikai and seinenkai can be found in the changes they implement that affect behavior, performance techniques, and, for good or bad, the presentation of the paantu itself. In addressing the visitor complaints utilizing Grimes' work, it is possible to see how differing understandings of competence in the ritual context result in misframing the ritual event itself. Finally, relying on the idea that understanding generates the ability to explain, I look at how residents and others create potential resources available to visitors prior to attendance in order to bridge these differences in understanding.

Preventing Trouble

Within Shimajiri, the seinenkai and jichikai's attention during Sumassari and months prior is toward Paantu Punaha as a ritual to prevent harm, not cause harm. Perhaps

unsurprisingly, the first evaluations of the ritual occur in the context of planning for how to prevent trouble and maintain safety. The first form this takes is the management of the physical space of Shimajiri, with substantial effort expended by people of all ages to maintain and beautify the town. In the context of joint planning meetings with the jichikai and seinenkai, the members discuss physical aspects of Shimajiri that could pose a hazard, especially after dark. Paramount is the desire for the event to go smoothly, with everyone safe from harm (*buji* 無事). Jichikai members enumerate burned-out streetlights, potholes, and other perceived dangers, and make plans to fix them prior to the event. Shimajiri's community life also incorporates town-cleaning days that occur several times a year, and one takes place a few short weeks prior to Paantu. On a Sunday morning when most people are free from work, volunteers of all ages take on clean-up tasks including weed pulling, tree-trimming, trash pickup, and maintenance of community buildings.

In addition, the jichikai purchases accident insurance should anyone be hurt. The town leadership is very aware of modern-day legal responsibilities, even if the local assessment of most of the accidents is that the paantu were not to blame, but rather bad weather, slippery pavement, faulty footwear, or alcohol consumption.

However, so that the paantu may not be implicated in injury or danger, the jichikai and the seinenkai discuss the behavior of the paantu and how safety can be made a priority. In planning meetings, the jichikai repeatedly stressed restraint on paantu behavior, particularly in the pursuit of children, so that they do not flee into dangerous places. Past decades saw children escape onto the low, flat rooftops of houses, only to be pursued by the paantu, sometimes working in pairs to cleverly trap their taunting prey. During one of these pursuits a decade or so prior, one of the masks was broken in half. So this advice reflects concern for the safety of the

children as well as the paantu and their sacred costuming.

Paantu Protectors and Personalities

The jichikai and seinenkai prepare extensively for the influx of visitors and examine the behavior of the paantu, but they also plan for how to shield the paantu themselves, an ironic shift that began around 2008 to protect the guardian deities from the people they have come to protect. A community youth, KT, explained:

That's why people from the seinenkai go behind the paantu. If they aren't there to help out, if the paantu is there alone, well, since people mess with them, they stay behind them and if a paantu related problem comes up, the seinenkai people are there and can fix it.

In response to the potential danger to the paantu that are dealing with compromised vision and dexterity, a pair of seinenkai assistants walk alongside or at front and back of the paantu, constantly vigilant. These assistants not only scout out targets for the paantu, but also serve as bodyguards against the curious, overexcited, or aggressive people that may rush up behind the paantu—a potential danger for pushing over the paantu, or restricting the paantu's ability to step away from those it is pursuing. Verbal commands are often explicit to crowds on all sides—don't crowd, don't push, stay back. These same assistants step in to try to calm things down when real trouble emerges, cell phones on hand to call the jichikaichô or the police if tensions escalate.

The paantu themselves must constantly play the tension between distance and proximity, since chasing after people and smearing them with mud comprises their principal activity. While many onlookers flee from them, others crowd in (the majority with cell phones aloft for that perfect shot). As a result, the paantu also demonstrate various techniques to keep the crowd from

becoming too comfortable or too near. In addition to unpredictable lunging or sudden changes of direction, the paantu may collect a handful of wet mud either from their own bodies or at the mud-rewetting station and fling it out into the crowd when it begins to gather too closely. Spattered with cold mud, the crowd recoils, and the paantu retain room to move.

With cautions against paantu behavior that is too unrestrained, individual personalities of seinenkai members taking the role of the deity result in different styles of action. Some paantu refrain from more rowdy behavior, shaking hands with the elderly, and daubing mud on toddlers.



Gentle and ungentle paantu. 2012. Photo on left by KT, photo on right by author.

Meanwhile, other paantu do not shy away from sitting on people, picking up screaming children to run away down the street with them, tackling people to the ground, glopping mud into nostrils,

rolling on tatami, or entering parked cars. However, their assessment by Shimajiri residents is mixed. While some, especially women, appreciate the gentle paantu for the relative lack of cleanup they entail, the overall preference favors the less gentle. “If it’s too well behaved, it’s not interesting. When it’s rampaging (*abareru* 暴れる), then it’s fun,” noted Tomori Mariko. Even those who are grateful for a gentle paantu simultaneously concur that perhaps the paantu should not be kind.

With excessive crowding, constant motion, and repeated doses of hard alcohol, not to mention potential attacks by onlookers, the physical demands on the paantu are severe. Jichikai leadership chides the paantu not to be seen resting—it creates the wrong impression. Alvaredo Kyoko, a Shimajiri native in her early forties, recalled seeing a visibly worn-out deity, and remembered thinking, “Paantu, get up! I don’t want to see you like this!” Like the members of the community who regard the newer masks as lacking the fearfulness of earlier generations, the disdain for showing weakness or gentleness reflects the view that paantu that cannot evoke fear may not be as effective.

Visitor Complaints and Ritual Recognition

However, it is precisely the rowdy paantu fulfilling these expectations that generate the most complaints from visitors, revealing completely different expectations what comprises performative competence. “I didn’t think it would go this far,” the *Okinawa Times* quoted a mud-covered young woman as saying (*Okinawa Times* 2014a). Women tended to be the source of complaints that their clothes had been ruined, or that the paantu had grabbed them, some implying sexual harassment. Men tended to state their anger directly, or to perceive the paantu’s action as a personal assault and return in kind (*Okinawa Times* 2014a).

The majority of visitor complaints reveal a contrast to what Shimajiri residents understand as a ritual with a focus on hosting deities and achieving health. Instead, visitor complaints express secular, non-ritual understandings of their experience, with senses of violation of personal boundaries, primarily personal comfort, personal property, and personal space. This secular perspective reinforces the perception that the paantu are simply men in costumes, so assigning aggressive or transgressive traits to them *as men* creates a tension with the local view of the paantu as a deity which *should* be both aggressive and transgressive. If the external criticism may be deemed a matter of “criticism in the service of practice,” then perhaps the external criticism implies that the paantu should be more discerning or restrained, acting like people, not like deities.

Such a response can be considered ritual “misframing,” where people present fail to recognize the correct genre of activity and misconstrue it, essentially missing the point of the whole endeavor (Grimes 1990, 204). Closely tied to this concept is that of ritual desecration, a condition that may emerge unintentionally out of ignorance that something is sacred (Grimes 1990, 76). While the taboos enforced with mundane, non-ritualized actions can be easily perceived and obeyed, the failure to accept the paantu’s action as a benediction instead as an attack, or mud as a nuisance instead of a warding against evil, confirms that despite being aware they have entered a ritual context, for a certain few visitors a year, the ritual action is not recognized as such.

Humphrey and Laidlaw suggest that in the ritual context, behavior shifts into a different mode where the intent of action is read differently than normal. Normal intentions underlying action can generally be inferred from context, such as a person waving their hand, or drinking a cup of coffee. However, they argue that the intention and purpose of ritualized action cannot be

inferred in the same way. The context of ritual results in different interpretations than the context of everyday life, because when action is ritualized, the intention is to perform ritualized action, which may have little or no relation to the same type of action in everyday experience (Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, 94). For the non-ritual specialist, observer, or visitor, recognizing this one-step-removed intentionality is key to appreciating the blessing and forgiving the assault.

This awareness is not lost on Shimajiri residents, who repeatedly stress that if people are going to show up, they need to know that Paantu Punaha is not an “event” (*ibento* イベント), or performance spectacle, but a ritual (*shinji* 神事), literally “sacred action,” or “deity matter.” For Shimajiri residents, the energy they spend making preparations beforehand, raising suggestions to accommodate tourists, and doing media outreach reinforces their own belief that providing context and educational outreach will result in visitors’ understanding and subsequent good behavior. If generating understanding isn’t working, however, some residents feel that perhaps the jichikai should make a pamphlet stating the rules of good behavior for visitors—ensuring that visitors meet local expectations by complying with the form, if not the spirit, of the ritual.

The good behavior desired by Shimajiri residents invokes the idea of respect as a key to distinguishing between event and ritual. As the behavioral caveat to their conception of holiness or sacredness (*shinsei*, 神聖), respect is the manifestation of understanding, the active recognition of meanings present. However, when a Shimajiri person might not clearly articulate a symbolic explanation for various aspects of Paantu, sacredness or “meaning,” (*imi* 意味) serves as a shorthand to indicate the respect that they require.

The lack of respect described by Shimajiri residents, like anger and violence, may be desecration of a different order—the “refusal of sacred as a relevant category” (Grimes 1990, 76). Having an awareness that the paantu is considered a deity, but choosing to actively

misrecognize it and demand human demeanor from it reflects this kind of desecration. Ignorance may be mitigated by education meant to broaden understanding; this type of desecration might not.

Understanding and Explanations

Understanding and explanation are linked. While Shimajiri residents assess the visitors as well as their deportment with a critical eye, part of their response results in ideas for outreach to educate potential visitors. In addition, tourist agencies and visitors add their perspectives, often picking up locally generated precautions or including their own.

Churashima Monogatari (“Beautiful Island Story”), a website run by Japan Airlines to promote various Okinawan attractions, put up a multi-page feature article in 2001 on Paantu Punaha, and updated its “events” calendar in 2012 with a brief description of the matsuri and its purpose, of the “inexorable” (*yôshanai* 容赦ない) action of the paantu chasing down visitors and locals alike: “no one can escape.” The event summary noted, “Also, let’s stop wearing high heels and sandals. They’re unsuitable for running away.” With a canny perceptiveness of local concerns, the blurb concluded, “Furthermore, there are various taboos, so since this is a very valuable ritual, while observing how the local community members do it, let’s meet the paantu with a humble attitude” (“Ibento Karendā - 2012/10 イベントカレンダー2012年10月 [Event Calendar - October 2012]” 2015). By 2014, their October event calendar concluded with a more strongly-worded warning: “let’s meet the paantu without being rude [*shitsurei* 失礼]” (“Ibento Karendā - 2014/10 No Ibento [Event Calendar: October 2014 Events]” 2015).

On a much smaller scale, various entrepreneurs promote Paantu, often in a blog format with a chatty, casual tone, highlighting the visitor experience. On a diving and scuba blog,

Oceana, Terayama Hideki talked about his visit with others to see the paantu when diving was called off due to an incoming typhoon in 2013. “Come in clothes that can get dirty; keep your camera in underwater housing,” (Terayama 2013). Bloggers from elsewhere on Miyako tend to emphasize the “right” way to attend: “I went in clothes that could get dirty; I covered my camera with a plastic (vinyl) bag; out of concern, I even brought water with me to wash my face and hands”(“Doro O Nurarete Yakuotoshi ‘Shimajiri Paantu’ 泥を塗られて厄落とし「島尻パーン トウ」 [‘Shimajiri Paantu’ - Exorcism from Getting Muddied]” 2014). But even Miyakojima residents weren’t necessarily prepared or totally certain about their experiences. In a post sprinkled with animated emoji, one Miyako woman related that: “I was grabbed by a paantu and fell onto the roadside. My hair and body were muddy. Even more— stinkyyy! That was awful. But I guess my bad luck is gone” (“Paantu Tsuzuki” 2006).

The efforts by event promoters and the dissemination of experiences by attendees have clearly informed some members of the public. In some cases, visitors prepare a little too well, arriving in sensible plastic rain ponchos, swishing through the streets from one location to another, unafraid of being muddied. While their threat to safety is low, the general opinion in Shimajiri seems to be that this is “cheating,” and is just as unbelievable as the visitor arriving to run away from the paantu in high heels, a fancy dress, or a bikini. One suggestion put forward by the jichikai was that perhaps there might be a fence. Visitors who did not want to get muddy could stand behind the fence and watch, but not interact with the paantu. However, the seinenkai immediately disagreed, insisting that there was no point to the ritual if the paantu could not move freely.

The assessment of the ritual often returns to the presence of the tourists themselves, regardless of what they are dressed in. Some people, many part of a younger generation that has

grown up with increasing crowds, acknowledge the troubles and their impact, but they enjoy the festive atmosphere and high energy created by the presence of additional people.

Among the seinenkai, the tourists and their relative benefit or demerit to the town is a fraught issue. While some of the young men appear to thrive on being the center of attention during the course of the matsuri, the standard response of the group as a whole is a more conservative one: the paantu is for Shimajiri, not the tourists. As a reaction to the crowds, certain habits emerged. Some members worked hard to spot Shimajiri residents in the crowd, giving them precedence. Another responded, “Tourists? I ignore them.” Hanashiro Hiroki noted that the sheer numbers of visitors crowded out locals, especially the elderly, from participating at all. Not wanting to appear overly unfriendly, others cautiously remarked that perhaps it would simply be better if tourists stayed at home.

This comment is at odds with most contemporary jichikai leadership, who want Shimajiri to be perceived as a welcoming place. They stress that because the paantu is from Shimajiri, places outside Shimajiri have no claim on it. However, they hope that enacting the ritual provides benefits to all who attend, perhaps rippling out for the well-being of all of Miyako, and even the whole of Japan. More practically, the jichikai hopes that the paantu will catalyze economic benefit for the town.⁷²

An alternative perspective is simply that numbers of visitors have reached their maximum possible level. Many Shimajiri residents told me how surprised they had been when tour buses full of visitors began pulling up on the roads coming into town. In his interview with the *Okinawa Times*, Miyara-kaichô stated that Shimajiri would likely go back to announcing the dates of the matsuri only just before it occurs, in order to reduce the numbers of people

⁷² I will discuss this further in chapter 5.

attending. They also hope to ask the various tourist agencies not to promote the ritual on such a large scale, which will limit visitors arriving en masse. By not listing the dates online and only giving out information directly to people who phone in to Shimajiri, they hope to cut back on casual, less-informed attendees (*Okinawa Times* 2014b).

The jichikai and seinenkai are not the only ones discussing these issues. Despite being a male-run event, the women in town are equally invested in its outcome. Similar ideas for what steps to take about the visitor troubles are discussed among women in informal gatherings, and include suggestions for a website describing the event or including an informative article in the paper prior to the event, or even signs placed at the entry to town warning visitors to reconsider attendance if they don't want to become muddy.

Such warnings and precautions continue the theme that somehow the visitors must be educated prior to their arrival. One former jichikai leader stressed that there needed to be clearly defined rules to follow, or at least guidelines for what constituted good manners, for visitors especially. Newspaper articles, bloggers, and commenters have likewise stated this idea—a pamphlet that could be handed out as people arrived would do a lot to educate people.

Yet there is no lack of online materials or newspaper articles, though very few have been produced by Shimajiri locals. As an offshoot of the Hentona Mango website, a family business, Hentona Tadashi decided to create a web page describing the paantu with the help of his brother Kiyoshi. In the webpage, the promotion of the event and the town merge with carefully curated photos and succinct descriptions. A picture of a paantu stands alone at the beginning:

Welcome

To Shimajiri, Paantu Village

I, the *Nma* (Parent) Paantu will introduce

the Paantu Festival (Actually called “Paantu Punaka”).

(“Paantu” 2015)

Unlike many websites geared toward tourists, the overview includes portions of the public affairs that most visitors will never see—Sumassari, making simmered pork, or ootoori, and of course the Hentonas’ sense of humor interwoven with the very serious business of being cultural interpreters. A picture of the reverse-twisted rope with pork and bone attached reads, “A little grotesque, huh? But since it’s for purification [*yakubarai* 厄払い], please tolerate it!” Very few websites have this level of detail, and few routinely return to remind people of the purificatory driving out of evil and the role of the paantu as a protective deity as often as this one does. Nothing provides visitors with particular advice about attending or states specific rules. Instead, the web page shows the kind of reactions residents have toward the paantu through numerous photos of people being muddied, and explains the symbolic meanings of mud and ritual action that comprise the core of Shimajiri residents’ understanding of their ritual.

Educative Matrix: Lived Practice & Ritual Embeddedness

Up to this point, I have discussed the various aspects of what can be learned through experience alone of Paantu Punaha, and what is being done by Shimajiri residents to address criticism, whether that resembles proactive repairs to protect people from physical dangers or doing outreach to explain central ritual meanings. However, most forms of explanation focus on the ritual itself. Here, I focus on the shared experiences that comprise lived understandings within which the ritual of Paantu Punaha exists.

As noted earlier, the “educative matrix” shapes context-dependent understandings and people within those contexts. Communicative competence and its focus on responsibility toward

performer and audience expectations appears to have its ritual studies counterpart in the the idea of “ritual mastery:” the ability to put to use the practical, embodied, and culturally specific knowledge acquired through lived experience (Droogers 2004, 139). However, as ritual scholar Catherine Bell notes, “It is a mastery that experiences itself as relatively empowered, not as conditioned or molded” (Bell 1992, 221). The ability to correctly interpret cultural knowledge and put it into effective practice reflects the degree to which participants feel empowered and not overpowered during Paantu Punaha. Ritual mastery, then, is not simply a function of being educated prior to arrival. It is a function of being incorporated into the ritual itself, corporeally and mentally, with knowledge that is physically and locationally embedded (Mason 1994, 25). Thus, visitors may find Paantu difficult to comprehend simply because they lack the time to integrate with the community itself. In this final section, I gesture toward the interdependence between ritual and context by paying attention to the kind of experiences that shape local understandings.

Lived understandings of ritual are complicated. Numerous Shimajiri residents, young and old, male and female, often prefaced their explanations with: “I’m still young, so I don’t know exactly, but...,” both to refuse authoritative voice as well as to indicate that even if their interpretation might be incorrect, a deeper, truer meaning existed. In many cases, their explanations contained the caveat that people today possessed only a degraded present-day connection to the ritual, resulting in the authority of the past over the present, the unknown “original” meaning to today’s category of respectful meaningfulness. Yet, they clearly considered the event personally meaningful.

Part of the educative matrix that shapes Shimajiri residents’ understanding is the ritual practice of Paantu Punaha itself, a form of embodied participation. Personal and communal

senses of meaningfulness grow alongside experience and repetition. Hentona Tadashi noted:

When we were born the paantu were already there. That's why, from when I was here, from a young age, when I did something bad or didn't listen, they always said, "The paantu is coming!" From my parents, they'd say things like, "The paantu is a scary thing!" and from the time I was born it was ingrained continuously.

As described by Leonard Norman Primiano, meaning evolves over time, and meaningfulness changes, specific to individuals (Primiano 1995, 50–52). Each person will approach, appropriate, and interpret received symbolic meanings in a process of consent and resistance to dominant social values, in dialogue, tension, and negotiation with other viewpoints. At the same time, the process of apprehending, reinterpreting, and accepting those symbols can make symbols a source of social integration (Savastano 2010; Kapchan 1994; Bell 1992, 191).

Said differently, the individually appropriated layers of symbolic meaning resonate deeply with some Shimajiri residents, and interconnect individuals with their contexts of everyday life as well as networks of knowledge acquired through the process of shared lived experiences. Ritual experience comprises one of these shared lived experiences where participation is not contingent on belief or agreement.⁷³ One can participate without internalizing dominant meanings, and some tensions may never be resolved, meanings internalized, or convictions solidified. At the same time, these tensions coexist in the same nexus of social connections and similar experiences shared by other community members.

⁷³ Catherine Bell discusses the understanding and appropriation of symbolic meaning in the context of ideology, asking whether or not ritual is a form of enforcing dominant ideologies. Drawing in the work of Merquior, Foucault, and Bourdieu, she writes, "Not only is ideology *not* a matter of belief; in actuality it rarely demands belief. Ideologies function as such by not requiring complete faith in each tenet or idea; all that is required is consent." (Bell 1992, 190).

The paantu as experience and as multilayered symbols provide a backdrop to growing up in Shimajiri. They mark major transitions into life stages—something of a rite of passage for the “big kid” who has faced paantu without parents, or for boys and men—the junior high schooler able to help out the young men’s association and enter into a kind of a paantu apprenticeship, to his experience of taking on the role of paantu itself.⁷⁴ As a form of incorporation for those entering into the community, such as significant others or spouses, attending paantu means being part of the community’s most notorious ritual, one that evidences a strong homecoming magnetism for people that have moved away.

Historically, it seems that the ritual of Paantu Punaha provided the opportunity to publicly discipline or humiliate community members that were public nuisances or otherwise dissolute (S. 平良新亮 Taira 1985, 44). As other ritual theorists have noted, ritual provides a way to act outside of social norms, including the opportunity for those with relatively little authority to become authorities (V. Turner 1977). As deities outside the bounds of normal human behavior, the paantu simultaneously enforce social values related to being a member in good standing of a small community. Maedô and Tsukayama recount the reaction by one older man to the paantu’s action:

Suddenly from the shadows the three paantu jump out and grab him, holding him under their arms, and smear mud across his whole face. Set free with a completely black face, Miyara-san laughs, “This reeks! I really got scolded!” (Maedô and

⁷⁴ I asked several seinenkai members post-ritual if they had experienced something, had the sensation of power or anything else in taking on the role of the kamisama. Most of them looked like they’d been mauled, their skin raw from the tightly tied costuming. They said no, it has just been difficult and exhausting. One, however, quickly affirmed, “YES,” grinning as he downed a glass of awamori; I never got anything else out of him.

Tsukayama 津嘉山朝政 1976, 58)

For the young men of the seinenkai, becoming the paantu or assisting with their transformation may not only be a form of learning the processes involved, but also marks their consent in taking on the role of a protector deity. In this way, the community vests them with the responsibility for the physical and spiritual well-being of the town.

Ritual(ized) Humor

While the paantu may be tasked with discipline and purification, at the same time it plays with the tension between fear and humor. Hentona Tadashi explains how the two are intimately connected through his explanation of how to be a paantu: “There’s really no technique to be paantu. Only one—be funny, strange, so that all the people will laugh a little, and then, occasionally, you really get somebody, and really make them afraid. So the children say, ‘That’s really scary!’ And so the children also see the bike riding, liquor drinking, cigarette smoking... the paantu joke around, too.”

Jack Santino stresses that the playful aspects of events are often overlooked as unserious, when in fact they work to effect social change, often by making the change appear unthreatening (Santino 2011, 62). In effect, playfulness masks the “ritualesque,” that one-step-removed intentionality that can emerge as performative actions in one domain seek to affect another (Santino 2009, 11). The ritualesque is the serious intent behind the playful mask to effect real change, often through symbolic action. However, while playfulness and serious intent may be seen as complementary forces, or perhaps on a continuum with one another, “ritual actors play seriously with variations, inversions, contradictions, double play, irony, incongruity, and counterrealities” (Droogers 2004, 136). In other words, play is firmly entwined with and part of

ritual action. In short, jokes have serious work to do.

Part of the culturally accepted knowledge that is key to Shimajiri's educative matrix is the local sense of humor. Ritualized in Paantu Punaha, this playful mode serves as the counterpoint to the ritual taboo on anger. In everyday life, the terrifying playfulness of Paantu Punaha has its non-ritual counterpart: the joke.

Fukuhara Kôyû, an architect in his fifties born and raised in Shimajiri, stated it simply, "People in Shimajiri love jokes, especially severe [*kitsui* きつい] ones." Hentona Kiyoshi, a forty-something known for his work with the family mango business as well as playing lead *sanshin* in a local folk band, explained to me that among the hardworking people of Shimajiri, stating one's opinion about something is fairly rare, and people won't bring up complaints. While this appears to irritate residents who favor a more direct approach, they also marvel how even with an annoying situation, like burning trash smoke wafting into a neighbor's drying laundry and through their window, never generates a hint of trouble. Neighbors focus on getting along with one another, at least through outward appearances, putting up with discomfort and annoyances to keep disruption and disharmony between members of the community to a minimum. Kiyoshi went on, describing the flip side of this social restraint:

Among friends, we love jokes. Our black jokes are just terrible. If you played a Shimajiri joke in some other place, they'd get angry. But Shimajiri people don't get angry. Here, we've got a very calm disposition.

In Shimajiri, the men in particular enjoy this dark, extreme joking. At casual gatherings with alcohol mixed in, men engage in relentless repartee, with low-ranking and high-ranking alike enjoying jibes at the others' expense. These jokes can range from the humorous observation that someone's bald head shines like the moon, to something more akin to hazing, drunkenly

goads a peer to do more and more socially unacceptable things. In an environment with high levels of social restraint and an unwillingness to cause trouble or voice direct opinions without seeming harsh or selfish, joking serves as a way to establish as well as confront relationships of power, at the same time creating as well as policing group identity, a source of pride as well as



Paantu on brand-new tatami.
2014. Photo by author.

everyone's cross to bear: a "Shimajiri joke" would never be tolerated outside of Shimajiri, but to live in Shimajiri, you may need to develop the kind of sense of humor that allows for being on the receiving end of such jokes (Fine and de Soucey 2005; M. Yoshida 2001).

Like an inside joke performed for an appreciative audience of friends, the serious, frightening visiting deity manifests as a kind of severe joke, a prank pulled on everyone, to delight and horrify, to haze and reinforce social ties. The paantu also provides a method for

Shimajiri residents to effectively prank each other—the dark delight of pulling up a carefully laid floor covering in a friend’s new living room for the paantu to roll on, or preventing a friend from fleeing so that the paantu will thoroughly muddy them. The paantu reinforce the character of Shimajiri, Hentona Tadashi points out, to the point that their perceived identities merge:

People in Shimajiri, the men, are the same as the paantu. They always tell jokes, make people laugh. That humor is like the paantu, we have a lot of humor. Maybe that comes from the paantu? That's how I see it. The paantu is a frightening thing, and a deity as well. People call it a yôkai or a monster but, it's not a monster, it's a deity like it ought to be! But it is an extremely...unique deity. So that's why the men of Shimajiri don't have fights and always make people laugh, and live a fun life. People in Shimajiri are something like that.

Practice and Understanding

Residents of Shimajiri draw together a different patterns of experiences and associate different meanings with the paantu, participating in it year after year, sharing the inside jokes as well as a sense of home creates a sense of ritual mastery—people know what the event is about, and they know which role they will play in it. They may look forward to participating, or simply shutter their windows and lock their doors and wait until the hubbub dies down outside. The purification is successful and benefits even those who choose not to participate.

For those arriving with little guidance, an observant visitor can indeed apprehend basic behavioral guidelines. With a minimum of knowledge and a respectful attitude, Paantu Punaha can be (and is) enjoyed by hundreds of visitors each year that look to participate for their own varied motivations, which must surely include health and protection, as evidenced by entire

families bringing small children and infants, and the infirm in wheelchairs arriving with caretakers. Perhaps this points to the practical benefits sought out by a public that has become increasingly aware of this ritual to drive out illness and misfortune, entering into the playful, frightening relationship between people and paantu, prepared with a sense of respect. On the other hand, perhaps these well-behaved visitors gesture toward a continuum where shared experience dovetails with understanding and explanation.

All points on this continuum also incorporate dissent and resistance. Each participant, local or visitor, has the ability to resist—within the ludic mode, fleeing from the paantu perhaps to be eventually apprehended, or to resist mentally—and fail to apprehend the basics of participation at the cognitive level. Resistance within the ritual context can stretch only as far as recognition of being in a ritual environment will allow. At the point of anger, of violent resistance, the participant crosses the line into desecration—they aren't really participating in a ritual anymore. However, their continued attendance highlights the opposite extremes of understanding and also forces reflections on ritual practice that may be new to Shimajiri people.

For these few visitors each year, questions remain as to whether or not a solution exists to solve their lack of understanding and respectful participation. Ritual analysis may gesture toward dimensions of misunderstanding, but perhaps it is less effective than offering educational solutions. In Shimajiri, the community works to negotiate with the criticism and put new changes into action; someone may be working on that pamphlet. On the Hentonas' website, the voice of the paantu is replaced with the voice of the town, firmly linking understanding with the continued existence of the ritual:

Paantu

Paantu is Shimajiri's cherished festival and an important *nigai-goto* (worship)

toward the gods. Paantu are Shimajiri's guardian deities, and we that have these legendary figures, having pride in the existence of the paantu, want to continue carefully protecting Paantu Punaka's true meaning and the traditional event of Paantu from now on.⁷⁵

While ritual understandings comprise one aspect of how Shimajiri residents and visitors interpret Paantu Punaha, how the event is interpreted and evaluated as cultural property demands separate consideration. The next chapter will look at how Shimajiri residents identify and prioritize action related to the protection of their ritual as well as their community.

⁷⁵ パーントゥは島尻の大切な祭りであり
神々への大事なニガイ事（神への礼拝）である。
パーントゥは、島尻の守り神であり、
伝承者である私たちはパーントゥプナカの本当の意味を
パーントゥの存在に誇りを持ちこれからもパーントゥの伝統的な行事を
大切守り続けたいと思っています。

Chapter 5: *Bunkazai* as Process

In 1993, the Miyakojima Paantu was designated an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property by the Agency for Cultural Affairs. Received with enthusiasm by the people in Shimajiri, the processes by which this designation came about are a little less clear. Closer inspection reveals that the designation of the paantu as a cultural property, or *bunkazai* 文化財, emerged out of decades of government policies intersecting with Shimajiri residents' initiatives to aid their community economically and culturally.

In the previous chapter, I explored how people understand and want to make understood various ritual meanings of Paantu Punaha in the present. In this chapter, I will discuss the historical construction of *bunkazai* in Shimajiri, how that process merges with the social and economic concerns of Shimajiri, and in turn how people in Shimajiri interpret and evaluate the paantu as *bunkazai* today. In contemporary discussion of heritage in Japan, *bunka isan* 文化遺産, a closer term in meaning to cultural heritage or patrimony, is coming into more common use. Unlike the international legal implications of conceptualizing cultural property versus cultural heritage, for people in Shimajiri, *bunkazai* is the common, blanket term that is utilized to refer to both the designation name as well as their local process of conservation.

In Shimajiri, people show their ideas about *bunkazai* through how they identify problems and solutions, both historically and in present, and in the ways that they express concern for their community. The heritage process interweaves with these social and economic concerns, and Paantu Punaha as *bunkazai* becomes a shorthand for certain kinds of significance and value that are both entangled with the ritual itself, but which exist apart from it. By exploring the multiple perspectives of what kind of heritage is preserved, through what processes, and for whom, we

can begin to access the outcome of actions taken to protect heritage. Turning to the ritual of Paantu Punaha as heritage evokes the broader questions of how significance and value become attached to a specific form of cultural practice.

Becoming “Heritage”

Heritage policies sometimes create a paradox where a national or global law attempts to create a one-size-fits-all approach to the recognition and preservation of local practices (de Jong 2005: 161). The only way to understand how such policies play out in all their variety is through close engagement with people within local contexts. The designation of Paantu as a national Important Intangible Folk-Cultural Property emerged out of the confluence of local and regional interests as well as national policies. Recent theorization suggests that heritage is a process, studied as “both a body of knowledge and as a political and cultural process of remembering/forgetting and communication” (Smith and Akagawa 2009, 6). People engaged in these processes interact with and against the processes and interests of politics as well as economics, which firmly links the action of recognition of heritage with that of its utilization (Bendix 2009, 260).

Paantu, like many rituals considered heritage in the world today, exists in contemporary practice as a revival. During World War II, the ritual stopped entirely due to wartime privations. Ikema Sadao, a community elder in his 80s, shared with me many of his recollections of his youth during the war, recounted terrible illnesses like malaria, starvation foods like bitter, stomach-wrenching sotetsu palm starch, and the gun-wielding soldiers that took the little food they had:

So, there were lots of soldiers around, all over the place were soldiers. There was

nothing to eat but potatoes we planted in the fields. The soldiers dug them all up and took them. The soldiers, we didn't resist them, we couldn't... Maybe they didn't go and tear our mothers away from us in the night, but our lives were in danger. That era, it was a terrible time. Terrible, terrible.

Postwar, the lack of available work and the scarcity of young men, many of whom had perished in the war, made the ritual difficult to continue, but the older men and women still knew the ritual practices from before. For a few years, the elders of the community put on Paantu Punaha in its most minimal form, taking down the masks and donning them to visit the mutuyaa and offer prayers.⁷⁶ Hentona Toyoichi, also in his 80s, described this as happening for a few years, recalling that Paantu was in danger of disappearing. However, a fortuitous outside intervention sparked its revival. Toyoichi explained:

But then, from the Ministry of Culture (Bunkachô) at that time, they wanted to make Paantu part of that cultural property, the intangible cultural property [*mukei bunkazai* 無形文化財]. And then that year, a person from NHK came to my place and asked if we'd have a revival [*fukkatsu* 復活].⁷⁷ Since he asked, all the officers of the jichikai got together, as well as the elderly people, and the NHK person asked the elderly people for information, legends, and various other things. But

⁷⁶ While the overall timeline is a little bit unclear, there are a few published touchpoints.

In 1966, the Miyako Shinpô newspaper published an account of Paantu Punaha, noting that perhaps its original form had been done by the old men and women, and included a number of aspects that made it a close comparison to the Akamata Kuromata visiting deity ritual from Yaeyama.

By 1975, the ritual again was definitely in full swing as it was documented by the University of the Ryukyus team, and there was a media presence, though whether this was the revival year is not clear either.

By 1979, movement to document and revive paantu grew alongside the agricultural community development movement.

In 1984, the Board of Education's Bunkazai Division carried out official documentation of Paantu Punaha.

⁷⁷ NHK, the Nippon Hôshô Kyoukai 日本放送協会, or Japan Broadcasting Corporation.

when the NHK person tried to interview them, the old people couldn't speak Japanese very well, so we asked the questions to the old people.⁷⁸ So with us officers there, we asked who had put together paantu in the old style (*mukashi no katachi* 昔の形). ...And they wanted to investigate things like where the vines grew. And when everyone finally finished looking for the vines, then we made paantu really beautifully, like it was done before. Since the NHK eventually broadcast it, that was a good thing. That was the beginning of the seinenkai's active involvement... After that, there were so many interested applicants it got to where we even had to do a lottery to choose. That was the beginning of the revival.

This outside intervention, attention, and the eventual designation as a national intangible cultural property grew from various waves of regional and national politics, involvement of local and outside organizations, and academic as well as lay interests.

A Brief History of "Japanese" Heritage in Japan, Okinawa, and Miyako

Japan's overall interest in maintaining historic buildings and recognizing cultural products goes back to the Meiji Era (1868-1912), a few decades after the creation of Okinawa Prefecture in 1879.⁷⁹ At the national level, concern for the preservation of historic monuments and valuable objects came in part as a response to the extensive damage wreaked on Buddhist temples after the institution of Shinto as a state religion, and in part due to the massive export of Japanese art objects to the West (Akagawa 2015, 48). The reaction to the country's rapid

⁷⁸ Elderly people in the community were most fluent and comfortable speaking Sumafutsu.

⁷⁹ For an in-depth look at the creation and evolution of "culture" or *bunka* as a concept in Japan, see Morris-Suzuki (1995).

modernization also spurred legislation to protect sites of historic and natural importance from being built over, although interest in preserving cultural property and increasing nationalism went hand in hand (Akagawa 2015, 50).⁸⁰ Okinawa occupied a unique place in the action to preserve cultural properties, as “Okinawa’s culture and its cultural differences were regarded as a problem of government and political power” (Loo 2014, 12). The Japanese government tended to consider the Okinawans “backward” and desperately in need of “civilization” (*bunmei* 文明), and the government put into place increasingly stringent educational and administrative policies intended to make Okinawans homogenous with the mainland, stamping out regional languages and religious practice and reorganizing traditional village life. Okinawans were encouraged to become more Japanese than the Japanese themselves, but were routinely denied the benefits of mastering mainland speech and behavior (Christy 1993).

But while the Japanese government considered Okinawan culture backwards, from dress to music to customs, Okinawan physical heritage was valorized, subsumed into a “nationalist master narrative of Japan,” where designations as Japanese cultural property served as “nodes of Japanese history that testified to the reality of a civilizationally accomplished present” (Loo 2014, 14).⁸¹ Between 1925 and 1945, the Japanese Imperial government named 23 “national

⁸⁰ 1871: Protection of Antiquities Order

1897: Law for the Preservation of Ancient Shrines and Temples

1919: Law for the Preservation of Historic Sites, Places of Scenic Beauty and National Monuments

1929: The 1897 law was changed to become the Law for the Preservation of National Treasure

1933: Law for the Preservation of Important Art Objects and Others (Akagawa 2015, 48–50).

⁸¹ (Loo 2014)) notes that Okinawa was placed into the situation where it had little choice about keeping its culture. However, this time period of the early 20th century saw considerable intellectual dispute between Okinawan intellectuals caught between conflicting ideas of heritage and identity; to imply that these policies were enforced without any resistance or without complicated responses is incorrect. Opposition to these language and culture policies of the government were also voiced by Japanese intellectuals at the time, including Yanagita Kunio and Yanagi Sôetsu, many of them folklorists that valorized local Okinawan culture and art forms. However, their involvement also relied upon ideas of valorizing Okinawan backwardness and ancient Japanese roots, and claiming recognition for their “discovery” of Okinawan cultural forms. Okinawan intellectuals rightly protested their colonizing

treasures” in Okinawa (Loo 2014, 14).

On Miyako, local organizations for the preservation of historical sites existed in the early decades of the 20th century, such as the Southern Islands Historical Site Preservation Society (南島史跡保存会 *Nantô shiseki hozonkai*), which published the first history of Miyako in 1927, written by Kiyomura Kônin, considered the father of Miyako Studies. After the war, many local historical groups formed and worked to accumulate catalogs of local landmarks and historical events.

Immediately after the war in Okinawa, American interests worked to preserve important cultural sites and gather together and protect what remained of tangible cultural heritage left on the island (Loo 2014, 151). This movement was not limited to the Okinawa main island (or the Americans). In 1947, the Miyako civil government mandated the creation of a committee for the compilation of cultural history, which included the prolific writer Inamura Kenpu (1894-1978). In 1948, the Miyako civil government published the *Miyako shiyô* 宮古史要, or Miyako History Guide, and followed it with individual city histories and various commemorative publications over the following decade (Miyakawa 2012, 427–28).

After the war, Japan passed the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties in 1950 with the approval of the American occupation, which restricted the inclusion of things that could be construed as militaristic or imperialistic, as well as de-listed many nationalist sites designated from previous legislation (Akagawa 2015, 51).⁸² This law contained the first legal mention of the

discourse, some insisting that advancement of Okinawan well-being relied upon leaving the past behind. See also (Christy 1993; 1995; Figal 2008; Siddle 1998; Allen 2002a; 2009; Keyso 2000; McCormack 2003)).

⁸² The Committee for the Protection of Cultural Properties (文化財保護委員会 *bunkazai hogo iinkai*.) was founded by this law. The Committee was replaced by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, also known as Bunkacho (文化庁) in 1968 (Akagawa 2015, 52).

term *bunkazai* 文化財, or cultural property, an umbrella term that could include everything from buildings to natural sites, as well as intangible cultural properties, a category added formally to the law in 1954 (Akagawa 2015, 10).

In Okinawa, the United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands (USCAR) enacted a form of this law in 1954. The Americans perceived Japan's prior action in Okinawa as colonial oppression which they hoped to undo by encouraging Okinawan cultural practices and physical heritage. By doing so, they sought to nurture a local Ryukyuan identity in opposition to a Japanese one that would ultimately benefit them (Loo 2014, 16–17). In addition to the founding of museums, the search to recover and support Okinawan heritage also included the Ryukyu Cultural Survey under the supervision of George H. Kerr. From 1961-1963, American, Okinawan, and Japanese fieldworkers jointly compiled a photographic database of Okinawan cultural artifacts throughout the islands. Although the survey focused predominantly on material culture, its inclusion of the Sakishima and other outlying islands stressed the evolution and distribution of cultural forms outside of the dominant, main-island-centered political-historical narrative (Loo 2014, 152–56).

By 1956, the first tangible cultural properties on Miyako were recognized in the form of historic tombs and landmarks. In 1967, the Association for the Protection of Miyako Cultural Properties (宮古文化財を守る会 *Miyako bunkazai o mamoru kai*) was founded (Miyakawa 2012, 427).

Okinawa reverted to Japanese control in 1972. The surge of new construction post-Reversion gave wings to local history research on Miyako, so that valuable historical landmarks, ruins, and artifacts would not be destroyed. In a similar fashion to the Reversion agreement that guaranteed equal treatment for Okinawa, all *bunkazai* established pre-reversion were

incorporated into Japanese national heritage with a status “equal to that of the mainland” (*hondo nami* 本土並み) (Miyakawa 2012, 515).

In turn, the wealth of material unearthed by researchers had fantastic results on Miyako. In 1974 the first volumes of the immense *Hirara City History* (平良市史 *Hirarashishi*) appeared through the efforts of the cultural history compilation committee. In addition to off-island groups led by folklorists and students from the University of the Ryukyus, the Miyako Local History Research Group (宮古郷土史研究会 *Miyako kyôdoshi kenkyûkai*) was founded, and began to publish a variety of titles including the academic journal, *Miyako Kenkyû* (Miyako Research) (Miyakawa 2012, 514).

The 1975 revision of Japan’s Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties included intangible (無形 *mukei*) and folk (民族 *minzoku*) properties as designations. While various iterations of folk culture surveys with increasing complexity and depth had been carried out since the 1950s, by the 1980s, these surveys were providing very specific guidelines and categories to each prefecture for the purpose of identifying local practices as well as seeking recipients for the next heritage designations (Thornbury 1994, 218–19). In 1982, the Ministry of Culture selected the paantu as suitable for becoming an intangible folk cultural property. In 1984, the Hirara City Board of Education carried out official documentation of Paantu Punaha in support of this goal (S. 下地栄 Shimoji 1985, i).⁸³

Local Documentation and Media Trends

The person heading the bunkazai department and overseeing the Board of Education’s

⁸³ The Hirara City Board of Education and the Gusukube Board of Education later merged to become the Miyakojima City Board of Education.

official documentation of Paantu in 1984 was Sunagawa Gensei. A Hirara native with a degree in Japanese history from the University of the Ryukyus, he did not participate in any traditional religious practices growing up, but studied them in college. “Until about 1975 we hardly knew anything about the rural areas. When we went to see what was out there, it gave us quite a shock!” He explained that even today, there are still a lot of practices that make a person think, “Even now there’s something like that?” He laughed, “Blows your mind!” (*Shokku!* ショック!)

Sunagawa explained that before the Reversion, nobody was interested in having local traditions made into bunkazai. But afterward, when the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties applied to Okinawa, there was an influx of explanatory books about how to protect culture and do things like set up memorial days. So guided, Sunagawa and other researchers followed the lunar calendar as they searched for long-established practices, especially annual events, that could be made into bunkazai. He explained that ordinarily, designated bunkazai moves from city-level to prefecture-level if its connection with Ryukyuan history is well-established. From there bunkazai transitions with some amount of mystery and difficulty to a national designation.⁸⁴

Hentona Toyoichi’s narrative intersects with Sunagawa Gensei’s at this point: “There really wasn’t any thought that people wanted paantu to become *mukei bunkazai*. It was really due to the assistance of the Board of Education and others,” explained Toyoichi. While today most Shimajiri residents affirm their heritage designation with pride, outside intervention by local government employees working within a framework of documenting and valorizing heritage for

⁸⁴ Sunagawa noted that he wrote an article for the *Okinawa Times* on the paantu sometime during this period, which caught the eye of a professor at the National Museum of Japanese History (Rekihaku). Rekihaku staff visited Miyako multiple times to be involved with the documentation of Paantu, and Sunagawa theorizes that their interest was instrumental in the quick movement of Paantu to national status.

the purpose of potential recognition by the national government may also be criticized if the community had little authority to refuse such an intervention. However, this does not seem to be the case; Shimajiri did not allow all their traditional religious practices to be documented. The record of this dissent may be found partly in memory and partly in absence—not all traditional religious practices in Shimajiri were recorded, documented, and incorporated into *mukei bunkazai*.

Sunagawa recounted how many religious beliefs surrounding Uyagan, an annual series of ancestor rituals carried out by the divine priestesses, made them impossible to document. For Uyagan, breaking ritual taboos forbidding men from watching, for example, could result in divine punishment that would fall not on the witnesses but on the tsukasa performing the ritual. In other locations, tragedies befalling priestesses after allowing documentation confirmed these beliefs. Sunagawa explained that *mukei bunkazai* had to contain a visible public portion that could be documented, even if the secret, private element remained undocumented. In the case of Uyagan, in Shimajiri, documentation was not allowed.

At the time of the documentation of Paantu, Sunagawa explained, “Nobody knew what ‘bunkazai’ meant. If you said the word, it didn’t mean anything. And that’s why we had the media come here.” For those public practices, documentation and promotion of cultural practices through film and televised programming gave the public a way to see something they had never heard of before, as well as a new label, a new way to consider their own practices: “valuable *bunkazai*.” The media put the vocabulary of heritage into the public lexicon, and declared it valuable.⁸⁵ Sunagawa noted that the two necessary elements for protecting *bunkazai* were

⁸⁵ See Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, for additional discussion of the value-added labeling of heritage (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998).

promotion and administration, and the media promotion marked the beginning of the process by which Paantu came to receive its mukei bunkazai designation.

Heritage and Agriculture

While the media helped to popularize the paantu and the idea of intangible cultural property, they spoke to a rapidly changing local and national environment, where the cultural and economic initiatives in post-war Japan and post-Reversion Okinawa also contributed to how the paantu grew in popularity. One initiative in particular was the “town-making” (町づくり *machi-zukuri*) movement. Starting in 1960s Japan, the government encouraged communities to revitalize areas of historic significance as well as invest in the creation of communal events in order to invigorate communities and economies through the strengthening of local resources and cultural practices (Akagawa 2015, 63). From the late 1980s onward, the political and nostalgic project of *furusato-zukuri* (ふるさと作り), or “hometown making,” encouraged the revitalization of traditional structures as well as festivals, trying to create a conscious sense of Japanese identity and place to bridge a perceived cultural disconnect between the past and the present (Akagawa 2015, 65–67).

As part of its own *machi-zukuri*, Shimajiri founded a number of community events from 1975 onward, including the enactment of Haarii, an Okinawa Island festival for the sea deity featuring dragon-boat races, a summer evening festival with food and music, a harvest festival, and a public celebration inviting all the elderly community members out for dinner and entertainment on Respect for the Aged Day. While the creation of these new events met some local opposition at the time, today they provide festive and fun occasions for all Shimajiri residents.

Machi-zukuri and furusato-zukuri went hand in hand with the “Agricultural Village Restoration Project” (*Nôgyô nôson seibi jigyo* 農業農村整備事業), an effort supported by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (Nôsuisanshō 農水産省). This initiative provided substantial money to Shimajiri to improve its agriculture. But from the local perspective, the ingenuity of Shimajiri residents resulted in these successfully funded endeavors. One in particular is the community center. In the 1970s, Shimajiri experienced a pressing need to have a meeting space available to address the concerns of the day, in particular the changing economics of the area in the wake of mainland Japanese businesses coming to Miyako post-Reversion. The jichikai leadership lacked the time to address the issue, so a younger Hentona Toyoichi volunteered to take it on with the support of the community behind him. Building on Shimajiri’s success as an agricultural restoration village and using that to their advantage, the community founded an Agricultural Promotion Association and applied to the Ministry of Agriculture for funding. The “Shimajiri Agricultural Community Training Center” (島尻農村研修センター), known locally as the shûkaijō, was built. In addition to providing the Agricultural Promotion Association with a location to hold discussions relating to local agriculture, the building also became a functional meeting place and center to hold community events for the rest of the town.

In 1979, the Ministry of Farming, Forestry, and Fishing recognized Shimajiri as a “Model Agricultural Village” (*Moderu nôgyô nôson* モデル農業農村), making it a district-wide example of successful agricultural revival. Satô Junko convincingly argues that this recognition worked to put Shimajiri on the national stage, leading to the 1982 recommendation that the paantu be considered a national cultural property. By means of farming fame, the paantu’s symbolic power grew through the next two decades until it was both a symbol of Shimajiri’s

culture as well as of its agricultural revival (Satô 2007, 6).

In 1984, Sunagawa Gensei and the Board of Education conducted their research in Shimajiri as the community set out on an ambitious program of renewal, land improvement, and agricultural problem-solving. These reforms included paving roads, installing irrigation, shoring up hills with concrete retaining walls, and entering into new contracts together to utilize unused land and begin new seasons of planting and harvesting sugarcane. A little less than a decade later, in 1993, the Agency for Cultural Affairs formally designated the paantu as intangible heritage. It is difficult to say from the local perspective what happened during that decade behind the scenes to move the paantu forward for consideration, but by the time the designation arrived, the Shimajiri jichikai had already taken measures to prepare for it.

Post-Designation Heritage Protection

Following the 1993 national designation of Paantu as national important folk-cultural property, agricultural renovation and local intangible cultural heritage went hand in hand. In 1996, the chief clerk responsible for the agricultural renovation project on Miyako strategically dubbed Shimajiri's development plan as "Paantu no sato-zukuri," or "making the hometown of the paantu" (Satô 2007, 7).

City-administered projects from 1996 onward in cooperation with Shimajiri residents oversaw the complete overhaul of the Shimajiri port, with the inclusion of an esplanade curving along the coast from the port and down the beach after a prehistoric whale fossil was discovered embedded in the clay hillside. Paleontological and archaeological digs were carried out along the coast and in Mutuzuma. Today, informative signage describes the stratigraphy, and the view of unique coral limestone boulders descending into clay bases provide a regular outing for fieldtrips

by nearby schools. City-established memorial signs mark sites of historically valuable wells and other important sites, including summaries of their historical importance, such as the Tōmidai (遠見台), the lookout site for ships entering local waters, dating back to the Satsuma domination for Japan after 1609.

Within Shimajiri, the jichikai has continued applying to the city and prefecture for funding on a project-by-project basis to protect and maintain larger physical and cultural heritage. In previous decades this took form in projects like the “old community center,” the shūkaijō. However, with its inevitable deterioration over the next forty years, the community began to need a better building. The government denied requests for a new community center, under the assumption that they already possessed a building that filled that need. Instead, embracing the contemporary focus on tourism, the jichikai applied to the government for a building, stressing that it was not a community center *per se*, but a “Paantu Village Assembly Hall.” Instead of a kitchen, the Paantu Village Assembly Hall has a “Culinary Research Classroom,” and the wide gateball field with exercise equipment to one side bears the name, “Agricultural Village Exercise Park.” Built in 2001, the Paantu Village Assembly Hall reflects the vision of the jichikai to utilize its newfound fame to develop outreach, tourism, and education. However, apart from providing toilet access to tourists during the chaos of Paantu Punaha, the new building has yet to achieve these lofty aims. It does, however, make an excellent community center.

Smaller projects to maintain physical heritage around Shimajiri tend to be funded through small government grants, drawing on the support of many members of the community. For example, in 2011, the jichikai successfully received funding from the government to beautify Nmarigaa and make it a more effective gathering place. In order to achieve this, they had the

elementary school children's group (the Paantu no Kodomo-kai) write letters of support to bolster their request, and they received approximately \$5000 (¥500,000) to complete the project. Another successfully funded project with schoolchild letter-writing support was the reclamation of the well Yamadagaa, located on the south side of town. During field reconstruction in the 1990s, builders buried the wellspring, filling it with trash. At the time, Shimajiri residents were angry but unable to do anything about it. With the successful grant of about \$4000 (¥400,000), Shimajiri residents rented the machinery to dig the historic well out again and beautiful its surrounds.

Other successful projects that have gone up around Shimajiri with government support for various culturally oriented activities include a pavilion overlooking the ocean for island-style wrestling (*shima sumô* 島相撲) during the sea deity festivities, and the money to make signs advertising the location of Shimajiri and its identity as the Paantu Village.

The relative success of Shimajiri leadership in securing funding to improve landmarks, historic sites, and buildings for community use contrasts with its recent failures in securing funding for needs related to intangible cultural heritage, particularly Paantu Punaha. Around 2006, a malicious break-in at the holy site where the uya-paantu mask is kept resulted in the destruction of all the various small things kept inside, even the table. The perpetrators stole the money left there as offerings and deliberately broke the uya-paantu mask itself. Satô writes that the community could have applied for government money to rebuild a more secure worship-place, but due to excessive regulations surrounding the construction of a new building within the city-designated historic site of Mutuzuma, the jichikai opted to take donations from Shimajiri residents in order to rebuild the site quickly, in time for a slightly delayed Paantu Punaha that year (Satô 2007, 11).

Another area that has proven difficult to receive government funding is for growing kyaan for use during Paantu. Many of the jichikai leadership and older Shimajiri residents feel strongly that having a more historically accurate vine is important. However, so far the state is unwilling, and local farmers seem disinclined to set aside parts of their own farmlands for this endeavor, or perhaps the sheer amount of kyaan necessary requires too large of a space to sacrifice their income.

Overall, the efforts to build agriculture and heritage over these decades have proved very successful. Each year from 1999 to 2002, Shimajiri received the Hirara City Industry Competition Prize (*Sangyô kyôtsûkai hôshô* 産業共進会褒賞). In 2002, Shimajiri received the Director General's Award for Agricultural Community Development and Promotion from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing. About the same time, the *Mura-zukuri* (Village-Making) Project Division of the Okinawa Prefecture branch of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing recognized Shimajiri in its “hundred best hometowns [furusato]” of Okinawa, where Shimajiri is described as the “furusato-zukuri watched over by the paantu,” (パントリーが見守るふるさとづくり) (Satô 2007, 7).

In 2007, Shimajiri received the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishery Director's Award (*Nôrin suisan daijinshô* 農林水産大臣賞) for the 28-year process of agricultural improvement and innovation (particularly with sugarcane and beef cattle), community building, community expansion, new businesses (like eco-tourism) and cooperative relationships with other Miyako groups and agencies that worked to bolster the town and deal with the various challenges faced by the town (Okinawa sôgôjimukyoku nôrinsuibu 2007).

Community Challenges

In order to understand the broader context for the ongoing development aims of the Shimajiri community done in conversation with the heritage designation, it is critical first explain some of the broader problems confronting Shimajiri today. Many of these problems have been consistent since the war ended: falling population and adequate employment among them. However, the challenges that the postwar generation met successfully now have become issues for the next generation, who must identify and prioritize problems and find new strategies to solve them.

Identification and prioritization of issues relating to bunkazai results in strategies designed to address those concerns. Some issues, like the influx of tourists, link directly to the popularity spurred on by the bunkazai designation. Other issues, like depopulation and environmental change, influence the basis of the community from which Paantu emerges. For Shimajiri's residents, the perception of disruption appears to inform the way the people perceive heritage-inflicted change, as well as environmentally affected change. However, the same sense of disruption that calls attention to the challenges faced by the community may also stand in the way of the community's ability to meet those challenges effectively. Most importantly, understanding these issues makes it possible to see how the paantu as heritage may be applied as a potential solution.

The jichikai considers depopulation one of its most pressing concerns, an ongoing issue since the war ended. A former jichikaichô explained the predicament concerning Shimajiri's population: "It's just under 300 people, and about 101 of those are over seventy. There are 43 people aged sixty to sixty-nine, so around half the population is elderly." With so many people past retirement age, the demographic balance skews heavily toward the aged.

The retention of working-age adults would help solve this ongoing depopulation crisis,

yet this obvious solution is the most difficult to achieve. A desire for education, the search for profitable work, and wanderlust all contribute to young adults' departure from Shimajiri.

Hanashiro Hiroki, a carpenter in his mid-30s, remarked to me that his graduating class from Miyajima Elementary School had been nearly thirty students. Of all of them, he alone returned to his hometown, but he and other Shimajiri natives that "U-turn" from the city back to their hometown have no guarantee of employment or living space once they return.

As legacy of Shimajiri's agricultural successes, one of the main potential areas for employment is agriculture, yet few choose to enter the field. Part of the problem is that agriculture lacks appeal for a younger generation. Hentona Tadashi explained his theory: "The image of Japanese agriculture is that it's smelly, difficult, and dangerous. That kind of impression. They hardly know anything but that dirty image. Young people now, all of them, style their hair and make their nails pretty; the boys, too." In short, fashionable, appearance-conscious young people find little appeal in "dirty" agriculture, despite its availability in their hometown. In some cases, spaces for seasonal workers for mangoes, sugarcane, and other crops are filled by mainland Japanese who have moved to Miyako and take these less desirable jobs in order to remain on the island year-round.

The cyclical nature of agriculture means that local young people may not find full-time agricultural work that covers the cost of living, especially if they move out of their family homes. Most Shimajiri residents working in agriculture supplement their income with additional work, and the majority of those living within Shimajiri find employment outside of it. Available jobs on Miyako as a whole tend not to pay well, and white-collar work is scarce. For those young people who beat the odds and find work, finding a place to live away from their family home can be an even greater challenge.

Shimajiri leadership has discussed what to do about the town's lack of housing for years. The small city-managed apartment building known locally as the *danchi* (団地) provides the only apartments available for rent in town—twelve of them—but the building has begun to suffer from its age. Residents represent a variety of ages and situations, including young families, retirees, single parents, and those that hope to bide their time until they can afford to build their own home. All the residents (save my family when we stayed there) also have some family tie to Shimajiri. Some residents of the *danchi* even have land in Shimajiri where the decaying structures of their ancestral homes lie, yet lack the funding to rebuild.

And yet sound homes abound in Shimajiri, standing empty, reflecting a secondary population shift from the upper half of the demographic: elderly residents that decide to move away to be with their children in distant cities. Sometimes these homeowners simply move to Hirara, where amenities like medical care are closer at hand. In either case, most homeowners feel profoundly ambivalent about renting their homes beyond the inconvenience of becoming landlords, because they have duties to the ancestral deities present in household shrines. Most absentee owners return several times a year to maintain their properties and make necessary offerings, especially during Obon, but most of the time they remain empty.

Another aspect of the declining population of young people is the simultaneous decrease in young families whose children attend Miyajima Elementary School. The community and the school share a long history, with Shimajiri petitioning that a school be built in town to protect their children after two fatal accidents occurred during local children's commutes to Karimata for school. The people of Shimajiri built the original school building themselves in 1971 with supplies provided by the city, and the various school events continue to be widely supported by the community. The partnership may be seen most particularly by the ways that the school

interfaces with local resources, inviting community elders to come and present on topics ranging from their wartime experiences to teaching how to plant and harvest rice in the school's small paddy. "Protecting the school is also very important," Hentona Tadashi said, as he explained that the school was one major reason he had returned to live in Shimajiri from the city. For him, the interrelationship of the school with the town made the community healthy: the sound of children playing in the street nurtured the elderly, while bringing up children within the community and having their elders teach them about local agriculture and fishing served a vital role in their education, a way of nurturing children's minds (心を育てる *kokoro o sodateru*).

For Hentona Toyoichi (Tadashi's father), the problem of depopulation negatively affects elderly residents, particularly those who leave town. This is because when elderly Sumafutsu-speakers leave Shimajiri to live in an elder-care facility or some other place, they can have a difficult time communicating with local dialects from elsewhere on Miyako, which results in social isolation despite proximity to better medical care. Toyoichi concludes, "Going to a place you don't know, then dying and returning with lonely memories... returning home only for your funeral, for me that's too much; that's a poor excuse for the end of a life." For Toyoichi, Shimajiri as a community not only incorporates its living members; a healthy community remains together until the end, and beyond when those same community members return as co-present ancestral deities.

Solutions in Process

Solutions to these issues of employment and housing tie directly to the steady decrease of Shimajiri's depopulation, as well as the protection and maintenance of its designated (and undesignated) cultural and natural heritage. In Shimajiri, most of the planning of measures to

benefit the town fall to the jichikai leadership. However, individuals also strategize how they may be able to contribute to community development and maintenance.

Housing, Depopulation, and Community

The multi-pronged issue of housing includes the lack of additional apartments, the lack of land, and the presence of empty houses. As one way to keep more people, especially young people, in town, the jichikai has repeatedly petitioned the city government to build a second apartment building opposite the current one. However, the longer the old building goes without renovation, the more likely it becomes that the city will instead replace the current building with a new one, which does little to solve the lack of available living space.

The availability of land for people to build new homes forms the second part of a potential solution. However, despite much discussion on how to accomplish this, action remains stymied. Miyara-kaichô reflected,

It's a conversation that has been going on a long time, like how to divide up land to give space to build more homes...but we haven't implemented it. If we had land, I think people would come and build, but we've had this conversation and haven't been able to do it.

Architect Fukuhara Kôyû waits for the town to solve the land problem, but remains willing to help local young people figure out ways to stay in Shimajiri, such as by building less expensive homes. In his opinion, if the cost to live in the city outweighs its convenience, more young people will put up with the inconvenience of commuting longer distances from Shimajiri.

The question of how to retain the elderly requires solving the same problem. Hentona Toyoichi suggests that the elderly would be less likely to depart if locally centered medical care

were available, enabling them to live in their own homes and maintain relationships with friends and relatives in town. However, the solution remains out of reach as long as no land or housing exists to build a new clinic.

As for opening empty homes to renters, the process remains stalled. Household shrines can be ceremonially relocated, but longstanding ties between the actual physical location of the home of a family lineage and those ancestors associated with that site make for an intense reluctance to disturb that relationship. Occasionally, people do choose to rent out their homes, and the tenants agree not to touch or disturb the household shrine which the landlords return periodically to tend. However, this situation tends to be an exception rather than the norm, and any major shift would require significant action on the part of jichikai leadership to convince homeowners to make such a transition.

While retaining young adults and their families in town would keep children at Miyajima Elementary, the jichikai has also asked Shimajiri parents to choose Miyajima for their children. With some grade levels at the school now represented by a single student, some local parents choose to send their children to larger city schools that have larger classes and more opportunities for athletic and club involvement.

Community Income

At the heart of discussions about how to sustain the community is money. Improvements and maintenance of public buildings and local sites as well as funding for community events require both small-scale solutions that the community can accomplish, as well as finding creative ways to draw in state support.

In 1990, an annual community meeting erupted in arguments over the town's lack of

income. The kôbaiten wasn't turning a profit, various subgroups of the jichikai were threatened with funding cuts, and there seemed to be no way to bring money into the community. However, with the recently constructed walkways through the mangrove forest on the outskirts of town becoming a draw for sightseers, Hentona Tadashi suggested that the community as a whole try to take advantage of the influx of tourists and build up local businesses to provide community income.

As a result, the jichikai asked Tadashi to develop such a business himself. So alongside the Hentona Farm, Tadashi began a sightseeing business in 1991 that leads guided tours of the mangrove forest via sea kayak, and he has built relationships with knowledgeable locals on Ōgami Island who lead trekking tours. His own staff leads snorkeling expeditions around the island and hosts barbecues there. The staff for the ecotourism business comes out of the farm itself, where his workers stop their agricultural tasks to take tourists out, then return to their farming duties. So in addition to farming, Tadashi and his staff also learn the names of fish, crabs, and other maritime wildlife, and have a detailed knowledge of mangroves and their value to coastal ecosystem.

The success of the Hentonas' mango farm also provides seasonal work to Shimajiri residents. Mangoes, raised in wind-proof greenhouses all year to protect them from Miyako's intense storms and typhoons, require an immense amount of labor, as each mango is individually ensconced in its own breathable bag as it grows to protect it from sunburn and insect interference. At harvest, the perfectly ripened mangoes sell for luxury prices and ship across Japan. Smaller, less picture-perfect mangoes can be found at the kôbaiten for less expensive local purchase. Shimajiri residents, many of them retired or semi-retired housewives, swell the ranks of the Hentona Farm to nearly fifteen workers during the busy times of protectively bagging

mangoes on the branch, then the later harvest and shipping process.

Hentona Tadashi is not alone in taking advantage of tourist presence. A Tokyo native that moved to Miyako a decade earlier runs Ocean Tribe, a successful small local business specializing in sea kayaking, diving, snorkeling, and other ocean activities. While this business owner lives in Shimajiri, like Tadashi, he and his staff pick up interested parties and bring them to where they will spend the day. His success serves as a model for how Shimajiri could open up properties and start local businesses, yet at the same time poses a challenge to the idea of the community as primarily connected to the past and one another through family lineages.

Apart from founding entirely new businesses, existing forms of employment have also undergone creative changes. Local sugarcane farmers, dealing with an aging base and dropping numbers of children inheriting their parents' work, came together in 2001 to cooperatively own a single harvester machine. While this initiative saved them labor and money, and enabled them to continue farming sugarcane, the downside is that part-time seasonal laborers are not needed to harvest cane by hand.⁸⁶ In 2012, Hentona Tadashi and a number of other farmers in their fifties created a limited liability company (合同会社 *gôdôgaisha*) for community agriculture. Together, members can operate the harvester and help the older generation that still works out in the fields. They hope that if they make a profit, they will be able help support both the local elementary school as well as the *kôbaiten*, although Tadashi notes that this is still a dream.

While these local job initiatives have succeeded in some aspects, the funding of various

⁸⁶ For many small farmers, participation comes with a number of pros and cons. Too wet, and the harvester can't move through the field. If the field is too small, the harvester cannot enter. The chopped cane cut in pieces by the harvester loses moisture more quickly—a negative when the payout is measured by weight. The harvester also picks up more unusable leaves and other detritus that hand-harvesters slice away, which does not count toward the total weight.

However, harvesting cane by hand takes days of nonstop labor in all forms of weather, and each farmer must complete the harvest of certain fields by a non-negotiable dates and times. If some cane is not cut when the truck from the sugar refinery comes to pick it up, then the cane and its profit are lost.

town subgroups like the seinenkai, Yamadakai, and rôjinkai comes in large part from the profits of the local cooperative store, the kôbaiten. One outcome of the tense 1990 community meeting was to embrace promotion. By advertising the kôbaiten's existence along the roads to various places like the Shimajiri Mangrove Forest and Ōgami Island, the traffic from tourists increased to the point that the store now runs at a profit.

Even today, the jichikai and in particular the store manager continue to grapple with how to make the kôbaiten more profitable, finding some way to balance between the trickle of tourist traffic and Shimajiri residents that make up its primary customer base. Many Shimajiri residents do the bulk of their shopping in Hirara where large supermarkets can offer lower prices, and remark wryly how expensive the kôbaiten is: the markup of items stocked from some of the same large supermarkets in the city reflect the cost of convenience.

Complicating the lack of housing and the concern about available employment is the nature of convincing people to make changes, and having the right strategy for making plans a reality. Retaining young people is important, but creating an environment that will lure back the 18-59 demographic is paramount. One community leader noted that Shimajiri needs to develop a long-range plan, made to last 5 or 10 years, in order to anticipate ongoing trends. With a systematic approach, the community can adapt. Such a plan would involve a method for making money, community expenses, and job creation, as well as the promotion and development of the paantu for profit.

Paantu as Cultural and Economic Resource

Within the context of various problems within contemporary Shimajiri, the designation of the paantu as national intangible heritage becomes a potential solution, a cultural resource the

community can draw on in various ways. Even since before the 1993 designation, the community has been considering how to market itself, to embrace the paantu not only as the visiting deity that protects body and home, but as a way to leverage the means to sustain both the community and its heritage.

Just as the boom in tourists has required action to counterbalance bad behavior and bad press, the promotion of the paantu has resulted in unforeseen effects. Most of the core jichikai leadership maintain the promotion and marketing will result in profit for the community, but most members of the seinenkai feel a stronger sense of ambivalence. Both feel that promotion has led to the need to clearly define boundaries in terms of participation and knowledge of ritual practice, and especially the legal ownership of the image of the paantu as its popularity grows.

Paantu Promotion and Imitation

As efforts by the jichikai to promote Shimajiri led to the increase in signage and the event's advertising by tourism promoting businesses, and the Important Intangible Folk-Cultural Property designation led to the national broadcast of paantu, the paantu itself was picked up as an emblem of Miyakojima, with various representations appearing on t-shirts, billboards, Orion beer cans, and a seemingly infinite variation of tourist goods. From 2002 to 2006, the Miyako City Government's Tourism Promotion Group and the corporate Miyako Tourism Association developed the "Tourist Goods Planning Assistance Project" (*Kankô shôhin kikaku shien jigyou* 観光商品企画支援事業), part of which focused on developing paantu-themed commercial products with the cooperation of the Shimajiri jichikai. They also proposed that Shimajiri men build a tourist attraction by performing a version of Paantu Punaha outside of city hall at scheduled times convenient to visitors (Satô 2007, 12).

The jichikai supplied a person to represent a paantu in the opening ceremonies of the Miyako Strongman Triathlon in 2006 (Satô 2007, 25). However, embodying a false paantu, even dressed in fake vines, an imitation mask, and no mud at all, went too far for many Shimajiri residents, who complained to the jichikai. In response, the jichikai no longer approved the paantu's entry, however emblematic, in the opening ceremonies of the triathlon. No move was made to work with the tourism association to enact Paantu outside of traditionally designated times, either.⁸⁷

However, this boundary appears somewhat permeable depending on where the impetus to perform originates. Within Shimajiri, children make masks of leaves and collect handfuls of vines to play at being paantu, especially just before and after Paantu Punaha. A longstanding aspect of child culture in Shimajiri, no one frowns on such play, and many regard it with fond nostalgia. Older performers of the “real” paantu from the seinenkai may push the boundary a little more. At a 2012 performance with various drum groups from around Japan, a Miyako group including some performers from the Shimajiri seinenkai fielded a fake paantu as a character during their performance along with other iconic Miyako cultural characters. Whether this was a locally authorized performance or not did not seem to bother the seinenkai members involved.

As a result of the potential presence of imitation paantu, the Shimajiri jichikai and seinenkai expend additional effort making sure that the role of the “real” paantu is performed by a person that has a deeper understanding of the role's significance. Beyond closing the lower age limit to bar junior high and high school students from being paantu, in 2012 the jichikai decided

⁸⁷ “Here, we could say that there is a difference in enthusiasm between [the project] and the administration [the jichikai]” (Satô 2007, 12).

to officially close participation as paantu to non-Shimajiri men. While historically a fairly rare occurrence, usually taking the form of visiting friends of seinenkai members or husbands of women from Shimajiri, the jichikai leadership instead mandated that if enough seinenkai members could not participate, then older men from the jichikai would fill in as paantu instead. Fukuhara Kôyû did paantu for the first time in 1988 when he was 28 years old, and then again when he was 45, which made him, at least in the mid-2000s, the oldest person doing paantu at the time, and possibly, he reflected, the oldest person ever to take the role of paantu. With the new jichikai decision, perhaps Kôyû will not be able to maintain his record.

As noted in the previous chapter, the move to limit photography and media access to sacred, transformative spaces during the matsuri has the result of asserting insider authority and control over knowledge of practice, with a general consensus that images of that knowledge should not be put on display for outsiders. Most consider the Board of Education's intrusion during its official investigation of paantu in support of its heritage designation (discussed above with Sunagawa Gensei) as a one-time, sufficient amount of outsider documentation. However, insider documentation for insider use, a small scale mediatization, is not expressly forbidden. Ubiquitous cell phone cameras as well as the seinenkai's own camera makes the rounds during the costuming process at Nmarigaa. Additionally, the jichikai has floated the suggestion multiple times that the seinenkai make an illustrated instruction manual in *manga*, or comic book, form, so that the intricate knowledge of how to put together the paantu will not be lost in case the ritual cannot be performed for a longer stretch of time. However, it was stressed, this kind of manual would be for local use only, not distributed, and it is possible that the unwillingness to make such a document reflects the ambivalence that such knowledge become not a local guide, but a template to be followed by those hoping to profit. Both the jichikai and seinenkai share the

perspective that Paantu is not a reproducible model for export.

Paantu and Profit

While promotion to increase awareness of the paantu has made it necessary to establish guidelines as to authentic representations of the paantu in performance, promotion to increase revenue into Shimajiri has had mixed results. While some promotion enabled the kôbaiten to move out of the red, gaining additional community revenue through the co-op has been difficult to achieve. Likewise, the hopes of increased revenue during Paantu Punaha from the increased numbers of tourists have fallen short. Kôbaiten manager Shinzato Hidehiko, in his mid-thirties, explained his take on the situation:

We thought that the tourists would bring in money, but in reality, hardly anyone brings a wallet. Sneaky, aren't they? They don't bring bags, because they'll get dirty. So that's the way it goes. Compared to the usual for the store, well, it's actually just a *little*, maybe about 0.5 times the normal income.

Many of the store's local customers, particularly the elderly women living in town, avoid the store during Paantu, and Hidehiko notes that what the tourists do buy tends to be drinks and food. He says ruefully, "It's just busy. The majority just don't bring a wallet; they don't bring anything valuable with them."

Unlike many other tourist attractions on Miyako, Paantu is not put on as a paid performance. However, because of the many hours of volunteer work put in by jichikai and seinenkai members, often taking days off from work to help out, the jichikai is considering additional ways to raise money, like charging for parking or having a place for donations.

Another way to pull in money may be to market the paantu in terms of selling tourist

goods, especially since other businesses have been quick to create paantu goods and profit from them. However, many Shimajiri residents struggle with discomfort with “using” or “making use” of the paantu for profit, and for those that support commercialization, feel that the paantu as economic resource must be balanced with respect for the real paantu.

This includes things being sold during the matsuri itself. While a hallmark of many Japanese festivals includes *matsuri sawagi* 祭り騒ぎ, a kind of merrymaking that includes food carts, games, and selling various things, Shimajiri has included these aspects in Paantu Punaha only since the mid-2000s, and not everyone in town approves. Arakaki Miyuki, in her mid-twenties and a kôbaiten staff member, explains, “There are people among the elderly grandfathers and grandmothers who say that this traditional event (*dentô gyôji* 伝統行事) shouldn’t have matsuri sawagi. I think my feeling is that, if it’s done for Shimajiri, it ought to be all right, but the people who have seen the event from a long time ago say that traditional events aren’t supposed to have it.”

At present, the matsuri sawagi in Shimajiri remains limited to one food cart parked next to the kôbaiten, run by a Shimajiri family, and a souvenir table that is covered in plastic sheeting to prevent mud from passing paantu, staffed by kôbaiten employees. The souvenirs for sale include t-shirts and keychains, cookies and stuffed toy versions of the paantu. The sales see only moderate success, hamstrung by the same dilemma of tourists not bringing money or purses with them.

Outside the two days of Paantu Punaha, the kôbaiten sells paantu-related souvenirs. Fukuhara Kôyû noted that the initial paantu goods in Shimajiri were locally produced t-shirts made by Hentona Tadashi, and that the seinenkai also made staff t-shirts for various town events that featured the paantu, which they still make for themselves for special events, but do not sell.

Fukuhara himself makes paantu masks out of wood in full and half-size that he sells at a few limited locations. However, the bulk of tourist goods today come from tourist goods companies that specialize in making specialty trinkets, t-shirts, and a nearly infinite variety of objects with logos that are sold at only relevant regional locations. Just as the matsuri sawagi, not everyone is happy with these goods. Hentona Kiyoshi sums up the tension between the viewpoints:

Because the paantu is a kamisama, commercializing it too much is no good.

However, because the paantu belongs to Shimajiri [*Shimajiri no mono*], even if it is commercialized, if the money comes back to Shimajiri I think that's all right.

There are some enterprises that are doing that for us already, but the small shops are doing whatever they want, and that's no good. Really, it's illegal. Shimajiri has the actual rights to it, but there are so many small shops, and even if you go to all of them and ask for commission, you can't take them all on, you can hardly do that. So that's why I think that making the paantu into a business shouldn't be done, but even so, the image of the paantu belongs to the people of Shimajiri, so the people of Shimajiri should be able to use that image. For other people who just want to make money, commercializing the paantu is no good. I don't think the deity will forgive them for that.

Kiyoshi's own stance reflects his respect for the kamisama, but also incorporates his generation's concern with the need for community income. He also mentions the idea of intellectual property, a new way that his generation has begun to consider the paantu. As the paantu grew in popularity, various tourist goods companies as well as local tourist-oriented shops began producing various representations of the paantu. The year before the mukei bunkazai designation, Hentona Tadashi, on behalf of the jichikai, proactively filed for copyright

(*chosakuken* 著作権) of the paantu and its image, and received that copyright recognition in 1995. This copyright covers the image of the paantu, although not the ritual practices themselves. When Kiyoshi notes the illegality of the creation of tourist goods for the many small tourist-goods store that dot the island, he is referring to the fact that the paantu has been Shimajiri's officially copyrighted property for over two decades.

Most of the current jichikai leadership feels that commercialization is not only inevitable but also desirable, with real potential to help the town. As noted earlier, the Tourism Promotion Group from the city government, and the Miyako Tourism Association worked to some degree with the Shimajiri jichikai to promote the paantu and find ways to commercialize it, with particular interest in generating local employment across Miyako, as per the "Emergency Local Job Creation Special Project" (*Kinkyû chiiki koyôsôshutsu tokubetsu jigyo* 緊急地域雇用創出特別事業) from the prefecture's governmental Division for the Stimulation of Employment (Satô 2007, 12).

"Wherever this event's image can travel, through the whole country, I think that's great," Miyara-kaichô affirmed. The paantu joins a small group of other local characters, a mascot ready for export.⁸⁸ Due to long campaigns to specialize local souvenirs for tourists, visitors readily identify locales based on the type of local specialty or image that can be purchased.⁸⁹ While

⁸⁸ In a world of souvenirs, having a specialized character is a must, so much so that the creation of cutesy local mascots (*yuru-kyara* ユルキヤラ) across Japan has exploded in the last several years, often sponsored by local governments to promote tourism. Miiya-kun, the *yuru-kyara* of Miyako, runs happily across various goods, and Miyako Mamoru-kun, a pale-faced policeman set up in statue form across the island to discourage drunk driving several decades prior also gets his turn on various goods. For more on *yuru-kyara*, see (Occhi 2010)

While the real paantu is anything but cute, plush, or cuddly, the soft cartoonish paantu dangling from keychains certainly are. Tomori Mariko commented that in some ways the paantu had become something like Giabbit (ジャビット), the well-known rabbit mascot of Tokyo's Yomiuri Giants baseball team.

⁸⁹ (Creighton 1997) for a discussion of the development of local goods.

mangoes, sugarcane, “sea lettuce” (Myk: *aasa*, Jp: *aosa* 石蓴), and “sea grapes” (*umibudô* 海葡萄) comprise many of the top recognizable locally produced foods for sale on Miyako, these subtropical edibles may be found throughout Okinawa. Fukuhara Kôyû considers the paantu-as-mascot, its presence on t-shirts to cookies, something of a benefit for Miyako’s tourist industry as a whole:

Miyakojima has hardly any nature, just the ocean. So even if people come as tourists, in the end, there’s nothing here, and there isn’t any unique Miyako souvenir (*omiyage* お土産); we really haven’t been making any... In places like the Okinawa main island and Ishigaki, they have a lot of places to see, and there are things like the mountain cat on Ishigaki or whatever, and on the Okinawa main island they have the Yanbaru *kuina*,⁹⁰ and there’s *habu*,⁹¹ but on Miyako, since we don’t have habu, just the ocean, we hardly have any specialized Miyako *omiyage*. So with it like this, the paantu becomes something here a little more for all of Miyako.

While the promotion of the paantu and the encouragement of paantu goods managed to successfully make the paantu a Miyako emblem, it does not appear to have had an influence on creating profitable producers of tourist goods within Shimajiri, and certainly has not discouraged producers of tourist goods outside of Shimajiri from commercializing the paantu in whatever way they like. Hentona Tadashi explains that contemporary culture requires embracing the “strict” (*kibishii* 厳しㇿ) legal mechanisms for protecting culture, rather than simply continuing

⁹⁰ Also known as the Okinawa Rail, an endangered bird found only in Yanbaru, the northern part of Okinawa Island.

⁹¹ A notorious pit viper from Okinawa, not found on Miyako.

to carry on tradition. “Nowadays, the culture is different—this was just a small community, but now *everybody* comes. That’s why we *must* do the trademark registration, *must* to do traffic control... And the people doing it must talk about it.”

Tadashi admits that their copyright does not necessarily solve the issue of controlling the paantu’s image, though he and the jichikai hope to shore up other legal loopholes, and hope to register the paantu as a trademark (*shôhyô tôroku* 商標登録) as well. By copyrighting and trademarking the paantu, the jichikai hopes to authorize images and discourse about the paantu so that people understand that the paantu is a deity. In this way they can promote the kind of ideas about paantu that will engender respect in the visitors who come to the ritual, and spread the correct interpretation of the event outside of town. While jichikai and seinenkai members alike insist that no substantive relationship exists between the tourist goods and the actual ritual itself, they hope that more tangible benefits may accrue to Shimajiri through their legal control of the paantu’s image.

The copyright offers entrepreneurs the opportunity to collaborate with the jichikai. For a small percentage of profit from the sale of paantu-related goods, the jichikai will not only make certain that businesses’ representations of paantu are accurate, but also publicly endorse the sale. One such partnership already allows for some return of money to Shimajiri. The company Nanpûdô (南風堂, literally “south wind store”) based in Itoman on Okinawa island specializes in the sale and wholesale of Okinawan regional foods and local specialties as well as clothing and manufactured tourist goods, and has regional offices on Miyako and Yaeyama (Nanpudo Co. Ltd 2016). After Shimajiri’s copyright registration in 1995, representatives from Nanpûdô came to the jichikai and asked if they could put together tourist goods based on the paantu. Some designs met with jichikai approval; others did not. The company manufactured the vetted goods, and

included an explanation of Paantu Punaha with each one, along with a seal noting that the object was “Shimajiri jichikai approved.” In addition to allowing the jichikai veto power over objects deemed inappropriate, the company also returns two percent of the profit on its paantu-related items back to Shimajiri. Representatives from the company return every year to the jichikai with new designs, and the process begins all over again.

The Nanpûdô company is fairly large, but only one of several large tourist goods companies that target the Okinawan tourist market. Numerous small stores manufacture their own goods on a small scale or buy wholesale from the larger companies. Beyond Miyako, the popularity of the paantu has spread elsewhere in Okinawa, with t-shirts and other tourist-oriented goods featuring representations of the paantu in cute, scary, and occasionally almost unrecognizable forms. Hentona Tadashi notes that the “good” companies will be ethical and speak to the jichikai, but also that for the jichikai’s control to be recognized, some financial element must be incorporated, even a relatively painless one like a two percent profit cut.

With the copyright, the jichikai becomes the official legitimator of authenticity. While the bunkazai designation is a value-added label to the paantu, the jichikai hopes that labeling paantu-themed goods as having an explicit tie to Shimajiri itself will prove to be profitable for both businesses and the community, where they become authenticators of their own tradition in a marketplace full of imitations. However, even in a changed culture that must rely on strict legal consequences, invoking those laws carries a social cost. A profit margin as small as two percent doesn’t make legal battles worthwhile, and many Shimajiri residents feel uncomfortable disrupting good relationships to make potential opponents within a fairly small island community.

Paantu as Bunkazai

Through the construction of bunkazai in Japan and on Miyako, it is possible to see how the heritage process interweaves with the social and economic concerns of Shimajiri. In particular, considering Paantu Punaha *as bunkazai* becomes a shorthand for certain kinds of significance and value that are both entangled with the ritual itself, but which exist apart from it. This consideration imparts interpretations that resonate with the ways that people in other places think about heritage, but also reflect the localized, context-specific constructions of heritage within Shimajiri.

Through historical sources, community memory, and contemporary explanations, Shimajiri residents identify problems and solutions as affects their community infrastructure, economy, and culture. Through these, it becomes possible to see the multiple ways that they engage with the concept known as bunkazai, particularly in their discussions around what should be done with bunkazai. Importantly, people in Shimajiri do not operate with a single definition of bunkazai, or a single stance on what to do about it, but rather possess simultaneous and often evolving views in conversation with one another. Four major interrelated interpretations emerge: bunkazai as a boundable object; bunkazai as a commentary on cultural change; bunkazai as a value; and bunkazai as a relationship.

Bunkazai as Object

As Sunagawa related earlier, the term “bunkazai” had to be associated with various forms of culture and given public value, but the definition of bunkazai itself is less clear. In many ways, the term seems to be somewhat circularly defined. Many scholars have observed how legal guidelines create a system in which the practice of heritage is bureaucratized and objectified (cf.

(Noyes 2006; Akagawa 2015, 8–27; Smith 2006, 106–14). Despite recognizing from a theoretical standpoint that bunkazai is an ongoing process, in contemporary Shimajiri, consistent with many decades of Japanese heritage policy, one major aspect of bunkazai is that of the boundable, preservable object.

This perspective may be seen most clearly in the seeking of defensible legal protections for paantu as intellectual property. The Shimajiri jichikai understands the necessities of working within the system. Culture as an owned, quantifiable, legally defended object mandates its entry into complicated legal bureaucracies, of a separate order from the kind of bureaucracy in place to evaluate and designate forms of culture as heritage (Brown 2003, 7–8). Protection and ownership in this legalistic model go hand in hand; Shimajiri applied for copyright on the paantu in 1992, the year before they were to receive the national intangible cultural property designation.

Protection of bunkazai as an object demonstrates concern with the present as the enabler of the future. As voiced by jichikai members as well as on locally produced websites (and even city-established memorial stones), bunkazai must be protected (*mamoru* 守る), and this protection primarily serves a hopeful future. However, in some cases, this does not allow practices to change or die off in the present (Hashimoto 1998, 43–45; Thornbury 1994). This in turn leads to fear of disappearance.

Bunkazai as Commentary on Cultural Change

The idea of protecting bunkazai for the future extends from adults to community youth as well. A conversation between three high school girls about their paantu experiences and their thoughts on change led to their sharing their uncertainty about the ritual's future:

SC: When I was small, it was only scary, but now it's fun, but...

SM: Like, what will become of it?

SC: Yeah, that and, I want it to last from now on.

Uncertainty about the future invests the bunkazai paantu with metacultural meanings that relate to how people seek to authenticate the performance and the reception of the paantu, and negotiate the varying positions of support for preservation and change. However, for some Shimajiri residents, making a part of integral cultural practice into bunkazai both reflects and creates cultural change. The paantu as commentary on cultural change can be seen in three areas. The first concerns belief in the paantu, and the fear that the younger generation is losing respect for local deities. The second area concerns authenticated practice. The third reflects the shift from knowledge as practice to knowledge as authorized documentation.

Hentona Toyoichi, as something of a spokesperson for the generation that lived through the war, reflects that despite the good side of local development and the positive aspects of protecting culture, some irreplaceable aspects of culture have vanished. More importantly, the protected things themselves may still be in danger of disappearing. He recalled when the first steps were taken to make Paantu bunkazai:

When I think about that time, how we ought to plan, the truth is that what mustn't be seen, mustn't be gone to, mustn't be entered—like it used to be done—I think we should have clearly done that, protected that to some extent.... If the things from the past go on disappearing, what comes next is that the kamisama won't be there, and the people that are born will have a barbarous path... The kami purify the right way of life, and in that cleansing, it means for me... that sometimes, we also must protect those places we can't go in, must protect those things that we aren't allowed to see.

For this older generation, fear and respect go hand in hand, and without a proper amount of either, belief itself is at risk. Ignorance and loss have profound spiritual and physical implications. Already some aspects of past practice, like the divine priestesses, are gone. Toyoichi asserts that the failure to inculcate both belief and respect in children rests with parents who had failed to take responsibility for their education, resulting in a situation where children only see the paantu as a plaything, not a deity. Folklorist Michael Dylan Foster describes the intersection of a heritage designation and a very different visiting deity ritual from Kyushu, citing the theory of folklorist Ōshima Akio (2011). Ōshima describes two aspects of tradition, the external form and the internal spirit. Foster notes that for the members of a small island community in Kyushu, “‘tradition of form’ without ‘tradition of spirit’ is no tradition at all” (Foster 2011, 87). For Toyoichi and others that share his opinion, the changing practice of Paantu has begun to result in a gentler, kinder deity, which, if trends continue, can only be gentled further until the spirit of the whole event is lost.

The situating of authentic belief as well as authentic practice in the past reflects discomfort with change, but also highlights the concern that the next generation possess a sense of their own history. While most assert that the core or “content” (内容 *naiyō*) of Paantu Punaha itself has not changed, carrying forward Paantu as practice within a shifting societal context heightens an awareness of cultural and economic transformations. For example, the dominant home language has shifted over the course of two generations to become Japanese instead of Sumafutsu, agricultural life is not a given for children, and with depopulation, the threat of having nobody left to continue the community at all is very real.⁹²

⁹² In the case of Zuukoomooiz, a children’s ritual of late summer giving thanks for the rice harvest where they sing a song in Sumafutsu outside the doors of local households and collect snacks, Miyara-kaichō noted that the shift away from predominantly rice agriculture posed a change in the ritual, but also that

Shimajiri residents try to connect the newer generation with their traditional culture in different ways. Sometimes this resembles the explicit instruction of a parent about local history during a beach cleanup, the nurturing of the relationships between teachers, community elders, and children at the school rice paddy, or in the seinenkai's outreach to younger boys so that they can learn firsthand about the paantu. At the same time, other suggestions that attempt to solve or smooth this perception of disruptive change include the embrace of the past itself. Fukuhara Kôyû phrases this as a medley of English and Japanese: "Go back to old time." For an authentic sense of the past, he feels, one must emulate it. This could be accomplished through growing kyaan, turning off all the streetlights to enable complete darkness, and allowing the paantu to be as frightening as possible. However, how to acknowledge the past or revive it in balance with contemporary life remains a difficult problem to solve.

As an alternative to returning the past, the discussions surrounding bunkazai-paantu reveal a complicated relationship to documentation, which reflects the tension created by a changing participant demographic during Paantu Punaha. While everyone wants all participants, regardless of where they come from, to understand the ritual so that conflicts do not occur, the perception that many participants have a shallow or nonexistent understanding heightens the necessity for maintaining ritual correctness and understanding for the central ritual actors, particularly the seinenkai. This in turn leads to a complicated stance regarding documentation, particularly because of ubiquitous contemporary photography and video capacities among cell phone users.

As previously mentioned, local documentation is permitted; the seinenkai camera makes

"the kids don't really understand the song anymore." Depopulation affected the participants numbers and genders as well as the number of thanks offerings left for the kami, shrinking the number of offering places from four to two. The children's enjoyment of the ritual continues unabated, but they must rehearse the song by rote prior to performing it.

the rounds inside Nmarigaa during the costuming process, and photos are shared within the group. Some members of the jichikai encourage descriptive documentation for local use, such as the creation of a comic-style illustrated handbook. However, the reproduction of the paantu by anyone other than the Shimajiri seinenkai and jichikai is completely unacceptable, and so the creation of such a document holds risk. The same holds true for photography and video outside of Shimajiri control, which can be seen in increased efforts to keep the closed half of the ritual from outsiders. The restriction of knowledge to the outside prevents its misuse.

At the same time, however, previous investigations of Paantu Punaha served contemporary members of the seinenkai and jichikai. Knight writes on the interplay between human and textual authority, as well as the link between heritage and national interest, “the attentions of outside scholars are put to local purpose, making local lore into textualized municipal tradition” (Knight 1997, 156). In Shimajiri this held true: Hanashiro Hiroki admitted that his personal quest for deeper knowledge about the paantu brought him to the city’s various reports on it, including the official documentation for Paantu’s inclusion as national bunkazai. During Sumassari, photocopied pages from *Hirara City History* (*Hirara shishi* 平良市史) name the various utaki and other places where the reverse-twisted rope is hung, and the pages are distributed to participants so they can double-check the placement of the ropes. The documentation of a generation prior, including both books of photography as well as city-led research projects, has become to some degree part of the tradition itself, a way of passing on knowledge that works alongside oral tradition and practice.⁹³

⁹³ For an alternative community opinion of resistance toward documentation of a similar ritual, see Foster 2011.

Reconsidering “Bunkazai” as Value

Related to the conversation about local change is how the paantu as bunkazai opens up doubts as to whether having Paantu as bunkazai is valuable or worthwhile. While the designation initially generated a lot of positive commentary and was perceived as adding value to local traditions by popularizing them, now feelings are mixed, and much of it has to do with the difficulties in dealing with visitors. Shinzato Hidehiko summed up some of the tensions,

Honestly, we don’t want to close it off so much anymore. For Shimajiri, PR is something different! Like I said before, the trouble’s been increasing, and really, if there are too many more people we can’t keep up with them. We even had this talk in the volunteer security force, and talked about whether we should call up a proper security company instead of having local people do it....When the media come, that alone would be, you know, but we also meet a lot of people that want to see Paantu, and that makes me happy, but that’s only half of it. If the number of people didn’t increase it would be perfect.

Then he chuckled. “Like if enough came so Paantu wouldn’t be lost, maybe.”

Other community members see a world in which the bunkazai designation has either failed in its goals, or needs to be drastically reevaluated. One Shimajiri resident of over thirty years admitted that while he didn’t have the same claim to the ritual since he wasn’t from Shimajiri originally, he felt fairly cynical about the development of Paantu, and that popularization ultimately would destroy it. Without sharing such a drastic end view, Hentona Toyoichi expresses the concern that popularization has not benefited the community as intended: “At that time when it was added to the bunkazai, NHK had us do it, and they reported, televised it, and at the time we thought it was a really good thing... now it’s gone too far.” Like Hidehiko,

Toyoichi also enjoys the appreciative tourists. When he was jichikaichô, he recalled a number of cards arriving, particularly those offering thanks from visitors that were touched by the paantu while expecting babies. However, he notes, Shimajiri needs to rethink the situation, possibly try to reassert prior ways of doing things, and reexamine how to manage how tourists interact with the paantu.

In some ways, while the community works to find ways to change in attempting to solve perceived threats to job security, living spaces, and depopulation, they find themselves digging in, shoring up the boundaries to their heritage. While heritage designations appear to confer both positive and negative outcomes, rather than being met with the concern held in other communities that a tradition will lose is flexibility, in Shimajiri the concern seems rather to be how to make the tradition less flexible, at least internally.⁹⁴

Perhaps somewhat paradoxically, implicit in these perspectives is that the bunkazai designation and the accompanying popularization of paantu has resulted in a tourist presence that has become a reluctantly accepted element of the matsuri, but more importantly, may even be the key to its ongoing survival in the community. This places greater stress on the community to define themselves in opposition to the outside, or perhaps find new ways of identifying themselves altogether.

Bunkazai as Relationship

Underlying discussions about the paantu as an indicator of cultural change or a carefully guarded object, is the community of Shimajiri. While the previous chapter examined the paantu as an embodiment of the personality of Shimajiri men, as bunkazai the paantu not only represents

⁹⁴ See Foster 2011, Noyes 2003, 2006.

Shimajiri symbolically to its own residents, but embodies the quality of relationships between all members of the community.

The relationship between past and present has to do with relationships between contemporary people and knowledge belonging to the people of former (昔 *mukashi*) times, but especially with the relationships between the contemporary generation and its children. The succession of meaningful knowledge requires not only a relationship between people, but also between people and the kami.

The quality of relationship embodied in the paantu may be referred to as *yuimaaru*, a widespread Okinawan word literally meaning “connectedness one at a time.”⁹⁵ Often cited in relationship to the fading communal agricultural practice of groups of farmers gathering to harvest each person’s field together, or communities gathering together to build someone a new home after a typhoon, a “spirit of *yuimaaru*” (as put by a former *jichikaichô*) affirms community relationships through mutual support that can be reflected in a commitment to physical, financial, and spiritual well-being. Protecting Paantu as *bunkazai*, as well as properly understanding the meaning behind it, requires everyone to help one another, not only to enjoy the entertaining aspects of the event. Hentona Toyoichi elaborates:

To say it means that everyone takes care [of it] (大事にする *daiji ni suru*), that’s good, but to not understand the meaning; if Paantu is only to be funny, well, won’t the children say, “Why is everyone helping out?” The adults need to grasp that a little more. Because it’s something important. Everyone helps out together, everyone does it carefully, and then we have fun together. There is a need for that sort of thing to be properly explained.

⁹⁵ Sumafutsu speakers often give it a Miyako inflection: *yuz’maaru*.

Notably, the relationships between people that the paantu creates as well as requires for its successful enactment stretches beyond the physical town itself to those members of the Shimajiri community who live elsewhere. This may be seen not only in the members of the *seinenkai* that return to help out during Paantu Punaha, but also in the many residents that return to Shimajiri to participate in Paantu, even though they've made the choice to live outside of Shimajiri for various reasons. Arakaki Miyuki explains:

They come! They really come. Here, it's a little inconvenient. If you don't have a car, it's inconvenient, and also the school is small, and there aren't too many people, but there's a sense of joint struggle (共闘心 *kyôtôshin*), a little, you know, a spirit of rivalry that says, "We won't lose!" that doesn't go away. People care, though there are a lot of people who really dislike tiny schools! But when it's Paantu they always come. The adults even have fun, like they're playing tag.

In many ways the returning Shimajiri residents embody another popularized description of Miyako identity, that of *araragama*, a Sumafutsu word meaning "indomitable spirit." Paantu encourages such a display of hometown pride, even when these returning visitors are either unwilling or unable to invest their physical presence in the town itself. When these two local virtues combine, concern for one another and solidarity against the odds endure. However, if returnees only are invested so far as enjoying themselves without contributing, the quality of the relationship that these people share with other members of the community may also be seen to deteriorate.

While the paantu represents the ideal qualities of Shimajiri residents (and in many ways, acknowledge larger Miyako traditional values that can be found islandwide), there is a circular relationship between the community and the paantu as well. They protect one another. Hentona

Tadashi explains:

In this community if there are no people left to protect paantu, then nobody will be living here. If it gets to where the people doing paantu aren't here, who will protect paantu? That's why people have to live here. In order for people to live here, we have to have jobs....That's so that we can protect the paantu; it's a necessary thing. The kamisama, as kamisama, reliably protects.

The circle of protectors, practitioners, residents, and kamisama are so interlinked as to become almost indistinguishable. Interdependence and interrelationships matter.

Bunkazai as Process: Last Thoughts

As explored above and in previous chapters, Paantu has been considered by Shimajiri people as experience, authenticated ritual, intellectual property, bunkazai, and authorized image. As bunkazai, it can occupy several dimensions simultaneously, as a value, as an object, as a commentary on change, or the embodiment of relationships. Paantu is both deity and thing, practice and image, something to be protected and something to be protected by. It is simultaneously something done in the moment, planned for and promoted, authorized through the backward gaze, and directed toward the future. It is objectified and processual, with conservative and dynamic tension straining in and between each facet.

Paantu as practice incorporates the necessity to remain locally rooted, to have knowledgeable practitioners, yet at the same time find ways to accommodate or redirect those who would disrupt traditional practice and boundaries. As a resurrected practice, perhaps reflexivity has been built in from the moment of its rebirth. Protection and sustainability go hand in hand, and require new ways to think about the paantu as a form of leverage or a source of

economic benefit. Legally shoring up the economic potential is considered necessary, just as necessary as having concern for the future.

Not everyone in Shimajiri views change as frightening or threatening. Many see it as necessary for the community's survival. Some discomfort may exist with changing cultural and economic times, yet many hope that some forms of change will come more swiftly. "Shimajiri is a place where change enters slowly," notes Hanashiro Hiroki. Certainly Shimajiri has adapted to numerous changes over the past thirty years. However, whether the community will adapt quickly enough to save itself, as well as its bunkazai, remains to be seen. Local attention to consensus building reflects the community value of mutual support and care. However, it may simultaneously be one of the roadblocks in the way toward timely adaptation. A former jichikaichô stressed the necessity for the community to come together and act:

That's why we have to have more and more discussions, but while we're having them, say how the future is becoming, and ask for cooperation and the like....In front of everyone, while we're having these discussions, we need to get people to understand and work together. For that purpose, administrative guidance is necessary. Community effort is also necessary. That's pretty important, isn't it?...Because people and nature are also both steadily moving forward.

Thoughts on Culture Things

J.C. Alvaredo, a Marine Gunnery Sergeant, married Shimajiri Kyoko, born and raised in Shimajiri. Together, they spent a number of years living both in Okinawa and the United States. When J.C. retired from the Marines at forty a few years ago, they returned to Miyako and opened a surf shop, La Playa. The three of us chatted at the counter in the shop while the quiet strains of Latin music drifted from the speakers, discussing surfing in Miyako, raising kids, and, of course, Paantu. With social ties in Shimajiri for nearly two decades, J.C.'s presence on Miyako made him a good potential candidate for Paantu. In 2011, he joined the seinenkai and took the role of paantu for the first time.

What they explained to me is you can go anywhere, do anything, touch anything, so it was like, I was trying not to go next to the tourists. So I was the oddball, running around the houses, terrorizing the homes, because there were incidents with the tourists, that they got injured last, previous year, and they were trying to sue, or something like that, so I was like, screw that.

Through the instructions given to him, he was able to better understand his role, even if the seinenkai members didn't explicitly teach the more subtle symbolic meanings. Exemplifying the continuum of understanding and ritual practice, J.C. explained that until he participated, he never took Paantu very seriously. He had experienced it before, but taking the role of the deity alongside the seinenkai made him aware of how seriously the men take the ritual. "They put a lot of thought into this," he noted, not only in terms of the ritual performance, the rules the paantu need to follow, but also how they are working to deal with tourists, in order to keep everyone safe. He concluded gratefully, "I was lucky enough for them to let me play with them....to be

part of their culture thing.”

J.C. gets it. People do put a lot of thought into culture things. No disrespect to informal speech, either, as his words capture something important. *Thing* in English can be object, some vague intermediary state, an action or event. It’s a stand in for when other words don’t quite work, when concepts or actions need to be given form. *Culture thing* reminds us that our culture, that complex and much-disputed word for human behavior, can be a process, can be action, can be vague, and can be made into an object as well.

Thing-as-event becoming thing-as-object; this process also fits into similar transitions of unidentifiable events into knowable creatures in Japanese folklore. Michael Dylan Foster discusses how unknown, fearful, or anxiety-causing phenomena take on form as the mysterious, often monstrous creatures called *yôkai*, where the process of naming allows people to identify as well as manage them, or at least cope with their presence. Naming in turn leads to depiction, including categorization and creative addition as well as standardization (Foster 2015b, 24–32).

I submit that the same process occurs in the process of heritage. In giving a name to the anxieties of change, the loss of tradition, and the sense of alienation arising out of modernity and the destruction and disruption of war, *heritage* is the name that has been chosen to hold the form of those anxieties, and takes its depictions in the varied vocabularies of preservation, safeguarding, conventions, laws, representative lists, and numerous titles of inscription at local, regional, national, and global levels.

Heritage and economics are inextricably bound. The Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties in Okinawa passed in 1954 by the United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyus. By no accident, in the same year the Okinawa Tourism Association (Okinawa kankô kyôkai 沖縄観光協会) was founded, and faced considerable challenges getting government support.

Annual records of their meetings from the 1950s indicate that they busied themselves most with designing sightseeing courses, producing guides, putting up signs, conducting surveys of tourist sites and facilities, holding exhibitions of local goods, hosting important mainland visitors, trying to convince the GRI [Government of the Ryukyu Islands] to establish a Tourism Bureau (which it finally did in 1961), and explaining to the local population what tourism was. (Figal 2008, 91)

The explanation and subsequent fostering of tourism, as Gerald Figal argues, exoticized Okinawa as an internal other, capitalized on the historical culture of the Ryukyu Kingdom, and turned bloody wartime sites of destruction and tragedy into peace memorials. And it *worked*. Tourism today is commonly described as one of the pillars of the Okinawan economy, often summarized as the three Ks: tourism (*kankô* 観光), the military bases (*kichi* 基地), and public works (*kôkyo-kôji* 公共工事).

However, tourism isn't necessarily a foregone conclusion to designated cultural heritage; the balance between heritage, government, and economics takes on different forms in different situations. This situation can be observed in the second ritual on Miyakojima that features a paantu, and which shares the national Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property designation with the Shimajiri paantu.

Satiparou: The Other Paantu

The ritual of Satiparou occurs in central Miyako in the district of Ueno, in a tiny farming town called Nobaru (野原). Smaller than Shimajiri with only about sixty families, the small military base of the Japanese Self Defense Force looms in dull green geometry over the town,

sharing the high ground with numerous utaki, including Nobarudake (野原岳), the highest point on Miyako. While reports about the Osprey helicopters and the protests on Okinawa Island were only newsprint in Shimajiri, an enormous military helicopter alighted at the base when I attended Satiparou. It remained there a time before flying away again, deafening us all with the roar of its rotors. In shock, I turned to my hosts in Nobaru, only to have them explain that this happens on a regular basis.

Satiparou, literally “village purification” (Jp. *sato harai* 里祓い), occurs during the twelfth month of the lunar calendar, around late January or early February. Unlike Paantu Punaha, women lead this ritual, including those serving as tsukasa. They don costuming of palm fronds and vines around their heads and waists, each stiff leaf like a knife, and swish together two short branches of fragrant Japanese cinnamon in each hand⁹⁶. Children from the area gather, and the tumu assistant takes the paantu mask out of its protective box and hands it to one of the boys. It attaches with a tie, so the boy can don the mask and continue to have his hands free. In this way he takes on the role of paantu with no other costuming whatsoever. Another child blows a conch shell, and another beats a rhythm on a handheld drum (*shimedaiko* 締め太鼓).

Together in procession, the paantu and the children lead the procession beginning from a local spring named Niimagaa. They are followed by the women. The conch blows twice with the drum beat, and the women echo, “Hoi! Hoi!” They repeat this as they walk around the town, drawing in a circle around children and paantu at major intersections, shaking their branches and moving in upon them with a wail. After an hour-long procession, moving past many of the major

⁹⁶ *Maani*, a type of feather palm, does indeed possess very sharp edges, and can slice skin open if care is not taken.

The vine used is a type of wild clematis called *senninsô* 仙人草.

Japanese cinnamon is known as *yabunikkei* 藪肉桂.

utaki in Nobaru, Satiparou ends on the outskirts of town at dusk.

People in Nobaru show concern for this ritual and its future. Like Shimajiri, the tsukasa belonging to appropriate house bloodlines have disappeared. However, the women's association, or *fujinkai* 婦人会, has taken responsibility for this ritual and other utaki rituals, with its members taking turns to be the lead tsukasa and tumu for Nobaru's eighteen utaki. When asked about local ritual and practice, the acting tsukasa in Nobaru insisted, "I *really* don't know anything." A lined notebook passes between the women responsible, with instructions for how to set up offerings and other information pertinent to local practice.

Challenges face the participants as well. Many women work outside of town, and find it difficult to take time off work to come in the middle of the afternoon to gather the necessary costuming materials and prepare them, or to return to town in time to costume themselves and perform the ritual at 6pm. Nobaru has no school in town, so students must commute a fair distance, and after-school activities also delay arrival. Like Shimajiri, Nobaru also faces depopulation as a major problem. In order to make sure there are enough children, fujinkai members speak with their friends, and fellow parents of their own children's classmates from neighboring towns to see if they will join in, and make sure the children receive a reward of snacks after the ritual ends, including homemade ones like fresh tempura as well as chips and drinks.

However, unlike Shimajiri, no one has interest in attempting to capitalize on the fame of the paantu. Satiparou sees nearly as many reporters, photographers, and folklorists as participants, but few, if any, tourists. When someone refers to paantu, Nobaru residents assume they are talking about Shimajiri. In contrast, the "Nobaru paantu" is simply Satiparou, the name of the ritual. Additionally, Nobaru has another nationally designated intangible cultural heritage,

late summer dances of men and women called Masutoria, which is more visitor-friendly, larger, and for which the community is perhaps more well-known.

Knowing about Culture Things

Intangible cultural heritage occupies multiple dimensions simultaneously, multiple aspects of being, real and imagined. As heritage it is both thing and process, as property it is both knowledge and image, as process it draws in past, present, and future. As a ritual, it is the evolution of form and belief, both as emergent process and locally authorized forms of knowledge. At the intersections of ritual and intangible cultural heritage, issues of identity, economics, and politics move into sharp relief.

In this research, I showed how the history of Miyako island and its religious practices leads into how the ritual of Paantu Punaha provides a place for people to grapple with contemporary concerns and challenges. Using the lens of ritual criticism, the conflicts that cause concern during Paantu Punaha can be understood as fundamentally different ways of interacting and understanding the ritual's central aims. At the same time, the history of heritagization plays out alongside the evolution of the community and challenges to its well-being, and heritage becomes a potential, if uncertain, tool to solve those challenges.

But do ritual and heritage do the same thing? Curiously, both ritual and heritage have been described as “ways of knowing.” Laurajane Smith describes how invoking heritage requires the use of memory to know about oneself or one's community (Smith 2006, 49–66). In ritual theory, Catherine Bell draws on the concept of knowledge to describe ritual experience as lived practice (Bell 1997, 80–83). Memory and lived experience dovetail, overlap, and inform one another, but ultimately they are not the same.

Crucially, however, both ritual and intangible cultural heritage embody processes of power negotiation. The ability to resist either ritual or heritage is possible, just as the potential conflict between participants, or between different aspects of government policy and the people that are involved in their creation and implementation. Clearly, the recognitions of governmental organizations, whether local, regional, national, or international, have real-life effects.

The processes of ritual and heritage also appear to mark moments where reflexivity inserts itself into *habitus*, and requires human choice and action. Bell notes that ritual is a strategy of empowerment, not control: “The person who has prayed to his or her god, appropriating the social schemes of the hegemonic order in terms of an individual redemption, may be stronger because these acts are the very definitions of power, personhood, and the capacity to act” (Bell 1992, 218). Likewise, heritage is a process that can affirm values and identity, as well as empower individuals to act together in protection of what they consider valuable.⁹⁷

International Ritual/Heritage

In 2012, Jichikaichô Miyara Tamotsu stated matter-of-factly that the jichikai has considered stopping Paantu Punaha entirely. With dwindling numbers of men to fill out the ranks of the paantu, each ritual could be the last. In 2016, the Council for Cultural Affairs decided to put forward the Miyakojima Paantu, a designation that includes both Satiparou and Paantu

⁹⁷ The potential of heritage as a system to fundamentally intervene in matters of cultural diversity is one that I regard with unease. Whisnant’s chapter, published in 1988, sounds downright prescient to the current state of heritage politics and shifts in American government, “What, after all, did the environmental movement teach us? Precisely that it is *not* possible to foster the continued vitality of endangered species or to use limited resources in a responsible way *without* fundamental structural changes in our political and economic system and in the values and assumptions upon which it rests.” (Whisnant 1988, 246).

Punaha, along with visiting deity rituals from six other prefectures to join UNESCO's "Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity." If approved, it will be incorporated into the same representative list designation as Toshidon, a visiting deity ritual from an island in Kyushu that was added to the list in 2009 (*Ryukyu Shimpō* 琉球新報 2016). Whether Shimajiri will find in this designation the impetus or obligation to keep the ritual going, or through it discover solutions to the structural issues that challenge their community, or even experience entirely new challenges remains to be seen. But the community is already readying itself, as it did before the national intangible heritage designation in 1993.

The Hentona Farm made an announcement on Facebook on March 10th, 2016, reminding everyone that the paantu character remains copyrighted, with the intellectual property rights registered with their farm. "For the use pertaining to souvenirs, trademarks, and so on, confirmation with our company or the Shimajiri jichikai is required."

Yet, even as the Hentonas assert community ownership over the paantu, and stress the jichikai's authority over the use of the paantu's image, they return to the same central concern that is reflected in Shimajiri residents' ongoing efforts to meet contemporary challenges of a changing ritual context: "We'd appreciate a response that has the right knowledge and understanding of Paantu."⁹⁸

⁹⁸ パーントゥマンゴーで販売している当農園のキャラクターのパーントゥは地元島尻の神行事として今度ユネスコに登録申請がされる予定です。
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パーントゥの正しい知識と理解ある対応をお願いしますね。

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- さ [Miyako's Water and Culture: The Richness of Natural Water, the Wonderfulness of the Power of People]." In *Miyako no shizen to bunka* 宮古の自然と文化 [*Miyako Nature and Culture*], edited by Miyako no shizen to bunka o kangaeru-kai 宮古の自然と文化を考える会 [Association for Thinking about Miyako Nature and Culture], 99–118. Mirakuru ni kagayaku yattsu no shimajima ミラクルに輝く八つの島々 2. Naha: Miyako no shizen to bunka o kangaeru-kai.
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Zumwalt, Rosemary Lévy. 1988. *American Folklore Scholarship: A Dialogue of Dissent*.
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Katharine R. M. Schramm

EDUCATION

- 2016 Doctor of Philosophy, Folklore, Indiana University (Defended May 23, 2016)
 Minor, East Asian Languages and Cultures: Japanese
- 2010 MA, Folklore, Indiana University
 Thesis: *Nascent Folklore: Communication and Aesthetics in Infancy*
- 2001 BA, History, Calvin College
 BA, Spanish, Calvin College

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Public Practice

- 2016 –2016 Folklorist, Traditional Arts Indiana, Indiana University
- 2013 – 2015 Curatorial Assistant, William Hammond Mathers Museum of World Cultures,
Indiana University
- 2013 – 2014;
2010 – 2012 Folklorist, Traditional Arts Indiana, Indiana University

University Teaching Experience

- 2015 – 2016 Associate Instructor, Indiana University (Japanese 101, 102)
- 2009 – 2010 Associate Instructor, Indiana University (Folklore 101)
- 2007 – 2008 Associate Instructor, Indiana University (Folklore 101)

Other Experience: University

- 2016 –
present Assistant Acquisitions Editor, Indiana University Press
- 2010 – 2012 Assistant Editor, *Journal of Folklore Research Reviews*
- 2008 – 2009 Program Assistant, East Asian Studies Center, Indiana University

Other Experience: International

- 2005 – 2006 Teacher, ABC English International School, Hikone, Japan

2002 – 2005 Assistant Language Teacher, Minakuchi Senior High School and Minakuchi Higashi Junior High School, Minakuchi, Japan

PUBLICATIONS

Peer-Reviewed Articles

2011 “Nascent Folklore: Aesthetics and Communication in Infancy.” *Children’s Folklore Review*, Fall 2011.

Book Reviews

Forthcoming Let’s Get the Rhythm: The Life and Times of Miss Mary Mack (DVD), by Irene Chagall. *Journal of American Folklore*.

2016 *The Undiscovered Country: Text, Translation, and Modernity in the Work of Yanagita Kunio*, by Melek Ortobasi. *Journal of Folklore Research Reviews*. <http://www.jfr.indiana.edu/review.php?id=1835>

2014 Books Briefly Noted: *Public Properties: Museums in Imperial Japan*, by Noriko Aso. *Museum Anthropology Review*, Vol 8, No 1. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14434/mar.v8i1.12828>

2014 *Songs from the Edge of Japan: Music-making in Yaeyama and Okinawa*, by Matt Gillan. *Journal of Folklore Research Reviews*. <http://www.jfr.indiana.edu/review.php?id=1430>

2013 *Japanese Demon Lore: Oni from Ancient Times to the Present*, by Noriko T. Reider. *Journal of Folklore Research Reviews*. <http://www.jfr.indiana.edu/review.php?id=1195>

2010 *Children’s Folklore, A Handbook*, by Elizabeth Tucker. *Journal of Folklore Research Reviews*. <http://www.indiana.edu/~jofr/review.php?id=779>

2007 *Myth: A Very Short Introduction*, by Robert A. Segal. *Journal of Folklore Research Reviews*. <http://www.indiana.edu/~jofr/review.php?id=474>

Public Audience

Fall 2011 *TAI Magazine*. Editor, Content Development and Production. http://www.traditionalartsindiana.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/TAI-Magazine-Fall-2011-food-4.8_Part1.pdf

Fall 2011 *TAI Magazine (Why We Sing: Indianapolis Gospel Music in Church, Community and Industry)*. Editor, Production.

http://www.traditionalartsindiana.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/TAI-Magazine-Fall-2011-food-4.8_Part2.pdf

Fall 2010 *TAI Magazine*. Editor, Content Development and Production.
<http://www.traditionalartsindiana.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/TAI-newsletter-2010-part-1.pdf>

Fall 2010 *TAI Magazine (Neighbors from Burma: Images and Stories from the Chin Community)*.
Editor, Production.
<http://www.traditionalartsindiana.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/TAI-newsletter-2010-part-2.pdf>

EXHIBITS

October 2015 – “Monsters,” William Hammond Mathers Museum of World Cultures. Exhibit
December 2016 Development.

June 2014 – “In Their Own Words: Native Americans in World War I,” William Hammond
January 2015 Mathers Museum of World Cultures. Exhibit Research Assistant.

March 2012 – “Manjeet Singh.” Rotating Exhibit Network, Traditional Arts Indiana. Exhibit
May 2014 Production and Development.

March 2012 – “The Pekin 4th of July.” Rotating Exhibit Network, Traditional Arts Indiana.
May 2014 Exhibit Production and Development.

March 2012 – “Gustav Potthoff.” Rotating Exhibit Network, Traditional Arts Indiana. Exhibit
May 2014 Production and Development.

March 2011 – “Sung Men.” Rotating Exhibit Network, Traditional Arts Indiana. Exhibit
May 2013 Production and Development.

March 2011 – “Dr. Djo Bi.” Rotating Exhibit Network, Traditional Arts Indiana. Exhibit
May 2013 Production and Development.

March 2011 – “Mineko Grunow.” Rotating Exhibit Network, Traditional Arts Indiana. Exhibit
May 2013 Production and Development.

March 2011 – “The Not Too Bad Bluegrass Band.” Rotating Exhibit Network, Traditional
May 2013 Arts Indiana. Exhibit Production and Development.

FIELDWORK

2012 – 2013 Miyako Island, Okinawa Prefecture, Japan. For Dissertation Research on
Community Ritual.

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|-------------|---|
| 2016 | Peru, Indiana, Survey of Peru Amateur Circus. For Traditional Arts Indiana and Smithsonian Institution. |
| 2010 – 2011 | Greene County, Indiana, Survey of Folklore & Folklife. For Traditional Arts Indiana. |
| 2010 – 2011 | Marshall County, Indiana, Survey of Folklore & Folklife. For Traditional Arts Indiana. |
| 2009 – 2010 | Japanese Traditional Artists in Indiana Survey. For Traditional Arts Indiana. |

AWARDS

- | | |
|------|---|
| 2011 | Japan Foundation Dissertation Fellowship, for dissertation fieldwork 2012-2013. |
| 2013 | Conference Travel Grant, Indiana University College of Arts and Sciences. |
| 2009 | Service Award, Department of Folklore & Ethnomusicology, for work with Trickster Press. |
| 2008 | American Folklore Society Student Travel Stipend |

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- | | |
|------|---|
| 2015 | “Conflict over Mud and Ritual Communication Failure: Understandings and Making Understood.” Presented at the American Folklore Society Annual Meeting in Long Beach, California, October 16. |
| 2014 | “The Woman, the Wax Prints, and the Wardrobe: Opportunity Knocks at the Mary Warren Collection.” Presented at the American Folklore Society Annual Meeting, Santa Fe, New Mexico, November 6. |
| 2013 | “Paantu in Praxis: The Visiting Deities of Miyakojima, Okinawa.” Presented at the American Folklore Society Annual Meeting in Providence, Rhode Island, October 8. |
| 2011 | “The Rotating Exhibit Network.” Poster presented at the American Folklore Society Annual Meeting in Bloomington, Indiana, October 12. |
| 2010 | “ <i>Eisā</i> .” Presented at the Hoosier Folklore Society Annual Meeting in Terre Haute, Indiana, November 5. |
| 2010 | “The Village of Fear and Happiness: Paantu in the 21st Century.” Presented at the American Folklore Society Annual Meeting in Nashville, Tennessee, October 16. |

- 2009 “Otherworld Souls and the Expression of Doubt.” Paper presented at the American Folklore Society Annual Meeting in Boise, Idaho, October 24.
- 2008 “Wearing your Fandom: Cosplay and Community.” Paper presented at the American Folklore Society Annual Meeting in Louisville, Kentucky, October 25.
- 2007 “Nascent Folklore: Socialization and the Formation of Protolore in Infants and Toddlers.” Presented at the American Folklore Society Annual Meeting in Quebec City, Quebec, October 18.

GUEST LECTURES

- 2016 “Of Gods, Men... and Tourists.” William Hammond Mathers Museum of World Cultures, April 14.
- 2014 “Regional Japanese Cultures: Okinawa.” Harmony School, High School Culture Class, March.
- 2013 “Religious Folklore, Ritual, and Festival: Paantu Punaha.” For F101: Introduction to Folklore, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, Indianapolis, June 11.
- 2013 “Introduction to Myth, Legend, and Folktales.” Danville Elementary School Fifth Graders. May 28.
- 2013 “Japanese Folktales,” Virtual Talk with Danville Elementary School Fifth Graders. March 11.
- 2010 “Okinawan Dance: *Eisa*.” For F360: Indiana Folklore, Indiana University, Bloomington, May 18.
- 2010 “Context, Community, Cosplay.” For F364: Children’s Folklore, Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis, April 7.
- 2010 “Material Culture.” For F101: Introduction to Folklore, Indiana University, Bloomington, March 8.
- 2009 “Cosplay and Context.” For F101: Introduction to Folklore, Indiana University, Bloomington, November 4.

COURSES TAUGHT

Introduction to Folklore

Instructor, Indiana University, Bloomington (Summer 2010)

Associate Instructor, Indiana University (Fall 2007 – Spring 2008; Fall 2009 – Spring 2010)

Elementary Japanese

Associate Instructor, Indiana University (Fall 2015 - Spring 2016)

SERVICE

2015 – present	Convener, Children’s Folklore Section of the American Folklore Society
2014 – present	Aesop Prize Committee, Children’s Folklore Section of the American Folklore Society
2014 – present	Uchinā Goodwill Ambassador for Okinawa Prefecture
2009 – present	Member, Okinawa YuYuKai
2010 – 2011	Chair, Aesop Prize Committee, Children’s Folklore Section of American Folklore Society
2008 – 2010	Head Editor, Trickster Press (Books Division)
2009 – 2010	Webmaster, Trickster Press
2008-2009	Webmaster, Folklore Student Association
2007 –2009	Webmaster and Project Director of Back Issue Digitization, Trickster Press
2006 – 2008	Assistant Editor, <i>Folklore Forum</i> , Trickster Press

LANGUAGES

Spanish
Japanese

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

American Folklore Society
American Anthropological Society
Association for Asian Studies