First of all, in this paper, the three types of Okinawan religious roles—priestess' (Noro and Yukiuma) and shaman (Yuta) will be introduced. Then, an actual example of the kamusu ritual from the Irabu Islands, Miyako Archipelago, Okinawa will be examined, as well as the function of the folk religion and the way priestess' and shaman's work will be discussed. Also the nature of the group and participants who support the kamusu ritual, and the process of the kamusu ceremony are explained. Music and dance; and their creation mythologies are also analyzed. Through those examinations, the significance of the kamusu ritual in community life is revealed. In conclusion, kamusu is the ritual which is reflected by and composed of gender roles, as well as political and economical life.

I Outline of Okinawan Priestess and Shaman

1. Prototype Classification

Because each of the islands have diverse historical backgrounds and geographic conditions, religious practitioners who live in Okinawa are not easy to classify. Nevertheless they can be divided into three broad categories as follows;

(1). Priestess' who preside over the community ceremonies including kamusu: namely Noro, Negami in Okinawa main island, and Tsukasa in Miyako Islad.

They are usually chosen from distinct families. In certain districts, Tsukasa are elected by ballot. Unlike shaman, they do not go into trance, and refrain from any activities associated with death or blood. They have a higher status among other Okinawan religious practitioners.

(2). Priestess' who preside over ancestral souls are namely; Yukima, Kudii, Munchugami, Umuringua or Kankakariya. They perform rites in honor of the ancestral souls, pray for happiness of kinfolk, and join in the community ceremonies. They practice possessions by spirit, and under the leadership of Noro, they sing chants.

The qualifications to become such priestess are to be born of the same kimfolk, and to be able to be possessed by spirits. Therefore, some shamanic traces can be recognized in them.

Their social status is the highest after Noro. They also refrain from death and blood impurities. They do not preside over funerals but may worship ancestral souls and can hold death memorial services for the dead.

(3). Shaman are called Yuta, Kankakariya, and other various names. The qualification
to be a shaman is to have ability to be possessed by spirits. Their social status is lower than Noro and Yukima. Unlike Noro and Yukinma, they deal with family or individual problems, they are paid by their clients. Noro used to be paid by the Ryūkyū government in the olden days.

The above three categories are the prototype classifications, in actuality, their roles are often mixed. For instance, Noro is sometimes asked to work as a Yuta shaman by clients, Yuta and or Kankakariya can also observe community ceremonies.

2. Classification by Occasion

Even though concepts of trance and possession can be applied, these mental attitudes should be interpreted differently in each case. A Japanese scholar, Masanobu Akamine, points out that it is a different phenomenon when a priestess acts as a god during the occasion of a ceremony than when a Yuta shaman are possessed by gods in every day life. (Akamine 1997)

II Kamusu

Kamusu is one of the largest annual rituals held in the Irabu and Nakachi villages which are located in the Irabu Islands, Miyako Archipelago. The emphasis of the ritual is for asking for good fortune from the major god, Tō, plus many other gods, and to show their feeling of thanks to the gods. There are over twenty gods, and their names are enumerated in a chant. Kamusu is observed during the first five days of lunar calendar in November and December.

The other terms for kamusu are kamusuori and kanmuri, which literally means 'descending of the gods'. It is believed that the god Tō visits the Island led by the North wind and stays there for three days, then returns by taking a ship sent by the South wind. When god Tō returns, forty members of women called Yukiuma act as the sailors.

These women are named as Yos-no-Funako-no-Oba [literal translation : 40 women sailors]. On the fifth day, the other minor gods also return to the other world. That ceremony is called Kamusunori.

III The Organization

Priestess and village women

1. Tsukasa: Three Tsukasa preside over the annual rites. They are elected by ballot from women who are between fifty to sixty-five years of age.

2. Yukiuma, Yosu-no-Funako-no-Oba: Forty priestesses chosen from the kinship. They serve a life long membership, and in the case of death, are replaced by a successor chosen by ballot from kinship, in front of the Buddhist altar. Their only responsibility among annual rites is kamusu. They serve the god Tō, and ask for good fortune for the village. At the present time, the number of Yukiuma has decreased, because of a shortage of descendants and a refusal to do the work.

3. Ayagutatsu: Two singers who lead singing, chosen from Yukiuma.

4. Sara-no -uma: A singer who sings a chant «Sarapayashi» are chosen by ballot from women aged fifty-five to sixty-five.

5. A group of village women
Village Men

As stated before, men participate only before the ceremony, as helpers to prepare for the ceremony. At the very last day of the ceremony, a representative Shiju-nare comes to the entrance of the sacred precinct, and express a gratitude for the end of the ceremony.

1. Cho-no-shu: Set the dates of the ritual. Men aged fifty to fifty-five are chosen by ballot. The period of the duty is three years.

2. Ogan-shu: Men aged thirty-three years old, help the priestess and his status is the highest among the male age groups. He does not join the ritual.

3. Shiju-nare: Men who are twenty-eight years old are servants who serve priestess.

4. Ugandumu: Men who are twenty-eight years old are savants who serve shiju-nare.

5. Kanisazu: A boy who is seventeen years old, does liaison contact work.

IV Process of November Kamusu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Ritual</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Chant</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct.</td>
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<td>Settings of dates</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2-3days before the ritual</td>
<td>Making of sake</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct.</td>
<td>a.m.</td>
<td>Preparation of Kamusu</td>
<td>Kamusumi</td>
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<td>p.m.</td>
<td>Kamusumi</td>
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<td>Night</td>
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<td>Dawn</td>
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<td>a.m.</td>
<td>Uikaza</td>
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<td>p.m.</td>
<td>Nanusu</td>
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<td>Night</td>
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<td></td>
<td>a.m.</td>
<td>Prayers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>p.m.</td>
<td>Prayer for family prosperity</td>
<td>Southern entrance &amp; Kamusha</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Acting of large catch of fish</td>
<td>Front road of Kamusha</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Eve.</td>
<td>Evening dance</td>
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<td>Night</td>
<td>Ceremony of Thanks</td>
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<td>4th day</td>
<td>Same as 2nd day</td>
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<td>5th day</td>
<td>Dawn</td>
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弘前学院大学文学部紀要 第40号 (2004)
V Music and Dance

Music and dance are interwoven in the kamusu ritual. In fact the core of the ritual is music and dance. Before discussing kamusu music, how human behaviors deal with religion will be clarified.

The components of religion are the ideas and actions that are related to divine supernatural beings. Taking an example of actions from Shinto ritual is as follows: 1) fasting, purifying oneself; 2) preparing an altar: opening the door from which a god comes, and invitation of a god; 3) making an offering of food and wine; 4) reciting a prayer; 5) performing a theatrical play, dance and or music; 6) offering a branch from the sacred tree to a god, and making a bow; 7) removing the offerings; 8) closing the door, after the returning of god; 9) holding a banquet.

The main substances of ceremonies are body movements: actions, dance; and sound phenomena, music.

Now revert to the subject, during the five days of ritual, from early morning to midnight, the priestess‘ sing and dance. Nevertheless, the number of chants are not many, and only seven kinds are used. These are (1) two of short phrases of shoutings; (2) Kannagi Ayagu; (3) Sarapayashi; (4) Izutsubuduri; (5) Kuicha; (6) Funausagi; and (7) Kannagi Ayagu.

Shouting [Ex.1] The constant rubbing sounds of tree branches, and the repetitious shouts produce a strange atmosphere: 'Yakuyo yakuyo hoi hoi hoi' which is intended to invite the gods in. As it is repeated persistently for a long time, it may be heard as the voice of the gods themselves. The priestess‘ may feel as though the gods appear among them. After the gods have descended, the priestess‘ (together with the gods) march to the shrine, Kamusha. During the procession, they chant the Chant II. A high falsetto voice of 'u rururu' is an exclamation of warning not to come near. Nobody, especially men should encounter them or even be seen by them. Otherwise misfortune will fall upon them.

Kannagi Ayagu [Ex.2] is the song which is sung many times during the ritual. The text of the song is an enumeration of the gods' names, and a prayer for good fortune. The number of gods are twenty-six.

The music is constructed of 7-tones, and the tone system is B flat major and la mode. There are 3 short phrases, and the register of the melody is low which makes them easy to remember in order to sing.

Sarapayashi [Ex.3] is sung on the third day. The meaning of the text is "We offer sake, therefore please listen to our prayers."

The music is constructed with 5-tones, with an interval of a major 6. The tonal system is an anhemitonic pentatonic scale, which is a very common tonal system found in Japanese folk songs. The singing style is responsorial, and the chant is sung in alternation between a leader soloist called ayagutatu in Japanese, and the other members of the group. Hand gestures mimic an offering of food and sake and in receiving presents from the gods. Sarapayashi uses a 3 stanza unit, and after singing each unit, they drink sake. There are 10 units in all, therefore the priestess must drink 10 times.
【Ex. 1】 Chant I Yakuyo

(2 measures = 4 beats, or 4 measures = 8 beats) Ya ku yo Ya ku yo Ya ku yo

(10 measures = 22 beats - 15 measures = 30 beats) Ho

【Ex. 2】 Kannagi Ayagu No.13 ~ 14

Bashi nu ku o ka gi n ya gu myu i no o ka gi n

he ga yo no yu ya na o re O zu no shu no ka gi n ya ku myu

i no o ka gi n he ga yo no yu ya na o re
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Izutsubuduri [Ex.4] The title is literally means "catch fish dance". This song is sung on the third day. The meaning of the text is to pray for a large catch of fish. The melody is borrowed from folk song Komi no Shu. The music is constructed with 4-tones, with an interval of a major 6. The melody is structured with 3 phrases. This transcribed melody is sung by an 80-year-old woman in a very vague way.

Kannagi Ayagu no Kuicha [Ex.5] is also sung on the third day. Unfortunately, the recording which was taken by Hatakeyama some twenty years ago, has lost its quality of sound, therefore it was not transcribed. The tonal system alone is shown in Ex. 5. At the end of each stanza, the priestess' laugh for joy.

Funausagi: [Ex.6] is presently an extinct song as the present priestess' do not know how to sing it, they have replaced it with Kannagi Ayagu. A retired priestess, Mrs. Kanimega IKEMA, an old woman, sang it by our request. The singing might not be accurate. The tonal system is rather awkward.

Kagitabiga Ayagu [Ex.7] is sung on the harbor road, on the third day. The meaning is "God, we will accompany you on your voyage, may our voyage be a beautiful one. God, Please come back again". The music is constructed with 7-tones, with an interval of an octave and perfect 4th. The tonal system is an anhemitonic pentatonic scale. The melody is structured with 4 phrases.

We know that the characteristic of the most of Okinawan folk songs are in a unique scale as shown at the end of the musical Examples. But none of the chants sung in kamusu are in that scale. The Okinawan scale has 2 hemitones. Only one song, Kannagi Ayagu, is structured of an hemitonic scale.

The tempo is m.m. J =60 to 104, at a rather moderate speed. The rhythmic pattern is not vigorous. As a whole, the construction of the melodies are simple and short. These melodies are repeated numerous times. This construction is the typical form of music performed in shamanistic rituals all over the world.

The dance movements are simple. The typical dance movements that are performed in every songs are as follows. The priestess' hold two branches of Ryoukyu Aoki (a type of laurel tree) one in the right hand and one in the left hand; they alternately move them up and down, making a rustling sound many times. The priestess' stand up straight and make a circle, facing to the center, and dance in a counter clockwise direction.

The dance and music are most effective for creating the intense trance-like state of the women. And the significance and purpose of the ritual will be imprinted vividly in their minds by the singing and dancing.

As stated before, the kamusu ritual is restricted to females only and men are excluded. Being male researchers, this information about the music and dance was not acquired by attending the actual ritual, but acquired by the explanations by some kamusu women members. When Hatakeyama made a study some twenty years ago, the most important chants, Funausagi and Kagitabiga Ayagu were not offered, because these chants are too divine to reveal to an outside researcher.

In June 2001, the authors of the study visited Irabu Island, and we were lucky in that these secret songs were offered by two old ladies who retired from the kamusu ritual a
long time ago. One of the retired priestess’, before she sang songs to us, prayed to the gods most reverently at the household shrine alter and asked for the god’s permission. We both joined her in prayer and received a good answer from the gods.

The whole kamusu ritual displays pseudo mass hysteria and mass hallucination. Shamanic elements can be seen in not only individual behaviors but also in collective behaviors. Originally the kamusu ritual must have been shamanistic, but over many generations, it has become more stable and fixed in style. Even so, clear examples of its shamanistic roots can still be seen today in the way they perform the ritual.

Within shamanistic rituals, elements of formalities are inevitably contained, and they might develop into fixed stable styles. Shamanistic elements, even though vague, have remained in Christianity, Buddhism, Shintoism, and other world religions. The kamusu ritual may be one of the good examples that contains both elements clearly.

【Ex. 3】 Sarapayashi

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Members

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【Ex.4】 Izutsubuduri

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【Ex.6】 Funausagi

【Ex.7】 Kagitabuga Ayagu

Tonal systems of Kamusu Music

Takefusa SASAMORI・Atsushi HATAKEYA Music EX.
VI Creation Mythology

There are several mythologies related to the Nushi Shrine and the origin of the kamusu ritual.

(1) Oldest mythology related to Nushi Shrine.

There was a beautiful maiden named Tamamega. When she was fifteen or sixteen years old, she went to the beach to draw water from the sea, and disappeared. Three months later, she appeared at the Nushi mountain, and told a villager that, she would become the guardian goddess for the island, and left her sleeve as a keepsake. Her parents and the villagers buried it and made a shrine there.

(2) Recent mythology related to Nushi Shrine.

A husband and wife named Obukani had a beautiful daughter Tamamega. She was so beautiful, that after she was fifteen years old, in order to disguise her as being ugly, she had to put pan soot on her face when she went out. One year, the island met a drought. Villagers did not know how to pray to the gods for rain. Obukani went to the other island Yaeyama to learn the prayer. The North wind sent his boat to Yaeyama, and when the South wind would blows, he would come back. The day the South wind started to blow, Tamamega was very happy and went to draw the water from the sea. Using the water, she intended to make tofu (bean curd). She was in hurry that she forgot to put soot on her face. She was then lost. Villagers searched after her but were not successful. Three month later, the sounds of handloom-weaving were heard at Nushi mountain. That night, she appeared there. Her parents hung on to her sleeve, but she disappeared tearing off the sleeve and became the guardian goddess of the island. Her parents and villagers buried the sleeve and worshiped her as a shrine goddess.

(3) Mythology related to Kamusu.

During the time the Miyako archipelago were governed by the Ryukyu Kingdom, the islanders were ordered to pay a tributary. Since nobody wanted to go to Ryukyu, forty sailors were chosen by ballot. Before the journey, they prayed for fulfillment at the Noshi-Utaki (Nushi Shrine). They arrived safely to Ryukyu, but on the way back they met with a storm and the ship drifted. A Chinese ship later saved them and took them to China. Then they were able to return to Irabu Island. It was thought that the divine protection by the shrine kept them safe on their journey, and so a “thanking ritual” was held at the Nushi shrine.

Originally, the mythologies on the kamusu and Nushi Shrine were independent stories. The first one is the oldest creation mythology of Nushi Utake written in the book Ryukyu-koku Yurai-ki [Origin of Ryoukyu Kingdom] (1712). The second one is the present oral tradition, and must have developed from the first mythology. And from it, the third mythology must have developed, which was that of the safety prayer for sea navigation. Those mythologies mingled together and developed to present kamusu ritual mythology.

VII Discussion and Conclusion

Presiding priestess' become ritual priestess'

The Tamamega mythology tells that, Tamamega was the servant, or supposedly a wife
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of a god, then afterwards became a goddess herself.

The person who serves the god, and tells the god's oracle to villagers will be accepted by the villagers as a living god. Tamamega was a priestess who prayed for her father's safe voyage and her prayer was fulfilled. Then she became the guardian goddess of the village. The same situation applies to Yukiuma in the kamusu ritual. They send off the god To, pray for the god's safe journey, and at the same time, they become the living god Sailor, "Funako gami", blessed by the god Tamamega; each of forty priestess becomes Tamamega.

Participation of Male

The male age groups are blessed by priestess' and they support the ritual, even though they do not actually attend the ceremonies. Before the ceremony they donate money, prepare for this and that. Even though these errands are their duty, women in the family do the work taking the place of men. The mythology tells that the cooperation between the women and men will make a good ritual, and will lead to the village's prosperity.

The forming of the Mythology in Kamiya

These mythologies must have been gradually made up by the forty-three priestesses. Separated from their village, forty-three women crowd into a small room, and stay for four nights, and five days. Without much sleep, and strenuous tension. They say that they are so tired and after the ritual, they stay in bed for several days. Those conditions may have originally helped to create the mythology. The segments of the story are, the concept of visiting gods, mythology related to the shrine near by, the Okinawa Kingdom and its power, experience of being drift at sea, and the geographic intimacy with China.

These components have well put together by the priestess'. It is not certain whether there were original set texts of the mythology, or when the mythology had actually formed, but the above condition may reflect the forming of the mythology.

The secret ritual and exclusion of any male participants reflects a social construction based upon the islander's ideas of gender. And the ritual reinforces the traditional island social order. Even though the ritual is in danger of diminishing, because of rapid social changes, the islanders are still happy to hold the ritual. And just holding the "form" of the ritual itself has become their enjoyment.

(This paper was originally prepared for the international conference sponsored by the International Society for Shamanistic Research, which was held in Estonia in August 2001. Even though the whole paper was written by both authors, Sasamori was responsible for the Music and Dance section, and other parts were written by Hatakeyama. The English translation was made by Sasamori.)

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