

Unpublished Materials by Nikolai Nevsky on the Ethnology of the Ryûkyû Islands

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Nikolai Nevsky (1892–1937) was a unique Russian scholar who greatly contributed to different fields of the Japanese language, ethnology, dialectology and folklore. His pioneering studies of the Ryûkyû dialects, customs and folklore foreshadowed later studies of Japanese scholars. Along with Minakata Kumakusu, Yanagita Kunio, Origuchi Shinobu and Iha Fuyu (all of them were his personal and close friends) he was one of the forerunners of contemporary Ryûkyûan ethnology.

Nevsky graduated from the Chinese-Japanese department of the Petersburg University, and in 1915 came to Japan to master his knowledge of Japanese. Initially his main interests focused on the Shintô religion. He studied the sacred Shintô hymns (*norito*) and translated some of them into Russian. He was one of the first to conduct field work in Japan, and undertook a few travels to remote provinces of the North-Eastern parts of the country, collecting there information on an obscure deity Oshira-sama, worshipped by shamans. Together with the Japanese ethnographer Sasaki Kizen he was going to write a book on this deity, but for a number of reasons the project has never been completed.

The October Revolution of 1917 in Russia postponed his return to his homeland until 1929. During his 15 years in Japan Nevsky used any opportunity to establish contacts with native scholars, kept an intensive correspondence with them, exchanging ideas and information, and continued his studies of the Japanese language, the Shintô religion and ethnology, the Ainu language and folklore, and the languages of the Taiwan aborigines (the Ts'ou tribe).

The Okinawa islands were of a special interest for him, because he felt that many ancient traits of the language, customs and beliefs had been preserved in Okinawa that had already almost completely disappeared in contemporary Japan. Nevsky three times (in 1922, 1926 and 1928) visited the Okinawa islands and while staying there collected and wrote down from native informants many folklore texts for his future studies. Most of all he was attracted by the culture of the Miyako archipelago, considered, even among the Okinawa islands, to conserve many archaic traits left unchanged. He visited Miyako, Ishigaki, Ikema, Irabu, Tarama and Minna islands, where he collected many folksongs, legends, fairytales, proverbs, riddles, local customs, etc. Nevsky had not enough time to prepare all the collected materials for publication. In Japan he was rather busy as a teacher, at first in the Commercial School in Otaru, later on in the Institute of Foreign Languages in Ôsaka, and after his return to the USSR in

1929, he got a position in the Institute of Oriental Studies in Leningrad, where he was mostly involved in decipherment of the Tangut (Xi Xia) language.

During his stay in Japan in the 1920s Nevsky published in Japanese journals only a small number of short articles based on his Miyako materials: „Miyakojima no kekkon to sairei“ (Marriage and Feasts in the Miyako Islands) in *Chikyû*, 3:1 (1924), pp. 60–65; „Ayago no kenkyû“ (Studies of the Ayago Songs), in *Minzokugaku*, 1:3 (1926) and 2:1 (1927); „Miyakojima kodomo yûgi shiryô“ (Materials on Children's Games in the Miyako Islands), in *Minzokugaku*, 2:4 (1927), etc. These three articles have been reproduced in the book *Tsuki to fushi* (The Moon and Immortality) ed. by OKA Masao, Tôkyô: Heibonsha, 1971, pp. 43–93.

Nevertheless, after his return to the USSR Nevsky did not completely lose his interest in Ryûkyûan subjects and kept in mind the publication of a number of articles based on the collected materials. Unfortunately, he never succeeded to do it, because in the autumn of 1937 he was arrested together with his Japanese wife Mantani Iso on a false accusation of having been a Japanese spy and was shot a couple of weeks after the arrest.

All his materials were confiscated, but happily at least a part of them survived. In 1969 his manuscript dictionary of the Tangut language together with a few articles on the same subject were published in a two-volume edition *Tangutskaya filologiya* (The Tangut Philology), and in 1962 for his achievements in deciphering this language he won posthumously the highest Soviet award – the Lenin Prize. In the following decades some of his other works on Ainu folklore, Miyako folklore, and the Ts'ou language of Taiwan have been published in the USSR as well. Nevertheless, many of his materials even nowadays are still held unpublished in the archives of the Institute of Oriental Studies in St. Petersburg and in the Tenri Library in Japan.

In the Nevsky archives in St. Petersburg (fund 69, inventory 2) there are three type-written papers dealing with Ryûkyûan ethnology. Two essays deal with etymological and ethnological aspects of the concepts (and terms) *munai* and *miki* (the sacred wine); the third one deals with traditional methods of curing diseases in the Miyako islands. We believe that even now these papers, written by a distinguished scholar who made his field researches in the 1920s, may be of interest both for ethnologists and for linguists.

The texts of the three essays (correspondingly items 164, 170 and 202 in the archives) have been translated into English by me from the Russian type-written version that Nevsky appears to have considered as final drafts of papers prepared for publication. Throughout the texts the specific transcription used by Nevsky for the Miyako words has been conserved.

Miki

by

Nikolai Nevsky

The common rice wine in Japan is called *sake*, though the same wine, if offered to deities or souls of dead, is called *miki*, or even more often a honorific form, *omiki*, is used.

Usually the etymology of the word *miki* is explained as a compound from *mi*, an ancient honorific prefix, and *ki*, the old term for wine, like in other ancient composites: *kuroki*, „the black wine“, and *shiroki*, „the white wine“, mentioned in the *Manyōshū* and *Shoku Nihongi*.

In the Ryūkyū Islands, present Okinawa prefecture, along with the word *saki* that means „a strong rice liquor“¹, there exists also the term *miki* in the following variations: *miki* (Ichumang), *kumi-miki* (Nagu), lit. „rice miki“, *miksī* (Aragusīku Island), *misī* (the Islands Sīkaksī and Patirōma = Hateruma), *ηksī* (mostly on Miyako island), *mcī* (the Ikima islands and Sarahama village on Iraw Island), *ncī* (the Sāda village on Iraw island), etc. The old Ryūkyūan-Japanese dictionary *Konkō kenshū* (otherwise called *Dairi kotoba*, „The Courtly Lexicon“)² contains the word おむしやく *omushiyaku*, *uŋsagu*, explained in characters 御神酒 „the sacred (divine) wine“. Aglossa is added: „It is also called *mushiyakumiki*, *uŋsagumiki*³. In Japanese it is also called *miki*.“ The *Gochikushū*⁴ mentions that in old days the wine was made by „chewing rice“. Perhaps the compiler of the Ryūkyūan dictionary referred to a Japanese legend, because even in his days, somewhere in a remote province if not at the Royal residence in Shuri, the same method of wine-making could still pertain.

Ch'en K'an, a Chinese ambassador to the Ryūkyūan government, in his work of 1534, known in Japan as *Shi Ryūkyū roku*, mentions a similar technique of wine-making: „Wine. After rice was soaked for a while, on the next day women chew it to get a juice. It is called *mik'i*“⁵. On the Miyako islands the wine for religious festivals even nowadays is made in the same way. Tajima Risaburō, who visited the islands during the Sino-Japanese war and collected a considera-

1 It is almost as strong as brandy, while Japanese *sake* does not surpass 11–17% alcohol.

2 This dictionary was compiled in Ryūkyū; the preface dates from the 24th day of the third moon of the fiftieth year of the Kang-hsi era, i.e. May 11, 1711. The dictionary, as is obvious from its alternative title, contains mostly the lexika of the courtly language in Shuri, but it includes a lot of obsolent words from the collection of the old Ryūkyūan hymns *umuro*.

3 The word *msagu* appears in the Miyako folk-songs in the meaning of „the wine“.

4 The *Gochikushū* is a Japanese collection of poetical expressions with explanations, arranged in the Iroha order.

5 Quoted after the Japanese dictionary *Wa-kun no shiori* (under the word *kuchigami no sake*); the dictionary adds that similar information is contained also in the *Wu pei zhi*. Cf. also explanations under the word *kamu*.

ble number of folksongs, stated in a commentary to the word *ŋksī* in his manuscript collection of those songs:⁶

Threshed rice is soaked in water, then after the extra water had been poured out, it is pounded in a mortar, and the rice flour is boiled to a paste-like state. Then, having purified mouth with salt, people minutely chew this mesh, once again mix it with water and put into an earthenware pot, covered with a lid. In about five days the wine is ready. It is called *ŋksī*.

The late Kunitaka Kanto, born in the Sâda village of Iraw island, who during my first and third trips to Miyako was the head of the Iraw district, in his vocabulary of the island's dialect wrote for the word *ncī*.

Sacred wine: The millet or barley flour is cooked into gruel, and women diligently chew it. They put the paste into an earthenware pot, and, having placed a lid on it, leave it to ferment. On the third or fourth day it may be consumed.

According to information from the same Kunitaka, such wine is very short-lived, and on the seventh day it turns into vinegar and cannot be drunk. As I heard from many local people, usually young girls before reaching puberty age are selected to chew the gruel.⁷ In a number of literary sources there is evidence that a similar wine-producing method was in use in ancient Japan. For example, the extant fragments of the *Fûdoki* contain the following information:

In Osumi province, when someone has enough water and rice, he informs the whole village, and then men and women gather and chew the rice, spit the mesh into a wine-barrel and then leave. After the wine spirit becomes obvious, they gather again, and those who had chewed and spat out the stuff drink the beverage. This is called *kuchigami no sake*, „the wine chewed by mouth“.⁸

The *Hsien bin lu*, a Chinese compilation, after the description of Chenla (Cambodia) in the 6th chapter enumerates notable things of that country, including the *birenjiu*, „the wine of beauties“: „It is made by beauties, who having held it in their mouths, produce it; on the next day the wine is ready“. The same method is found among the Polynesians, where the wine is being made from roots of a certain species of pepper.⁹ The same practice still persists among different tribes of Formosa. A young man by name Dakkis Nôbin (his Japanese name is Hanaoka Ichiro) of the Sedek tribe (a branch of the Tayal

6 The manuscript is being held in the district office of the Fumnaka village.

7 I would like to mention that on Iraw there is another word *m:cī* (< *m+ncī*) to designate wine made of cooked and unmashed sweet potatoes (*m*) with some addition of water and barley malt. This mixture begins to ferment under a lid, and the wine is ready by the tenth day. Usually this sort of wine is being prepared for the New Year and is served to girls visiting their girl-friends between the third and tenth of January. The host should sing a song called *m:cimul âgu*, and the visiting girl meanwhile dances with the *juttaki* (a sort of castanets) in her hands.

8 KURITA H., *Kofûdoki itsumon*, II, Tôkyô, 1897, p.37.

9 MATSUOKA S., *Nihon kozoku shi*. Tôkyô, 1926, p.99.

tribe) informed me that in his Guṅu hamlet of the Para settlement (in Japanese – of Musha) the wine is made by chewing millet; it is called *punubawah*, and is used as a medicine; the grain is being chewed not only by women but by men as well. I personally met such chewed wine at the Northern Ts'ou when visiting the Tapant village in the Aridzan mountainland. The wine produced in this way is called *emi* and is consumed mostly on festive occasions. (I happened to be there at the very beginning of the largest seasonal festival in August of 1927). Below I include an account about the wine-making that was written down by me in the Ts'ou language from a young man (a student of the Educational College in T'ainang) by name Won'e Jataujanana (his Japanese name was Yata Issei) of the Tfuya village:

When wine is made from millet or rice, the rice or millet is first of all threshed, then it is winnowed until grains become completely threshed. After grains become threshed they are put into water to soften. After the grains become soft, they are pounded to turn them into flour. The flour is placed into a large bowl and is boiled. When it becomes ready, the paste is placed into a winnowing-basket. After the paste becomes a bit colder, young women all together chew it. Having chewed it through, they wait until the paste becomes completely cold and put it into a large pot, add some flour and pour into it a little of water. Then it is covered by leaves of the *tsyohu* plant, and the winnowing-basket and other things are put on the top of it. By night (the paste) starts to ferment and by the next morning it becomes sweet. In the morning the chewed stuff, flour and water are added (again). Then (the wine) begins to ferment again, but this time it will not be so sweet as previously. In the morning it is quite strong, and by the afternoon it is already fit for drinking. Then they invite other people and drink it all together.

This description, paired with quoted above statements of Tajima and Kunitaka, is a clear evidence that the Polynesian tribes of Formosa as well as the inhabitants of the Miyako islands, who speak a language of the Japanese Ryūkyūan group, use almost identical methods to produce wine. Probably, in ancient Japan wine was made exactly in the same way; that is confirmed by the mention of an old custom in Osumi province on Kyūshū island. In such cases the use in the old days of the word *kamu*, „to chew“, in the meaning „to make wine“ does not cause any confusion. For example, in the old chronicles *Nihongi* under the eighth year of the Emperor Sujin's rule (90 B.C.) the following song, ascribed to the emperor, was included:

| | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>kono miki wa</i> | This sacred sake |
| <i>waga miki narazu</i> | is not my sacred sake |
| <i>Yamato nasu</i> | 'Tis sacred sake brewed |
| <i>Ohmononushi no</i> | by Oho-mono-nushi |
| <i>kamishi miki</i> | of Yamato. |
| <i>ikuhisa</i> | How long ago, |

*ikuhisa*how long ago!¹⁰

The meaning of the last line is „be you healthy!“ or „drink for your health!“ The *Shinsen jikyô* dictionary for the character 釀 „to make wine“ provides also a reading 佐介加牟 *sakekamu*. A derivative from the same verb *kamu* is also the word *kamosu*, that until recent time had been used in the meaning „to make wine“. In my opinion, the latter is to be considered a honorific form of the former (cf. *kikosu* < *kiku*, „to listen“; *shirosu* < *shiru*, „to know“).¹¹ Because, as far as I know, the alternations of vowels in the verb stems are known to occur in the Japanese language only in the Nara period (the eighth century), the word *kamosu* had probably came into existence in that period and may not be considered to be a later derivation.

The wine produced in a primitive method, by chewing a paste from certain cereals, is quite short-lived (see the above comment by Kunitaka), and its alcohol content is rather low. For these reasons such method was reasonable only to produce limited quantities of wine to meet short-time needs of primitive communities.

To make more durable wine of better quality and in a larger scale a more developed method with use of yeast should be employed. This method has been known to the Japanese since long ago, and probably they borrowed it from the Koreans. In the *Kojiki*, in the chapter on the Emperor Ojin's rule (270–310 A.D.), where many foreigners (mostly the Chinese and Koreans) who had arrived in Japan are enumerated, there is the following passage:

And also a man named Nifo, or Susukori, and some others came from beyond the sea. And this Susukori has brewed “the great wine” and presented it.

The *Nihongi* does not mention that fact, but the *Shoji-roku* in the chapter on Sakabe no kimi states:

During the rule of the Osazaki Emperor [a name of the Emperor Nintoku, 313–399] from the Hang country arrived two persons: the elder brother Sosopori and the younger brother Sosopori. The Emperor inquired about their talents. Both had talents to make wine. They were caused to produce wine ...

The modern word *kôzi* (Miyako, Psara) goes back to *kamchi*, and the latter is the condensed form from *kamutachi* (in the *Wamyôsho* – 加禰太知), i.e. again with a compound with *kamu*, „to chew“ (but already in the meaning „to make wine“).

10 I quote the English translation after W.G. ASTON: *Nihongi*. Tôkyô: Tuttle, 1985, Pt. 1, p. 154. (To the last two lines Aston adds a note: „How long ago!“ is in Japanese *ikuhisa*, an obvious allusion to the brewer's name, Ikuhi, in short a pun.“ – A.K.)

11 The alternations of the vowel *u* into *o* (or *i* into *e* as e.g. *mesu* < *miru*, „to see“) has obviously resulted from the contraction: *o* < *u+a* (*e* < *i+a*); in such case the verb *kamosu* can be traced back to **kamu-asu* (cf. *kikosu* < *kiku-asu*, *shirosu* < *shiro-asu*, *mesu* < *mi-asu*) where *asu* means „to make“ (= modern *suru*, literary form *su*), that has been preserved in the Miyako dialects in exactly the same form.

Probably the *kamu* became also the source for another Ryûkyûan word for „wine“. The *Konkô kenshû* contained the word *gamiŋ*, with the glossa: „Sacred wine“; *gamiŋku* is the flour for making the sacred wine; it is met in the „Umuru sôshi“. In the „Umuru“ (XII, 48) *gamiŋku* was written without *nigori*, i. e. *kamiŋku*.

For many primitive nations, wine is considered a necessary ritual object, initially produced only for certain religious festivals. As has been mentioned, the Formosa aborigines make their wine *emi* only for the harvest festivals, after millet or rice had been collected. And though now sometimes they drink wine to become inebriated, this is explained by outside influences of other people, lately of the Japanese; such wine is called *emi no maja*, „the Japanese wine“.

According to the ancient Japanese prayers (*norito*), the Japanese also accepted wine as a ritual object, and offering wine to gods was a symbolic substitute for offering of the main agricultural crop, rice (and before the introduction of rice it was probably millet).

The Ainu of Hokkaidô buy Japanese *sake* only on the occasion of a festival with a religious connotation. According to the religious concepts of the Ainu, wine along with *inau* (sticks with shavings) are the favourite things of the deities. If an Ainu receives from someone wine as a present, he first of all inserts a stick called *ikeush-pashui* into the wine and scatters a few drops into the fire, water, etc., reciting a prayer, where he usually describes the way he has obtained the wine and asks the gods to present him what he needs, and then drinks himself „the remnants“. During my stay on the Ikema island (the Miyako group) I brought to a family rice wine (*saki*) as a present. The hostess first of all poured a small cup of wine and after thanking me in a rhythmical way of speech and praying to the gods, she shut the cup into the altar (*kamidana*). Then she poured the second cup and drank it herself, and only afterwards poured the wine to her husband and gave the bottle to the men. It is obvious that the religious and ritual attitude to wine continues to exist among many people even after it loses its original religious function. Whereas in Japan the primitive method of wine-making by chewing had been replaced by something more perfect, or when instead of the *miki* produced in a small quantity the new method of *sake*-making had appeared, the former still continued (and even now exists, e.g. on the Miyako islands) to exist only during the religious ceremonies of limited social groups; furthermore (like in modern Japan) only wine offered to gods or to the ancestors' altar was labelled as *miki*, while *sake* became the common alcoholic drink for everyday use. However, even in that case the original respect towards the wine has been conserved, because in the everyday speech (except for compounds) it is usually prefaced by the honorific prefix, i. r. *o-sake*.

Wine is believed to be a medical remedy, and for that reason the Ryûkyûan dictionary *Kenkô henshû* provides for wine the word *ukusuri* (or *okusui*), where *u-* is a honorific prefix, and *kusuri* (*kusui*) corresponds with the Japanese *kusuri*, „medicine“. On the Miyako islands the wine offered to the altar of an-

cestors (*kamtana*) is called *gusi*. It has the same name on Ishigaki island and in Shuri and Naha, where it usually has the honorific prefix *u-* (in the Yara village of Kunjan district it is called *ugus'i*). Though the word *gusi* is usually written 五水 *gusui* (in the Japanese pronunciation *gosui*), the name appears to take origin from *u-kusuri* (*ukusui*).

Munai

During my studies of the Japanese language, combined with my interest in the Ryūkyūan dialects closely connected with the Japanese language, I have been often puzzled by certain concepts that my mentality refused to accept and for which I failed to find any equivalents in Russian or any other languages I know.

The problem was rather with these concepts being beyond the so-called logical thinking sphere than with my insufficient experience.

The term *munai*, that I encountered for the first time in 1922 during my summer journey to the Miyako islands of the Ryūkyū archipelago, may be considered a typical case.

For the first time I have heard the word in a compound *munai-kadzi*, „the *munai*-wind“, used to explain the reason of a suddenly storming sea that prevented any traffic between separate islands, usually maintained by small steamboats.

Suspecting that the *munai-kadzi* is an equivalent of the Japanese term indicating a wind from a definite direction, like *kochi* (the eastern wind), *hai* (the southern wind), etc., I questioned about the direction, but was surprised to hear that the *munai-kadzi* can blow from any direction, depending on circumstances. In this case it blew from the Sarahama village on the Iraw island, where a few days ago a fisherman had drowned in the sea. This event „has made *munai*“ (*munaija sidu:zi*) and caused the *munai-kadzi*.

From this answer I realized that my suggestion has been wrong, and the word *munai* is quite peculiar and applied not only to this wind. Moreover, there is even a special verb *munai-si*, „to make *munai*“.

From this single example I became aware that the natives perceive some link, some interconnection between the death of a fisherman and the storming sea, and define this relation with the term *munai*.

A few days later, when I visited the above-mentioned Sarahama village, one of its inhabitants, Maodomari Kinkichi, told me that during his wife's pregnancy he wounded his leg with an axe. The wound was not serious, and soon disappeared without leaving any scar, but after the child was delivered it had on his arm a red spot, exactly of the same shape as was the scar of his father.

For us two events, like wounding of the father's leg and the birth of a child with a scar-like spot on his arm, seem to have no connection at all, while for the people of Sarahama they are interconnected, the former being the cause for the latter, or in the vernacular *munaija-hi:du:l* „has produced *munai*“. Someone present during this conversation remarked with a thoughtful air that if the

Maodomari's wife, having heard what had happened with her husband, made a wound on her own leg as well, nothing would influence the coming baby. During this explanation most of people approvingly nodded.

In the town of Psara on the main Miyako group island I was told about an insane man who has a large red spot on his breast. When his mother was pregnant, the father went to Formosa and was killed there by aborigines. It caused the *munai*, i. e. became reflected through his son in a visible way.

Being afraid of *munai*, the Miyako inhabitants have a large number of taboos for a pregnant woman and her husband as well. For example, spouses should not kill pigs or other animals that are used for eating. A pregnant woman should not eat goat's meat, otherwise the future child could have „red“ hair (i. e. of a lighter colour than usually have the natives), since goats on the Miyako islands used to be white with brown spots. In Psara, as well as in Sarahama, pregnant women are not allowed to drink goat milk to prevent the birth of a child as careless as a goat. (However, in certain places just before delivery a woman in childbirth is given goat-meat to relieve accouchement. This meat is used throughout the Miyako islands as a purgative medicine, and the natives believe it may facilitate a child to go out, as it happens with alimentary products.) If a pregnant woman sees a funeral, a child with a blue pigment spot on his buttocks may be born.¹² For this reason pregnant women on Miyako islands are kept away from funerals. Throughout Japan people of lower classes believe that if a pregnant woman sees a funeral or a fire, a blue or red pigment spot will appear on the child's body, and to prevent it there are certain apotropaic means, like holding a mirror, etc. The natives of Irav island believe that if a pregnant woman or her husband „draw boundaries“ on a rice-field, a hare-lip child will be born. The belief that killing animals by either of spouses during the delivery period will definitely „make *munai*“, exists not only in the Sarahama village, but is widespread throughout all Miyako islands and a certain case is even described in an *ajagu*: (in the vernacular it is pronounced *a:gu*; in the Tarama island – *e:gu*) song, written down by Tajima Risaburo during the Chinese-Japanese war.

Kanagama of the Inner Nima

Kanagama from the Inner Nima, from the Middle Nima,

A girl named Kanagama was born;

A heavenly star, a girl desired to be embraced appeared.

The very night Kanagama was born,

The late night the girl has appeared,

Was the night of rainy mist, of cloudy sky,

And they could not, having descended the shore ap'azma crab to find,

They could not, having descended the shallows, a „goggle-eyed“ to catch.

Swiftly they ran back to the settlement,

12 Cf. the existence of similar superstitions among the Russians.

A pig from the back-yard, a pig placed there, killed.
 Because the fast/in case of pregnancy/was broken,
 Kanagama has made *munai* from the back-yard pig.
 With coming of darkness she has no heart to sit,
 With arrival of night she has no wish to stand.

(The two last lines have the meaning „with arrival of night she is not able to stay at home“.)

The poet laments on some local beauty named Kana (-*gama* is a diminutive suffix), who seemed to be a wanton woman and by nights could not stay at home. The poet explains it by the fact that when the girl had been born, a pig was killed, thus breaking the taboo. According to the local custom, after the child's birth someone of the relatives went to the seashore, and having caught there two white crabs *p'azma* (in the village of Sa:da in the Iraw island they are called *p'alma*, in Sarahama – *çaima*), return home. One of the crabs is used to prepare a soup for the pregnant woman, another one is released to run under the house. The killed pig caused *munai* in the girl, and having grown up she could not stay at home by night, but like a pig in the pigsty¹³ started to walk around.

The *munai* belief is not an exclusive trait of Miyako island. Miyara Tôsô, born on Ishigaki island, confirmed its existence also in the neighbouring Yaeyama archipelago. When describing the delivery-related customs, Miyara says:

There are a lot of different taboos of spiritual type. I will provide an example.

If during a woman's pregnancy a „feast of bonewashing and burning of incenses“, prescribed for the 3rd or 5th annual anniversary after the death of parents or brothers, happens to be in the house, this woman, even if she is a close relative of the deceased, is not allowed to be present during the ceremony of „the washing of bones“. Furthermore, not only the pregnant woman, but her husband as well is prohibited to participate. If a pregnant woman would go to such a place, she is said to deliver a monster child, called *munu-ai*. Lately the young people gradually began to consider it only a superstition and try to put an end to it. Therefore a lot of old women gather and give examples in favour of this practice. For example, a pregnant woman who went outside by chance encountered a procession that returned from the ceremony of „the washing of bones“; when she delivered, the baby had crooked legs and arms and they did not improve for the rest of his life.¹⁴

Such a child, and the effect of *munai* itself, is on the Ryûkyû islands called *'il:ku* (the word seems to origin from *ai-ku*).

The number of such superstitions is enormous, and similar facts can be found throughout the world in very different cultures.

13 On the whole Ryûkyû archipelago the pigsty is at the same time a latrine.

14 MIYARA Tôsô, The Yaeyama islands stories. *Jinruigaku zasshi*, vol.36, (1921), p.118.

In many contemporary works on ethnography and folklore may be found a stereotyped statement that the logical mistake *post hoc ergo propter hoc* is the guideline for any people on the lower stage of civilization. But a question arises: why do people think in this way, and why do they follow wrong concepts and continue to be satisfied with them?

To answer the question, quite common in studies of primitive people's mentality, Lévy-Bruhl developed the concept of the „pre-logical“ thinking that pre-determines any action of a primitive man.

If a man had drowned in the sea, and afterwards the sea rose, this is *munai*; if a pregnant woman had eaten the goat's flesh and the baby's hair became „red“, this is also *munai*. In fact, in similar conclusions we can notice a logical error. But the natives of Tarama island, for whom similar facts, like the above-mentioned *kadzi-munai*, are commonplace, the *munai* in general is conceived as something that prevents the fulfilment of the premeditated act. For example, a peasant has started to construct a house, and after long and elaborate preparations placed the central pillar which holds the whole construction. If the house falls down before he completes the whole work, the peasant says: „*parau tati: uksitallugadu kairi:ne:ng kure: munaigajo:*“, that means, „The pillar was erected, but it fell down; it should be a *munai*“. A Russian in a similar case would deem: „It must be bad fate“. Anyway we may trace in this statement the same logical error: „afterward“ means „because of it“.

I would like to add some more examples. When I notice a person who puts a slice of lemon in his mouth, I involuntarily frown, and my face makes a sour grimace as if myself had eaten a lemon. For the Miyako natives this is also a *munai*. When in the theatre we are so impressed by the actors' playing that we feel ourselves to be in their roles, it is a *munai* as well. Putting it into other words, the physiological definition of a „natural reflexes“ are termed by the inhabitants of Miyako as *munai*.

Summing up, one can conclude that the *munai* is a certain constant link, a constant interrelation between any existing things, a certain constant influence of one thing upon another. Any change that happens or has been made to a certain thing will influence another one, and bring forth the same or a similar change.

In the Yaeyama islands, that are situated between Miyako and Formosa, the same unchangeable principle that rules, in the opinion of the islanders over nature, is called *munuai*.

A friend of mine, Miyara Tôsô, born on Ishigaki island, in a letter of October 1, 1922, wrote to me:

The Yaeyama word *munuai* is a compound of the *munu* („a thing“) and the *ai* („the unification“), but in this very case *munu* means not „the matter“, but „a spirit, a soul“, while *ai* means „a quarrel, a fight“. For example, if you have injured yourself somewhere in the forest, but gradually the wound becomes a serious sore, people believe this is the result of the *munuai*.

Thus, according to folk etymology, and to the Miyara's interpretation, *munuai* is to be understood as „a quarrel of souls“, „a conflict of souls“, „a clash of souls“.

In the Miyako and Yaeyama islands the meaning of *munu*, as well as of the Ryūkyūan *mung* and of the Japanese *mono*, is in its meaning slightly different from our concept of „thing“. It means not only a material thing, but also a certain immaterial essence of the thing, that is independent and can exist separately of its material embodiment, in other words, it is a spirit of a thing. Therefore, the word *mono* in Japanese signifies a deity, a demon, and a spirit at the same time, is obvious even from such words as *mono-mairi* („as going to a *mono*“), i. e. a pilgrimage to a Buddhist or Shintōist temple, *mono no tatari*, „punishment sent by a demon“, *mono-tsuki*, „a possession by a spirit“, „a possessed“, etc. The same concerns both *munu* and *mung* in the Ryūkyūan archipelago, for example, in the compounds *madzi-mung* (the vernacular of Shuri and Nafa), or *madzi-munu* (the vernacular of the Miyako and Yaeyama islands), „a spirit“, „a ghost“, „a werewolf (cf. the Ancient Japanese *madzi-mono sum*, „to do a sorcery“, „to conjure“)¹⁵, *ki-zi-mung* (the Nafa dialect), „the spirit of an old tree, that is believed to cause nightmares“, therefore „a nightmare“ will be (*jana*) *munu-nu baci*, „the punishment of the (evil) spirit“. This is one of the most widespread curses in the Miyako islands, etc.

As concerns the second component of the word *munu-ai*, it can hardly go back to the verb *au* < **apu*, „to unify“, „to meet“, and in Miyako and Yaeyama islands also in the meaning of „to quarrel“, „to fight“. However, the alteration of *ai* < **api* in the Shuri and Nafa dialect of the main Ryūkyū island usually corresponds to the long *e* (*e:*), while the *ai* we are dealing with is pronounced with guttural explosion, i. e. as 'e(:), as it is, for example, in the Ryūkyūan-Japanese dictionary *Konko kenshū*¹⁶, compiled in 1711. There the word 'e(:)ku < *ai-ku* is explained in a following way: „A mother's conduct during her pregnancy, when any of her peculiar acts will influence the child, is called *ai-ku*“. In the Japanese it is called *aemono*¹⁷. In the „Tokonatsu“ chapter of *Genji-monogatari*“ it is said: „They lamented that this is the result (*aemono*) of the Myōhōji temple abbot's appearance in the accouchement chamber“ (*Myōhōji no bettō daitoko no ubuya ni haberikomū aemono to nan nagekihaberitamaeshi*). A commentary says: „This abbot talked very swiftly, so after he passed through

15 Cf. the modern Japanese *maji-nau*, „to do a sorcery“, and also *maji-waru*, „to have relations with“, „to hold intercourse with“, „to mingle with“; and *mazeru majeru maji-arū*, „to be mixed“, „to mingle“.

16 This is the only Ryūkyūan dictionary that includes the vocabulary of the courtly language and the words from the ancient Ryūkyūan sacral hymns (the so-called *umuru*).

17 As have been already mentioned, at present there are also certain beliefs in the *munai*, at least during pregnancy, though there are no special words to designate it (at least in the standard language). But in the old days such phenomena were called *mono-ae*, as indicated by the compiler (or compilers) of the above-mentioned dictionary.

the chamber where Omi-gimi had been born, it influenced Omi-gimi and he became a very swiftly talking person...¹⁸.

As is obvious from the above quotation, the first component of the modern Ryūkyūan word 'e(:)ku corresponds with the first part of the word *ae-mono* given as a synonym (sic!) of the Ryūkyūan word. This part, i.e. *ae-* is nothing but the second stem, or the *nomen deverbatiuum* of the verb *aju* (the root being *aj-*), and one can draw the conclusion that in the past *ae-* was pronounced as *aje-*.

The old verb *aju* in its meaning corresponds with a modern verb of the same root – *ajakaru*, which in contemporary Japanese-English dictionaries is usually translated as „to resemble“ and „to take after“. However, in my opinion, these translations do not cover the whole range of meanings of the verb. The large Japanese dictionary *Dai Nihon kokugo jiten* provides the following meanings for this word: 1) to become similar by establishing a contact with something; to become identical with something under its direct influence; 2) to gain a fortune for oneself through becoming similar to a fortunate person.

In old Japanese the root *aja* was used in the adverbial form *aja-ni*, which is explained as „the adverb expressing the feeling of surprise from anything unexplainable“ (see ORIGUCHI Shinobu, *Man'yōshū jiten*, addition, p. 16. Tōkyō, 1919); the adjective *ajashi*, „inexpressible, undescribable, miraculous“, which in the modern language is used with the meaning of „strange, conspicuous“, goes back to the same root. In the old Ryukyuan hymns the word *aja* had been constantly used in the meaning of „wonderful, beautiful“. In contemporary Japanese the word is also used in the meaning of something incredibly beautiful, subtle, hidden, that results in more concrete meanings: a design (in particular, a pattern on the tissue that is not noticeable from the first sight), the refinement of speech, embellishments in the rhetoric, a shade of meaning; from the other side, the same word has been used in the meaning of „a scheme“, „a secret plot“, etc.

Such words as *aja-doru* or *aja-curu* (< **aja-turu* < *aja-toru* < *aja-doru*), „to manage skilfully“, „to manipulate“, „to manoeuvre“ (in particular, to make puppets work pulling strings); *aja-maru*, „to make a mistake“, *aja-matsu*, „to err“, *aja-su*, „to dandle a child“, *aya-ui*, „dangerous“, etc., are derivatives from the same root.

Curing of diseases in the Miyako islands

In the Miyako islands, especially in remote villages, there are no decent doctors, and people distrust them, preferring to use domestic means.

As a powerful remedy against various diseases, especially general weakness or exhaustion, goat's blood is used. It is used in a rather barbarian way: a goat suspended to a cross-beam is knifed in the neck artery; a bamboo tube is insert-

18 See *Konkō kenshū* as an appendix to IFA Fuyu's *Kō Ryūkyū*, 3rd ed., Tōkyō, 1922.

ed into the wound, and the sick person drinks the warm blood through it. The same custom exists on the main Okinawa islands (see the note of SUEYOSHI Anshô in the journal *Dôzoku to densetsu*, No.4, Dec. 1918, p.20). The author states: „Besides, if the person (the sick one) experiences an unpleasant feeling (i. e. drinks the blood with disgust), it will not bring any effect“.

As medicine against *sôbing-kuzuri* („wrong urination“, i. e. gonorrhoea) the decoction of the biwa tree (*Eryobotria japonica*, Lindl.), brought from Okinawa, sugar candies (*kôrizatâ*) and Chinese tea is drunk by the sick person. In the *Simuzi* district as a medicine to cure the same disease a peculiar crab species is used, *maku-gan*, usually found in ancient neglected tombs, called *zzaja*. These crabs are also highly valued in Psara, as the best purgative remedy. In Psara people suffering from constipation are given goat's meat to eat.

The natives believe that to cure syphilis, *naban'a* (in some places pronounced as *nabani*, perhaps being a corrupted form of *namban* or *naban*, „the Southern Barbarians“; the natives consider that the disease was brought by them from the south) it is necessary first of all to make the poison go out, and the diseased is fed the she-goat's (*pinza*) flesh. When the whole body becomes covered with sores and ulcers the patient is given dog's meat to dry the sores.

In the *Simuzi* district the best remedy against leprosy is believed to be the flesh of babies between half a year and a year and a half of age, so-called *ssavva* („a white baby“); there are rumours that for this reason theft of babies' corpses quite often happens there.

To cure various fevers and colds (*nici*, „the heat“, or *jakijam*, „the fever“) large leaves of the plant called *Jâmanummagajûspazvsa*, „the grass-urine of the old hag from Yaeyama“ (a mountainous old woman?) are being used. The juice of the leaves is sucked out, and then the head, breasts and other parts of the body are covered with leaves to draw off the heat.

Measles (*zgasa*) is believed to be a sickness everyone has to undergo. Therefore, if in any family a baby has caught the measles, the neighbours intentionally send their children to play in this house to have them infected with the disease as soon as possible, because at an older age it can be dangerous. The sick child is placed in a separate room in the back part of the house; as a medicine it is given a decoction called *zibîrajû*, prepared from the *zibîra* plant, and is prohibited to consume any fat or oily food. (A similar custom of intentional infection of children with measles is found in many other regions of Japan, for example in the Shakotan district on Hokkaidô, where previously the same practice was carried out with smallpox as well).

As to the curing of *jûbzî-isaku*, whooping-cough (now it is usually called by the Japanese term *hyakunichigai*), *tisimbâz*, mumps and *cura-gase*, „smallpox“, my native informants could not provide anything of special interest.

Besides curing diseases by such and such „medicines“ one should mention the treatment by exorcism, considered in primitive societies even more powerful than the former remedies. In Sarahama village (Irav island) for that purpose there are even special female exorcists called *zî:jum'a*. In Sâda village of the

same island the word *zî:* has the meaning „reason“, „pretext“, while *jum* means „to speak“; therefore the word *zî:jum* may be translated as „to bring to reason“, and the *zî:jum'a* as „one who brings to reason“. According to the information of a Sarahama native, one of his friends received treatment for some disease by a Japanese doctor in Kagoshima, but having realized it to be of no use and unable to work because of the disease, returned to his home village and appealed to a local *zî:jum'a*; the woman pronounced a charm of magical content, and shortly the sickness has completely disappeared. In the Sâda village the charms are called *fcî-paraz*, „oral purification“.

To recognize the cause of a disease, inhabitants of Sarahama, as well as any other Miyako aborigines, are used to appeal to female shamans (in Sarahama now the shamans are male), called *munis'î:* („a sorceress“, „a sorcer“), *kamkakar'a* („possessed by gods“), *kamtitca* (the etymology is unclear, but the first component *kam* doubtless means „a deity“; the word is in wide use in the Sarahama district), etc.

A female shaman brings down spirits on herself and prophesies, giving in such way to a sick person or to his relatives an explanation of the cause of a disease. Mostly the cause is the *tatal* (in Psara – *tataz*; cf. Jap. *tatari*), „a retribution“ (the word can not be adequately rendered into European languages) of a deity or an animal, caused by improper conduct toward the deity or by killing, injuring or beating a certain sentient being. Through a prophecy of a female shaman the diseased can also get information about the time of his recovering. Meanwhile the shamans sometimes recommend worshipping the so-called *mav-gam*, „the tutelary deity“, and in such cases a special altar is suspended a bit below the ceiling in the *nibanza* („the number two room“), and is worshipped like ancestors (for those there is a special altar in each household), offering wine, tea, flowers, etc. The worship ceremony is performed only by females. The auspicious influence of the *mav-gam* on the life of the house's members is supported by the existence of a wide-spread expression: '*mavva tumôsi: karadu masasfu nar'ûz*, „after the tutelary god has been invited, it is as if the burden fell down“.

Because my stay in Sarahama was very short (only for a few hours), I could not have a talk with the *zî:jum'a* and write down any invocations from them; as to the *kamkakar'a*, they have totally been inaccessible for me. Female shamans are now under prohibition and are persecuted by the Japanese police, being accused of spreading superstitions; this is why they were highly afraid of an unwitnessed „Oranda“ („a Dutchman“, the term applied to any foreigner in the Ryûkyû) and strictly denied being involved into the craft, though in secret they go on to trade it.

In Psara people who appeal to the *kamkakar'a* are used to pay them with money and food, while in Sarahama neither *zî:jum'a*, nor *munusî* receive a single coin. People explain it in a following way: „Shamans and sorceresses do not differ from normal people; because they need our assistance when building a

house, etc., we do it willingly and free of charge. Why should we pay them, if they ought to help us?"

Below I provide a few widespread incantations and magical performances that I was able to collect.

For example, if a child has a stomach-ache, the mother strokes his belly, repeating: *pagzâ fsun nari, pssa fsun nari*, „reduce to dust under the feet, reduce to dust under the steps!“ (Agaznakadzuni district in Psara). In the Nakasizi on Tarama island in the same situation a mother tells: *bagangadi: kara di:si nadibâ assfsu pssafsun'k'e: nari:tubi*, „because I stroke you with an unsavoury hand, with a bitter hand, turn into a dust under the feet, turn into a dust under the steps, and run away!“ But what exactly is being turned out, first to the feet, and then to dust under the feet? It becomes clear from an invocation of the natives of Sâda village (on Irav island). When suffering from a stomach-ache, any person takes some sharp object like a *zi:pa* (a female hair-pin), *katana* (kitchen knife), *m:pur'a* (a knife for digging out potatoes), etc. and, having blown on it, strokes the belly with it in various directions with the words: *bagaparâba paziñh kai smuñkai uri:e'ari ma nukuru ma nukuru gûgûcîcîcîcî mm'a jukalm*, „because I expell you, go to the feet, below descending go away! Disappear, demon! Disappear demon! In this way, in this way! I prick you, I prick you! Have already gone away!“

In Uizi village (the Simuzi district), if a child has a stomach-ache, its companions sing in chorus:

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| <i>agaitanduijônu</i> | Oh! Oh! Oh! |
| <i>batanudujang</i> | The belly is aching! |
| <i>kûsû fâi</i> | Have eaten pepper |
| <i>masari:dujang</i> | Even more is aching. |
| <i>fûnakua fâi</i> | Eggs have eaten |
| <i>nuâzdusi</i> | And recovered. |
| <i>gaksi bata-ga 'ma</i> | The nasty belly ! |

This song helps to realize which remedy has been in fact used in the above village to cure the stomach-ache: the sick person is given Cayenne pepper that intensifies the pain, afterwards he is given hen-eggs to eat and soon the pain appears to stop.

In Agaznakazumi (Psara) if a fish-bone has got stuck in the throat, one should thrice blow into the palm and then, striking the throat, repeat:

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>atahfu atahfu</i> | <i>Atahfu, atahfu!</i> |
| <i>tanta tanta</i> | <i>Tanta, tanta!</i> |
| <i>atahfununudunna</i> | In the throat of an <i>atahfu</i> |
| <i>tantanunudunna</i> | In the throat of a <i>tanta</i> |
| <i>pun'âkarañ</i> | A bone does not stick, |
| <i>pun'âkarañ</i> | A bone does not stick. |

According to Mr. Tomimori Kantaku, who recited me this incantation, the *atahfu* appears to be a fish, living by river or sea, like the cormoran, and feeding on fish; its other name is *tanta*. Fishermen of Sarahama informed me that the *tanta* is a large bird like an eagle, able to catch even big fish; in the same village the word *atahfu* is also used in the meaning „(eating) one's fill“, „(to eat) plentifully“ (cf. Jap. *tarafuku*).

Concerning blowing into the palm during this incantation (as well as in the above-mentioned incantation from Sada village), I would like to note that in popular beliefs of any country and people blowing and spitting are believed to be a powerful magical means against diseases and any evil spirits' influences (cf. W. WUNDT, *Myth and Religion*. Russian tr., SPb., n. d., p. 66).

In the Simuzi district (as well as in Psara) to cure an unceasing hiccup, two *umisi* (chop-sticks), or any other thin sticks are placed crosslike above a bowl with water and then one gulp is drunken in turn from every segment between the sticks.

If someone sneezes, all present used to say *kusk'a* (in most parts of Japan in such case the people say *hakksyo*). In certain places, if a child sneezes, it says itself *kusu* („shit“), while the mother or anyone else says *ujaki* („rich“). In Okinawa after sneezing the present people say *kuskwe* (homonymous with the expression „eat the excrements“).

The following legend exists in Okinawa concerning the origin of this custom. When a baby was born, a person invited for the feast a *zuri* (prostitute) from Cizi (the licensed quarter in Nafa, a former village) whom he met by chance. The *zuri* was in fact not a usual woman but a demon, the spirit of a dead prostitute. After the host had managed to send her away from the house he followed her and by a tomb near Cizi heard a conversation. „Why are you so late? It is forbidden to enter!“ – „I beg your pardon! A *sizja* (= a man) deceived me and brought me along to a childbirth feast. This is why I am so late. Would you forgive me, if I bring this new-born?“ – „We would for sure forgive you, if you bring the baby, but how can you afford it?“ – „I will cause the baby to sneeze, and then bring him along.“ – „Rubbish! How could you obtain a child? The *sizja* knows quite well that if you can cause a child to sneeze, he must say ‚*kuskwe*‘, and you fail to do anything!“ The child's father hurried homewards and told what he had heard. When the child began to sneeze, all present repeated ‚*kuskwe*, *kuskwe*‘, and then the demon failed to catch the child in spite of all efforts. Since then the practice to say ‚*kuskwe*‘ after a sneeze has become common. (SAKIMA Kyōei, *Nanto setsuwa*, Tōkyō, 1922, pp. 65–67.). On Hokkaidō in the Shakotan district when someone sneezes, all present say ‚*kuskurya*‘ („eat the excrements“) as well.

Expressions like ‚*kuskya*‘, ‚*kusu*‘, ‚*kuskwe*‘, ‚*kuskurya*‘, etc. are without any doubt homonymic imitations of sneezing (that in Japanese is called *kushami*); however, from the above story it follows that sneezing is conceived as a sign that a soul may quit a body, and therefore it is a good opportunity for malevolent spirits to steal the soul. The similarity of the word for sneezing with

the word *kusu* („the excrements“) gave birth to the above magical expressions, associated with „excrements“, that in popular superstitions by their magical force are believed to be antidotes to evil influences. Among Japanese thieves there is a custom when intruding at night into a sleeping room, to leave their excrements there to provide safety for themselves. A similar custom exists among thieves in Europe as well (see W. WUNDT, op.cit., pp.66, note 1). In the case of sneezing the words like „*kusu*“, etc. are used as substitutes for real excrements, that „along with any other physiological secretions or body's discharges are believed to contain spiritual forces, or at least to reduce their bad effect“.

I will mention one more incantation, even though it does not directly concern diseases, but rather helps to prevent disaster, or even death: during an earthquake people say *ckacka*. In similar cases in the mainland Japan one used to say *kuwabara* („a mulberry grove“); in Japan the mulberry tree is believed to possess a magical force to destroy bad spirits' influences.

And now I would like to add a few words on the so-called *jûura*, „the night divination“. If a member of family is ill, as well as before the marriage or any other serious enterprise, the inhabitants of Miyako-jima pray to their ancestors before the *kamtana*, a household altar, burn incenses (*kô*) and ask for an indication of the result of the sickness or success of an enterprise. Afterwards they leave the house and walk to a neighbouring quarter, where having heard scraps of casual talks accept them for signs from ancestors. In ancient Japan such divination was called *yûge-toki*, and in Ise province the divination of young priestesses (so-called *kora*) by casual utterances heard on their home-way was called *oige-wo kiku*.