"Okinoshima Island and Related Sites in the Munakata Region"

Study Report

II / 2

English Translation

2012

World Heritage Promotion Committee of
"Okinoshima Island and Related Sites in the Munakata Region"

Foreword

"Okinoshima Island and Related Sites in the Munakata Region" are our heritage consisting of Okinoshima Island, where state-related rituals were held from the late 4th century to the end of the 9th century, Munakata Taisha, a Shinto shrine that developed from the rituals on Okinoshima Island, and a group of mounded tombs associated with the Munakata clan and maritime people who undertook the rituals. Worship of Okinoshima Island and rituals at Munakata Taisha have been protected and passed down by local people of the Munakata region from ancient times to the present. The group of mounded tombs also remains in a good state of conservation, giving testimony to the characteristics of the place and people at that time. While we can learn many things from this property, we have the responsibility to pass down the value of this precious property to future generations. It was in this recognition that the World Heritage Promotion Committee of "Okinoshima Island and Related Sites in the Munakata Region" was set up in January 2009 to pursue World Heritage List inscription as a means to protect and pass down the value of this property.

In order to achieve World Heritage List inscription, it is necessary to define the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. A study project started in order to verify the value of this property and Study Report I was published in the fiscal year 2010. In the fiscal year 2011, five international researchers kindly accepted our request, despite time constraint, to write papers, examining the value of this property from international perspectives. Thanks to their cooperation, Study Report II-2 has now been ready for publication. The papers contained here are full of new perspectives and precious comments from international experts.

This report successfully contributes to proving the value of this property and at the same time makes a great step forward with the study of this property with a special focus on Okinoshima Island. I sincerely hope that this report will stimulate interest among young researchers too and provide the opportunity for more people to recognize the value of this heritage.

The Committee hopes to engage more people in the effort to have "Okinoshima Island and Related Sites in the Munakata Region" inscribed on the World Heritage List. Your understanding and support are most appreciated.

March 31, 2012

OGAWA Hiroshi
Chairman,
World Heritage Promotion Committee of
"Okinoshima Island and Related Sites in the Munakata Region"

Note

1. This report is a compilation of the achievements of the research that was commissioned in the fiscal year 2011 by the World Heritage Promotion Committee of Okinoshima Island and Related Sites in the Munakata Region.

2. The Committee identified the research themes based on the recommendation by the Experts' Committee on Okinoshima Island and Related Sites in the Munakata Region, with input from the Office for World Cultural Heritage, Monuments and Sites Division, Cultural Properties Department of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, as well as Mr. NEGITA Yoshio, Cultural Properties Chief Senior Specialist and Mr NISHI Kazuhiko, Cultural Properties Specialist.

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3. The names of the authors are given at the top of respective papers.

4. The sources of the illustrations, plates, and photographs are given separately.

5. Munakata Taisha cooperated for this study, including on-site visits.

6. The editing and compilation were done by the secretariat of the World Heritage Promotion Committee of Okinoshima Island and Related Sites in the Munakata Region, which was jointly set up by the World Heritage Registration Promotion Division of Fukuoka Prefecture, the World Heritage Registration Promotion Office of Munakata City, and the World Heritage Registration Promotion Section of Fukutsu City.   The publication of the original report (in Japanese) and the English translation was assigned to PREC Institute Inc.

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A Study on Ancient Rituals in China

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Abstract: Among the cultural heritages that humans have passed down from generation to generation, it is faith that best embodies the spiritual world of their ethnic groups. Each ethnic group has its own myth and religion as well as its unique sacred world it has built; accordingly, each people practices its unique rites and rituals. From a cultural perspective, rites and rituals are the representative works of the spiritual realms of human society. They serve as a bridge over which people move between the secular world and the sacred world. It is rites and rituals with which each ethnic group has unleashed its extraordinary imagination and developed a symbolic world of magnificent diversity in its wake. In this way, each ethnic group has exercised its enormous tensile force of the mind as well as its collective power when faced with adversity of various kinds.

China boasts a long and interrupted history of civilization that dates back to five thousand years ago. Its culture and tradition can be traced back still further to more than ten thousand years ago. A unified nation of multiple ethnicities, China has more than 50 peoples, which stands out prominently with their own unique culture. Among the cultural aspects of the nation, rituals constitute an important part of the Chinese culture. This paper provides an overview of the rituals of ancient China.

Keywords: Niuheliang site, Temple of Heaven, Jongmyo Shrine, ancestor worship, imperial rituals, Mount Taishan, Mazu worship

I. Divine Spirits and Rituals

1.   The Emergence of Divine Spirits

Any ritual has its object and reason. If it were not for divine spirits, there would be no awe for or dependence on them and therefore there would be no discussion on rituals.

Divine spirits are a product of imagination of people in the real world. At the time of its origin, a divine sprit corresponded to the object it symbolized. Trees, mountains, stones, and animals in the real world as well as heaven and earth were worshiped as tree, mountain, stone and animal deities as well as deities of heaven and earth, respectively. As people's thought and imagination developed over time, the most salient features of animals such as claws, fangs, heads, and tails were combined with the human head or body to form divine spirits that did not exist in the real world. Such divine spirits eventually took the form of a human after mankind came to have a relatively developed civilization. This is how divine spirits emerged in the shape of unworldly, sophisticated, and dignified emperors, generals, and premiers. On the other hand, ancient and solemnly worshipped deities of heaven and earth whose existence people kept in their minds and whose names they chanted in prayer remained in the obscure realm of imagery. Though without a concrete form, these deities represents divine spirits that discipline and encourage people while always watching their deeds with dignity and feelings. Ancestors and deceased relatives as well as past brave warriors were also revered as deities.

The emergence of a divine spirit that symbolizes an object or power of nature gives rise to a primitive religion that worshiped that spirit, providing the preconditions for rituals. The most important precondition must be that that particular divine spirit is personified. Such personification focuses mainly on the aspects of thoughts and feelings. Divine spirits and people have common standards for deeds and emotions. People think they can figure out the likes and dislikes and the joy and anger of divine spirits and induce them. It is

with this belief that people have the wish to communicate with divine spirits in one way or another. As people improved their imagination and created myths about the achievements of deities, divine spirits, originally conceptual in nature, came to have a concrete form. Accordingly, concrete objects of and reasons for worship emerged; so did the possibility of communicating with divine spirits. These factors set the stage for rituals.

2.   The Emergence of Rituals

When the concept of divine spirits was born, people began to perform rituals accordingly. People are in a passive position vis-à-vis divine spirits. Because divine spirits are far more powerful that humans and ubiquitous, people cannot afford to offend or shun them. People in the past thought that divine spirits existed in their living environment despite their elusiveness and inexplicability.

People worship divine spirits for the simple reason that the latter are beyond the former and in control of their fate. Accordingly, people take the attitude of submission, obedience and reverence in communicating with deities. This is because people hope to please divine spirits so that they will not cause calamity at least and, if possible, bring benefits to them. People must revere deities devoutly and sincerely, prostrate themselves, and seek divine protection because they cannot delude or deceive ubiquitous divine spirits.

It should be clarified here that constant fear of divine spirits can give rise to a primitive religion but will not always lead to the practice of rituals. The emergence of rituals requires that people strongly call for them. In fact, rituals emerged when people not only simply yielded to divine spirits from afar but also wished to influence and even move them to their advantages. People engaged in primitive crop or livestock farming increasingly wished for more natural materials. They came to pray for appropriate amounts of rain and wind as well as the safety of fishing and hunting. Fulfilling such wishes called for ensuring that divine spirits would not at least interfere or bring harm and, if possible, provide support. Seen from a certain perspective, it is safe to say that rituals provide a tool for people to bargain with divine spirits.

A ritual is a ceremonial rite with the fundamental aim of soothing divine spirits, avoiding calamity, and seeking happiness. Such aims can be described as bribing divine spirits while expressing submission to them.

3.   Transition of Rituals

In time immemorial, people worshipped supernatural beings in their settlements or burial grounds; they had no particular sites solely for rituals. An archaeological survey of the Upper Cave site in Beijing found that primitive men buried the dead near the cave in which they had lived and sprinkled red mineral power around the remains for mourning purposes. It was not until the end of the Neolithic period that fixed and large altars began to appear. In the historic period, rituals were increasingly complex in type and diversified in location.

Humans believed in the "spirit" apart from the body as early as in the Paleolithic period. In a primitive men site in Zhoukoudian, Beijing, archaeologists found a sepulcher of Upper Cave men dating back to some 20,000 years ago. They found red power around the remains of the dead as well as grave goods. These finds suggest that people back then had the concept of "immortal soul." Primitive men expanded that concept to include things, believing that everything has a soul. Then the power of nature that controlled their lives came to be represented by supernatural souls, i.e., divine spirits. The existence of a deity gave rise to dialogue and interaction between it and people, and rituals provided a primary means to that end. In primeval times, human beings had little capacity to change nature; their lives depended completely on the blessings of nature. In such periods, religions and rituals thrived greatly. This has been substantiated by a large body of archaeological literature and anthropological studies on primitive peoples in the world.

As human civilization developed, another external power, i.e., society came to have a more impact on human lives. The external social pressure in the form of a clan, people or state determines fundamental living conditions of individuals and families; it can even change the fate of individuals. Now, new lords are

enshrined in religious sanctuaries of various kinds, and rituals are now different in both content and methodology.

A religion takes the course of its own. In a primitive society, rituals involved all its members. They were increasingly divided into official and folk rituals as class society emerged and civilization developed. Over long periods of history, official rituals came to serve as an important tool for the rulers to maintain their rule. Folk ritual activities, on the other hand, were designed for the public to make a desperate wish associated their lives and fulfill their spiritual desires. Such rituals deeply permeated into the lives of the public in the form of traditional rites. They thus became part of their lifestyles.

4.   The Status of Rituals in Ancient China

In ancient china, rituals were of great significance and constituted a great undertaking that permeated the entire social life. *Chun Qiu Zuo Shi Zhuan [Commentary of Zuo on the Spring and Autumn Annals]* states clearly: "The great affairs of a State are sacrifice [rituals] and war." Between the Spring and Autumn period and the Warring States Period, frequent wars resulted in small states being annexed to larger ones. Defending national borders with military buildups was a logical consequence under such precarious circumstances.

Rituals were the supreme state affairs and placed before military affairs. In ancient China, ritual activities were considered a statutory institution of a state, and society as a whole was placed under the rule of divine spirits. In fact, any history book as well as any record of regional affairs included accounts of ritual rites and related matters. Local legends and folklores never fail to describe ritual customs and miracles, suggesting that every family observed ritual conventions of various kinds. Ritual activities, which cover the history of human civilization since the prehistoric period, have had an extremely great impact on the traditional Chinese culture while involving Chinese predecessors over the eternal history of China.

Rituals were of paramount importance in ancient China. They were an integral part of politics and life. Rites were performed throughout the year with many different purposes. The Yin Dynasty valued rituals, and its monarchs decided all kinds of affairs associated with state politics by divination. In the Zhou Dynasty, the Duke of Zhou established rules for rites and music. Confucius, the founder of Confucianism, "did not talk about prodigies, force, disorders, and gods." In the subsequent periods, it seems that emphasis was placed on practical culture established by sages and ancient philosophers, not on rituals, i.e., séances with divine spirits. The reality, however, is that rituals for supernatural beings survived were handed down from generation to generation throughout the long feudal age. Divine spirits of ancient times did not disappear. More than that, new divine spirits were born one after another. Rituals for ancestors and those for heaven and earth were also passed down from generation to generation. Even meritorious retainers and sages who accomplished moral, military, or military achievements were engaged in rituals in one way or another. The supreme ruler of a state could not possibly distance himself from rituals.

In the Yin-Shang Dynasty, the monarch was recognized as a patriarch because the practice of selecting the head of a state based on blood relationship had not been wiped out yet. Apart from administering his tribe, the patriarch had an important task of communicating with supernatural beings in heaven on behalf of his tribe. In short, the patriarch doubled as a medium. When supernatural beings in heaven were discontent with the patriarch, they brought about calamity to abort the rituals. There is a legend in the Yin Dynasty known as the "prayer for rain by King Tang of Shang." The legend has it that in the reign of Tang, a drought lasted for seven years, drying up the Luo Shui River. The weather was so hot that stone could melt. People suspected that the drought was a vengeance of heaven on King Shang Tang of Shang, who defeated King Jie of Xia and established a new dynasty. Rituals of any kind did not work. Without recourse to other means, King Tang of Shang decided to follow ancient customs in order to bring the disaster to an end. He visited a shrine in a mulberry forest and tried to sacrifice himself in front of Shangdi--the deity that governed all things--as well as his ancestors by throwing himself in a raging fire in an attempt to curry favor with the supreme deity. This is the famous legend as the "prayer for rain by King Tang of Shang." Such deeds were discussed in the context of rituals and customs of ancient people by Mr. Zheng Zhenduo's in his work *Tang Dao Pian*. King Tang of Shang was lucky. After cutting his hair and finger nails, he was about to set fire to the firewood at his feet when a heavy rain began to fall from the heavens. The success of

this ritual provided proof that Shangdi did not abandon King Tang of Shang and that the disaster was not due to the king. The fact that the leader who made the great achievement of establishing a new dynasty had to risk his life points to the sheer power of Shangdi and the firm concept that heaven selects the monarch.

From the Zhou Dynasty onwards, heaven continued to be piously believed; the duty of administering rituals by the monarch was strictly executed. Whether the monarch could worship supernatural beings successfully or not constituted an important criterion for people to judge whether he was a man of virtue or not.

In the Warring States period, because any state was always at the risk of collapse, the monarch had to concede to the authority of deities and, as the case may be, even to his retainers. After the unified institutional foundation in the feudal age was later solidified, the monarch no longer needed for concession. His authority was strengthened absolutely, and the monarch had the exclusive right to rituals for heaven and earth deities. The sphere of supernatural beings was limited to small affairs of ordinary people.

II. Rituals in Ancient China

1.   Classification of Rituals in Ancient China

Rites and rituals of Chinese peoples were extreme complex. They can be classified into many kinds from different perspectives.

By objective, rituals are largely divided into two types. One type is rituals for praying for happiness. It refers to day-to-day ritual activities when there are no major difficulties standing in the way of daily life. This includes ancestral rituals in season festivals (Spring Festival, Qingming Festival), as well as the Baishen ceremony, which continues to be observed regularly in private commercial facilities in coastal cities. The other type is rituals designed to ward off misfortune. Those who perform this type of rituals are often faced with difficulties. With a clear and direct aim, they pray for the imminent critical situation to change for the better.

By object, rituals are divided into two types: those for divine spirits in the natural realm and those for divine spirits in the social realm. By approach, rituals are divided into those with a passive approach and those with a positive one. In the first type, people show decorum and humility towards deities as much as possible in the course of the ceremonial rite. The second type is designed to work on divine spirits or impress them in one way or another in order to prompt them to help fulfill people's wishes. For example, they hold a memorial service for the dead, chant sutras, perform a play, and do an imitation.

2.   Developments in Rituals in Ancient China

(1)   Rituals in the dawn of Chinese civilization

i.   A six-thousand-year-old sepulcher decorated with dragon and tiger designs

Twenty-some years ago, a sepulcher belonging to the Yang-shao culture in Xishuipo, Puyang, was excavated in the western part of Henan Province. The grave goods unearthed were an astonishing discovery, although they numbered only a few. A pile of shells was found on either side of the person buried, with the pile on the east side forming a dragon design and the one on the west side forming a tiger design. This pattern, believe it or not, matched the faith in Si-shen--the four deities: the blue dragon of the east, the white tiger of the west, the red phoenix of the south, and the black turtle-snake of the north, which spread between the Warring States period and the Han Dynasty. Did a prototype of the Si-shen pattern exist 6,000 years ago? The answer remains no for many scholars, but it may be irrational to treat this assumption as a mere coincidence. At any rate, it is clear that such designs were made with a profound intention when people back then buried the dead. These designs should be thought of as an artifact of the ritual activity at the time of burial. It is reasonable to presume that they embody the prayer for the protection of the spirit of

the dead from evil spirits.

ii. The Goddess Temple, cairns, and altars that date back to more than 5,000 years ago

Between some 6,500 and 5,000 years ago, an archaeological culture was distributed in the Liao River basin in the western part of Northeast China. This culture was named "Hongshan culture" because it was discovered in the Hongshanhou Site in Chifeng city, Inner Mongolia in the 1930s by Kosaku Hamada, a Japanese scholar. The culture began to develop at an accelerating rate 6,000 years ago and reached its height of prosperity some 5,500 years ago. The most salient feature of Hongshan culture is advanced levels of Chinese jade, which was highly developed by some 5,500 years ago. The Chinese jade of the Hongshan culture has three major characteristics. First, it comes in many types. Second, it is elaborately designed. Third, jade in the shape of an animal account for a large proportion of all jade.

(i) The discovery of the Goddess Sculptures and the Goddess Temple

Advanced levels of human sculptures are an important characteristic of the Hongshan culture. It has been widely believed that China lacks the tradition of human figures, as an overview of the world's art history suggests. Indeed, few human figures have been discovered, although designs of animals, tao-tie (a mythological Chinese monster), and fenghuang (a mythological sacred bird) have been found in many parts of China. It is a fact, however, that the Hongshan culture has the tradition described below. In the early 1980s, sculptures of women were unearthed from the Goddess Temple, famous and large structure remains belonging to the Hongshan culture, in Niuheliang. Some of them were sculptures of pregnant women. The unearthed sculptures of women's heads as well as human heads were exquisite. Jade was used for their eyeballs, making them more look like heads of living women. These were widely known as Goddess Sculptures. Many pieces of the sculptures of women's heads and bodies were discovered in this structural remains along with other human figures. What is striking is that these female sculptures come in many sizes. There can be largely divided into large-, medium-, and small-sized sculptures. The large size is three times as large, as exemplified by sculptures of ears. The medium size is life-size. The small size is much smaller that the actual figures. These female sculptures suggest that women were worshipped back then. Two hypotheses have been put forward regarding the status of these women. One is that they represent earth goddesses (land deities). The other is that they represent ancestral deities. The second hypothesis assumes that female sculptures three times as large symbolize ancestral deities of the highest rank, the life-sized divine sculptures signify indicate those of lower ranks, and smaller-sized ones no longer represent ancestral deities. Unearthed along with female sculptures were a few animal sculptures, including sculptures of the mouths and fangs of an animal resembling a dragon in later times as well as large claws of Raptatores (hawks and falcons). Unfortunately, these sculptures of goddesses, humans, and animals are all made of clay but not calcined. Calcined clay sculptures are hard and therefore easy to handle, but non-calcined clay sculptures are so brittle that they will easily be broken in the excavation process. Because of this excavation that cannot be overcome by the current excavation techniques, we made only timid and abortive attempts and have not been able to unearth all of them. Still, it is clear that this structure has something to do with rituals. Now this site is widely known as "Goddess Temple" in the academic world.

(ii) The emergence of an imaginary animal: pig dragon

A new type of jades was discovered in sepulchers of the Hongshan culture. It was named "pig dragon" because the head part looked like a pig month and the curved body part resembled a dragon in shape. It is customary to use this terminology as some scholars believe that the dragon has been mutated from a pig. That the dragon is an imaginary animal is a common knowledge. How did it come into being then? The answer remains a mystery. There is a general consensus, however, that two or more animals have been combined to form the dragon. And that is the common image of the dragon from a long time ago. Recently, some scholars proposed the hypothesis that the image of a bear is involved. Some of the jades unearthed from Chifeng do not come in the shape of an animal, and their purpose remains unclear. When talking about pig dragons, it is imperative to consider these jades. Certainly, they are elaborately and exquisitely designed and believed to date back to 5,000 years ago, not far from the period of the pig dragons that have been found in Hongshan sepulchers. Still, there are some uncertainties about the dating because these jades of a non-animal design come from the collective repository of once scattered archeological artifacts, not directly from excavation sites. At any rate, they are similar to the above-mentioned pig dragons in the shape

of the mouth but much more elaborate and beautiful. When we try to identify the usage of artifacts, we need to consider where (the type of place) and how they were unearthed apart from their shapes.

(iii) Cairns where aristocrats are buries and nearby circular altars

The pig dragons mentioned above have been excavated from sepulchers at Locality 2 at Niuheliang. Known as cairns, these sepulchers are made of piles of stone. Mounds 1 and 2 to the west are square in shape. At the center of each mound is a rectangular tomb, which is destroyed. There are a number of small graves to the south, and several jades have been unearthed from some of them. It is noteworthy that no sepulcher has been found in the adjacent circular ruins about ten meters. The ruins are surrounded by three-tiered circles of stone (inner, middle, outer). The inner circle is the highest, while the outer circle is the lowest. Excavated from outside of the outer circle are cylindrical earthenware (of a hollow, bottomless structure). With a half-semicircular part of the cylindrical surface is colored, this earthenware somewhat looks like a haniwa, a hollow clay figurine often found in the outer part of the burial mounds of the Kofun period in Japan. We postulated that this circular object ruins beside the tomb were those of a ritual altar. The circular shape of the altar and the rectangular shape of the tombs are some of the things that deserve attention. The ancient "round heaven, square earth" concept is well known. The Temple of Heaven [literally the "Altar" of Heaven] in Beijing has a three-tiered structure and uses a circular altar for rituals for heaven. In the context of this three-tiered structure, it is worthwhile to recall that Chinese literature of the Warring States period mentions "three-tiered heaven." The mythological Kunlun Mountain, which was revered back then as a divine land to and from which deities and immortals were believed to descend and ascend, has a three-tiered structure as well, a fact that remind of three-tiered altars of the Hongshan culture. It should premature to assume that these altars more than 5,000 years ago are linked to altars for heaven rituals in later times. However, the existence of such a three-tiered circular facility 5,500 years ago can be confirmed. What deserves attention here is a possible link between this facility and traditional temples of heaven designed to worship heaven in ancient China.

Tombs in the square mounds and small graves around the mounds are different in term of the social status of the persons buried there. The tombs came with more than ten jades. On the other hand, the small graves produced only a couple of jades at best; some of them were without any jade. People who were not buried in sepulchers must have been further lower in the Liao River basin in the western part of Northeast China. By about 5,500 years ago, society had been stratified with a clear distinction between high and low, and rich and poor.

What is noteworthy is that no ruins of a village or dwelling have been found in the area--10-plus-square-kilometer area where Niuheliang cairns are located--even though there are sepulchers in ten-something hill tops among many in the area. What does that imply? My theory is that this region was a zone solely for burying people with a higher class, not a zone of everyday life for commoners. In other words, the region may have been more like what was later known as a religious sanctuary. At least, evidence suggests that it was associated with rituals. It is likely that people in the region worshiped the same divine spirit that the Hongshan people did. Indications are that that spirit was the female progenitor of the people in the region. The Goddess Temple that has been discussed is situated near the highest peak in the Niuheliang site complex. Discovered on that peak is a large altar with a pile of stone fixed with earth. Seen from a bird's eye view, the archaeological site complex may look as if cairns and altars on the ten-something peaks surround the Goddess Temple and the large rectangular altar. This points to the possibility that the complex was at the center of rituals of the Hongshan culture, which thrived in the west part of what is now Liaoning. Evidence suggests that by the end of the Hongshan culture period, the division of labor and social stratification had reached an unprecedented level. It is likely that there had already been the aristocracy who control the power over religious and ritual matters and the handicraft group specializing in contriving elaborate and beautiful jades. In sum, the period of 5,500-5,000 years ago represent an epoch when the culture and society of prehistoric China developed.

iii. Nascent civilization in the lower reaches of the Yangtze River: the ritual and social aspects of the Liangzhu culture

Many archaeological sites and burial grounds that date back to 5,200-4,300 years ago are scattered in the Jiangsu-Zhejiang-Shanghai area, i.e., the Lake Taihu area. The period of the Liangzhu culture marks an

extremely important epoch in the formation of civilization in the area.

First, take a look at the development of agriculture. The discovery of the remains of paddy fields 6,000-4,000 years ago and those of stone spades more than 5,000 years ago in the area points to a significant improvement in farming technology and efficiency. The handicraft production technology was markedly advanced in the Liangzhu culture.

The Liangzhu culture is best characterized by the development of jades and its production technology. The development of jades is reflected in marked increases in variety and quantity. Jades characteristic of the Liangzhu culture come in ten-something types. This represents the highest number of jade types in the history of this area. The technology of jade production also experienced significant development. Liangzhu jades are extremely exquisite. Some bear on their surface a design that may be associated with a totem.

The Liangzhu culture is also characterized by the extensive practice of rituals. Altars have already been found in ten-something locations. The altars have a square horizontal surface, surrounded by a stone-piled wall, with each side measuring ten-something meters. Altars of the Liangzhu culture are often accompanied by sepulchers. Back then, these altars were used as a ritual site, where people worshiped divine spirits. Later, people came to bury the dead in these altars, which became burial grounds over time. Sepulchers that accompany altars are a high class, producing many jades. These jades include a variety of jades associated with rituals. We believe that priests who led rituals were buried in these altars after their death. It is likely that these priests, who were relatively high in social class, came to be the object of rituals by people in later times. Jades have been unearthed from the sepulchers that accompanied altars as grave goods. These grave goods are divided into two types. The first type is mostly ornaments. Because the local soil has long been so acidic that even human bones often have not survived, unearthed artifacts provide an only clue to determine to determine the gender of people buried in graves. We thus concluded that the persons buried with ornaments may have been female. The other types are artifacts related to power such as weapons and ritual jades. We believe that they are likely to be for men. Exquisite jades have been unearthed in large quantities from the graves, suggesting that a huge amount of effort was made to make these rare objects. Such objects are seen only in relatively large sepulchers, indicating that the upper social class possessed a large amount of property.

It is noteworthy that among the Liangzhu jades were new high-grade jades designed for purposes that were not related to everyday living (*cong* and *bi*). A *cong* has the shape of a quadrangular prism with a large cylindrical hollow inside. Such a design is common to jades of the Liangzhu culture in the lower reaches of the Yangtze River; it is familiar to people in this cultural sphere. It is clear that such a design was related to the local faith. The more recent *cong* is increasingly more abstract in design, with two circles and one horizontal line presenting the eyes and the mouth, respectively. The *cong* spread extensively between the 5,000 and 4,200 years ago in the lower reaches of the Yangtze River. The area is now known for the *cong*. Many theories have been put forward regarding the interpretation of this design. One theory is that it reflects the image of the ancestors of the Liangzhu people. Another theory has it that the design depicts a medium or a priest engaging in ritual activities, thereby expressing the image of the spirit of the dead in the grave ascending to heaven on the back of a divine beast. In fact, literature in the Zhou Dynasty of China describes an immortal ascending to heaven on the back of a divine beast. Yet another theory is that the design depicts the legend in which an ancestor of the Liangzhu people was combined with the animal to form their tribal progenitor. Indeed, ancient Chinese literature includes similar descriptions. If the third theory is right, the design has a bearing on the ancestor worship that was extensively practiced in the lower reaches of the Yangtze River in the period of 5,200-4,400 years old. This design is extremely common in, and highly typical of, the region. A similar design was used for jade Yue axes--presumably the symbol of military power--that were unearthed from the same sepulcher. A bird is depicted on the tip of one end. A *bi*, on the other hand, is circular in shape. A large amount of *bi* was found around the person buried at Tomb 23 in Yuhang-Fanshan, a grave that accompanied an altar. The unearthed artifacts suggest the person buried had amassed a huge amount of wealth. They also had religious connotations; they may have been used to avert evil in later times.

(2)   Rituals in the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties

Ritual activities were frequently performed in the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties, all of which belong to the period of slave society in ancient China. The "Record on Example" chapter of the *Book of Rites* states: "Under the Yin dynasty, they honored Spiritual Beings, and led the people on to serve them; they put first the service of their manes, and last the usages of ceremony." They placed special importance on ritual activities and war as *Chun Qiu Zuo Shi Zhuan* states: "The great affairs of a State are sacrifice [rituals] and war." Any ritual involved divination. Mediums inscribed *Bu-ci* or what is now known as "oracle bone inscription" on special tortoiseshells or animal bones for divination. It is due to the extensive ritual activities that tortoiseshells and animal bones inscribed with characters are unearthed in large quantities today. According to the old records concerned, the objects of rituals by people in those days were diverse, including Shangdi in heaven, the sun, the moon, planets, stars, mountains, and rivers, as well as deceased relatives. Discovered along with such carapaces and bones are bronze ritual implements for memorial services for the dead, such as *ding* (tripod cauldron), *li ding*, *dou*, *jue*, *zun*, *hu*, plates, and trays. These bronze implements are often inscribed with characters. Such inscriptions are known as bronze inscriptions. Oracle bone inscriptions and bronze inscriptions, which include records of the history of slave society in China, bear witness to ritual activities in this period.

i.   Shang rituals that offered humans and domestic animals as sacrifices

Shang is a dynasty that flourished between 3,600 and 3,000 years ago with its center in the middle reaches of the Yellow River. Yin Xu is the ruins of the capital of the Yin Dynasty that were discovered in Anyang, Henan Province. Among the discoveries are the remains of palaces, ancestral temples [*zongmiao*], royal tombs, craft workshops, as well as the remains of many houses and sepulchers. The most striking difference between rituals in the Yin-Shang Dynasty is that many humans were offered as sacrifices, as well as domestic animals such as cattle, sheep, and pigs. *Bu-ci* on the unearthed bones and carapaces include many records of cases of human sacrifices. A total of 1,350 pieces of oracle bones and carapaces as well as 1,992 passages recount human sacrifice cases, according to Mr. Hu Hou Yi, a scholar who is famous in China for his research on ancient characters. He estimated that up to 300-500 people were offered as human sacrifices. In ordinary rituals, around 30 people were sacrificed, he said. Mr. Hu Hou Yi added: "In the Yin Dynasty, slave society prospered for 273 years (1395-11213 BCE) under the rule of 12 kings (8 reigns) from the first king Pan Gen, who relocated the capital to the last kin Di Xin. A total of 13,052 people (those recorded in the oracle bones and carapaces) were offered as human sacrifices. When the number for 1,992 *Bu-ci* passages is counted on the assumption that one person was sacrificed for each passage, at least 14,197 people are estimated to be killed for rituals. This is a conservative estimate. According to the *Bu-ci* on carapaces and bones that have been found so far, it is a rare case that only one person was sacrificed at a time. The actual number killed is likely much higher. It must be an astonishing number after all.

Extremely cruel means were used to kill people for rituals. In no way they are different from those used to slaughter domestic animals. The victims were beheaded, buried alive, and even minced. According to the *Annals of Yin* of the *Records of the Grand Historian*, King Zhou, the last king of the Yin Dynasty killed two of his principal ministers in a fit of anger, cut the prince of Chiu into small pieces and slicing the prince of Ou into slices for dried meat. Cases of killing to death by burning and cutting off the limbs are often recounted in *Bu-ci*. The practice of human sacrifice as described in *Bu-ci* was fully substantiated by the excavation of sepulchers of the Yin Dynasty. In the spring of 1950, archaeologists discovered 17 grave pits arranged in four rows in the south of a tomb of Yin Xu in Wuguan Village. Bones that was found buried there were all those of beheaded bodies. The human bones of 152 bodies in total were discovered: ten each in 12 pits, nine each in two pits, eight in one pit, six bodies in another pit, and an unknown number in the remaining pit where the bones were too scattered around for estimation. Some of these headless bones came with a pair of jawbones, a few of which even had teeth, suggesting how atrociously these victims must have been sacrificed. Many other grave pits were found in the royal tombs area. Human bones were scattered around there. Some of them were headless, and there were even piles of skulls. These disposal burial pits and disordered burial pits may be referred to as "ritual pits" for burying people who were sacrificed for rituals. Such ritual pits were discovered in large quantities in Yin Xu.

Ritual sites in the Yin Dynasty can be classified into two types: those for temple rituals and those for tomb rituals. Temple rituals were performed in fixed ancestral temples. Ancestral temples in the Yin Dynasty are

known as different names: *zong*, *sheng*, *gu*, *shi*, and *ya*. People of the same surname had a common *zongmiao* (ancestral temple). Those who were descended from the same individual who bore that surname had a common *zumiao* (directly ancestral temple). Those who came from some common branch family from that ancestor had a common *nimiao* (paternal temple). The following paragraph discusses major differences regarding the construction and rituals of *zongmiao*.

A mortuary tablet for royal predecessors that was enshrined in a *zongmiao* is called *shii*. *Shi* is divided into *da shi* and *xiao shi*. The former was used for lineal royal predecessors and the latter was used for collateral ones. Generally, cattle and sheep were sacrificed for *da shi* and *xiao shi*, respectively. A place where *da shi* were gathered is called *da zong*. Likewise, a place where *xiao shi* were gathered is called *xiao zong*. Terminology for ancestral temple architecture is many. For example, *dong shi*, *nan shi*, *da shi*, and *xiao* are all places for rituals. Likewise, *zong*, *gu*, *shi*, and *ya* are all places for setting up mortuary tablets. The remains of the foundations for large palaces and ancestral temples were discovered in Henan Yanshi, the capital of the Shang Dynasty in its initial stage and in Yin Xu, the capital of the same Dynasty in its last stage. Either of the two is likely the ancestral temple where Shang kings worshiped their ancestors.

The other type of rituals in the Yin Dynasty is known as tomb rituals. Kings and leading aristocrats performed rituals in front of their ancestors' tombs as well as the temples they built. Tomb rituals were commonly performed as a means to worship their predecessors for generations. Depending on the area, they are referred differently as: 墓祀, 上墓, 上塚, 上墳, 上飯, 上食, 祭掃, 拜掃, 拜墓, 修墓, 添土. Archaeologists have proved that tomb rituals were extensively practices in the Yin Dynasty. Yin Xu in Anyang, Henan Province is an area where royal tombs are concentrated. In 1949, more than small graves were discovered in the royal tombs west area. Archaeologists who surveyed this area concluded that these graves were ritual pits of the Shang Dynasty. They confirmed that the people buried in these pits were human sacrifices for ancestral worship, not the retainers of the deceased kings who followed their lords to show their royalty. The archaeologists said: "These graves totaling more than 1,000 were all found near the tombs. Many of them were arranged in rows. Only human heads and bodies were buried, often in large quantities. Grave pits for vehicle horses and wild animals were also unearthed. There is no doubt that all these small groups were appendages to the tombs. In 1976, more than 200 grave pits were excavated here this area. Researchers concluded that these ritual pits were part of the ritual site of the Yin Dynasty designed to worship ancestors. If that is the case, it follows that tomb rituals used human sacrifices as well in the Yin Dynasty, offering "human meat feast" in front of the ancestral tomb and burying these sacrifices in pits around the tomb. Such a practice differs greatly from the practice of ancestral rituals in later times whereby offerings were not buried with the exception of alcohol, which was offered directly underground and ritual performers had a feast in front of the tomb. It seems to directly and realistically convey the meaning of the dictum: "t[T]hus they [the filial sons] served the dead as they would have served them alive." By extension, it is possible to infer that cannibalism continued to be practiced in everyday life settings in the Yin Dynasty. The Annals of Yin of the Records of the Grand Historian contains many accounts of the practice of making dried or salted meat from human bodies. Even people with a high social rank such as feudal lords were turned into food if they committed even a misdemeanor. It goes without saying that meat of plebeians and slaves were served as food.

In addition to *Bu-ci* on carapaces and bones, inscriptions on bronze objects also provide information on ancestral rituals in the Yin Dynasty. During this period, people recorded happy occasions such as feats of arms, merits, and honors on bronze objects. The dates inscribed on bronze objects in the Yin-Shang Dynasty often fell on the dates for ancestral rituals. This is because the Yin Dynasty "killed people of sin and praised those of merit" in ancestral rituals. It seems that aristocrats in the Yin-Shang Dynasty had the ethos that they should report matters for congratulation to their ancestors, especially when they received a reward, in the belief that such happy occasions were the result of the protection provided by the spirits of their ancestors. This ethos characterizes ancestral rituals in the Yin-Shang Dynasty.

ii. An ancestral ritual system of the Zhou Dynasty whose implications reach all the way down to the modern period

The system of enfeoffment, which was promulgated in the early Zhou Dynasty, had an extremely great impact given that the dynasty's socioeconomic structure was the one typical of an agrarian society. The concept of the system was passed down to so-called the "Duke of Zhou's *li*." As Confucius approbated the

Rites of Zhou, saying "How complete and elegant are its [Zhou's] regulations! I follow Zhou," people in feudal society always read books of Confucius and Mencius and practiced the "Duke of Zhou's *li*," which provided the code of conduct for intellectuals. The ancestral ritual system of the Zhou Dynasty served as a tool for governing an agrarian society in which the family was the fundamental, pivotal, and production unit. The system was partly passed down all the way down to the Qing Dynasty.

(i)   Clear ranking in relation to distant ancestors and close relatives

Zhou rituals had a clear ranking and specific numerical rules. The numbers of temples--independent sites for ancestral rituals--that were allowed to have were seven for the son of heaven, five for feudal lords, three for ministers of state, and one for scholars. The common people performed rituals at their sleeping space. The seven temples for the son of heaven were responsible for separate rituals for each of the seven royal predecessors: up to the sixth predecessors from the son of heaven currently on the throne plus his great ancestor. The predecessor(s) between the sixth one and the great ancestor were worshipped collectively, not separately. Of the seven temples, the great ancestral temple was permanently designated as the first temple. The temples for the descendants of the second, fourth, and sixth generations from the great ancestor are called "*zhao* temples." Likewise, the temples for the descendants of the third, fifth, and seventh generations are called "*mu* temples."

This Zhou system that classified these seven types of temples into "*zhao*" and "*mu*" embodied two major focuses for rituals. The first focus was on rituals at the great ancestral temple. The great ancestor was the one who made the greatest achievement for its people by establishing its foundation as the symbol. Rituals for him were maintained regardless of generational change. Because the great ancestor built the state territory, individual rituals for him continued permanently. The second focus was on rituals for close relatives. The father and grandfather were closest relatives and most loved ones of all. It is only human nature that rituals for them were performed independently when they died. For the distant predecessors from the preceding seventh generations upward, it was a traditional custom to worship them by placing their remains in *jia shi* (a small room attached beside). In folk rituals, people did not go as far as establishing a temple but did build graves for their father and grandfathers; they collectively worshipped more distant predecessors.

Recently, the remains of the foundations of high-class buildings of the Western Zhou Dynasty were discovered in the Zhouyuan archaeological site, Shaanxi Province. The architectural style is special, quite different from the siheyuan palace of the Western Zhou Dynasty that was discovered earlier. Because the architecture is similar in structure to the ancestral temples described in such literature as the *Rites of Zhou*, it is likely the remains of a temple of high-class aristocrats in the Western Zhou Dynasty.

The ranking system of the Zhou Dynasty not only embodied the system for temples but also specifically stipulated the music and dance that were performed for rituals. The then dance called "*wanwu*" was performed with a feather flag in the hand. The number of rows of *wanwu* dancers who were allowed to hold the feather when performing in an ancestral temple was specified as eight for the son of heaven, six for feudal lords, four for ministers of state, and two for scholars. Why up to eight rows? The answer comes from literature of the Spring and Autumn period. According to the literature, the music instruments for the dance were made of eight types of materials. Eight rows was proscribed in order to propagate the music in eight directions. The scale of and participants in a ritual was also stipulated in details according to the ranking.

The ranking system of the Zhou Dynasty regarding rituals was clearly reflected in the ritual instruments as well. The system of *li* [proprieties, rites, etc.] of the Western Zhou Dynasty clearly specified the numbers of bronze vessels to be used according to the social status of aristocrats: 9 *ding* and 8 *gui* for the son of heaven, 7 *ding* and 6 *gui* for feudal lords, 5 *ding* and 4 *gui* for nobles and ministers of state, and 3 *ding* and 2 *gui* or 1 *ding* and 1 *gui* for scholars. Unearthed bronze vessels buried as grave goods in sepulchers of the late Western Zhou Dynasty were found to differ in type and number, depending on the social rank of the person buried there. The numbers of *ding* and *gui* certainly matched the numbers specified in the ranking system described in written records.

(ii) Valuing frugality and stressing virtue

While the Yin Dynasty saw many domestic animals people sacrificed, the Zhou Dynasty valued frugality and emphasized when it comes to ancestral rituals. There is a Zhou saying "frugality is of great virtue; luxury is of great evil." Perhaps due to such a sense of good and evil, the architecture of ancestral temples in the Zhou Dynasty was not magnificent. Even great ancestral temples had a thatched roof. Such frugality is evidenced by a recorded account of Duke Zhuang of Lu, who was criticized for his action to adorn the temple of his immediate predecessor Duke Huan. Duke Zhuang, who succeeded his father Duke Huan after he died, built his father's temple. In the process, he first the pillars painted red and in the following year carved flowers on the interior of the temple. This action was criticized by his retainer as an extravagant deed that blemished his virtue.

In the minds of the Zhou people, ancestral temples were a place where ancestors tried to avert evil by supervising their descendants, controlling all the officials, and promoting the virtue of all these people. They considered it a matter of course to perform rituals while bound by "*li*" and in accordance with a fixed system. The failure to do so contravened *li* and constituted an act of major irreverence. Under this system, rituals were performed first for the grandfather and then for the father. Any change to this order was not allowed.

Apart of the order of things, *li* specifies the ritual paraphernalia for ancestral temples. In the Zhou Dynasty, *ding,* jade, and other ritual implements were all thought of as precious treasured items. These treasured articles were usually dedicated to ancestral temples. Jade, the kind of stone that is so beautiful that even divine spirits were believed to scramble for it, can be said to a natural treasured item; it was used only for important rituals and *hui-meng*, a conference of heads of states for signing treaties. In the Zhou Dynasty, only aristocrats were allowed to use bronze vessels because of their preciousness. *Ding*, which was so large that it was often difficult to produce, were regarded as a priceless national treasure that "pacified" the state and ward off evil. It was therefore used at the ancestral temple of the son of heaven. Wishing to obtain such *ding* was considered the act of treason that was designed to usurp the son of heaven. In the Spring and Autumn period, Chu amassed power and became a strong state. The monarch of Chu framed a plot to take the power of the royal family of the Zhou Dynasty. As he wanted to bring it to Chu, the monarch openly asked about the weight of the Nine Tripod Cauldrons, the symbol of the royal authority of the dynasty. He was rebuffed by the Zhou king's minister, Wang-sun Man, who said, "Chu lacks virtue, and this is an unjust act of provocation." From then on, the phrase "asking about the weight of *ding* [tripod cauldron]" was interpreted to represent an attempt to usurp the supreme power of the state. The implications are that *ding*, which symbolized state power, should be obtained by fair means and that otherwise, any act was deemed an act of evil. This episode adds to the body of evidence that the rituals of the Zhou Dynasty is characterized by its emphasis on virtue.

(iii) Copious amounts of offerings and the attitude of integrity

The Zhou Dynasty stressed the importance of agriculture and valued agricultural produce. More and more agricultural products were used as offerings. Chinese chives, wheat, millet, and rice were offered for spring, summer, autumn, and winter rituals, respectively. People also offered various vegetables in seasons they had picked up for ancestral rituals. Animal offerings were diversified. Some were offered alive. Others were cooked and then offered.

In order to perform rituals in respectful ways that did not contravene *li*, the *li* system not only defined the means and scope of a ritual as well as the order of proceedings but also designated the master of a ritual and people in charge of different processes. Different types of such stewards were necessary to perform ancestral rituals. The "Offices of Spring" chapter of the *Rites of Zhou* specifies a wide range of such stewards, including: The *li* system also defined the participants in ancestral rituals in details. Ancestral rituals in the Zhou Dynasty were performed throughout the year, and *li* had to be observed. Accordingly, there were different kinds of ritual personnel specializing in a wide range of aspects, including costumes, rugs, drinking vessels, reception, the handling of alcohol, the main rite, and the supplementary rite, as the range of rite stewards enumerated above. The *Commentary of Zuo on the Spring and Autumn Annals* describes, in its texts regarding decorum and the division of role, some of the standing offices for these personnel, including *taishi*, who recited paeans; and *taizhu*, who displayed offerings. In the rituals, people

had to behave sincerely and respectfully. Falsely reporting the quantities of offerings, especially overstating them, was prohibited. Violating this rule was considered the act of deceiving gods and ancestors that entailed serious punishment.

In a period of transition from slave society to feudal society, the ruling class placed more emphasis on the role that rituals played in ruling the state and came to use the ritual ceremony for enlightening the public.

The *Rites of Zhou*, the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial*, and the *Book of Rites*, which are collectively referred to as the "Three Rites" and laid the foundation for the Chinese rite system that lasted 2,000 years, were compiled by this period (from the Western Zhou Dynasty to the Qin and Han dynasties). The "Three Rites" followed, systemized and standardized rituals and customs of ancient times. They permeated these rituals and customs into the lives of the public.

(3) Imperial rituals and their developments from the Qin and Han dynasties to the Tang and Sui dynasties

i. Suburban rituals

Suburban rituals are the ritual activity that ancient Chinese dynasties valued the most. Kuang Heng and Zhang Tan, two of the renowned li scholars, stated: "for the king, nothing is more important than to receive the order of heaven; no event is more appropriate than suburban rituals to receive the order of heaven" ("Treatise on Sacrifices," *The History of the Former Han Dynasty*). A suburban ritual is a major heaven and earth ritual activity that was performed by the emperor in the suburbs of the capital.

Literature has it that in the Qin Dynasty, rituals for the White Emperor were first performed near Xianyang, the capital. This is the oldest record of suburban ritual activities performed in the capital city. However, the Qin people had only facilities for worshipping heaven; they did not have a northern suburban altar (or square alter) designed to worship earth.

Emperor Wen of Western Han built the wei yang Five Emperor temple and the chang men Five Emperor altar near the capital city of Chang'an as a symbol of rituals for the Five Emperors, effectively moving ritual sites outside of the capital.

Emperor Wu of Han established a system each for heaven rituals and earth rituals but could not set up a ritual site in the southern or northern suburb of the capital in accordance with the principles of yin and yang. What is noteworthy is that Taiyi emerged as the supreme god of heaven during the reign of Emperor Wu of Han. Accordingly, Emperor Wu of Han built the altar of Taiyi in the southeastern suburb of Chang'an. This altar may be the origin of circular altars (circular mound) that people in later times built in the southern suburb of the capitals to worship heaven. The altar of Taiyi is a three-tiered circular altar with eight sets of stairs; it can be thought of as a prototype for circular mounds in later times.

Towards the end of the Western Han Dynasty, Wang Mang and others carried out a series of reforms of the *li* system. The suburban ritual system also underwent a major change. In accordance with the principles of yin and yang, an altar of heaven for worshipping heaven and an altar of earth for worshipping earth were built in the southern and northern suburbs of Chang'an, respectively. Rites for worshipping heaven and earth collectively came to be performed in the southern suburb. These reforms solidified the foundation for, and had great impact on, the subsequent suburban ritual system.

The East Han Dynasty built suburban ritual facilities in the southern and northern suburbs of the capital city of Luoyang. The southern suburban altar had a circular shape and eight sets of stairs. It also had a multi-tiered altar and was surrounded by triple walls. The northern suburban altar was a square altar that had with four sets of stairs and a ritual building. The architecture of the southern and northern suburban altars of East Han was modeled after by the successive dynasties.

The Western Jin Dynasty combined the southern suburban facilities with a circular mound. Likewise, the dynasty combined the northern suburban facilities with a square mound. This system was followed in the Eastern Jin Dynasty and the Southern Dynasty. The Northern Dynasty, on the other hand, adopted a system

of separating the suburbs and mounds. Both the Tang and Sui dynasties followed the system of the Northern Dynasty, separating the suburbs and mounds for worshipping heaven.

A look at the suburban ritual system in the Han and Tang dynasties indicates a strong influence of the reforms of the *li* system in the last stage of the Western Han Dynasty. During this period, the Theory of Yin-Yang and the Five Elements solidified its leading status in the field of rituals. It was institutionalized in the Tang and Sui dynasties, improved in stages in the Wei, Jin, and Southern and Northern dynasties, and completed in the Qin and Han dynasties.

ii.   Ancestral temples and alters of land and grain

One of the basic principles of the *li* system of Zhou was to arrange an ancestral temple on the left and *Shejitan* or [altar of] land and grain on the right. This arrangement system was established in the Han and Tang dynasties after undergoing a long development process. The altar of land and grain of Western Han was built in the southern suburb of Chang'an. Until Wang Mang assumed the post of regency, imperial temples of Western Han were scattered inside and outside of the capital and the above-described arrangement system was not established. During the period of Wang Mang, a suburb temple was built on the left side of an altar of land and grain for the first time in accordance with this arrangement.

The Nine Temples of Wang Mang, which was built by Wang Mang himself, strictly observed the *zhao-mu* system. The ancestral temple of *yi tai chu* was considered the temple of the progenitor.

The system of ancestral temples and altars of land and grain was fundamentally reformed in the Eastern Han Dynasty. The Eastern Han Dynasty built a *gao* temple and a *shizu* temple in Luoyang for worshipping the emperors of the Western and Eastern Han dynasties. The system whereby the mortuary tablets of the seven ancestors were gathered in the great ancestral temple to worship them had a great impact on great ancestral temples in later times. In the Eastern Han Dynasty, an altar of land and grain was situated on the right side of an ancestral temple. This is the oldest confirmed case in which the system of arranging an ancestral temple on the left and an altar of land and grain on the right in the Han and Tang dynasties.

iii.   Halls of distinction, royal academies, and *ling-tai*

The wei yang Five Emperor temple built by Emperor Wen of Han is likely the predecessor of halls of distinction (ming-tang) in later times.

Emperor Wu of Han built a hall of distinction in Wenshang. Since then, halls of distinction were modeled after Ming Tang Tu designed by Gong Yu Dai of Jinan.

In the 4th year of the Yuanshi era in the reign of Emperor Ping of Han, Wang Mang took the lead in building a hall of distinction, a royal academy, *ling-tai*, and *tai-xue* (imperial colleges that were built in every district for training scholars) in the southern suburb of Chang'an. This architecture of the *li* system had a great impact on later times. The *ling-tai*, *tai-xue*, and the like that were built back then were independent from one another. Even the halls of distinction and royal academies were often separate from each other. Both the halls of distinction and royal academies built back then had five rooms and a structure of a circular top and a square bottom.

The Guang Wu of Eastern Han built a hall of distinction, royal academy, and *tai-xue* in the southern suburb of Luoyang.

The halls of distinction, royal academies, *ling-tai* and *tai-xue* that were constructed by the Eastern Han Dynasty were repaired each in the period of Cao Wei, the Western Jin Dynasty, and the Northern Wei Dynasty (after its capital was transferred to Luoyang), except that the *ling-tai* were not repaired and abolished altogether.

The hall of distinction, royal academy, and *ling-tai* that were built in Pingcheng during the Taihe era were integrated into a single unit, a modality different from that of the Two Han period. Halls of distinction of Northern Wei had a structure of a circular top and a square bottom.

It was not until the reign of Wu Zetian that a real hall of distinction was built for the first time. The hall of distinction built by Wu Zetian were three-tiered, with a square lower tier and circular middle and upper tiers in accordance with the traditional circular-top-and-square bottom architecture. A "*tiequ*" or solid ditch was established around the hall of distinction as if it were royal academy in an attempt to create an image that the hall of distinction was one with the imaginary royal academy. The structure in which the main central pillar pierces through the upper and lower tiers is not part of the traditional architecture. What deserves special attention is that the hall of distinction built by Wu Zetian was placed in the middle--rather than in the south--of the imperial palace in Luoyang. This particular hall of distinction has a reactionary air of "palace-temple integration" because "the upper tier is designed to worship heaven and the lower tier is designed to administer politics" as far as its function is concerned.

After the reign of Wu Zetian, halls of distinction underwent reconstruction and removal, thus losing their social functions. More recently, "rite of *da xiang* hall of distinction" in the Tang Dynasty was mostly performed at *yutan* (altar of rain).

Ling-tai had already lost its status as part of the architecture of the *li* system after the Northern Wei Dynasty. In the Tang Dyanasty, groups of monks and others conducted astronomical observation activities using astronomical observatories. *Ling-tai* was no longer used for studying good omens or performing rituals.

iv.   Rituals for the sun and the moon

In ancient China, the status of the supreme god of heaven was conspicuous. It seems therefore that rituals for the sun and moon deities were not so valued in relative term. This is a major characteristic of the tradition of ancient Chinese rituals. Still, the "rite of the morning sun and the evening moon" continued to be observed intermittently during the Han and Tang dynasties.

v.   *Xian Nong* altars and *XianCan* altars for worshipping agriculture deities

In order to promote agriculture and sericulture, ancient emperors often conducted activities of the *li* system designed to worship *Xian Nong* (farming deity) by way of crop cultivation by the emperor as well as *Xian Can* (sericulture deity) by way of silkworm breeding by the empress.

In the Han and Tang dynasties, the technique whereby the emperor cultivated crops and worshipping agriculture deities was launched by Emperor Wen of Western Han. The Ji Tian ceremony, which was conducted by Emperor Jing, Emperor Wu, and Emperor Zhao of Han among other emperors, was designed for the emperor to cultivate paddy fields in a symbolic manner in prayer for the divine protection of agriculture deities towards a bumper crop.

This style was modified in the Eastern Han Dynasty. People came to build a small shrine for worshipping *Xian Nong* and *Xian Can.*

In a reversion to the style of Emperor Wen of Western Han, Emperors of Cao Wei conducted the Geng Ji ceremony in the eastern suburb and silkworm breeding in the northern suburb of Luoyang.

Most of the subsequent dynasties followed the system of worshipping agriculture and sericulture deities by symbolically engaging in crop cultivation and silkworm breeding.

vi.   Other

Apart from the architecture of the *li* system, the Han and Tang dynasties had many different facilities of the *li* system such as the *yutan* (altar of rain), *ling-xing* shrine, *gao-mei* altar, *liu-zong* shrine, *feng-bo* altar, and *yu-shi* altar. These facilities, however, were not subject to "regular ritual performance by the state" and eventually abolished. On the other hand, temples of Confucius, temples of Guandi, and *shan-chuan* altars, and other ritual structures that failed to attract much attention and assumed only a secondary status during the Han and Tang dynasties, were increasingly valued over the period of the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties. These ritual structures became an important component of the imperial rituals by these dynasties.

(4) Ancient Chinese folk rituals

Ancient Chinese folk rituals prospered the most during the Ming and Qing dynasties. More recently, folk rituals underwent a major change as Chinese society experienced a drastic transformation. Especially after the People's Republic of China was established, folk rituals began to decline due to the rapid improvement in the intellectual level of the people. Some rituals disappeared, some were simplified, and others saw their functions change. Some traditional folk rituals are still observed actively in daily life today, partly because they are well-established customs and partly because even people in modern society need spiritual support to fall back on whey they are faced with difficulties.

3.   The Objects of Ancient Chinese Rituals

The content and form of a Chinese ritual are dictated by its object. The deities worshipped in rituals can be traced back to a range of religions that appeared in the history of China, including primitive religions, Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism.

Chinese folk beliefs are typically polytheistic as utilitarianism and affinity are two major characteristics of Chinese culture. The general public care less about the differences in doctrine, theory, and approach between religions. They care much more about whether a religion protects the peace of their material life. Accordingly, Chinese folk beliefs often combine Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Deities, ghosts, spirits are jumbled together. Even divine spirits in primitive religions enjoy certain levels of status.

The theological system of Chinese folk beliefs is extremely complex with innumerable deities involved. On one hand, divine spirits that emerged in the period of primitive religions (Fu Xi, Nüwa, Pangu, etc.) are worshiped by the public even today. On the other hand, new deities continue to emerge in later times. These new deities originate from foreign religious such as Buddhism. Some of the various Taoist immortals as well as historical figures such as Laozi, Lü Dongbin, Guan Yu, and Yue Fei are deified. As in the case of Cheng Huang (land deities), some local celebrities are worshipped ad deities and immortals.

Divine spirits in Chinese folk rituals are based on different religions. The Taoist deities worshipped in such folk rituals include the "Three Pure Ones," "Siyu," "Taishang Laojun," the Jade Emperor (Yu Huang Dadi), Wangmu Niangniang (Xi Wangmu), the Truly Martial Grand Emperor, *xian zhen* (people who turned into an immortal: Mazu, the Eight Immortals, Celestial Master Zhang). Among the Buddhist deities worshipped are Tathagata and bodhisattvas such as Maitreya, Guanyin, Samantabhadra, Manjusri, as well as the five hundred disciples of Buddha who attained Nirvana. Confucius, the Saint of Culture, is also worshipped in Chinese folk rituals. People also worship Guan Yu, the Saint of War, as well as   emperors and Shennong from primitive religions, and Fu Lu Shou from folk beliefs.

In Chinese folk beliefs, divine spirits with a high status dwell in heaven. Some of them, including Haotian Shangdi and deities of heavenly bodies--are originally divine spirits. Others, including Mazu and the Eight Immortals, are those who ascended to heaven after wining great fame or completing ascetic practices in the real world.

(1) Jade Emperor (Yu Huang Dadi)

Jade Emperor (Yu Huang Dadi), also popularly known as Yu Di, Yu Huang, Tian Di   (Celestial Emperor), Tian Gong, and Lao Tian Ye, is the supreme deity in Chinese folk beliefs and is considered the emperor of the Taoist immortal world. The rite for worshipping Haotian Shangdi or Huangtian Shangdi [Jade Emperor] as a sky deity was practiced as early as the Shang and Zhou. Over time, the Emperor was personified and socialized, and then was permeated through folk legends and Taoist mythologies. In the Song Dynasty, the Emperor assumed its status as the principle deity for state rituals. In Chinese folk beliefs, the Jade Emperor is the most popular object of rituals because the emperor holds the power of life and death in heaven and under earth. Every year, the public holds a grand temple fair for worshipping the Jade Emperor on January 9, which falls on the date when the emperor was born according to legend.

(2) Wangmu Niangniang

Wangmu Niangniang, believed to be the wide of Jade Emperor (Yu Huang Dadi), is the goddess with the highest status in traditional beliefs. Dwelling in her palace in the Kunlun Mountain in the west, Wangmu Niangniang oversees all the women who turned into immortals or attain the way (Tao) in the three realms of existence and the ten directions of heaven and earth. Literature has it, however, that Wangmu Niangniang, also known as Xi Wangmu, is modeled after the chieftain of a state (or tribe) that existed in western China.

(3) Mazu

Mazu, also known as Tian Hou, is not the wife of the Jade Emperor but a goddess of the sea. Tian Hou is a typical deity that was created and revered in the feudal society of China. Emperors from the Song Dynasty all the way down to the Qing Dynasty performed a total of more than 40 investiture of Mazu. The official title given to Mazu, who was originally a daughter in the Lin family, successively increased in rank from Madam, to Tian Fei, Sheng Fei, and eventually to Tian Hou and Mazu.

(4) Lei Shen

A look at deities concerning the weather shows that the sun and moon deities are largely not subject to particular worship in Chinese folk beliefs, although they are well revered by peoples in other countries. An exception is Lei Shen, who is subject to special awe. Lei Shen is believed to holds the power of life and death. When people swear an oath, they chant an incantation: "Break the oath, and Lei Shen wreaks the vengeance of heaven. In general, the public in China take a courteous attitude to savage deities so as not to offend them. Presumably associated with totem worshipping in ancient times, Lei Shen has a sturdy body like a sumo wrestler and a head that looks like that of a rooster.

(5) Mountain deities

Mountain deity worship was common in ancient Chinese folk beliefs. *Shan Hai Jing* states that deities dwell in almost all the mountains. Among them is Zhuyin, the deity of Mount Zhong, as described in this classic text. In some respects, Zhuyin is just like the creator of the world. This deity has a human face and a snake body. The whole body is red and 1,000 leagues long. When it opens its eyes it is day, when it shuts its eyes it is night. Usually, Zhuyin does not eat, drink, or breathe. Once it breathes, however, a gale blows, displaying its power. This must be the image primitive men had of Mount Zhong.

The most influential mountain deities in the feudal age of China are probably the deities of the Five Great Mountains: East Great Mountain of Tai Shan (Mount Taishan), South Great Mountain of Heng Shan (Mount Heng), West Great Mountain of Hua Shan (Mount Hua), North Great Mountain of Heng Shan (Mount Heng), and Center Great Mountain of Song Shan (Mount Song). The Emperor Lord of Mount Taishan is the most powerful and highest in rank among the deities of the five mountains. Even emperors often performed *Fengshan* [a grand ceremony that marked the enthronement of a new emperor] in Mount Taishan when they acceded to the throne. In this way, they worshipped the mountain deity and sought its protection.

(6) Water deities

Water deities in China are popularly known as dragon kings. Dragon kings dwell in not only oceans and rivers but also pools and wells. They control water on earth as well as water in heaven. Under the direction of the Jade Emperor, dragon kings go here and there, move the clouds, and produce rain. People generally believe that the dragon king of the four seas is the head of all dragon kings. In fact, people worshipped dragon kings every time a drought or storm disaster occurred. Ritual activities for rain in the face of a drought is common in the agrarian society of China.

(7) *She* deities

In the feudal age of China, altars called "*she*" was set up in states and regions. In general, *she* was built in a

certain forest. Enshrined at the center of the altar was a stone that represented the deity there called "*she stone*." For example, the stone that represents Nüwa (a goddess in Chinese mythology) is called "Gaomei," arguably the oldest deity of impregnation. Legend has it that both Yu the Great and his son Qi were born from stone. Even today, some ethnic minorities worship stones that look like a male or female sexual organ in the belief that they bless infertile couples with children (e.g., "Ayangbai," a sculpture worshipped by the Bai people in Dali, Yunnan Province). The stone deity the Han Chinese revered the most is Shigandang. Shigandang generally refers to a piece of stone tablet with the characters meaning "Shigandang" or "Mount Taishan Shigandang" inscribed on its surface. It is placed at the entrance facing the alley or strategic spots along roads. As the deity of Mount Taishan is believed to control the life and death of people, Qin Shi Huang visited Mount Taishan during his imperial tours and had a stone there inscribed with such writings. For this reason, the public came to place a Mount Taishan stone at their homes or nearby roads to ward off evil in the belief that it helps them avoid misfortune.

(8) Other nature deities

In the eyes of the general public, divine spirits do exist in animate animals and plants if they ever exist in inanimate objects in the natural world. Of such animal and plant spirits, those that do good to humans are called "deities" or "immortals," while those that do harm to humans are called "specters." Dragons and fenghuang as well as serpent and fox deities are common in the folk beliefs of the Han Chinese. The plants often deified include those humans need such as cereals. Rare plants such as gigantic old trees are also worshipped in rituals in many areas.

4. Ritual Sites in Ancient China

Ritual sites in ancient China include *shan* (flat area for rituals), *tan* (mound altar), *kan* (depressed area for rituals), ancestral temples [*zongmiao*], ancestral halls [*citang*], *qinkan* (home altar in the main hall), and sepulchers [*fenmu*].

In time immemorial, people worshipped supernatural beings in their settlements or burial grounds; they had no particular sites solely for rituals. An archaeological survey of the Upper Cave site in Beijing found that primitive men buried the dead near the cave in which they had lived and sprinkled red mineral power around the remains for mourning purposes. It was not until the end of the Neolithic period that many altars began to appear. Such altars include circular altars of the Hongshan culture as well as square altars of the Liangzhu culture in the lower reaches of the Yangtze River.

In the Shang and Zhou dynasties onward, rituals were generally performed in *shan*, *tan*, *kan*, ancestral temples, ancestral halls, *qinkan*, and sepulchers.

(1) Shan

"Chu di wei shan" means to sweep earth to make it even. The areas thus made even for rituals are called "*shan*." They are arguably the simple and most primitive type of altars. When the Zhou people worshipped heaven, they swept earth for rituals. Although heaven was believed to be the noblest, rituals for it were quite simple. Such simplest rituals are common even today. When the public worship Tiangong or Tianpo (land deity), they generally perform rituals usually at land temples. Yet they often do so as well in a corner of farmland after making it even by sweeping. Some people offer prayer to their ancestors by burning *zhiqian* or false representations of paper money for ritual purposes in a corner of their garden and kneeling down before them.

(2) Tan

"Tu feng wei tan" means to pile up earth or stone and use it as an altar. Piling up earth or stone requires much effort, but such *tan* looks more magnificent and solemn than *shan*. *Tan* takes a different form depending on the object of the ritual. A circular altar is used for worshipping heaven as a circle represents heaven. Such *tan* is known as "circular mound." Likewise, a square altar is used for worshipping earth as a square represents earth. Such *tan* is known as "circular mound." The height and width of *tan* depend both on when and where the ritual takes place as well as its rank. Generally, altars are several *shaku* high [1

shaku equals about 30 cm] with stairs built from four or eight directions. A typical altar of the Han Dynasty onward is two-tiered with each tier having flights of stairs. The upper and lower tiers are called "*neitan*" and "*waitan*," respectively. The principle deity is enshrined in *neitan* whereas and *jidashen* is enshrined in *waitan*. Lesser deities are enshrined below *tan* or at the flights. As a rule, altars of heaven, earth, the sun, and moon are separately built in the suburbs. For several thousand years, only the ruling class has been qualified to perform such rituals.

In ancient times, *she* had to be set up for every 25 households, including *shetan*. Plebeians performed rituals at *she* in spring and autumn. The typical *shetan* was generally situated in a forest. A pile of stones or a wood stake was used to indicate its location. Today, *she* are simplified or remain only in the form of *shetan* or *sheshu* (an old tall tree where rituals are performed).

(3) *Kan*

"Tu jue wei kan" means to dig a large hole in the ground and use it as an altar. Whereas *tan* is elevated and thus corresponds to "yang," Kan is depressed and thus corresponds to "yin." *Tan* is used for worshipping deities belonging to "yang," including the deity of the sun, *sishushen*, and deities of elevated land such as mountains and hills. Likewise, *kan* is used for worshipping deities belonging to "yin," including the deity of the moon, *sihanshen*, and deities of depressed land such as rivers and valleys.

(4) Gong/miao

If walls and a roof are built using *tan* and *kan* as their foundation, "*gong* [palace]" is formed. If a mortuary tablet is enshrined in *gong*, "*miao* [temple]" is formed. Because people of the past believed that supernatural beings needed a place to live and sleep like humans, *miaotang* [temple buildings] were arranged just like houses of humans. Originally, *gong/miao* was designed only for ancestors. As nature deities were increasingly personified, however, all deities of heaven and earth came to entail *gong/miao*. The chapter "Law of Sacrifices" of the B*ook of Rites* refers to a sun altar as a "royal palace," showing that *gong/miao* already existed in the Warring States Period. After the Buddhist culture was introduced in the Han Dynasty, Buddhist temples were built one after another here and there. Incense was burned everywhere. The passage of a poem written by the Tang poet Du Mu "Four hundred and eighty temples of the Southern Dynasty; in the misty rain stand a few high buildings" inspires an image of how the situation back then looked like. Also built in a great number were Taoist temples. Amid rivalry with Buddhism, Taoism developed thanks to the praises given by Tang emperors. Early Buddhist temples in China were modeled after the Indian counterparts; they had a tower at the center surrounded by temple buildings. In the Jin and Tang Dynasty onward, the architectural arrangement was modified. Temple buildings were increasingly taking the place of the temple tower as the main feature of Buddhist temples. The growing trend was that the tower was built outside the temple precincts. Famous Buddhist temples in China include the White Horse Temple in Luoyang and the Shaolin Temple in Dengfeng. Among the well-known Taoist temples are the White Cloud Temple in Beijing and the Azure Clouds Temple in Mount Taishan.

(5) Ancestral Halls

Ancestral halls are solely for worshipping ancestors. *Gong/miao* originates from temples in which ancestral spirits were enshrined. Back then only the ruling class was allowed to build it. Plebeians were not qualified. The construction of an ancestral hall was financed by funds from the family and/or the clan concerned. An ancestral hall had to be smaller than the great ancestral temple where the emperor performed rituals. The failure to comply this rule was considered disrespectful and even punishable by death. Typically, the main building accommodates four *kan* (home altars). The mortuary tablets for the ancestors up to four generations back on both the paternal and maternal sides are enshrined in *kan*. The *kan* on the west side is for the older ancestors. In front of each *kan* is an offering stand on which an incense burner and an incense box are placed. Ritual paraphernalia in ancestral halls are sealed when they are not in use so that they will not be put to other uses.

(6) Qinkan

Plebeians usually performed rituals in *zhengtang* [main hall] (or *tangwu* [main room]). For *qinkan*, they

usually built *shenkan* [home altar] and enshrined mortuary tablets for their ancestors there. Most *qinkan or shenkan* were built of wood with a height of 1-2 *shaku*; they looked like a miniature room. They were placed on *xiang'an* (incense burner table) or hung from the central, uppermost part of the front wall. In some cases, a statue of a deity or Buddha was enshrined in *qinkan or shenkan*.

(7) Sepulchers

The oldest and simplest approach is to perform rituals where the dead were buried in the belief that their spirits dwell there. This simplest approach may have been the most extravagant and squandering form of rituals in the feudal age for the ancient sons of heaven or feudal lords, who built a tomb for the deceased based on the palace in which he had lived. Accordingly, the tombs of emperors have bedrooms and a drawing room in the basement and *gong*, *miao*, and a hall on the aboveground floor. In contrast, plebeians build a round mound for burial. It is customary to plant a tree besides the sepulcher. This practice may be aimed at ensuring that the spirit of the dead will live long with the verdant tree, at protecting the spirit from direct sunlight or rain, or at ensuring the spirit will not feel lonely. A gravestone or a wooden equivalent on which the name of the dead is inscribed is set up in front of the sepulcher. In line with the recent advancement both in society and the level of civilization, interment is no longer practices especially in large cities. In most cases, the families of the deceased pray before the gravestone or grave tablet or at the common ossuary.

5. Ritual Offerings in Ancient China

According to historical literature, ritual offerings can be classified into several types as shown below depending on their primary and secondary nature.

(1) Food

i. Meat

In a primitive gathering and hunting economy, meat was the most precious food because people risked their lives to obtain it. Meat was long been treasured even after primitive crop and livestock farming were developed. For this reason, meat has been the principal offering for divine spirits. There are a few unique nouns concerning meat offerings. Domestic animals offered in a ritual are called "*xi sheng*." The original meaning of the term "*xi sheng* [sacrifice]" is an even-colored animal. Large precious domestic animals such as cattle, sheet, and pigs were sacrificed. A large domestic animal as a whole was the most extravagant offering. When livestock farming developed in the Spring and Autumn period, meat offerings were classified into two types: "*shao lao*" and "*tai lao*." "*Tai lao*" refers to the most extravagant type of offerings, i.e., cattle, which was valued the most among pigs, sheep, and cattle. In any ritual by the son of heaven, cattle were offered alone or together with a pig or sheep. "*Shao lao*" refers to the less extravagant type of offerings, i.e., pigs and sheep. Nobles and ministers of states offered only pigs and sheep because they were lower in status and authority than the son of heaven. The word "*lao*" came to mean such sacrifices because its original meaning is a small building with fences for raising cattle and other domestic animals. "*Tai*" and "*shao*" means "large" and "small," respectively. "*Tai lao*" is so called because a large fence is needed to keep cattle; an even larger fence is necessary when cattle are kept together with sheep and pigs. Likewise, "*shao lao*" is so called because a smaller fence suffices for pigs and sheep.

ii. Alcohol

People came to enjoy drinking thanks to the invention of alcohol. Because it requires a large amount of cereals, alcohol was deemed extremely rare in ancient times. Alcohol is indispensable for a feast for aristocrats in the Shang Dynasty. It was a matter of course that alcohol came to be offered to deities as it was something people enjoyed. The *Rites of Zhou* specifies the office solely in charge of managing alcohol for rituals in its section "*Jiuren* [literally "wine people"] of the "Offices of the Heaven" chapter.

iii. Fruits and vegetables

In ancient times, it was common to pick up fresh fruits and vegetables--which were mostly wildly grown back then--and offer them to deities.

iv. Cereals and other products

Cereals were also common offerings to deities. Everyday foods made from cereals came to be the principal and most common food offerings, especially in folk rituals.

People consume food offerings in ways that are common in day-to-day social life and add certain social functions to these ways of consumption. Such symbolic modalities of eating and drinking include distributing, donating, and eating or drinking during rituals. In fact, it was a common practice to distribute meat offerings during rituals in ancient Chinese society. The Han Chinese and ethnic minorities in China maintained such practice in varying degrees up to the modern and contemporary ages.

(2) Exquisite ritual offerings

i. Jades

Human beings continued to handle stone from when they were ape-man. Over a long history of practice, they acquired skills to make stone shrine brilliantly and glassy. Jades were made in this way. In ancient times when gold or silver ornaments were almost unavailable, jades were extreme precious. Wearing jades symbolized aristocracy. Tallies and seals made of jade were highly treasured. Accordingly, worshipping deities using jades is in line with the mentality of ancient people. This is why jades were the most important ritual implements in ancient ceremonies.

ii. *Bo*

Bo is a generic term for silk fabrics. Both jades and *bo* were regarded as precious offerings in ancient rituals.

Finally, two types of special offerings are explained below.

(3) Special ritual offerings

i. Humans

The first type of special ritual offerings is humans. The practice of offering humans to divine spirits as sacrifice is known as "human sacrifice." Human sacrifice is the practice of sacrificing humans while they are alive. This practice was recorded in many oracle bone inscriptions of the Yin-Shang Dynasty. As many as 1,000 people were sacrificed for a single ritual. They were burnt to death, drowned, buried alive, cut in the throat, or beheaded. They were even cut into small pieces or stewed. Initially, human sacrifices were mostly men who became war prisoners. After gods became the norm, beautiful women, especially pretty girls, were offered to gods. This custom was likely created to fulfill the strong sexual desire of divine spirits, the product of imagination. The means of sacrifice, be it just killing, burying alive, or drowning, are designed to please gods with beautiful women. The ostensible reason was that the spirits of such women would become the wife or mistress of divine spirits. In reality, however, they fell prey to the lust of divine spirits. In yet another type of human sacrifice,   young boys and girls were offered to divine spirits.

ii. Blood

In ancient times, blood was believed to have important value for spirits or lives or some kind of mysterious power. The act of offering fresh blood was probably the logical consequence of expressing submission to divine spirits in rituals. Human blood or the blood of a domestic animal was used depending on the situation.

A review of various means of religious rituals in ancient China shows that fresh blood of an animal was

offered more often than human blood. In giving blood to deities of heaven, people usually offered the blood of a domestic animal to represent vigorous life. This gave rise to the rite of dedication to deities, which is described as "cerebrating altars of land and grain, the five rituals, and the five great mountains" in the chapter of Offices of Spring of the *Rites of Zhou*. When a new temple was completed, blood was offered to the deity.

6. Forms of Rituals in Ancient China

The traditional concept held by the Chinese is that mysterious phenomena in the natural realm as well as life and death, weal and woe in the social realm are always associated with the special force of divine spirits. Such divine spirits include the spirits of various phenomena and things in the natural realm, those of historical, legendary, and existing figures, and even those of the unknown and deceased. They manifest themselves as deities of celestial bodies, meteorological phenomena, areas, plants, animals, ancestors, characters, and vocations, which gives rise to a system of heaven and earth deities with extremely complex relationships of higher and lower. These divine spirits have long been the objects of people's worship or rituals. People have revered and enshrined these divine spirits, a product of people's imagination because they often have supernatural power and thus influence or even determine people's fate. Some of the divine spirits have an image considered be the incarnation of a deity, but more others are represented by specific symbols such as national objects and idols. Specific examples include the sun, the moon, and other celestial bodies; mountains; rivers; lakes and marshes; rocks and stones; caves; plants; animals; artifacts; idols; paper cutouts; designs; and imaginary specters and monsters.

(1) Sun rituals

Chinese ancient mythology has two major explanations about the origin of the sun. The first explanation is that the sun is the eye of the Creator. The second explanation is that the sun was born from the goddess Xihe. As for the movement of the sun in the sky, the ancient mythology has it that the sun is on a vehicle or that the sun is on the back of a bird. The Yin people, who came originally from the east, had special faith in birds. They carefully observed the sunrise from the east and described sun rituals in *Bu-ci*. Every day, the Yin people performed "*binri*," a ritual for welcoming the rising sun in the morning called and "*jianri*," a ritual for sending off the setting sun in the evening. The custom of worshipping the sun dates back to ancient times. This is substantiated by the sun-worshipping rites of many different peoples.

Sun rituals had a fixed form from ancient times. In the Yin Dynasty, cattle or sheep was sacrificed for welcoming the rising sun and sending off the setting sun. During the Zhou Dynasty, people performed solar rituals in fixed sites where they built a high *tan*. In such rituals, they first greeted the rising sun outside of the east gate and then moved outside of the south gate to worship the noon sun. From the Han and Tang dynasties to the Ming and Qing dynasties, people performed a sun ritual in the north of the site in the morning and a moon ritual in the west. Solar rituals were generally observed on the Vernal Equinox Day and lunar rituals on the Autumn Equinox Day. In the 9th year of the Jiajiang era (1530), a sun altar 100 *mu* [1 mu equals approx. 660 m^2] in area was built on a piece of land outside of the Chao Yang Men gate (what is now the Ritan Park [Temple of the Sun Park]). The Ming people performed "*yingri*" or the rite for worshipping the sun there at the dawn of the Vernal Equinox Day. This rite was made up of three parts: *yingsheng* ["welcoming the deity"], *lingfu shouzuo* (distribution of the meat offered), and *songshen* ["sending off the deity"].

(2) Rituals for the moon and other celestial bodies

The rite of *jiyue* [worshipping the moon] was an ancient tradition in China. The moon rite was performed independently or together with a suburb ritual of heaven and earth. The moon altar in what is now Xierhuan, Beijing is where lunar rituals were performed during the Ming and Qing dynasties. A major rite for worshipping the moon is observed on the Autumn Equinox Day. A moon ritual is also performed in auspicious events such as New Year and other seasonal festivals.

Faith in celestial bodies besides the sun and the moon is also common. People in ancient times believed that heaven and the real world were closely associated with each other. Celestial bodies, large and small, were likened to terrestrial figures. They believed that they were involved in everything from the rise and fall of

every state to the status and life of every person. According to the volume on religious sacrificial ceremonies of the *Records of the Grand Historian*, Celestial deities were worshipped in many of the more than 100 temples in Yongdi (what is now Qinyang Country, Henan Province, and surrounding areas) before the Western Han Dynasty. Deities of the Three Stars, Mercury, Dipper, Beidou, Mars, Venue, Jupiter, the Twenty-eight Mansions Celestial deities are enshrined in their respective temples. Because of their natural properties, celestial bodies are believed to have mysterious power in rituals. Astrology, as well as superstitions and customs that regard a celestial phenomenon as an omen of some sort, constitutes a system whereby celestial bodies are arranged in the order of posts of government officials and associated with government officials, the empress, and the emperor, as well as natural, meteorological, and social phenomena.

(3) Rituals for heaven

Heaven worship was the most important part of the imperial ritual in ancient China; only the emperor was qualified to perform it.

The Chinese had already created Shangdi (the deity that governed all things) by the Yin Dynasty, a period some 2,000 years before the birth of Christ. Shangdi of the Yin-Shang Dynasty was believed to exert its power in two aspects: controlling natural power and intervening in political power. People back then believed that Shangdi controlled the power of nature to produce wind and rain and at the same time and make people's wishes for such phenomena come true at times, as substantially recorded in *Bu-ci*. Due to this influence, similar power was granted to the Jade Emperor in Taoism, which emerged in later times.

The Yin people sought prophecies and instructions on all matters, including whether they would have a bumper crop in the next season, whether they would be caught in a rain during hunting, or how many humans, cattle or sheep should be sacrificed for a ritual. They fully embodied the idea or custom of "valuing rituals and venerating supernatural beings. Shangdi, the product of the imagination of the Yin people, was believed to be "heaven." As such the will of Shangdi was called the "will of heaven."

In the Yin-Shang Dynasty, the royal authority needed to be underpinned by the mandate of heaven. Shangdi (i.e. "heaven"), which was conceived by the Yin people, was at its nascent stage and closely associated with ancestral deities back then. It was not yet too holy to be approachable. In fact, there was no clear distinction between--or ranking among--deities, emperors, and ghosts. The Yin people believed that the ancestors of everyone on earth were all around Shangdi. They thought disobedience to Shangdi was tantamount to disobedience to their ancestors. In this way, faith in Shangdi was parallel to faith in ancestors in the Yin Dynasty. The Yin people believed that their prayers in the face of disaster, war or doubt would reach to Shangdi through their ancestors.

The Yin Dynasty owes much of its success in ruling the neighboring states to its faith in Shangdi. The Yin people performed rituals for Shangdi on a grand scale, offering a copious amount of offerings, including human and animal sacrifices. Such rituals impressed the other tribes within the dynasty that the Yin people, who took charge of both serving deities and governing the population, was chosen by heaven and therefore difficult to defy. Even the Shang people themselves performed such rituals piously.

Heaven, though endowed with divinity and authority, exists along with nature deities and ancestral deities unlike the monotheistic God. It is therefore enshrined together with deities of mountain, river, and other nature deities. When signing an alliance treaty, the heads of states swore to heaven and their ancestors and asked supernatural beings to witness the treaty. The coexistence of heaven and supernatural beings is one of the characteristics of the faith in the Celestial Emperor in the Zhou Dynasty. The Western Zhou and successive dynasties stuck to this mode of placing a ritual for heaven side by side with a ritual for supernatural beings.

Ancient Chinese emperors called themselves the son of heaven. As the son of heaven, they represented the will of heaven. Successive monarchs highly valued rituals for heaven because they publicly advocated the idea that their royal authority was granted by heaven. Rituals for heaven, earth, staple grains, and ancestors were performed more lavishly than any other types of rituals. Rituals for heaven, which were originally quite simple in form, became increasingly complex. For rituals for heavens, pre-Qin monarchs climbed a high mountain or laid earth on the flat ground in an attempt to get closer to heaven as much as possible.

They burned offerings with firewood in the type known as *fan ji* [roasted sacrifice], *liao ji* [burnt sacrifice], *wang ji* ["viewing from the distance" sacrifice], *yan ji* [smoked sacrifice], and *chai* [firewood (sacrifice)]. Specifically, they burnt offerings over burning firewood that had been stacked neatly and poured alcohol over burning hay to bring their savor to heaven.

The *Rites of Zhou* established the rule to perform a ritual for heaven in the southern suburb of the state capital. With the highest value placed on the spirit of revering something old in rituals, Dynasties that followed Xia, Yin, and Zhou continued to abide by this rule. In this way, it became customary to perform a ritual for heaven in the southern suburb on the winter solstice. The architecture and rite for worshipping heaven were also stipulated. Their specifics are well represented by relevant buildings and ceremonies during the Ming Dynasty.

In the early Ming Dynasty, Nanjing became the capital, and a circular mound was built in the south of Mount Zhong, where a ritual for heaven and one for winds, clouds, thunders, and rains were observed together on the winter solstice. After the capital was transferred to Beijing, an altar was built in the southern suburb of the new capital for worshipping heaven. This is the present-day Beijing Temple of Heaven, which was built in the 18th year of Yongle (1420) with a total area of 273 hectares. Its main components, namely, the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests, the Imperial Vault of Heaven, and the Circular Mound Altar, are designed so that their planes are all circular in form to represent heaven. The main four pillars of the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests symbolize the four seasons. The 12 surrounding pillars arranged in two rows represent the 12 months and hours. The altar of heaven in the real sense of the term is the Circular Mound Altar, which is surrounded by threefold alabaster balustrades. The main utilitarian benefits of worshipping heaven were supposedly appropriate amounts of rain and wind and a bumper crop. This was the reason the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests was built.

As the above paragraphs show, rituals for heaven are the most important of all the rituals for deities of celestial bodies. The idea of dreading the will of heaven was permeated in every corner of society in the feudal age. Rituals for heaven were all performed in the southern suburb of the imperial capital; rituals in the southern suburb were considered an important event by the successive dynasties. Even the Yuan Dynasty established by the Mongolian aristocracy and the Qing Dynasty founded by the Manchu people continued with these rituals. On the winter solstice every year, the Qing Dynasty performed a large-scale ritual for worshipping heaven at the altar of heaven in the southern suburb.

(4) Rituals for sacred mountains associated with rituals for heaven

Mountains constitute a special natural landscape. Influenced by the idea of nature worship, ancient people often regarded mountains as the symbol of divine spirits. Mountains symbolize divine spirits because the natural features of mountain themselves inspire people's imagination. Some mountains are too precipitous and spectacular to be accessible. People believed that high mountains reach as high as heaven and divine spirits ascend to them.

Mysterious and deep mountains that are often covered with clouds or fog and inhabitant by singular animals and plants tend to inspire a sense of fantasy in people's minds.

Such distinctive aspects of the natural features have made mountains one of the major objects of worship. *Shan Hai Jing* alone carries more than 400 maintain deities, most of whom are half-man, half-beast in appearance. They are described as having, for example, having a bird body and a dragon head, a dragon body and a bird head, a human face and a dragon body, a human face and a cattle body, a human face and a sheep body, a human face and a serpent body, a human body and a dragon head, a human face and a bird body, a human face and a beast body, a human face and a pig body, and a horse body and a dragon head. These descriptions reflect ancient people' faith in mountain deities.

It was believed that mountains that towered above the clouds were near heaven and that divine spirits in heaven descend along them. For this reason, mountains were called *tianzhu* [pillars supporting heaven] or *tianti* [stairway to heaven]. Supposedly, mountains were in the realm of divine spirits and summits were where deities of heaven visited. Because heaven was too high to be accessible, the mountain nearest to heaven was the first-priority option for the site of a ritual for heaven. In ancient China, the East Great

Mountain of Mount Taishan ranked first among the famous mountains to which deities supposedly descended from heaven. The Kunlun Mountain ranked second.

According to the chapter "*Zhuixing* [Forms of Earth]" of the *Huainanzi*, the Kunlun Mountain was a place for the Celestial Emperor, and to climb up this mountain was to become a deity. The Kunlun Mountain continued to be deified and mystified. Mount Taishan is also a sacred mountain according to mythology. During the period when mountain rituals were practiced, it was the best renowned mountain and considered the king of many different mountains.

The *Fengshan* grand ceremony at Mount Taishan started out as one form of heaven worship. Ancient people believed that because Mount Taishan was equal to heaven, performing this ceremony of the Celestial Emperor at Mount Taishan meant that the emperor who had been given the mandate of heaven became the true son of heaven and that he was given the supreme power to govern the state and the people on behalf of heaven. As such, *Fengshan* at Mount Taishan came to symbolize imperial power. Qin Shi Huang, who rose to power after unifying the six states, needed to enhance his power with the help of the Celestial Emperor. Tian Di power
To take advantage of the tradition of *Fengshan* at Mount Taishan, the new son of heaven ostentatiously headed for Mount Taishan but was bewildered by unexpected torrential rain in the mountain. Emperor Wu of Han performed *Fengshan*. This helped solidify the status of Mount Taishan from the Han Dynasty onward.

Rituals for mountain deities were divided into several ranks. These ranks were established based on the ethos of the initial phase of the feudal age as well as various mountain ranges. The scale of the ritual, the amount of offerings, and the status of the ritual performer varied greatly depending on the rank.

The son of heaven was the principal ritual performer for sacred mountains and great rivers. Such sacred mountains were best represented by the Five Great Mountains: Mount Taishan, Mount Song, Mount Hua, Mount Heng (South Great Mountain), and Mount Heng (North Great Mountain). The son of heaven performed rituals at Mount Taishan most lavishly, displaying his imperial power. *Fengshan* are characterized typically by its splendid ceremonial weaponry, complicated procedures, and copious amount of offerings. From the early Zhou Dynasty, Mount Taishan was believed to be the sacred mountain where the monarch or the son of heaven were supposed to perform a ritual. Successive emperors who wanted to show off their achievements performed a grandiose rite there.

In ancient China, mountain deities were worshipped on a large scale in various places. When a disaster occurred, a ritual was performed in the sacred mountain in the region. When a war was won, war prisoners were sacrificed to the mountain. Because the local sacred mountain was supposedly the deity that governed and protected the region or the state, the important decision to select the imperial successor was entrusted to the deity of that mountain.

Rituals for mountain deities in ancient China were often performed in one of three styles: *mai ji*, *xuan ji*, and *tou ji*. In *mai ji*, offerings were buried in the ground to remind *di zhi* (ground deity) that people were performing a ritual and thus please the deity. This style was used not only for worshipping the ground but also for rituals for mountain deities time and again. In *xuan ji*, offerings were made to deities by hanging them from above. The ancient Chinese believed that divine spirits came to receive offerings hung high. In *tou ji*, offerings were thrown into the mountains. This style was maintained by a few ethnic minorities up to the modern and contemporary ages.

(5) Rituals for water deities

Water-related rituals were mostly designed to pray for rain. Records of severe drought in the central plains of ancient China are too numerous to count. Every time a severe drought hit, various rituals were performed and prayer was offered to different deities high and low across the land, especially water deities. In the snow-melting spring and the water-freezing autumn, calves and corn were offered, respectively, for rituals. At the end of the winter, heaven and earth were worshipped on a grand scale, not to mention water deities.

Chen ji is the type of ritual solely designed to worship water or river deities. The ancient Chinese believed

that water deities, who lived in water, would not accept the offerings unless they were immersed in the water. As such, there were people who threw jades into deep pools, if any, for prayer. *Bu-ci* on carapaces and bones in the Yin Dynasty includes such descriptions as "three sheep were immersed," "three cattle were immersed," "five cattle were immersed," and "ten cattle were immersed."

(6) Rituals for sea deities: the Mazu faith

The ancient Chinese believed that their land was surrounded by the sea on all sides. They found a boundless ocean more mysterious than rivers. The sea was beyond their understanding. The ancient Chinese believed that only divine spirits could dwell in the sea. This is how they created the divine spirits of the four seas.

The History of the Former Han Dynasty states that the joy of worshipping the sea is the same of that of worshipping heaven" in the volume titled "Treatise on Sacrifices." In the Song and Yuan dynasties onward, the faith in sea deities emerged as sea traffic developed. In coastal areas, the faith in Tian Fei emerged; Tian Fei became the goddess that governed the sea. Tian Fei was originally called "Mazu." Her real name was supposedly Lin Mo. She was born on March 23 of the 1st year of the Jianlong era (960 CE) during the reign of Emperor Taizu of Song in Meizhou Island, Putian, Fujian Province and died on September 9 of the 4th year of the Yongxi era (987). Lin Mo was bright and eager to learn as a child. After coming of age, she mastered the art of divination. Because she helped and entertained local people, Lin Mo was admired in her home town. Local people began to venerate late Lin Mo as a sea goddess. Legend has it that Lin Mo worked divine miracles many times to rescue wrecked vessels in the sea. Accordingly, voyagers and fishermen have faith in Lin Mo. In the Yuan Dynasty, she was granted the divine title of Tian Fei. The Ming Dynasty lifted the decree of seclusion, setting the stage for maritime traffic, trade, and exchange of envoys. Tian Fei was reputed highly all the more because navigating wooden vessels in the sea entailed great risks at the time when maritime weather forecasting was at a primitive stage. Back then, every port in the coastal areas had a Tian Fei temple. Sailors of vessels, large and small, always performed a ritual for a safe voyage at such a temple before setting sail. They also hired *xiang gong* (person in charge of rituals) to perform a Mazu ritual on board. The Ming and Qing dynasties granted Mazu such titles as "Tian Hou" and "Tianshang Shengmu," thus promoting the faith in this sea goddess even further. As more and more Chinese migrated abroad, Mazu temples were built not only in such Asian countries Japan, Korea, Indonesia, and Singapore but also in Europe and North America. In this way, Mazu became a global sea goddess. The Mazu ritual at a wharf or at a port is one of the most fervent and magnificent rites that are locally performed. A famous temple fair in Tianjin also worships Mazu. Among its many features is a lively street parade of people disguising themselves as different figures and carrying an image of Mazu.
Local government officials also take part in this event.

(7) Rituals for land deities

Land deities have developed over time. First of all, earth goddesses changed to *she gong* (a kind of land deities). Accordingly, "*she*" came to mean "the master of the land" rather than the land itself. Worship of land deities is none other than a "*she*" ritual.

There is a dearth of literature as far as the specific styles of "*she*" rituals. It is likely, however, that a mound or altar was made to perform them. In ancient China, when people moved to a new land and built a country or village for that matter, they set up a *she* and performed a ritual there. This is exactly what is meant by the saying "when you build a country, tell *hou tu* (land deity) first. In such a ritual, domestic animals were sacrificed and jades and silk fabrics were offered. Trees were planted around the mound or altar.

The rituals that were designated in the feudal age as those that should be performed at *miaotang* [temple] changed over time in terms of when, where and how they were observed. It was not until the Zhou Dynasty that these specifics were established. The "Dasiyu [musician-in-chief]" subsection of the *Rites of Zhou* states that deities of heaven are to be worshipped on the winter solstice and *di zhi* (ground deity) on the summer solstice. Based on the Chinese ancient concept of "round heaven, square earth," people built *fang ze tan* (altar for worshipping the deities of earth) in the northern suburb of the capital and worshipped earth there. Rituals for the deities of earth correspond to those for the deities of heaven; both types of rituals are collectively referred to as *huang tian hou tu* [emperor of heaven and empress of earth]. For a long period,

from the Qin and Han to Tang and Song and further to the Ming and Qing dynasties, it was customary to perform a ritual for (i) earth alone in the southern suburb, (ii) both heaven and earth in the southern suburb (known as "suburban ritual for heaven and earth," or (iii) earth alone in the southern suburb on the summer solstice. According to the *History of Ming*, the ritual for both heaven and earth was performed in most cases over a period of more than 1,000 years from the Han to Tang dynasties.

While the ritual for heaven burned offerings in the southern suburb, the ritual for earth buried offerings into the ground in the northern suburb. The ancient Chinese believed that because *di zhi* dwelled deep in the ground, the ground deity would not notice or rejoice at the fact that people were performing a ritual for it unless offering were buried into the ground.

The rise and fall of *she* deities and states

She deities and war were inseparable. They shared the glory of victory with victorious monarchs and the humiliation of defeat with defeated monarchs. Victorious monarchs performed a grand ritual before *she* deities and offered war prisoners they had taken. They sometimes killed the prisoners and offered their blood. *She* deities savored it and the people to another war. By contrast, the monarchs and their *she* deities who suffered a devastating defeat were both humiliated. The defeated monarchs were taken war prisoners. Their *she* could not escape the miseries of destruction.

Also, *Hou tu* deities that governed farming are worshiped along with the deities of cereals, the product of land. *Ji* deities were worshipped from the Zhou Dynasty onward as divine spirits that represent both land and crops.

(8) Ancestral rituals: the most central rituals in China

i. The status of ancestral rituals

Ancestral rituals are a great affair in the social life of ancient China. Ancestors were the most important object of ancient Chinese rituals. The successive emperors regarded ancestral temple rituals as one of the three major types of rituals, the others being rituals for heaven and earth and those for alters of land and grain. In folk rituals, the upper class built an ancestral hall and produced a family tree while the common classes set up mortuary tablets and built *zibei* (characters that represent kinship). In ancient China, the whole society was governed based on Zongfa (clan law) and developed under the light of grace from ancestral rituals.

Ancient Chinese rituals were based on the idea that souls are immortal. The ancient Chinese believed that souls continued to live after death. They called a soul separated from the body *gui* (ghost). Even after ancestors left their families or groups, the spirits of ancestors were believed to move around in the real world and watch over their descendants all the time. To warn their descendants, the spirits of ancestors supposedly appeared in the flesh before them or in their dreams as necessary. In the past, the idea of immortal souls was generally accepted in China. The spirits of the dead supposedly had the capacity to retaliate against their enemies and return a favor to those who had done good to them. Their appearance and voice were unchanged from those when they were alive.

ii. Establishment of ancestral rituals

Ancestral rituals were already established in the period of slave society in ancient China. They were performed in a solemn and ardent manner.

People in the Shang and Zhou dynasties made offerings of war prisoners of other tribes as human sacrifices in their rituals, i.e. their common tribal ancestors. Ancestral rituals helped to promote tribal bonds, encourage descendants, and solidify their status. The degree of blood relationship and the social status of a person depended on his relationship with his ancestors. This also reflected in ancestral rituals. In the Zhou Dynasty, the performance of ancestral rituals was one of the privileges of the aristocracy. Kings were allowed to perform a grand ritual for ancestors to up many generations back once a year. They were even allowed to worship their legendary tribal progenitor as the primary ritual object along with their

blood-related ancestors. Feudal lords, due to their lower rank, were not allowed to go back to their legendary and symbolic ancestors of a distant past in their ancestral rituals; they were admitted to go up to their ancestor who was first designated as a feudal lord. Scholars and ministers of state were allowed to go back to their *gaozu* (great-great grandfather). The common people were, obviously enough, permitted to go back to their grandfathers; they were prohibited to go any further. In other words, the higher social status and the more power people had, the more leeway they had to attach objectives, ostensible or otherwise, to their ancestral rituals. In this way, ancestral rituals bore witness to their social status and thus symbolized the fact that their political power was in place. When a Chinese dynasty was defeated, their ancestral temples and altars of land and grain were often obliterated. Such obliteration is known as "*jue si*" or "*yi zong miao*." These words are a synonym for the fall of a state.

iii. *Lishi* and mortuary tablets

A mortuary tablet refers to a wooden tablet on which the name of the dead is written. *Lishi* is the act of subjecting a living person to a ritual in place of the dead. Both *Lishi* and mortuary tablets were used for rituals for aristocrats who died recently. The type of ritual as required by the social status bore testimony to how much the dead was venerated and demonstrated the power of the descendants of the dead.

The Zhou Dynasty valued the social class system. The word expressing death differed depending on the social class of the dead: *beng* for monarchs, *hong* for feudal lords, *zu* for ministers of state, and *si* for plebeians. When a monarch died, a mortuary tablet was made and enshrined in the ancestral temple. The type of ritual called "*tesi*," which set up only one mortuary tablet of the dead, was a special privilege to those who died recently. Ancestors one or more generations back were worshipped in the ancestral temple together with other ancestors. At any rate, when a monarch died, his demise was reported to the feudal lords and he was given burial. The burial was followed by the act of wailing at the ancestral temple, where the new mortuary tablet was enshrined along with the mortuary tablets of the ancestors. This concluded the whole process of the funeral rite. When to give burial and where to perform the funeral were also specified. When the son of heaven died, he was given burial seven mouths later, and all the feudal lords attended the funeral. Likewise, when a feudal lord died, he was given burial five months later, and all the feudal lords in alliance attended the funeral. When a minister of state died, he was given burial three months later, and officials with the same rank attended the funeral. At the funeral of a feudal lord, people of a different surname wept outside the city as a sign of their condolences. Those of the same surname offered their condolences at the ancestral temple. *Tongzong* (those who were descended from the same individual who bore that surname) offered their condolences at the *zumiao* (directly ancestral temple). And *tongzu* (those who came from some common branch family from that ancestor) did so at *fumiao* (paternal temple). Condolences must be expressed and gifts associated with the funeral must be given before the burial. Doing otherwise contravened the rules of decorum and considered the act of disrespect for the deceased.

Ancestral rituals provided a tool for uniting *tong zong* and relatives. A ritual performed by *tong zong* helped to promote their sentimental solidarity. In such a ritual, meat offerings were distributed among the relatives.

In the Zhou Dynasty, ancestral rituals were performed quite frequently for different reasons, ostensible or otherwise. Among them was a seasonal ritual that was performed four times a year. In its chapter titled "Royal Regulations", the *Book of Rites* states: "The sacrifices in the ancestral temples of the son of Heaven and the feudal princes were that of spring, called Yue; that of summer, called Di; that of autumn, called Chang; and that of winter, called Zheng". Comments by Zheng Xuan suggest that these names signify rituals of the Xia and Yin dynasties. In the Zhou Dynasty, the spring ritual was called "Ci", and the summer ritual was called "Yue". The names of the autumn winter were unchanged. The *Commentary of Zuo on the Spring and Autumn Annals* describes three styles of ancestral rituals: Di, Zheng, and Chang. In the cool autumn season, the Chang ritual was performed in which newly harvested crops and newly brewed alcohol were offered to the ancestors. Even today, such rituals are observed by many ethnic minorities. The Zheng ritual was performed in the coldest season. "Zheng" (蒸) means firewood and "Zheng" (烝), another ritual title, is associated with "Zheng" (蒸), which also means "to steam." The performers of this ritual burned firewood, steamed offering meat, and serve them on a plate. The idea was to allow the ancestors to take nutritious food in order to live through the winter. The Di ritual was performed at the ancestral temple on a grand scale, often after the grain harvest in summer. In this ritual, all the successive ancestors were worshipped. The special music called "Diyue" was performed. Diyue was handed down the generations in

the state of Lu in the Spring and Autumn period. Among other rituals were those meant to worship those who died recently that go by the name of "Teji" and "Anshenji."

iv. Folk ancestral rituals for the purposes of pacifying ancestors' souls and avoiding misfortunes

Ancestral rituals are widely practiced by the public. Plebeians are allowed to perform rituals for up to their great-grandfathers or great-great grandfathers. The frequent objects of rituals are fathers, mothers, grandfathers, and grandmothers who have already passed way.

Love is the most fundamental reason for performing a ritual for the deceased relatives. For the ritual performer, his deceased father, mother, grandfather, and grandmother was the person with whom he shared his life over a long period of time. He vividly remembers how much the relative cared about him. He cannot possibly forget what the relative had to go through to raise him. After losing his loved one, the ritual performer realizes, in the face of the permanent separation, that he can no longer repay their favors. With such regrets, he has difficulty pulling himself together. His sorrow is even unbearable in cases his living standards improved after the relative's death or the relative died young because of his or her adversity. Rituals that may makes it possible to commune with the deceased provides an avenue for those left behind to repay the deceased relative and look back on the days when he or she was alive. Generally, the whole family get together and carry out a grand ancestral ritual during the New Year or other seasonal festivals. They "call back" their ancestors to let them talk to their descendants and enjoy food and drink. The idea is to demonstrate that they will never forget their ancestors. On the occasions of the Qingming Festival and the Ghost Festival, the Chinese visit the grave their ancestor, tidy it up, and perform a ritual before it. By so doing, they can feel they have fulfilled their duty and they can convince themselves that their deceased relatives are pleased with their deed. Such a deed is, in essence, the embodiment of the desire of relatives to commune with one another beyond the border between this life and after life by means of ritual. It may be an act of self-contentment. Essentially, such a ritual is driven by sentiment. In general, certain deeds tend to become mandatory if they become a custom. The act of performing an ancestral ritual is no exception. Once it becomes a custom, the conformity mentality sets in. Eventually, it can become a formality. The failure to perform an ancestral ritual or visit the ancestral grave may be thought of as an abnormal, unforgivable act and become a target of criticism. In fact, the lack of filial piety was subject to punishment in feudal society. Under such circumstances, it is likely that the modalities to express personal sentiments will be fixed and such fixed modalities will eventually dominate personal emotions and turn into a mere regular function. By the same token, chances are that ancestral rituals will come before personal emotions and become some kind of "rule" to be observed by every family.

Apart from regular ancestral rituals, extraordinary rituals are also performed, especially for good health. The ancient Chinese generally believed that they became sick and suffered domestic misfortune because the spirit of a deceased relative put a curse on them. They believed that the spirit got angry and cause calamity to its descendants because its desire was not fulfilled or the ritual for it was inadequate. Mediums tend to provide such explanations as to the cause of disease. It is often the case that when a person gets sick, his or her relatives try to unconditionally meet the demands of the dead as communicated through a medium. They tend to perform unscheduled ancestral rituals in which they burn clothes or *zhiqian* to comfort the irate spirit or make a prayer. When the sick person recovers, his or her relatives may visit their ancestral grave and recall the spirit to be winded and dined during the New Year or other seasonal festivals. The other major reason for performing an extraordinary ritual is dream-related. A deceased relative may appear in the dream of his descendant with whom he once lived. In the dream, the deceased relative complain of hunger or cold or call attention to a familiar domestic problem such as a leak in the roof. The descendant may be convinced that the dream is real. When the ancient Chinese had such a dream, the rich and poor, high and low alike conducted various types of ritual activities to fulfill the desires of their deceased relatives. The popular belief is that deceased relatives appear in a dream because their spirits seek help and that it is an unavoidable duty for their descendants to help them. This is exactly what was known as "*xiaoxin* [filial piety]" in ancient China. The ancient Chinese believed that disregarding such a dream and shunning their responsibility was bound to incur the wrath of the spirit, resulting in sudden illness of their descendants or sudden death of their domestic animals. In ancient China, mediums played an important role of communicating with the spirits, or rather, conveying their words. Conversely, the ancestors always received the benefit of rituals thanks to mediums.

As discussed above, ancestral rituals were the most important type of rituals in ancient China. In the Zongfa-based society of China, The code of ancestors, which dictated family rules constituted the common law that was independent from the state code. The ancestral hall was an important site where great affairs of the clan were administered and tribal bonds were promoted. Successive rules stressed that the whole country should be ruled based on filial piety. They also emphasized that, while those with high aspirations should have the sublime goal of pacifying and ruling the country, it is important to manage families properly as the most fundamental component of the country. Filial piety and ancestor veneration provide an important basis for managing families. And ancestral rituals are the most important of all rituals for every class and group. Various rewards and punishments are conducted under the pretext of ancestral rituals. Over a period of several thousand years, the other types of rituals for divine spirits have been simplified, abolished or taken into Buddhism and Taoism. However, only ancestral rituals have survived for thousands of years, enabling us, living today, to find in them the remnants of what they used to be in the past.

Navigation and Rituals on the Korean Peninsula
– Mainly in Ancient Times
(oral presentation transcription)

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1.   Introduction

For this lecture, I would like to raise the following three problems. First of all, I think that we need to examine it in literary records whether rituals were performed in connection with navigation in Korea like Okinoshima Island. The second problem is that we must also study the art of navigation. This is because the method or object of ritual in ancient times had a very close relationship with navigation. Then, as the third problem, I would like to introduce to you ritual sites which have been archaeologically identified in Korea so far.

2.   Ancient Navigation and Rituals in Literary Records

To begin with, I would like to look at literary records. There is "Kudara-Honki" (the Chronicles of Paekche) in "Sangoku-Shiki" (the History of Three Kingdoms). King Kero as the king of Paekche sent a letter to China to the following effect:

> In the 18th year of the king's period (473), a messenger was sent to Wei Dynasty and handed over the letter saying, "…..I set sail for China in intense waves and searched for a way to Myeong-Jin. Leaving my life to the divine will, I will present a letter, even if it is one ten-thousandth of pure sincerity. I pray to the gods of heaven and earth they may be moved; and if I could reach the imperial palace of the emperor under the great divine protection of the emperor and express my feelings, I should have nothing to regret even if I hear in the morning and die in the evening." ("Kudara-Honki" in "Sangoku-Shiki")

Here is a description that he left his life to the divine will in order to cross a rough sea. Crossing the sea was an extremely difficult act. That is why he prayed to the gods of heaven and earth they might be moved and he could reach China in safety under the divine protection. This suggests the presence of such an idea in ancient times that the act of crossing the sea is very dangerous and therefore they will pray to the god.

Let me show you another historical material.

> "Three great mountains, five divine mountains, other celebrated mountains and great rivers are classified into large, medium and small rituals…..The four seas are Adonpyeong (Pohan) in the east, Hyonpyeong (Busan) in the south, Mirunpyeong (Okuku) in the west and Pyesang (Samsop) in the north." (a description of rituals in "Sangoku-Shiki")

The following is also a description cited from "Sangoku-Shiki", which indicates that rituals were ranked in various ways in Silla. The largest-scale ritual in which the state took part was classified as a great ritual, a medium-scale one as a medium ritual and a smaller-scale one as a small ritual. Medium ones of those rituals were performed on a medium scale under the control of the state. There are ritual sites on the seashore where rituals were performed. This suggests that rituals were performed in order to worship the god of the sea. We can also confirm that the god of the sea was worshiped.

Moreover, I would like to look at another literary record. This is a historical material called "Sangoku-Kenji".

Achanyanpe, the youngest son of the king (Chinrinnyo?—897) served as a messenger to Tang Dynasty. When he heard that pirates blocked the way of people on Chindo Island in Paekche, he selected 50 soldiers able to shoot arrows, who accompanied him……When their ship reached Kokudo Island, they were forced by intense wind and waves to stay there for about 10 days. Prince Yanpe grieved at it and sent his man for divination. He was told as follows: "There is a divine pond on this island. If you perform a ritual, it may become fine." Then, he placed offerings on the pond, the water of the pond sprang up in a straight line. (Kotachi as the king of Chinrinnyo in "Sangoku-Kenji")

Kokudo Island shown in Figure 2 means Baengnyeongdo Island now. The picture on the right side shows Baengnyeongdo Island. You may have heard news about an incident of artillery bombardment on Yeonpyeongdo Island. This island is located just below Baengnyeongdo Island on the map. The mission to China took this sea route. It is described that they stayed on this island for 10 days owing to the stormy sea. They performed a ritual on a pond called Kamiike. From this, we can know that in the age of Unified Silla, people landed the island on the voyage and performed a ritual.

Figure 1   Baengyeongdo Island

Let us look at the next literary record. This is a famous Japanese book called "Nittō-Guhō-Junrei-Kōki". Let me cite a part of the record related to Silla.

"On September 8, the 7th year of Fechang (847), despite being very much scared by bad news, I was unable to depart because the wind did not blow. The crew performed a ritual (aboard) by offering mirrors to the god in the hope that the wind could blow. Priests prayed to the indigenous god of this island (Kuchodo Island) and the gods of great and small men for safe return home (Japan) together with others by burning incense" ("Nittō-Guhō-Junrei-Kōki")

This is a record which refers to Ennin, a Japanese Buddhist priest. It describes how Ennin returned home from China. The crew threw mirrors into the sea by way of pray for wind-blowing. Moreover, they prayed to the indigenous god and the gods of great and small men. The picture in Figure 2 shows a replica of the ship on which Japanese envoys to Tang Dynasty used to go to and return from China.
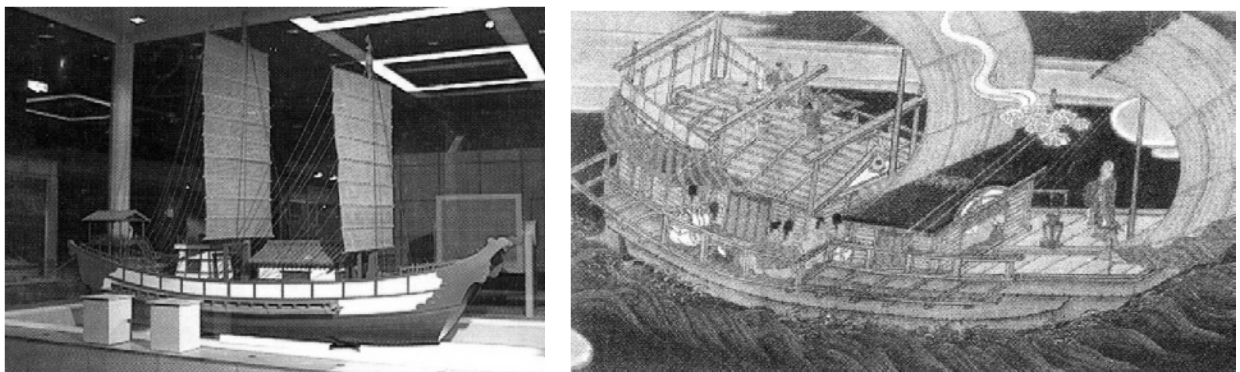

Figure 2   Ships used by Japanese envoys to Tang Dynasty China

In those days, it was a man called Chōhokō in Silla that took control over the sea way. In some cases, people from Silla boarded the ship as members of the crew because they were very familiar with the sea way.

I have introduced four literary records to you above. Besides them, there are also various literary records which give us fragments of information with regard to rituals on the voyage. However, I would like to omit them today.

3. The Ancient Art of Navigation and Marine Transportation Routes

Then, let me move on to the second theme, namely the ancient art of navigation and sea routes.

Earthenware such as shown in Figure 3 gives us a clue to knowing boats/ships on the ancient Korean Peninsula. The lower part is a pedestal, on which a boat is placed. A person who rows the boat is also seen in it.
Figure 4 is a line drawing incised on a rock. This drawing seems to depict boats used in the 7th century. At a glance, they seem to be not drawn in details. However, there are sails to receive the wind, an anchor and an oar in each boat. Moreover, from the drawing of two boats, we can know that people made a voyage in a fleet of vessels in those days.
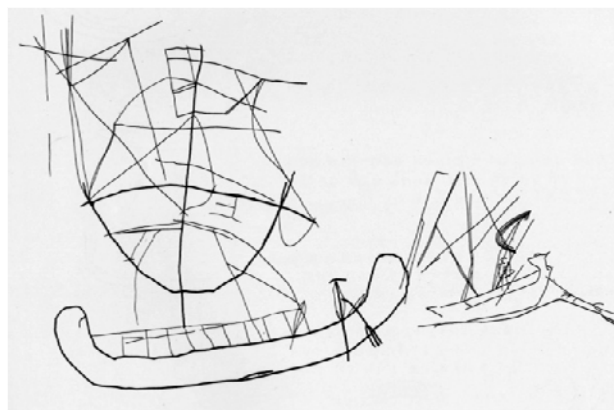
Figure 3   Earthenware

Figure 4   *Ishugawa-Zenri* mural

Wooden boata used in those days were reconstructed with a computer based on such earthenware and traces of boats/ships excavated from Anatch. (Figure 5)

In ancient times, the major mode of marine transportation was wooden boats, which had no engine and no way other than using the natural wind. However, the wind is not a source of power which can be used any time. Accordingly, when the wind did not blow, people used oars or waited for the unpredictable blowing of the wind.

They were faced with various constraints and conditions on navigation. First of all, they had to perceive the right direction. Their method of measuring it was limited. For example, they chose a high peak or a certain island as a landmark. They had to make a voyage while observing such a landmark with the naked eye. This situation made it a usual voyage to sail from one island to another or along the coast in ancient times.

Kaya Boat   *Silla* (Anatch) Boat

Silla Boat
Figure 5   CG reconstructions of wooden boats

If so, judging from the height of a real mountain, it is presumable that people were able to navigate a ship only in a limited area shown in the following figures.
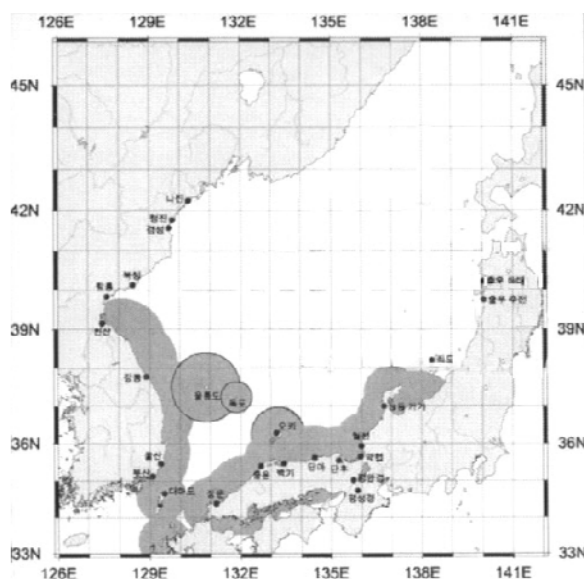

Figure 6   The Distance of visibility on the voyage and the range of navigation

In the age of the Korean Kingdom, land tax and other levies were transported by ship. Land tax in those days was paid by rice in many cases and rice was loaded onto a ship to carry it to Seoul. Ships in this age may have been slightly enlarged as compared with those in ancient times. However, I think that the method of navigation had not changed since ancient times.

Figure 7   Model of a boat in the Korean Kingdom period

The following illustrations show sea routes in those days. People navigated a ship to weave their way between one island and another. We can also know that they sailed along the shoreline of land like this. In those days, people had to take various things into consideration aboard a wooden ship. The most important thing is knowledge as to a tidal current or sea current.

This is because ancient wooden ships were able to go with natural wind power. When the wind did not blow, they were partially forced to go by the power of men pulling oars. It seems that people depended on the wind for about 80% of navigation. Therefore, the wind was a very critical element of navigation. The wind varies from season to season. It may get strong or weak suddenly. The crew of a ship could not navigate it without abundant knowledge related to the wind.

Figure 8   Sea routes in the Korean Kingdom period

The tidal current is also very important. It changes twice or three times a day. As previously stated, ships are navigated on a route along the coast. There are many isles in coastal areas. They affect the tidal current, which is quick in some places and not so quick in others.

In such a situation, sailors in those days had to take various things into consideration on the voyage in order to navigate a ship in the right direction as they wished to go.
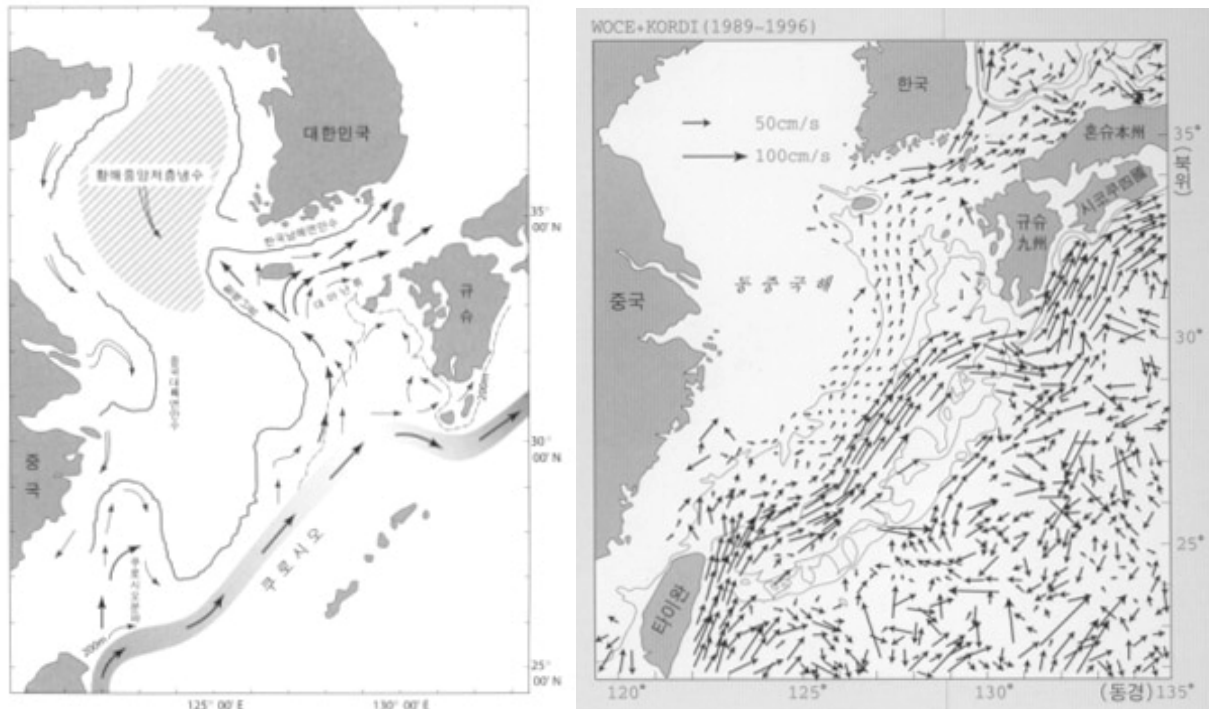
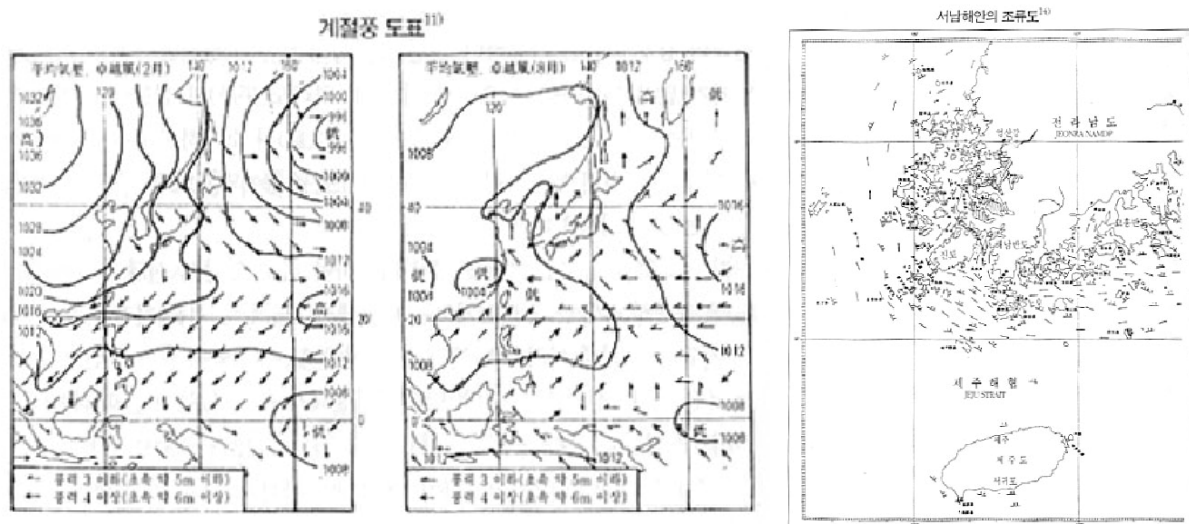Figure 9   Marine environment (sea currents)

Figure 10   Marine environment (monsoon and tidal currents)

Moreover, in addition to those elements, they had to check the depth of sea water or the appearance of tideland at the ebb or the existence of submerged rocks on the voyage. It is also recorded that they sailed with measuring the depth of sea water.

The loading capacity and storage of wooden ships were limited in those days. Of course, they were not

equipped with a refrigerator. Necessary goods, drinking water and foodstuffs, especially fresh vegetables had been continuously supplemented in the course of voyage, whenever necessary. For this purpose, they had to visit some ports at regular intervals. In an extreme case, when someone fell ill, he was dropped off on the land and the ship departed without him.

I think that night navigation was very dangerous. People had no light but putting up a torch. That is why people avoided navigating a ship at night and sailed almost in the daytime. During the night, they searched for a good place to anchor or moored their ship in some bay. They moored their ship somewhere for a long time or they prayed to the god not only when they came across a storm. Ancient people were able to continue their navigation by mooring their ship regularly at various spots for various reasons.

These various conditions extremely limited routes in those days. As shown in the following chart, routes from/to Okinoshima Island, Silla, Paekche, Koguryo and China were all along the coast. Ennin whom I have previously introduced also returned home on such a route. Marine transportation routes in ancient times were limited to a line from the coast of the Chinese continent to the Gulf of Bokkai, the coast of the Liaodong Peninsula, the southwestern coast of the Korean Peninsula, Korea Strait (Tsushima Strait) and Japanese inland seas. This can be confirmed with "Sangokushi" compiled in China in the third century. After the 6th century, a transversal route extending from the coast of Hwanghae Province to the Shandong Peninsula in China, the Liaodong Peninsula and the southern part of China was developed by Koguryo, Paekche and Silla. Moreover, in about the 8th century, a new marine transportation route was developed. This route crossed the East China Sea and directly linked the Korean Peninsula to the southern part of China. It was a convenient route extending from Yonam, Heuksando Island and Wangdo Island on the southwest side of the Korean Peninsula to Yangzhou, Hangzhou and Mingzhou in the southern part of China. On the other hand, Bokkai also developed a route which directly crossed the Sea of Japan and led to the northeastern part of Japan. Although various routes were also developed in addition to them, it was extremely dangerous to sail in an ocean where even one island was out of sight. A route to cross an ocean was taken only in an avoidable case. People usually sailed on traditional routes which connected one island and another or led them along the coast in many cases.

Thus, navigation in ancient times was extremely dangerous and people sailed at the risk of their lives. In such a situation, what will people do in case of a happening beyond their knowledge and skills? Then, people began to pray to gods. They had very strong faith in gods just because they had a very strong sense of crisis. They began to perform a ritual to worship gods. I think that their rituals are ones which have been lately discovered as artifacts at various sites such as those shown in Figure 13.

A similar thing can be said about Silla and Bokkai. They may have mainly used the following routes. Bokkai also had interchange with Wa and there are many artifacts discovered.
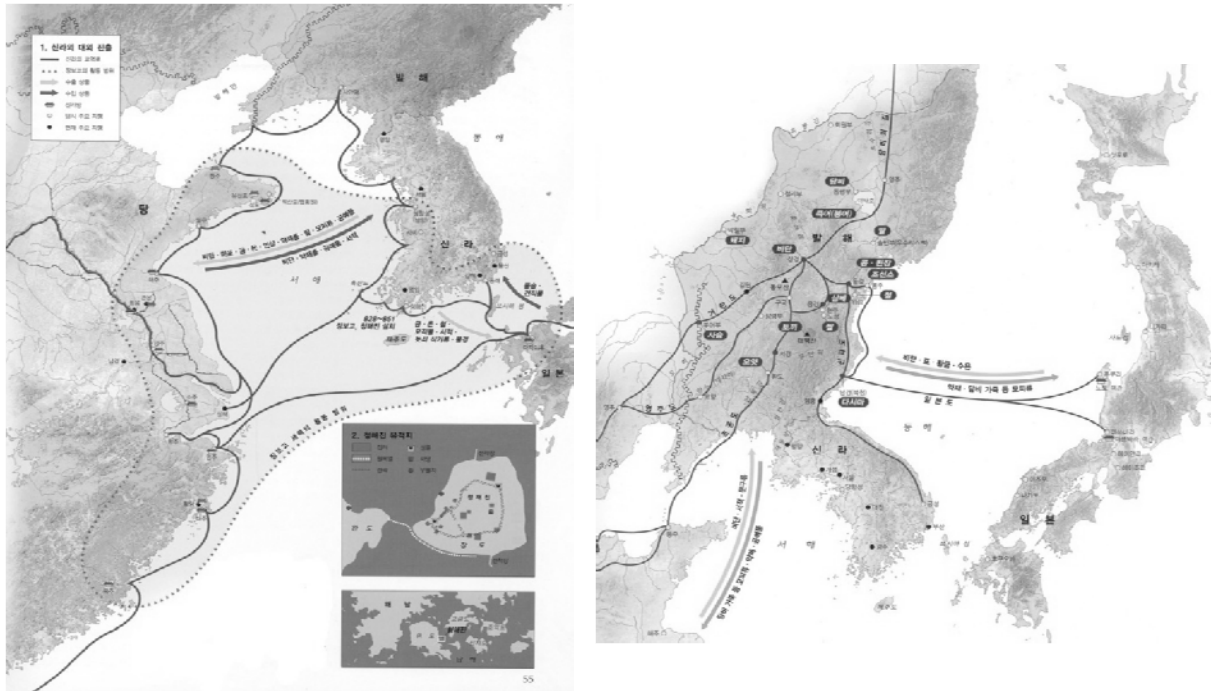

Figure 11　Ancient navigation routes

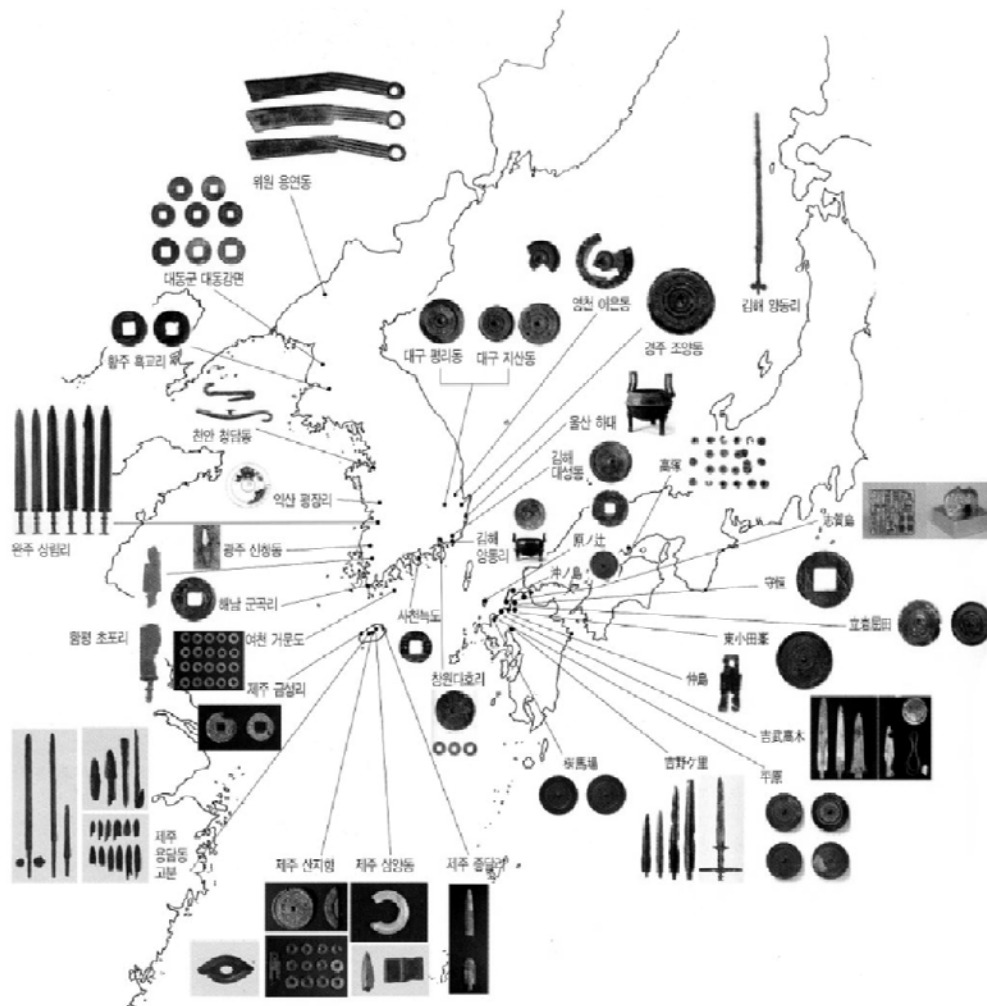Figure 12   Marine interchanges between Silla and Bokkai

Figure 13   Marine interchanges among three states and evidence of interchanges

4. Ancient Navigation and Rituals Seen from Archaeological Material

Next, I would like to refer to several ancient ritual sites and explain ancient navigation and rituals. Major sites are Chungmakdong, Wando, Jeju-do and Ulleung. In addition, I can give some other examples, including Heuksando, Wolchulsan, Gongju as the capital of Paekche and Sabi. There are also other sites which I would like to introduce to you. However, today, I am going to mention only the four sites of Chungmakdong, Wando, Jeju-do and Ulleung because there are still many things which have not been correctly clarified.

First of all, let me mention the site of Chungmakdong in Buan. Here is a map which shows the location of the site.

This site is located on the shore which protrudes most on the Pyeonsan Peninsula. There is a cliff from which you have a fine view of the near seas around the peninsula. There is also a cave eroded by the sea. A flat area extends over the cliff. The cave looks like being formed as a result of seawater erosion. There is also a bay used as a landing place. There remains a facility where rituals were performed to worship the god of the sea.

The site of Chungmakdong is on the land and accessible to everyone. Any taboo has not been identified so far, including limitations on visit. There is a small shrine called Suiseido, which is said to be a "holly place" where fishermen who wished a good catch or those who had a character like a shaman were given a divine tree. Ancient people performed rituals with various ritual tools and offerings.
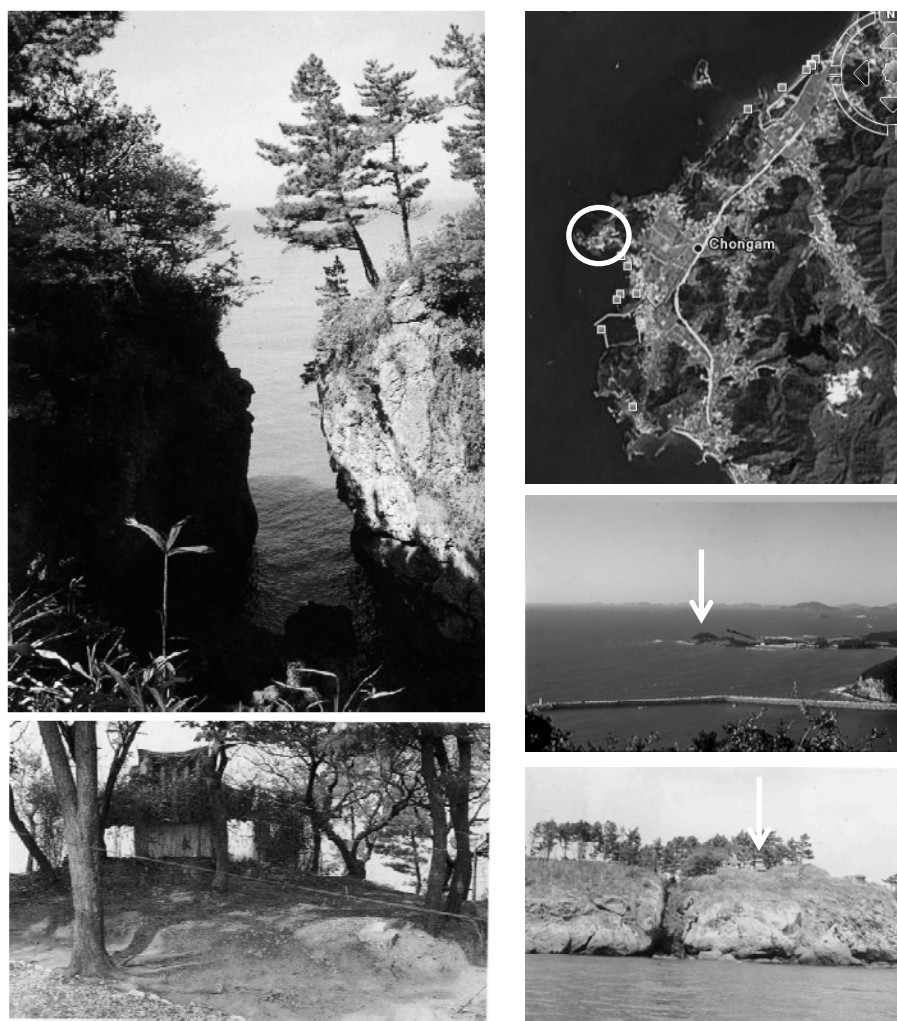

Figure 14   Chungmakdong ritual site

Then, let us look at specific artifacts. As artifacts, many items were identified, including earthenware comprising pedestals, dishes with pedestals, dishes with lids, jars, large pots and bottles, weapons comprising iron halberds and swords, bronze bells and mirrors, and Chinese ceramics. There are also about 200 items of harness and stone replicas, such as horse ornaments and saddle frames. In addition, pottery and ceramics in the Koryo period of Korea were also excavated.

I cannot introduce all those artifacts to you here. However, if I show you some items which represent them, there are large-sized items of earthenware, such as large pots and jars. Looking at their age, they date back to the period from the 4th to 9th centuries. In those items of earthenware, broken metal products were found, such as spears and mirrors. A situation like this is a very unique case which has been hardly reported even in South Korea, not to mention Okinoshima Island. Presumably, they are considered to be traces of having put them into pots and jars to offer to the god of the sea or ancestors. Besides them, there are also artifacts of Chinese earthenware and stone replicas which have been identified in large quantities in Japan.

Inferring from those artifacts, it seems that rituals performed at this site may have continued until the end of the Korean period after the third century. It seems to be from the 5th to 6th centuries that rituals were frequently performed on the largest scale. There are artifacts of Chinese celadon and Japanese stone replicas. A style of ritual with harness and weapons put into large pots was identified in Kaya. It is highly possible that this region was merged into the territory of Paekche in those days. Taking these three points into consideration, it is presumable that going and coming ships visited this region in the international alliance among Chinese Dynasty, Paekche, Kaya and Wa and performed rituals to pray for the safety of long-distance navigation.
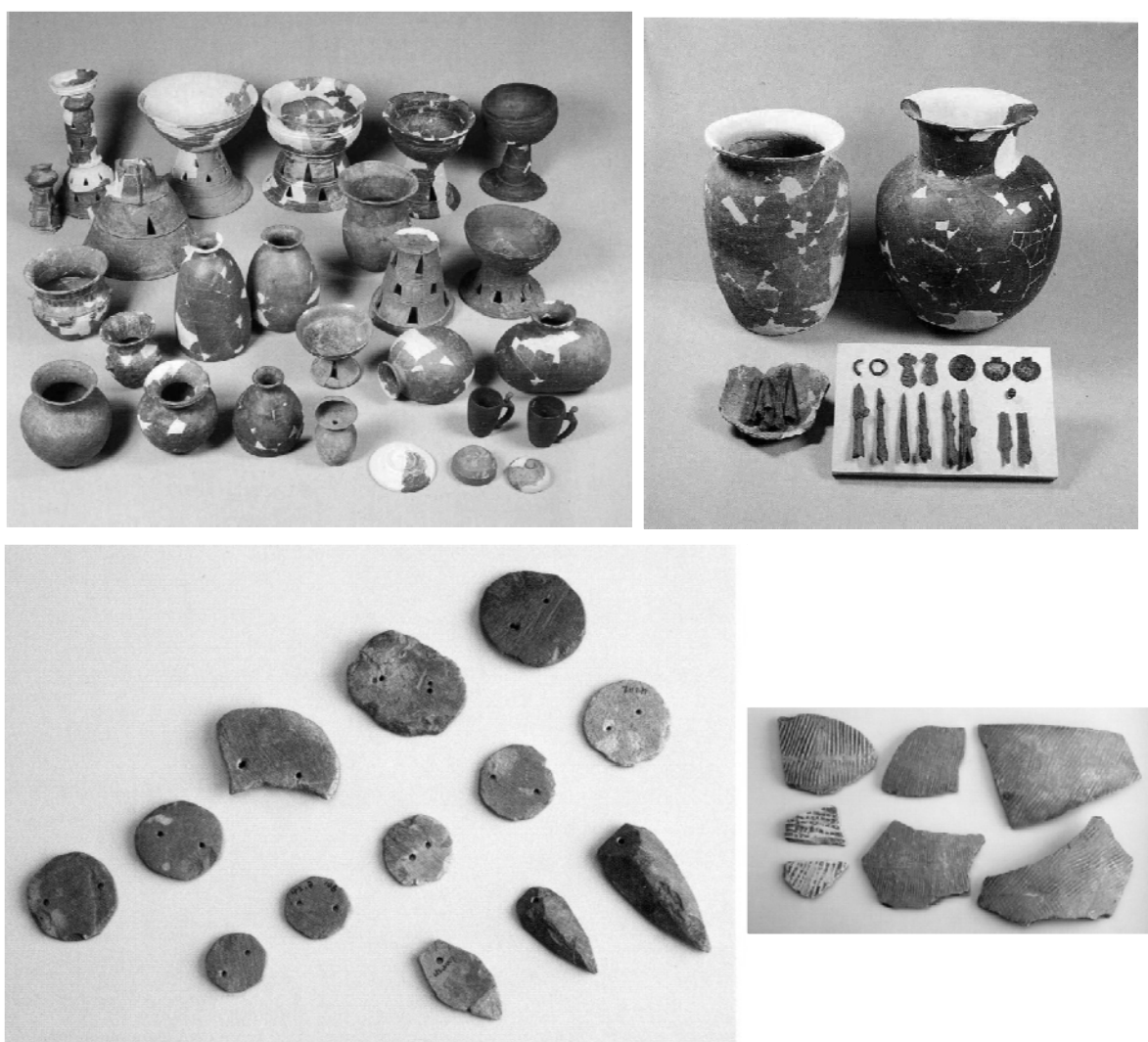

Figure 15   Artifacts from Chungmakdong ritual site in Buan

Figure 16   Artifacts from Chungmakdong ritual site in Buan

The picture below shows a small-scale reconstruction of the Chungmakdong ritual site. Presumably, people may have performed an open-air ritual like this. Moreover, tiles were found at a site in the age of Koryo, which I have not introduced to you here. Judging from these, it may be considered that the form of ritual changed to the use of a building in the age of Koryo.

Figure 17   Artist's reconstruction of Chungmakdong ritual site

Next, I would like to mention the site of Chonhejing on Wando Island.

This site is composed of a castle inside an island called Chando located in the sea near Wando and wooden fences for defense put up along the surrounding coast. It is presumably Jang Bogo that drove in piles and commanded his men in a war. Jang Bogo is a merchant in the age of Unified Silla who had great military power and established a tremendous marine force extending from Tang to Silla and Japan. Isn't it that he

performed rituals for the safety of navigation along with his activities? Artifacts, including mortars dating back to the age of Unified Silla, have been also excavated in large quantities.

What is important is that many traces of buildings remain in the castle. A hole is found to be 2m in diameter and about 2m in depth. From this hole, large pots, bronze bottles and iron tripod kettles were discovered as they were orderly buried. It seems that a ritual was performed with large jars and other specific items buried in the hole. It is recorded that a ritual was performed to worship the god of the sea in Chonhejing and Silla in those days. According to "Sangoku-Shiki" that I have introduced earlier, Silla performed a "medium ritual" here. Although I cannot come to a conclusion, it may be possible to consider that a ritual was performed at the national level in connection with marine activities at this site that was an international marine base.
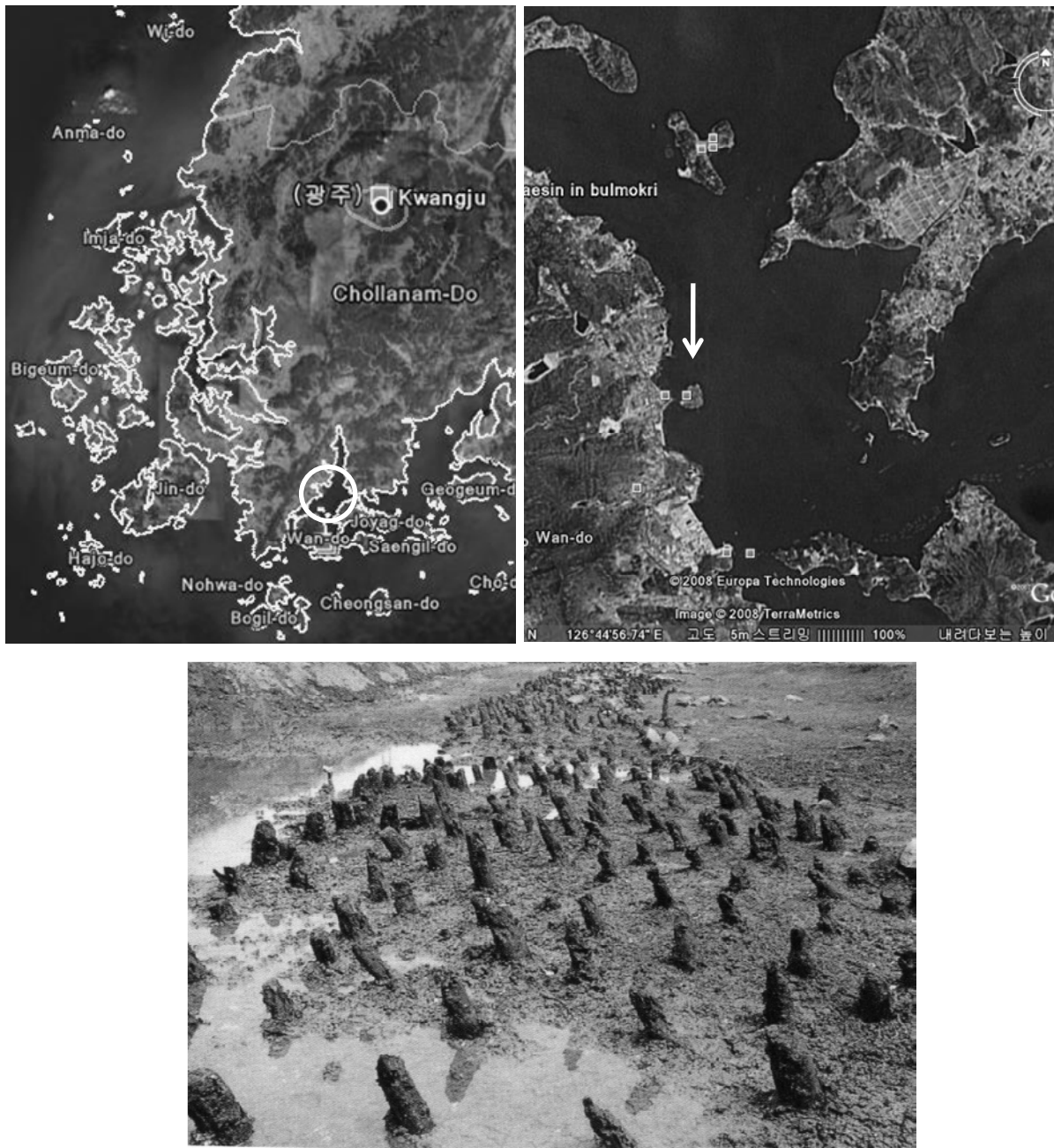

Figure 18   Chonhejing ritual site

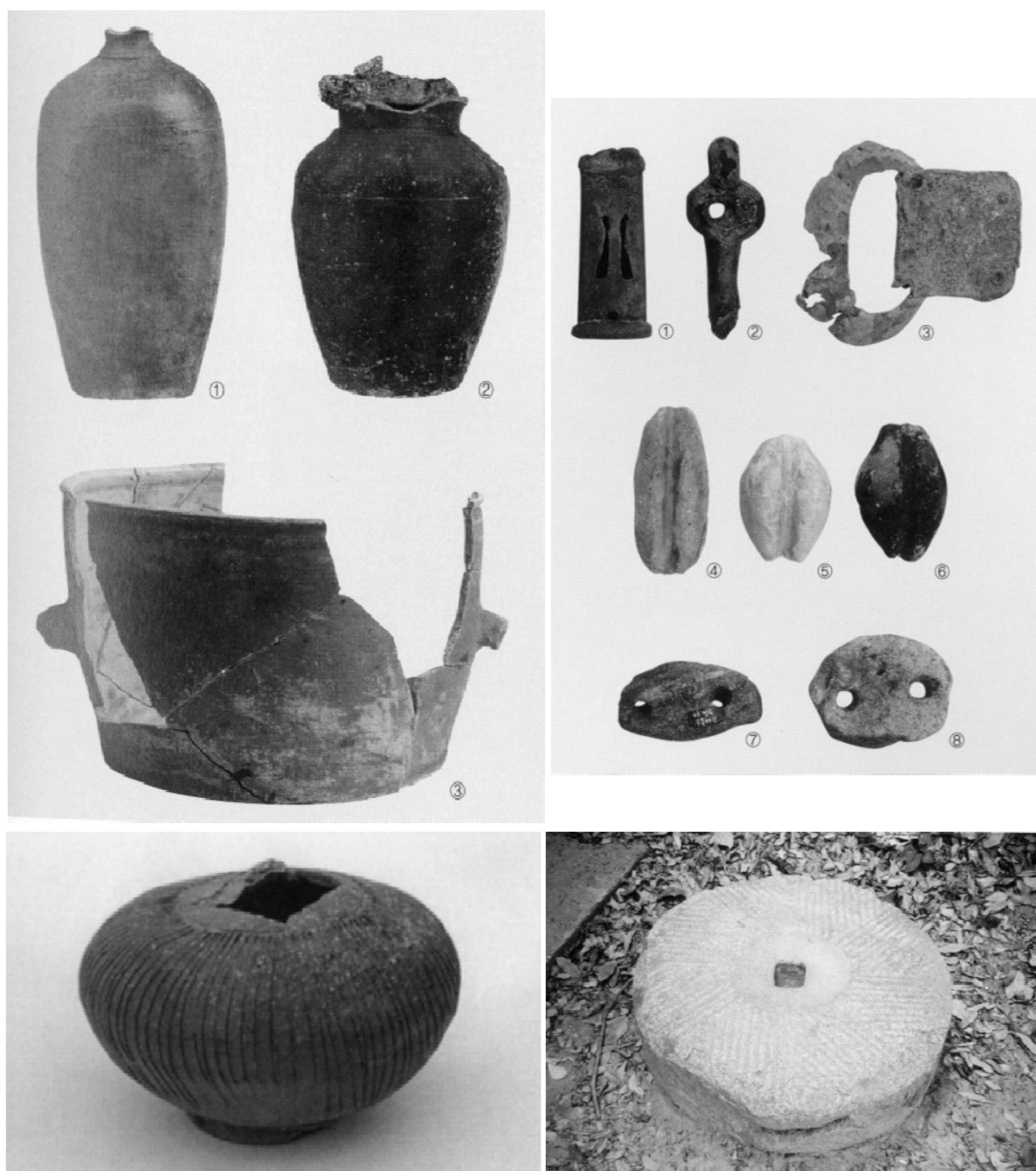Figure 19   Chonhejing ritual site

Figure 20   Artifacts excavated from Chonhejing ritual site

Let me move on to the site of Yondandon on Jeju-do Island. It is presumable that this site fundamentally has the same character as the site of Chungmakdong in Buan, though they belong to different times. This site is located on a hill from which you have a view of the sea near Jeju-do and there is a good bay for ships to moor in the neighborhood. Earthenware, pottery, ceramics, girths, grindstones and so forth were excavated from this site. Those artifacts were precious items which could not be produced in the Jeju region in the 8th to 9th centuries. Presumably, people in high social positions who were able to possess such things through marine interchange may have performed rituals there to pray for the safety of navigation. In the course of excavation, artifacts as shown in the following picture were found to be broken and thrust into rocks. Besides them, buckles and Chinese earthenware, ceramics, grindstones and beads were also excavated. From these artifacts, I think that it is a ritual site where rituals were performed for the safety of navigation by a person who often visited Jeju Island or a figure who had the greatest power on the island. The times of such rituals seem to be from the 8th to 9th centuries.

Figure 21   Yondandon ritual site

Figure 22   Artifacts excavated from Yondandon ritual site

Finally, let me mention the site of Hyunbori on Ulleung Island. This site is located on a coastal hill on the northwest side of the island. At this site, five stone columns are arranged in three lines from east to west with a stone structure in the center of the site. It is said that they have some relation with rituals. Around this arrangement, broken jars, bottles and large pots have been excavated. It is notable that large pots which are often seen especially at the site of Chonhejing on Wando Island account for a high percentage of artifacts. Ulleung Island is located on the route that connects the Japanese Archipelago and the Korean Peninsula. The location of the site is especially good enough to give a fine view of the surrounding landscape on the island. This site seems to be a place where people performed rituals to pray for the safety of navigation.

Owing to the importance of its geographical condition or location on the route from the Korean Peninsula to Japan, Ulleung Island, like Okinoshima Island, is likely to draw very much attention of the people concerned in the future. Although emphasis is laid on only sites in Unified Silla at the moment, I think that artifacts earlier than them or in the 5th century may have remained. Therefore, more discoveries can be expected from this site in the future.
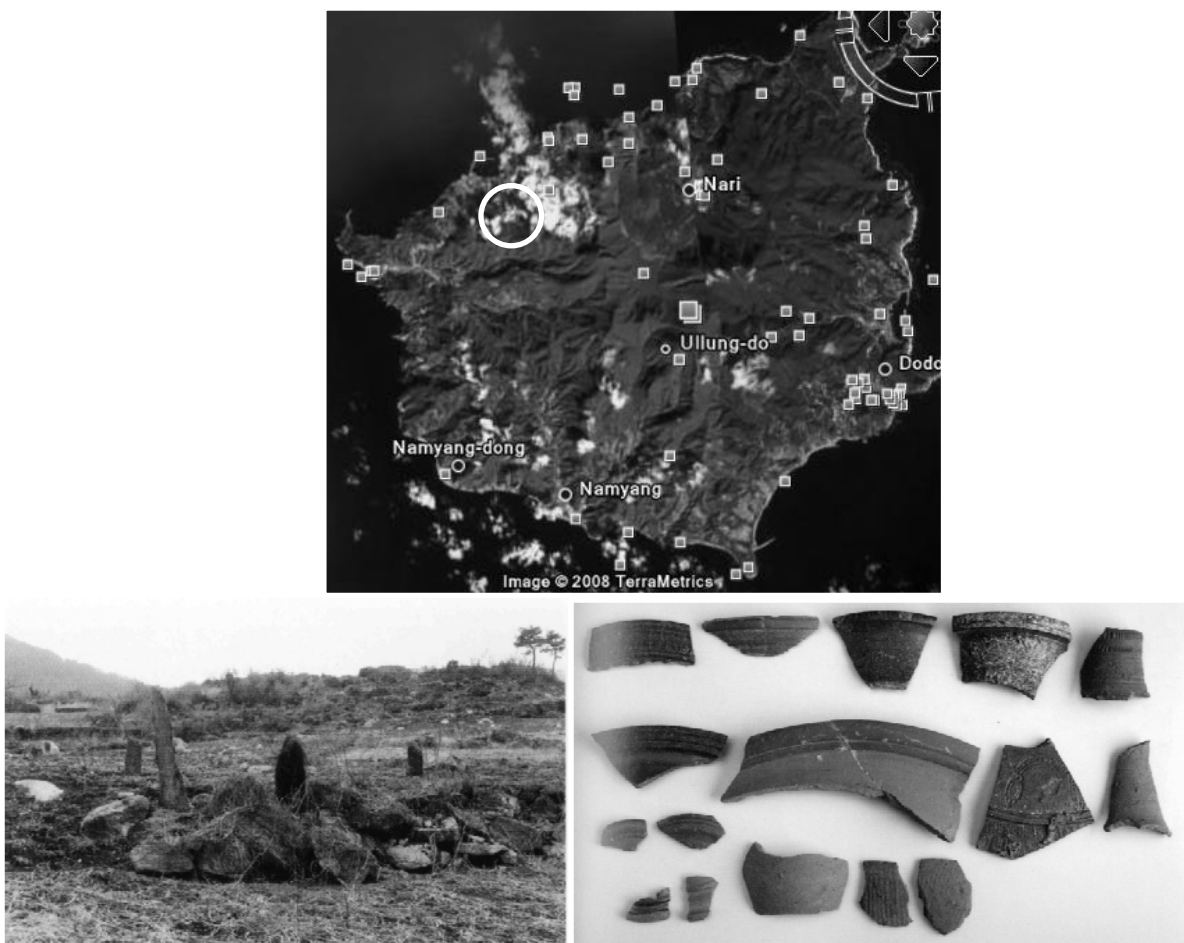

Figure 23   Hyunbori ritual site and excavated artifacts

5. Conclusion

To conclude this lecture, I would like to express my gratitude for allowing me to participate in the World Heritage Registration Project for "Munakata Okinoshima Island and Related Heritage Sites".

When I came to Japan, I was surprised with the enthusiasm of people for registering Okinoshima Island, Munakata Grand Shrine and tumuluses as a whole as a world cultural heritage site. We also aim to register Paekche heritage as a world cultural heritage site. I have felt our efforts very inadequate compared with Japan. We are required to make strenuous efforts for the registration. I had a very good impression of Japanese efforts in cooperation with local governments.

Also I think it very good that you are active in developing public relations in order to let the region of Fukuoka extensively known to others. During my visit to Japan, I have become aware anew that public relations are important for the purpose of transmitting the value of the assets in an effort to register the region as a world cultural heritage site. This symposium has given me a very wonderful opportunity. I would like to give many thanks to all the people concerned.

Okinoshima in World Perspective:
Weaving Narratives of Ritual, Politics and Exchange

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Introduction

This paper explores the value of the archaeological remains of the island of Okinoshima and sites associated with the Munakata clan in terms of a comparative study of other ritual and religious sites around the world. The paper follows on from an earlier study by the same author (Kaner 2011), which discussed contemporary thinking about the archaeology of religion and how Okinoshima can contribute to such a field of study, and is informed by a series of studies about Okinoshima commissioned as part of the process of preparing the case for the nomination of Okinoshima and associated sites in the Munakata region for UNESCO World Heritage Status.

My previous paper argued for a contextualised set of narratives about Okinoshima, that would allow visitors to understand both the nature of the ritual practices that took place there, and also the motivations behind those practices. In addition, I argued that some of Okinoshima's importance lies in how it can contribute to understanding change within traditions of ritual and religious practice. I provided a brief contextualised account of the development of ritual observances on Okinoshima: in this paper I attempt to broaden this out, to set what was happening at Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region in an East Asian context, before comparing them to sacred islands and sacred mountains in other parts of the world. I also proposed a series of research questions that derived from the research already undertaken. In this paper I expand on the comparative sites, and include what have become known as 'natural places', and consider the relationship between these and monumental places of worship. I also develop a series of research themes that I think are of great significance for Okinoshima, and through which Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region can contribute to the broader history of humanity. I concluded my previous study by suggesting three forms of agency (body-agency, object agency and space-agency) that may be helpful in considering Okinoshima, and also discussed the notion of performativity, central to many contemporary studies of ritual practice. This study concludes with some suggestions about how an archaeology of religious experience can be enhanced by a visit to the sites associated with Okinoshima, a journey that has already been begun with the excellent displays at the 'Uminomichi Munakatakan' Museum'

1.   A framework for comparison

As demonstrated by the comparative research commissioned as part of the process of nomination for inscription as a World Heritage Site (Fukuoka 2011), Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region are of tremendous value in understanding the relationships between (1) changing traditions of ritual practice, (2) changing political circumstances and strategies, and (3) interactions between different parts of East Asia (including diplomacy, trade and warfare). The sites that currently comprise the property being nominated include significant natural places (islands, mountain tops, clusters of large rocks, and coastal locations with specific sightlines); monuments (burial mounds and shrine buildings); and the material remains of votive deposits (with research still ongoing into whether these are all the actual remains of ritual acts intended to propitiate deities, or whether some at least represent acts of deposition before or after such propitiatory rituals). While each of these components is undoubtedly of great value in their own right, I consider that it is in their association with each other that they take on Outstanding Universal Value.

It is these associations that truly set Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region apart from other sites in the history of humanity that are considered to have outstanding Universal Value in terms of religion, trade and state formation. In order to compare Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region with other sites around the world we therefore first need to establish a framework for

comparison. This framework needs to be based on the recognition of the importance of these associations, on a set of interwoven narratives about history, ritual and religion, politics, and the exchange of commodities, each of which draws on distinct bodies of scholarship.

In the course of this paper, we will consider a number of potential comparators and types of comparators for Okinoshima, and the associated sites, each of which contribute to setting Okinoshima in the context of the global history of humanity. But at the same time, we will examine differences as well as similarities, in order to appreciate the specificity of the significance of Okinoshima. This is not necessarily to argue that Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region are unique in terms of any of their individual components (any more than any other archaeological site is unique), but rather that the specific sets of associations and relationships identifiable at Okinoshima and the associated sites have the potential to enable us to understand in a unique way the complexities of the development of East Asian world when the nations that comprise East Asia today were being created.

This emphasis on specificity within a global context complements the microhistorical approach adopted by much of the comparative research commissioned as part of the nomination process (e.g. Shiraishi 2011). Japanese archaeology now offers a very high resolution dataset based on over a century of detailed research which provides excellent chronological control, the essential basis for weaving together the various mythological hints, historical snippets and archaeological fragments with which we can create compelling narratives about what happened in and around the Genkai Sea at this critical time in East Asia's past.   And we must be aware that the creation of these narratives is open to political manipulation just as were the stories in the ancient histories, which so often served to legitimate the interests of those who commissioned the accounts. While our accounts cannot, and indeed should not, be removed from the contexts within which they are written, our narratives must be self-reflexive and need to be sensitive to the diversity of voices involved. The places, sites and objects under study meant different things to different people at different times. While we can track continuities within traditions of ritual practice, we need to celebrate the dynamic history of these traditions, rather than restrict our endeavours to searching for origins of later religious combinations such as Shinto.

Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region offer an exceptional opportunity to address the complicated archaeology and history of East Asia from the 3rd to 9th centuries in a way that takes advantage of new developments in the archaeology of religion, but that avoids the problems associated with many earlier cross-cultural generalisations. Richard Bradley, in his *Archaeology of Natural Places*, re-examines Marcia Eliade's concept of 'hierophanies', 'literally, places where the sacred world shows itself' (Bradley 1999: 28-32; Eliade 1954, 1964). Okinishima and the associated sites of the Munakata region are an excellent example of a hierophany.

According to Eliade, all religions are based on two competing principles:

> 'cosmos and chaos. Cosmos is the domain of human order and, by extension, that of sacred power, whilst chaos is its opposite and stands for the profane. The two elements exist in tension, and the principle or order must be reasserted constantly. Religious practices provide one way of mediating between those two extremes. Communication is all important here: it must happen in special locations where the sacred world is revealed' (Bradley 1999: 29).

These special locations are what Eliade terms hierophanies. Eliade uses the example of the rock, which is appropriate to our study of the rocks on Okinoshima:

> 'The object appears as a receptacle of an exterior force that differentiates it from its milieu and gives it meaning and value. This force may reside in the substance of the object or in its form: a rock reveals itself to be sacred because its very existence is an hierophany: incompressible, invulnerable, it is that which man is not. It resists time' (Eliade 1954: 4).

Inspired by scholars such as Bradley and Eliade, and the many others referred to in my previous paper, our comparative framework will emphasise the following: interwoven relationships between different elements; microhistories; the recognition of specificity within a global context, highlighting both similarities and differences; diversity of perceptions; and both continuity and change in traditions of ritual practice, and

how these are reproduced and transformed through time. Our comparisons will emphasise structural themes (deposition, pilgrimage and isolation) rather than simple formal analogies (sacred mountains and islands). In this way we can begin to construct an archaeology of religious experience for Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region, both based on and contributing to an appreciation of the Outstanding Universal Value of the component sites and their relationships, that will enhance our understanding of the archaeology and history of the Genkai Sea and its place in the fabric of the East Asian past.

The current paper proposes that the outstanding universal value of Okinoshima and the associated sites lies in their potential to contribute to understanding of a series of themes of significance for the history of humanity in broad. These complement the criteria being used for the nomination and include:

- The relationship between religion and state formation
- The relationship between religion and international interaction (including trade and war)
- The ways that ritual practice change through time, and the relationship between such changes and the interaction between different traditions of religious and cult belief
- The development of monumental places of ritual observance and their relationship to worship at natural places

Making this case requires a detailed consideration of changing perceptions of Okinoshima as a basis for beginning to understand how different people would have experienced and thought about the various practices whose material traces are exceptionally well-preserved on the island.

2. A new archaeology of religion and the archaeology of religious experience

As set out in my previous paper, many archaeologists in the past felt that archaeology, the study of the material traces of the past, could not contribute to our understanding of religion. Moreover, many felt that religion was not an important part of understanding the development of society and human behaviour. In terms of understanding the causes of human development, religion was considered secondary to, for example, technology, economy and politics. Ideology was important, religion less so. And yet, at the same time, many people professed a religious belief, and went to church.

In Japan after 1945, archaeologists were very cautious about using the historical records of the Nihon Shoki and the Kojiki to interpret the past. Following the difficult association between Shinto and militarism before and during the Second World War, these historical accounts were no longer taught in school. Archaeologists focused on interpreting just material remains instead (see Fawcett and Habu 1989; Mizoguchi 2007).

Over the past 25 years there has been a very major change. There is now a new field of the 'Archaeology of Religion', and many books and publications on this topic. Religion is no longer seen as epiphenomenal. In a world in which we have rising levels of fundamentalist religious belief, religion is now recognised as a major motivating factor in the past, as well as in the present. And yet in my own cultural context, less people profess a belief than ever before. In my city, Norwich, home to the highest density of Medieval churches north of the Alps, and with two magnificent cathedrals, the most recent census, in which people are asked about their religious beliefs, suggested that Norwich is the most 'godless city in England', with the smallest proportion of the population in England attending church on a Sunday. Yet in Japan, there has been a renaissance of interest in visiting religious sites, with the identification of 'power spots', and we can anticipate that very high numbers of visitors will visit the Munakata region if the nomination is successful.

Two years ago I had the tremendous privilege to visit the sacred island of Okinoshima. I received some very important advice and instruction before we went. This is an island of taboos: I was not to speak to anyone of what I saw (although I understood that I could show them pictures). I was not allowed to take anything away (a very important principle of visiting any archaeological site). I would have to purify myself through *misogi*, or bathing in the sea. Going to Okinoshima was an act of pilgrimage: we were going to a remote place, and the crossing was likely to be very rough: I needed strong sea-sickness medicine. We were very lucky; the Munakata deities smiled on us that day and we had a beautiful smooth

crossing. But there is no question that just going to Okinoshima was a clear rite of passage, a ritual that forms an important part of most religious beliefs. As somebody who does not practice any particular religion at home, I was moved by a sense of awe, by the special nature of the island, and by the sense of privileged access to what is clearly a very special part of the Japanese archipelago: removed from the everyday, with some very special environmental conditions.

I was very aware that the vast majority of people, including all women, would never be allowed to visit this island. While visiting, and since, I have been thinking about how can a flavor of the importance of religious experience be passed on to ordinary people, to the people who cannot visit Okinoshima. In this, I was guided by many of the archaeologists who are now working on the archaeology of religion. They are developing ideas about how we can engage with material culture that is created and used as a result of religious motivation.

3.   Multiple stories from Okinoshima: An interwoven narrative of East Asian religion, trade, politics and diplomacy

Over 80,000 artefacts have been excavated from the ritual sites on Okinoshima, including objects that we think we know the function of (mirrors, weapons, horse trappings), and some for which the word 'function' is more difficult to apply, such as the evocative stone miniatures. More are being uncovered by the ongling investigations into the associated sites of the Munakata region. We can create stories around each of these objects, and the places they were found.

One of the challenges of assessing the outstanding universal value of Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region is to appreciate its significance in the history of the development of religious belief and practice in East Asia. We also need to understand how the changing traditions of ritual practice in the region exhibited by the archaeological remains of offerings on the island and the associated sites relates to political and economic developments in East Asia (including the Japanese archipelago) more broadly.

Very few visitors will have a detailed understanding of what is a very complex period in East Asian history, and one in which the sources available to us need to be subject to particularly rigorous critical assessment, as they have been used in the past to legitimate political ideologies that lead to crisis and disaster. For this reason, in addition to the thematic approach adopted in the first part of this paper, it seems helpful to develop an outline narrative that weaves together some of these strands in a way which will encourage the average visitor to take away from their encounter with Okinoshima an enhanced understanding of the kinds of questions that Okinoshima is uniquely positioned to address.

In this narrative, I have attempted to extract a number of questions about each phase of the use of Okinoshima that can be linked to broader themes in world history, and which form a baseline for a placing Okinoshima in a comparative perspective.

The main narratives that have been created around Okinoshima relate to the development of religious beliefs and practices in a regional context. And the archaeology of Okinoshima encourages us to think about the importance of interactions between the various countries and empires that rose and fell during the 3rd to the 9th centuries AD. It is during this time that for the first time an East Asian consciousness developed, with shared beliefs in particular the worship of Buddha in conjunction with earlier beliefs and practices, many based on the propitiation of spirits and deities that dwelt in specific natural places.

And this East Asian consciousness is very important today. East Asia has the highest population densities, the largest economies, and arguably the greatest cultural impact in the 21st century: popular culture, fashion, cuisine. And if Okinoshima can help us understand and appreciate that consciousness, then it truly has Outstanding Universal Value.

Before ritual offerings were made at Okinoshima:

The thousand years before the first votive deposits were placed on the top of large rocks on Okinoshima, marking the start of the main tradition of ritual practice on the island, were of great importance for East

Asian history. The founding figures of three great religious traditions that had a great impact on later Japanese history, Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism, all lived between 500 – 200 BC, during what the great historian of religion, Robert Bellah, refers to as the Axial Age (Bellah 2011). China was unified for the first time under the First Emperor, and massively expanded its power and influence during the Han Empire. Religious specialists were travelling widely through continental Asia, spreading the word of Buddha, although it took a long time for Buddhism to actually take hold in China. The first Buddhist temples were built in China (AD 193) and the power of religious texts was recognised for the first time, and challenged, for instance in one of the earliest recorded episodes of book burning (213 BC, by the First Emperor of China, Qin Shih Huang Di). Regional powers in the Japanese archipelago (such as Himiko's Yamataikoku) and on the Korean peninsula send envoys to the new Chinese colonies and to the central court (from 238 onwards), so that by the time the first offerings are being made at Okinoshima, the tradition of envoys sent from court to court was already well established. The authority of rulers such as Himiko was based on her personal shamanic powers, but such rulers already appreciated the importance of prestigious material symbols of power and allegiance, such as mirrors. Although there are artefacts from Okinoshima that date to this period, there is no evidence for them having on overtly 'ritual' character, although it is quite probable that the fishing expeditions that left them inhabited animistic universes where many seemingly mundane activities (going fishing) required the propitiation of spirits.

Phase 1: Late 4th – Early 5th centuries AD (see Kaner 2011 337-339)

During this time of weakened centralised power in China, Buddhism becomes well established with major centres of Buddhist learning appearing, and there is competition between Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism for support from the ruling authorities. By 400 Buddhism is ascendant by the time writing is introduced to Japan by Chinese scribes. Buddhism is introduced to the kingdoms on the Korean peninsula. There is heightened interaction between regional powers in Japan and the Korean peninsula, with possible military engagements from the 390s (see 414 AD). Diplomatic envoys continue to be sent between Korea and Japan, and Japan and China. The reign of Great King Yuryaku (456-479), known as Wakatakeru in his own lifetime, marks an important development in the nature of politics and ritual practice in the archipelago. Yuryaku extends Yamato control over much of western Japan by gift-giving and advantageous marriages, establishing his patronage over various regional cults (such as that of the Munakata region), and creates a role as the pre-eminent ritual coordinator of the archipelago, appropriating and safeguarding sacred regalia from regional cult centres in shrines such as Isonokami in the Yamato heartland. To facilitate this, he engages professional ritual practitioners, so that ritual powers are no longer just the prerogative of the ruler, as was the case with Himiko. He also sends offerings to the shrines of these major local deities, including Okinoshima. At the same time Yuryaku continues the tradition of sending envoys to the Chinese court. But when Yuryaku dies there is a fierce dispute over succession, demonstrating that the power of the Yamato court was not yet consolidated sufficiently to secure a smooth transition from one generation to the next.

Phase 2: Late 5th – 7th centuries AD (See Kaner 2011: 339-341)

In China work commences on a series of major Buddhist monuments, including great cave temple complexes with many Buddha sculptures (e.g. Yungang) and fabulous monasteries (e.g. Yongning with its nine-storeyed pagoda reputedly 1000 feet high), and the new capital at Loyang becomes the most important Buddhist city in Asia. On the Korean peninsula Buddhism is adopted by Silla, the last of the kingdoms to do so, and all of the Korean kingdoms begin the construction of elaborate Buddhist monuments. In the Japanese archipelago Great King Keitai (507-531) consolidates Yamato power over the many of the regions, employing a strategy of royally sanctioned ritualization to take control of agriculture (and irrigation) and production (notably of iron). Rites that were previously the preserve of regional chiefs were taken over and made part of the royal preserve by palace ritualists. Diplomacy and the succession were ritualised as part of this extension of royal control. This enhanced centralisation was continued through the reign of Kimmei (535-539) who consolidates the royal dynasty, on the eve of the arrival of the worship of Buddha into the Japanese archipelago. In the later 6th century Empress Suiko and her regent, Shotoku Taishi promote Buddhism at the expense of local cults. A programme of the construction of Buddhist temples is inaugurated (see Kidder 1999 and McCallum 2009). Under Suiko, power was further consolidated in the hands of the Yamato clan: Suiko claimed to be the Heavenly Heir (tenshi or tenno), essential to the maintenance of the cosmic order, which she reproduced and guaranteed through ritual propitiation. The construction of large mounded tombs is forbidden, and the urge to construct monuments instead becomes

focused on Buddhist temples. This phase comes to an end with the confrontation between Tang and Yamato expeditionary forces at the Hakusonko River which sees Japan withdraw from the continent.

Phase 3: Late 7th – 8th centuries AD (See Kaner 2011: 341-343)

The rulers of Tang China make use of both Buddhism and Daoism to keep their newly reunified Empire in a state of contented subordination. In 666 AD, for the first time in six centuries, recalling the glories of the Han Empire, Empress Wu performs the *feng* and *shan* sacrifices on the sacred Mount Tai. At the same time as the Empress is embodying the harmony of the universe, she is also promoting Buddhism. She is acclaimed as a reincarnation of the Maitreya Buddha. In 695, five years after taking the throne for herself following the death of Emperor Gaozong, she is on hand to welcome back the Buddhist pilgrim Yi Jing (I-ching) after his 24 year travels which capture the cosmopolitan flavour of East Asia during the rule of the Tang dynasty: he sets out on a Persian ship and travels to Sumatra and Bengal. Empress Wu commissions the great Mingtang (Hall of Light) audience hall, behind which stood a great pagoda housing an immense Buddha. The monument is destroyed in a fire, probably set by the Empress's rejected favourite Xue Huaiye. Following this episode Empress Wu turns to Confucianism, but also offers support to new, incoming beliefs including Manicheism from Iran.

None of this is lost on the new Yamato ruler, Tenmu (r. 672-686) who further enhances the use of ritual authority, and established an administrative bureaucratic state with the tenno at the top, the rule of whose line is legitimated by newly commissioned histories (the first of which appears in 712), which demonstrate the unbroken link between the current ruler and the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu, now enshrined in Ise, which is elevated to the main national shrine. With Tenmu, the process of state formation in Japan is completed, in readiness for the establishment of the first Chinese style capital at Nara in 710 AD and the construction of a series of monumental Buddhist temples, epistomised by the Todaiji, founded in 745.

Phase 4: Late 8th – end of 9th centuries AD (See Kaner 2011: 343-345)

The last major stage of ritual observances at Okinoshima coincides with the later part of the Tang Empire, and further new religious influences entering China. A stele in the Nestorian church in the Tang capital, Chang'an, describes Christian activity in China in 781. In 798 a mission from caliph Harun al-Rashid arrives in Chang'an. The great Buddhist monk Kukai, who was to found the Shingon sect of Buddhism upon his return to Japan, and who was largely responsible for bringing Buddhism to ordinary people rather than it remaining the preserve of the elite, would have experienced this cosmopolitan atmosphere himself while travelling in China from 804-806. Other Japanese monks travelling in China around this time included Ennin, Jogyo and Engyo (see Miller 1978 and Pollack 2010 for Japanese perceptions of China at this time). But in China the golden age of the promotion of Buddhism was drawing to a close, and the reign of the Emperor Wu-Tsung (r. 841-846) witnessed the suppression of monasteries on a massive scale: between 843-845, 4600 monastic establishments were demolished or turned into public buildings; 260,000 Buddhist monks and nuns were secularised and registered for tax. 40,000 other places of worship were destroyed or given over to other uses. Along with Buddhism, the Iranian religions were outlawed, as was Christianity. Against this backdrop of suppression, in 851 the first description of Canton by a foreigner, an Arabian trader named Suleyman, who knew the great port city as Khanfu, paints a portrait of a bustling multicultural entrepot of some 200,000 souls, where Chinese and Arabs rubbed shoulders with Iranians, Malays, Brahmins, Chams, Khmers and Sumatrans (Gernet 1996: 294-296).

Over 70 years before Suleyman was describing Canton and Wu-tsung was cracking down on the Buddhist temples, the Yamato government had found a different way to address the power of the Buddhist establishments: they moved the capital from Nara to Heian (modern-day Kyoto) following a brief sojourn at Nagaoka-kyo.

4. Okinoshima in early Japanese history

Between the 3rd and the 9th centuries AD, the small island of Okinoshima was the focus of a tradition of ritual practice involving apparently votive offerings in a number of different contexts on the island. The offerings ranged from relatively everyday utilitarian objects such as locally-produced pottery, to exotic

imported items (including mirrors, glass, gilt-bronze lion heads and an exquisite miniature loom) that are thought to have been highly valued by the people who were making the offerings, and those on whose behalf they were being made. Some of the objects were apparently made specifically to be deposited on the island of Okinoshima, while others already had interesting biographies.

The Munakata region in which Okinoshima and its associated sites are located has long been associated with the Munakata clan, referred to in the ancient chronicles of Japan. Those chronicles and other sources suggest that the Munakata clan were a significant regional power during much of the first millennium AD and that their relationship with the emerging and centralising power of Yamato, whose centre was located several hundred kilometres to the northeast in the Kinai region, was of importance for the development of early state-level societies in Japan. Significant archaeological remains associated with the Munakata clan include burial mounds and settlement in the region.

The development of the tradition of votive offerings at Okinoshima took place against the backdrop of major political, economic, religious and other cultural changes in Japan, and it is quite likely that the specific meanings of the offerings varied over time. The archaeological evidence for offerings made at Okinoshima between the 3rd and 9th centuries are mostly interpreted as offerings made to the local deities in order to ensure safe crossings over the Genkai Sea and Tsushima Straits to Korea and on to China. It is further assumed that these offerings were made by and on behalf of seafarers beginning their journeys in Japan. Such voyages constituted an important aspect of relations between Japan, the Korean peninsula and China. The voyages were made by official envoys, ambassadors and their entourages, by traders and merchants as well as by fisherfolk, and involved religious figures, students, privateers and poets: sometimes a combination of many of these. The voyages themselves and the records we have of them are a measure of the interaction between Japan and the continent during much of the first millennium.

During the period the offerings were being made, new religious configurations developed in Japan. The earliest offerings were made when religious activity in Japan was based on local cultic beliefs with no written codes: by the 9th century great Buddhist temples had been constructed in Japan, and sutras and other texts were in regular circulation. The engishiki, the codification of the Way of the Kami, had been written down. By the 8th century the first chronicles of Japan were published, the Kojiki and the Nihon Shoki. In the course of this period, courtly and royal rituals become increasingly defined, intertwined with the development of popular cults that drew on Chinese and Korean practices.

5.   Okinoshima and the East Asian world: 300-900 AD

The middle centuries of the first millennium AD witnessed the development of a new East Asian consciousness. While there had been many contacts and influences throughout prehistory from the first peopling of the region over a million years ago, it was only with the spread of a literate sinophone culture that we have evidence for a self-aware engagement between the various polities the occupy the region now comprising China, Korea and Japan. While older narratives talk of the rise of East Asian civilisation and focus on cores and peripheries (usually with China at the core and other polities on the peripheries), more recent scholarship emphasises the multiplicity of contingent relationships that existed between the empires, states and kingdoms that flourished and disappeared between the fall of the Han and the fall of the Tang, in the early third and early tenth centuries respectively. Wang Zhenping, in his survey of recorded Chinese relations with Japan, *Ambassadors from the Islands of Immortals* (2005) talks in terms of the 'multipolar nature of the international system in Asia' during this period, evoking a multiplicity of centres each with their respective hinterlands and each lasting for varying amounts of time.

Within Japan, this period saw a series of shifts, from a series of autonomous but competing regional powers, to a bureaucratic central state authority, with those in power self-consciously manipulating both the creation of history and structures of belief (including the worship of Buddha and the propagation of Shinto kami deities), shifts embodied in the commissioning of the first indigenous histories of the Yamato state (the Kojiki, Nihon Shoki, Shoku Nihongi), the written codification of ritual (the Engi Shiki), and the construction of monumental buildings for the purpose of worship (exemplified by the Ise Grand Shrine and the Todaiji Temple). All of this was undertaken in the context of the maintenance and regular redefinition of relationships with powers on the East Asian mainland, relationships that did so much to help define how

Japanese rulers saw themselves. And the nature of these relationships were symbolically expressed and protected by the observances regularly undertaken at Okinoshima.

All through this period, ritual observances were carried out on the island of Okinoshima. The Munakata clan that controlled both the island and the coastal hinterland of the seascape of which Okinoshima was such an important part was a major regional power playing a significant role in the development of the Yamato state, the first centralised authority in the Japanese archipelago. Okinoshima, with its remarkable preservation of the material traces of ritual activities, and the associated sites of the Munakata region, provides an unparalleled example of the interplay between traditions of ritual observances, the shifting relationships between local authorities and the waxing and waning of centralised authority in the process of state formation, and the exchange of official ambassadors, religious ideas and commodities such as silk, all in the context of the emergence of the new East Asian identity.

Silk, both as metaphor and commodity, provides an appropriate framework for the complex interweaving of finely spun narrative threads that surround what happened at Okinoshima from the third to the 10th centuries. Silk also encapsulates wider themes exemplified by the ritualised observances at Okinoshima, which are of global significance, and which give Okinoshima its outstanding universal value, we see at Okinoshima are interwoven into East Asian history during these centuries. These themes are set out above. The interactions that structured the relationships between Japan, Korea and China at this time were shaped by perceptions (how leaders saw themselves in relation to each other) and experiences (including encounters with foreigners and activities undertaken to attempt to influence the supernatural forces that controlled the outcome of events). Even today, international diplomacy is all about perception. Many of the difficulties faced around the world are the result of misunderstood intentions and disagreements over belief. Can Okinoshima help us understand how to avoid such misunderstood intentions in the future?

Here is a passage about 'fusang', a mythical 'other world' as perceived by China through much of its early history. Fusang was probably not Japan, but it is a perception of lands to the east of China, separated by sea. And central to Fusang is the notion of the mulberry tree, the source of silk, a metaphor for Japan. In Europe, we are used to thinking of Japan as the Isles of Gold: it was gold that encouraged Marco Polo to head east. But in fact silk was one of the main units of value for much of the period we are thinking about. And weaving narratives makes a good metaphor for how we can present an archaeology of religion about Okinoshima. And this is additionally appropriate as the Munakata deities are goddesses of weaving.

Wang provides a vivid introduction as to how Japan was seen by China during much of this period:

> 'Ancient Japan is an island of magic plants, animals, and immortals in Chinese legends. Jade greens, golden vegetables, and peaches grow on the ground, and mulberry trees of more than one thousand meters rise from the blue seas. These trees bear one-inch fruits, which are part of the diet of the immortals, who have shining golden bodies and fly like birds. As if they were two lovers embracing each other, these mulberry trees usually share the same roots, and their branches often intertwine. This vivid imagery prompts the Chinese to use the terminology "intertwining mulberry tree" (fusang) as a metaphor for ancient Japan' (Wang 2005: 7).

The Munakata deities who inhabit (and indeed are embodied by Okinoshima) are deities of weaving. Michael Como, in *Weaving and Binding: immigrant gods and female immortals in ancient Japan* (2009) has recently argued for a major role for cults inspired by the Chinese festival calendar in the religious and political structures of the early Japanese state. One of the best-documented such cults is that associated with the Weaver Maiden and the Cowherd:

> 'the Weaver Maiden, daughter of the Celestial Emperor, was said to have fallen in love with a cowherd and consequently neglected her weaving duties. As a result, the two lovers were condemned to spend the entire year on different sides of the Heavenly River (the Milky Way) until the seventh day of the seventh month, when the Cowherd was allowed to cross the Milky Way and be united with his lover for a single night' (Como 2009: 38).

This legend and the associated cult has a range of meanings relating to rites of sacrifice and purification: the Cowherd carries associations of the sacrifice of cows; the Weaver Maiden has associations with brides

sacrificed to the water deity – sacrificial victims who are later transformed into objects of worship. In modern Japan, these beliefs are enacted through the Tanabata Festival of July 7th, which played an important role in cultural consciousness at least from the reign of the Emperor Tenmu, who did so much to reconfigure Japanese divine power (Como 2009:39).

Silk itself was of great importance throughout the period in question: it was perhaps the single most valued commodity exchanged through the diplomatic missions and then trade. And the process of silk production was also of great symbolic significance: weaving implements and elements of the weaving process figure in ritual centres and shrines 'both at court and across the Japanese islands' including Ise, where they comprise 'according to the *Engishiki,* four of the twenty-one sacred regalia' (Como 2009: 39). The Munakata region is particularly important in this regard: 'Probably the largest caches of weaving tools unearthed to date … have been at the Munakata shrine in Kyushu and the Okinoshima shrine, an important cultic centre for the worship of the Munakata deities. This was an important stopover point for vessels travelling between Kyushu and the Korean peninsula'. The 8th century *Hizen fudoki*, a gazetteer from north Kyushu, gives an account of the 'propitiation of the vengeful Akaru Hime, a female deity whose cultic identity appears to have been close to weaving', and which 'clearly illustrates how weaving implements could and were used for the pacification or propitiation of vengeful spirits' (Como 2009: 40).

The silk thread linked Japan into the emerging East Asian world of tribute systems, exchange and eventually commerce that connected the central Japanese court in the Yamato with Kyushu and on to the Korean peninsula, the developing trading ports on the Chinese coast, the capitals of successive Chinese dynasties and out into the world beyond, through southeast Asian maritime routes to India and the Mediterranean, and across the caravan routes of central Asia to Iran and beyond. Although we do not have extensive archaeological evidence for the vehicles used, maritime archaeology provides a few clues as to the form of vessels used by embassies and traders at this time: double-hulled or lashed-lug log boats from Shanghai and Mindanao, some with bulkheads as in the Rugao ship from Jiangsu province, and some flat bottomed craft with chine strakes, as found in the Anapuchi Pond in Korea (Sasaki 2011, Tono 1995). It was to secure the safe passage of such vessels that ritual observances were undertaken at Okinoshima, vessels that were to return laden with the kinds of treasures eventually deposited in the Shosoin Imperial Treasury at the great Todaiji Temple in Nara (Hayashi 1975).

6.   Comparable sites

Now that we have established the context and woven together some of the strands into a fabric of narrative, we can turn to identifying suitable comparators from other parts of Japan and around the world for Okinoshima and the associated sites in the Munakata region. I approach this by exploring a number of categories of site, some of which have been inscribed as World Heritage Sites in their own right, and others which have not. The categories include: sites of structured deposition; urban religious centres; pilgrimage centres and sites of isolation (in which I also revisit sacred islands and sacred mountains); natural places of worship, including Saami sacred sites, sanctuaries from the world of classical Greece, and sacred groves; burial mound cemeteries; and shrines, including a discussion of Ise and Izumo, two of the most famous ancient shrines from Japan. Then, by way of comparison with the exchange and interaction networks that criss-crossed the Genkai Sea, and that are in many ways the raison d'etre of Okinoshima, I will also consider the Silk Road and Viking trade networks.

Sites of structured deposition

Placing offerings on or in the ground as offerings to spirits and deities as a ritual practice is a well-known phenomenon. In many cases, such objects (that can include material culture, either high value (gold) or everyday (pottery), specially made, or objects which are akin to those used in mundane activities, and animals, their parts, and human beings) are sacrificed to the deities. Insoll provides a useful discussion of sacrifice which focuses on the notion of 'killing': objects, animals or people who are sacrificed are killed or broken, and this act of killing or breakage forms a key part of the ritual practice. Other acts of deposition can include placing items in tombs to accompany the deceased. At Okinoshima we do not have evidence for actual breakage of objects during rituals, although further investigation of the objects placed at the ritual sites may cast new light on this question.

Many of the most remarkable archaeological remains from Okinoshima and Oshima appear to represent deliberate acts of deposition, interpreted as votive offerings to the Munakata deities to secure safe passage for seafarers traversing the Genkai Sea. The reconstructions of these votive rituals suggest that the objects would have been carefully arranged, perhaps with attention being paid to their spatial relationships on the ground, both to each other and to the people participating in the rituals, actually undertaking the ritual acts, or as worshipers or other observers. For a number of years now, archaeologists have been undertaking studies of what have become known as 'structured deposits', sets of material culture that are placed in or on the ground in deliberate association with each other. The ongoing research into the 80,000 objects recovered from Okinoshima during the excavation campaigns of the 1950s to the 1970s suggests that this material may also lend itself to this kind of analysis. Important examples from elsewere which may provide useful comparators include J D Hill's analysis of artefacts and animal bones from the thousands of pits from Iron Age Britain, notably the important hilltop centre at Danebury, and the great sacrificial pits of early China, one of the most spectacular recent example being from Sanxingdui near Lake Dai in Yunnan Province, southwestern China (Bagley 2001).

An important distinction made in this recent re-analysis of the archaeological artefacts from Okinoshima, is between the placement of objects as part of a ritual, and the placing of objects either stored in readiness before a ritual or put away or discarded after the ritual (Oda 2011). A further question must concern whether any of the objects might have been used more than once: for example were some of what we might regard as higher value objects, such as the gilt dragon heads, used in repeated acts of veneration and propitiation. It may be of interest in future research to examine the way in which comparable objects feature in later Shinto rituals for which we have better historical records.

Urban religious centres

Many UNESCO World Heritage Sites cite religion in their justification for inscription. These range from the great cathedrals of Europe, such as Durham, Canterbury and Cologne, to the ceremonial urban centres of south and central America, including Caral-Supe in Peru, the sacred city of the Norte Chio culture and considered the most ancient city in the Americas; Copan and Tikal, centres of the Maya; Monte Alban (Oaxaca); Chan Chan, capital of the Chinu culture, and Inca Cuzco; Teotihuacan and Chichen Itza; El Tajin in Mexico, and Mexico city where the largest cathedral in the Americas sits atop the ancient centre of Tenochtitlan. Other major ceremonial centres in the Americas include Cahokia and Chavin, and Fuerte de Samapaipata, a town shaped from sculpted rocks dating to the 14th-16th centuries, the ceremonial centre of a pre-hispanic culture. A further ceremonial monument is the Temple of Heaven and the Imperial Sacrifical Altar in Beijing, China. But these monumental ceremonial centres and great cathedrals do not compare well with Okinoshima and its associated sites.

Pilgrimage centres and sites of isolation

Centres of pilgrimage are also well represented in World Heritage Sites: Baalbek (Lebanon) was a major site of pilgrimage in the Roman period; Sulayman Mountain (Kyrgyzstan) near the city of Osh is a major Muslim pilgrimage centre and 'the most complete example of a sacred mountain in Central Asia'; the Christian centres at Santiago de Compostela in Spain, and Kalwaria in Poland; and closer to Okinoshima we find sites comprising the pilgrimage routes of the Kii mountain range, including the Kumano shrine and of course the Buddhist centre of Mount Koya. A special issue of the journal *World Archaeology* (1994) presented a series of case studies about the Archaeology of Pilgrimage from early Christian Ireland, Mesoamerica, Peru, Buddhist India and the Hajj.

The pilgrimages to Okinoshima are relatively small scale, and it may make more sense to compare Okinoshima with a further category of religious sites are those which are deliberately set apart, isolated from the world of everyday, profane, experience. In my previous paper I reviewed the evidence for sacred islands (Kaner 2011: 345-352), including Itsukushima in Japan, elsewhere in the Pacific Papahanaumokuakea and Pohnpei, islands in the Aegean such as Malta, Gozo and Milos, and islands around the British Isles, including Lindisfarne and Lundy. In what follows I introduce a few further examples including Skellig Michael and Iona, and some coastal sites such as Mount Athos, and St Michael's Mount, as well as the islands in Vanuatu in the Pacific relating to Roi Mata's Domain, and Rapa Nui (Easter Island). I also discussed Okinoshima among the world's sacred mountains (Kaner 2011: 352-3),

and here, as an addendum, make some comments about Chinese sacred mountains and Mount Fuji.

While many of these sites, islands, coastal sites and mountains, can be seen as isolated and remote, they are often in fact well connected through established communications networks. Christopher Young (personal communication) notes that 'assessment of remoteness is very subjective … For example, monastic sites settled for their remoteness in the West often develop strong external contacts because of their holiness. They also have strong economic links to their surroundings and in many cases (e.g. the string of Anglo-Saxon monasteries down the east coast of England [including Lindisfarne]) appear to have been sited deliberately so that they can have external contacts…. It is worth noting that all the western monastic sites would also have had wide estates which provided their economic basis, though it is generally difficult to identify tangible evidence of this for the early sites.' For Young, 'the key factor is not whether or not they are islands but whether or not they are next to the sea and so have a degree of remoteness and isolation'. Young has further provided a helpful comparative chart of such sites (Table 1). This notion of interconnectedness in the context of apparent isolation is addressed in my discussion of island archaeology and seascapes (Kaner 2011: 345-346).

Sacred islands and coastal monasteries

Such sites include a series of monastic sites on islands and isolated coastal stretches, such as Skellig Michael (Ireland) and Iona (Scotland), and of course Mount Athos in Greece (which shares issues of accessibility with Okinoshima).

Mount Athos lies on the northern coast of Greece overlooking the Aegean Sea. For over 1000 years it has been an important centre of the Orthodox branch of the Christian Church. The rugged terrain is now the location of 20 monasteries housing 1400 monks. The mountain was granted autonomous status in 972 and historical records describe its development as a spiritual centre from 1054. Women and children are not allowed access to Mount Athos, a restriction shared with Okinoshima.

St Michael's Mount is a tidal island on the southwest coast the county of Cornwall, England. It is possible that it is the location of a place called Ictis by the classical author Posidonius, and there was a port for the trade in tin for which Cornwall was known through later prehistory and into the historical periods. It is thought that a monastery was founded there in the 6th century AD, which was then dedicated to St Michael sometime between 950 and 1050. In 1099 historical records describe how the mount, until then part of the mainland, was cut off by a huge sea flood. The monastic foundation became Ballinskelligs Abbey, which was closed down by Queen Elizabeth I. St Michael's Mount is often compared to another, similar coastal mount on the other side of the English Channel, at Mont St Michel, on the north coast of Brittany, and a World Heritage Site in its own right.

Off the north coast of England there are two further sacred islands. Off the east coast, jutting out into the North Sea, is the island of Lindisfarne, or Holy Island. This small island is joined to the mainland by a causeway which is flooded at high tide. Lindisfarne was an important centre of Celtic Christianity from the 6th century AD, and is associated with a number of important saints associated with the spread of Christianity in the northeast of England, including St Aidan and St Cuthbert. The monastic complex at Lindisfarne was subjected to Viking raids in the 9th and 10th centuries, as described by the historian monk Bede. In the 1550s a castle was built on the island.

Off the northwestern coast of Scotland lies the island of Iona, a further important centre of Celtic Christianity. The Irish monk Columba is thought to have arrived on Iona in 563 AD, fleeing from problems in his home country. The monastery established by Columba and the 12 monks who accompanied him became the centre of one of the most important monastic networks in Britain, and played an important role in the spread of Christianity to the Picts of Scotland in the later 6th century, and of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria in the 7th century. Like Lindisfarne, however, Iona was repeatedly attacked by Vikings from 794 onwards, and in 849 the monastery was closed. It is possible that the renowned illuminated manuscript known as the Book of Kells (as it was completed at the Abbey of Kells) was started on Iona.

Sacred islands are not restricted to northern Christianity. Two important examples can be cited from the Pacific. One of the most remote islands in the world, over 1000 miles from the closest inhabited island, is

Rapa Nui, also known as Easter Island, inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 1995. Now belonging to Chile, Rapa Nui was originally settled by Polynesian seafarers in the 1st millennium AD, who built the *moai* massive stone sculptures for which the island is most famous. 887 still stand in clusters and rows around the island. Population declined from a high of over 15,000 in the 1700s, to just 111 in 1877, although it has since recovered to an extent.

Further southeast in the Pacific lie the three islands of Efate, Lepela and Artok, now part of Vanuatu. First occupied some 3300 years ago, they are now inscribed as the World Heritage Site of Chief Roi Mata's domain. Although assumed to have been home to chiefly societies for many centuries, the eruption of Mount Kuwae in 1452 AD had a massive impact on the societies that inhabited the islands, and there was a long period of conflict between the various chiefs.   In 1600 AD Chief Roi Mata introduced a series of social reforms that finally saw an end to this feuding, with the result that Roi Mata's residence and the associated burials are regarded as an outstanding example of spiritual and moral heritage. Roi Mata's Domain is an important example of the long term development of spiritual and political systems in chiefly societies prior to European contact, which happened for the first time in 1840, and so can be compared to the situation at Okinoshima.

Sacred mountains

Sacred mountains are also an obvious category for comparison with Okinoshima, as discussed in my previous paper (Kaner 2011: 352-3). In China, there are a series of sacred mountains (Mt Emei, Mt Huang, Mt Tai, Mt Wutai and Mt Wuyi). Gina Barnes has reviewed the place that mountains played in Buddhist sacred landscapes (Barnes 1999).

25 sites comprise the sacred landscape of Mount Fuji, the highest mountain in the Japanese archipelago. Home to the Shinto deity Asama no Okami, Mount Fuji's outstanding universal value was considered to lie in the inspiration it has provided for artists for many centuries, and its significance as an object of pilgrimage. Narratives around Mount Fuji include the story of the interrelationship between Shinto and Buddhism, the relationship between people and nature, the symbolism of death and rebirth, and the practices involved in ascent and descent for the purpose of worship.

Several mountains in China have already been inscribed as World Heritage Sites, including Mount Tai, inscribed in 1987, and the focus of traditions of worship for over 3000 years, and the place where the Emperor on occasion performed some of the most important state rituals, the Feng and Shan sacrifices.

Natural places of worship

Richard Bradley in *An Archaeology of Natural Places* has made a compelling case for the need to understand the importance and significance attached to particular places in the landscape. In my previous paper I discussed the special significance often attached to caves, mountains and other particular landscape forms.

During the course of the sequence of ritual observances at Okinoshima, monuments (notably monumental buildings) became the focus of rituals in Japan, as against the placing of deposits in natural places. Okinoshima and the associated sites of Munakata offer the possibility of understanding the transformation of ritual practices that occurred at locations such as this.

The Laponian area in northern Sweden, designated a World Heritage Site in 1996, forms part of the lands traditionally used by the Saami peoples. These peoples occupied territories across northern Scandinavia and into Russia. Of particular interest in comparison with Okinoshima is their use of particular rock formations and islands as sacred places, and the fact that women were not allowed to take part in rites at these locations (unless they were dressed as men). Traditional Saami religion was a form of polytheistic paganism, with particular places being associated with certain spirits. Sacred sites included mountains, springs and certain land forms. Shamans, or *noaidi*, played an important role in Saami ritual practice, and shamans drums have a special place in Saami material culture. The Christianisation of the Saami from the 18th century led to the destruction of many sacred sites, or *siejdde*, and less than 100 shaman drums are known to survive, despite many thousands being made. Some elements of Saami religion are close to what

is known of Viking beliefs.

One of the most famous Saami *siejdde* is the island of Ukonsaari in a lake in northern Finland. Items deposited in a cave there in the course of sacrificial offerings include metal items (including a silver ring and bronze work), now thought to date to between 1000 and 1350 AD. (Bradley 1999: 5). Ukonsaari is one of some 500 known Saami sacred sites across northern Scandinavia, and are usually related to places with very distinctive topography, 'often rock formations that bear a certain resemblance to humans, animals or birds' (Bradley 1999:6). Unlike Okinoshima, the sacrifices at Saami sacred sites were 'closely bound up with the everyday lives of the Saami … to ensure a dependable food supply', as well as ensuring the health of the reindeer herds on which the Saami depended (Bradley 1999: 9).

Another set of important sacred natural places are the sanctuaries of ancient Greece (see Kaner 2011: 349-350). These sanctuaries are often in very striking locations, and places which can be considered liminal in some way: mountaintops, springs and caves being very popular. Earlier sanctuaries were often the focus of the votive offering of everyday items and figurines. And unlike Okinoshima, animal sacrifice was often an important component of the associated rituals. Delphi on the slopes of Mount Parnassus in central Greece, now a World Heritage Site, as well as being considered the centre of the world (the navel, or *omphalos* of the Goddess Gaia or Earth) as identified by Zeus, was home to the most important oracle of ancient Greece. Apollo was worshipped at Delphi, as he was at a series of other sanctuaries on the Greek mainland, the Peloponnese and the islands of the Aegean. Caves include the Vari Cave and Phyle Cave in Attica, associated with Apollo, Pan and Hermes. Some of these caves contain marble votive tablets. At the Phyle Cave one such votive tablet sees Hermes, messenger of the gods, leading three females, who along with the associations with water, are perhaps reminiscent of the Munakata deities. One of the most important islands in the Cyclades is Delos, a tiny island just 5 kilometres in length, now only home to archaeological remains. The location of an important sanctuary to the god Apollo, Delos was inscribed as a World Heritage site in 1990, and has remains dating from the Neolithic, Mycenean and palaeochristian periods, spanning some three millennia.

Sacred groves

A further group of sacred World Heritage sites of interest in relation to Okinoshima are sacred groves. Some of the components of the property being nominated share characteristics of sacred groves, and indeed many later Shinto shrines have sacred groves within their compounds. The Kamitakayama and Shimotakayama ritual sites on Mount Munakata, within the precints of Munakata Taisha and an integral part of the Hetsumiya, along with the outdoor ritual sites on Okinoshima and on the summit of Mount Mitake, were all sacred groves.

> 'Sacred groves are clusters of trees considered of sacred significance. In many parts of the world they are associated with specific deities and sacrifice. Elsewhere, in particular in more recent times, they have are related to movements for the preservation of natural resources, plants and animals, especially in the face of aggressive urbanisation. Sacred groves were important features of the mythological landscape and cult practice of Celtic, Baltic, Germanic, ancient Greek, Near Eastern, Roman, and Slavic polytheism, and were also used in India, Japan, and West Africa. Examples of sacred groves include the Greco-Roman *temenos*, the Norse *hörgr*, and the Celtic *nemeton*, which was largely but not exclusively associated with Druidic practice. During the Northern Crusades, there was a common practice of building churches on the sites of sacred groves'.

Famous examples include (the possibly fictional) pagan centre of Romowe or Romuva in the Prussian Baltic, which inspired later romantic Lithuanian nationalist movements. Described by Peter von Dusberg in 1326, the groves and shrines were home to a 'Pagan Pope' who had spiritual rule over the Balts. At Sventybrastis in Lithuania, four sacred oak trees still stand at this long-used site of pagan ritual. In Scandinavia, as described by Adam of Bremen, every tree at the Temple at Old Uppsala, a major centre of Norse paganism, was considered sacred. In the Celtic polytheistic tradition especially connected to Druidism, the sacred grove or *nemeton* was associated with the Celtic goddess Nemetone. A famous example is the Nevet Forest in Brittany, northwestern France.

In the world of the classical Mediterranean, early geographers and historians such as Strabo and Herodotus

describe important sacred groves. Strabo discusses the site of Drunemeton in Galatia in Turkey, whose name seems to relate again to the Celtic Goddess Nemetone. Many groves in classical Greece and Italy were dedicated to specific deities, and many are thought to have been the place of human sacrifice to propitiate those gods. Herodotus considered that the sacred grove at Dodona in Epirus in northwestern Greece was perhaps the oldest Hellenistic oracle, with its origins going back earlier than 1000 BC. Dodona, eventually associated with Zeus and Dione, went on to become second only to Delphi in terms of importance: priestesses interpreted the rushing of the wind through the oak and beech leaves as the words of the deity.

Sacred groves are found in many other parts of the world, including the Americas, Africa, South and Southeast Asia. In India, while some 14,000 sacred groves are known, it is thought that there may have been as many as 100,000. The Kodava people of Karnataka in the south of India maintained over 1000 themselves. Each sacred grove is associated with a particular deity, mainly Hindu, but some Islamic and Buddhist examples are also known. In Africa the capital of the historic Ghana (Wagadu) Empire (9th-13th centuries), which became wealthy on the profits of trans-Saharan trade, had sacred groves, *al-gaba*, and some still exist, such as the Buoyem Sacred Grove.

The sacred groves of Osun-Osogbo in Nigeria were inscribed as World Heritage in 2005. 75 hectares along the River Oshun on the outskirts of the city of Osogbo, an important city of the Yoruba people established about 400 years ago, comprise the only surviving sacred grove associated with the Yoruba civilisation. The grove is associated with the Yoruba goddess of fertility, Osun and is the focus of many ritual activities and festivals throughout the year which continue to today. It comprises some 40 shrines, two palaces, 5 sacred places and 9 worship points, many of which are marked by sculptures and worship points. The sacred Mijikenda Kaya forests in Kenya was home to the Mbuti 'pygmies' and focus of Victor Turner's famous book '*Forest of Symbols*'. Neither of these sites has been the focus of much archaeological investigation, although Tim Insoll's research on African sacred groves does indicate the potential significance of the types of deposit than can be expected beneath the Shimotakamiya open air ritual area at the Munakata Grand Shrine.

Closer to Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region, many Shinto shrines in Japan are surrounded by stands of native woodland, sacred groves in their own right. In Okinawa the Seifa-Utaki sacred grove, with stands of native *kubanoki* (a kind of palm) and *yabunikkei* (a kind of wild cinnamon) and the associated rock formation were inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 2003.

Burial mound cemeteries

The Shimbaru-Nuyama mounded tomb group comprises a cluster of 41 mounded tombs of varying sizes from the 5th – 7th centuries which overlook the Genkai Sea, facing the islands of Oshima and Okinoshima. The tomb group is considered to visually control the *kaihokudo*, the maritime route that linked the Munakata region with Okinoshima and the Korean peninsula. The tomb cluster is thought to be the final resting places of the rulers of the Munakata clan.

Burial within or beneath a mounded tomb is a very widespread form of funerary practice around the world, and a number of mounded tombs and mounded tomb complexes are already inscribed as world heritage sites.

In East Asia, the tradition of burial beneath great tomb mounds begins with the burial of the First Emperor of China, Qin Shi Huang Di in the 3rd century BC, inscribed as a World Heritage site in 1987. The construction of mounded tombs for powerful individuals spread through China, into the Korean peninsula and the Japanese archipelago, where some 100,000 mounded tombs are estimated to have been built in the period which takes its name from these 'old mounds', the Kofun period. The Shimbaru-Nuyama mounded tomb group is by no means the most important of the tomb clusters from Kofun period Japan, or even in Kyushu. Much more impressive are the massive tombs of the Kinai region, including the Mozu-Furuichi Kofun Group which contains the largest kofun of all, the Daisen Kofun considered to be the tomb of the 5th century Emperor Nintoku: at 486 metres in length the largest single burial monument of the ancient world. The Mozu-Furuichi Kofun group is currently on Japan's Tentative List for World Heritage nomination. Elsewhere in Japan there are also a series of tombs whose burial chambers were exquisitely decorated, inlcuding the Takehara tomb in Fukuoka Prefecture, and the renowned Takamatsuzuka tomb in Nara prefecture, possible final resting place of Emperor Mommu (Kidder 1999: 191). Some of these decorated tombs, notably those

around Kumamoto Prefecture, exhibit an indigenous style of decoration, while others, such as Takamatsuzuka are clearly influenced by continental models, from Koguryo and Tang China.

Some of the earliest mounded tombs are the long barrows and passage graves of the European Neolithic. These Neolithic tombs are different to the monumental burial mounds of East Asia in that they were burial places for multiple members of the community. Spectacular examples, already inscribed as World Heritage Sites include the monuments of the Bru na Boinne (the bend of the River Boyne) in Ireland, including the megalithic tombs of Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth. The passage grave at Newgrange, which also exhibits outstanding megalithic art carved on to the stones that make up the burial facilities, also had a calendrical function, the passage being aligned with the mid-winter sunrise. This calendrical function is also important at Stonehenge in England. Recent archaeological investigation has demonstrated that the henge and stone circles at Stonehenge were also associated with the world of the dead, and indeed the landscape around Stonehenge, also inscribed as World Heritage, contains 10 Neolithic long barrows and 348 Bronze Age round barrows, demonstrating that area was used for burial for over 1000 years.   Other significant buried tombs in Europe include those in Brittany, northwestern France, such as Gavrinis at Carnac, where decorated megaliths from other sites were re-used in the construction of these great tombs. One of the most famous, Saint-Michel, was appropriated by early Christians who constructed a chapel on the top of this mound.

Mounded tombs are found across Eurasia, in Africa and the Americas. Many contain evidence for long distance trade from remarkably early periods. For example, tomb mounds from Jarigole in the Turkana region of Kenya contain coastal commodities that attest to extensive trade networks among the established pastoralist societies in East Africa. Pastoralist societies were also responsible for the kurgans of central Asia, with renowned examples from Kazakhstan and Mongolia (See Stark et al. 2012). In the Americas, mound building, both for burial and other ceremonial purposes, was a defining characteristic of the Hopewell cultures, which represent an extensive trading network that developed across much of the eastern and central United States, with traded items included in the repertoire of grave goods. Cahokia, one of the central places of the Hopewell tradition, was inscribed as UNESCO World Heritage in 1982. The 1600 hectare site, close to the city of St Louis includes 120 mounds, including the largest mound in north America, the Monk's Mound, 30m high. The site, which is thought to have had a population of 10-20,000 people was occupied from 1050-1150 AD. A smaller but no less interesting example is The Devil's Lake – Sourisford complex of mounded tombs in Manitoba which was constructed in the late 8th and early 9th centuries AD include copper objects and marine shells in the burial assemblages, evidence for far-flung exchange networks.

Several manifestations of mounded tomb are associated with state formation and trade. Over 1000 mounded tombs associated with Dilmun and Tylos in Bahrain are now inscribed as UNESCO World Heritage. The contents of these tombs, which include ceramics from Mesopotamia, are evidence for the so-called 'Magan' trade which linked one of the earliest state level societies in the world in Mesopotamia, with southern Arabia and the Indian subcontinent between 2250 and 1750 BC. Another example would be the Roman burial mounds at Bartlow Hills in Cambridgeshire, eastern England. These are the highest confirmed burial mounds in northwestern Europe and date from the late 1st to the early 2nd centuries AD. Located near an important centre of Roman rule in Britain, they contain objects imported from the Rhineland in Germany.

A further group of mounded tombs of interest here are those from northwestern Europe and Scandinavia dating to the later part of the first millennium AD. Burial in mounds is a funerary practice that extends back into prehistory in Europe, with famous examples being the Hochdorf chiefly burial in southern Germany dating to the Iron Age. Tombs with particular significance for early state formation and trade include those at the Viking trading centre of Birka and the royal cemetery of Jelling, and the Anglo-Saxon ship burials at Sutton Hoo in eastern England.

At Sutton Hoo, overlooking the River Deben in Suffolk, eastern England, are a number of burial facilities including a complex of 20 burial mounds dating to the late 6th and early 7th centuries AD. The most famous mound, Mound 1, was built over a 27 metre-long ship which is thought to have contained the burial of King Raedwald, ruler of the East Angles, an Anglo-Saxon kingdom which had a royal centre, perhaps at nearby Rendlesham, as well as an important centre of overseas trade which developed at Gipeswic (modern-day Ipswich) from the early 7th century. The ship burial at Sutton Hoo is compared to accounts in the famous epic Viking saga of Beowulf, set in southern Sweden. Many of the rich artefacts, which are considered some of the best art of its time from Britain or Europe, include silver plate from the Eastern Roman Empire and a wealth

of ceremonial items, including a very famous helmet and shield. Mound 2, now reconstructed to its full height, also contained comparable treasures, including fragments of a blue glass cup. Sutton Hoo therefore makes a good comparator for the Shimbaru-Nuyama tomb complex due to its associations with nearby ruling, administrative and trading centres, overseas trade, and protohistoric written sources.

In Denmark, the site of Jelling was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 1994. Jelling is a royal centre associated with the 10th century rulers Harald Bluetooth and King Gorm. Two large burial mounds, some 70 metres in diameter and up to 11 metres high were built over a large stone ship. The mounds were built partly over pre-existing Bronze Age burial mound, suggesting a desire to be linked to earlier monuments. The northern mound was built around 958-959 AD and is thought to be the tomb of King Gorm. Two rune stones at the site refer explicitly to King Harald and King Gorm, along with the earliest representation of Jesus Christ in Scandanavia. A small white church stands on the site of at least three earlier phases of church building, the earliest of which was built in 965 AD by King Harald, and was the first Christian church in Scandavania. Although not many burial goods remained, the site is of great significance for understanding both the Nordic pagan tradition and the beginnings of Christianity in Scandinavia. The site makes a good comparison with the Shimbaru-Nuyama tomb group as it is associated with local rulers, early historical written sources, and a major transition in religious belief.

A final burial complex of interest here is the site of Sammallahdenmaki overlooking the Gulf of Bothnia in Finland. Inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 1999, the site comprises over 30 granite burial cairns dating to 1500-500 BC. Over 3000 Bronze Age burial cairns are known from the coast of Finland altogether, but Sammallahdenmaki is the best example. Burial goods included items of bronze, despite a complete absence of copper or tin, the ingredients needed for bronze, in the area, demonstrating that these commodities must have been traded in. The cairns, and two associated structures assumed to have had a ritual purpose, were also related to the worship of the Sun, at the centre of a belief system that spread throughout much of Scandinavia from this time. Of significance for the Shimbaru-Nuyama tomb group, in addition to the suggestion that those interred at Sammallahdenmaki were in control of extensive trade networks, is the degree of intervisibility of many of these tombs, and their positioning overlooking the coast.

Shrines

Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region include in the nomination a series of shrines. For the purposes of this paper, a shrine needs to include a built component, and can be differentiated from a 'natural place' of worship, for example a rock formation, river, or mountain top. Very often, of course, such natural places are often subsequently the locations of built places of worship.

> 'A **shrine** (Latin: *scrinium* "case or chest for books or papers"; Old French: *escrin* "box or case") is a holy or sacred place, which is dedicated to a specific deity, ancestor, hero, martyr, saint, daemon or similar figure of awe and respect, at which they are venerated or worshipped. Shrines often contain idols, relics, or other such objects associated with the figure being venerated. A shrine at which votive offerings are made is called an altar. Shrines are found in many of the world's religions, including Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese folk religion, Shinto, and Asatru as well as in secular and non-religious settings such as a war memorial. Shrines can be found in various settings, such as churches, temples, cemeteries, or in the home, although portable shrines are also found in some cultures. A shrine may become a focus of a cult image.'

On Okinoshima itself, shrine buildings were constructed at Okitsu-miya sometime between the 9th century and the middle of the 17th century, and now enshrine one of the three Munakata deities, Tagorihime-no-kami. Associated with this, on the northern side of the island of Oshima, is the Okitsu-miya Yohaijo, which was built by the mid-18th century to allow people to worship the deity at Okitsu-miya without having to travel to Okinoshima. A third shrine complex (Nakatsu-miya) was established in the 16th century on the southern side of Oshima island, at the foot of Mount Mitake, once rituals in the open air on the summit of Mount Mitake had stopped. Shrine buildings were also constructed in the vicinity of the earlier open-air ritual site on the summit of Mount Mitake.

Today, the main shrine complex is the Munakata Grand Shrine (Munakata Taisha) on the Tsuri River, whose grounds today include not only the Hetsu-miya (where shrine buildings are recorded from the 12th century,

the current versions of which enshrine the Munakata deity Ichikishimahime-no-kami) but also two earlier ritual sites: the Kamitakamiya ritual site on the summit of Mount Munakata, from which both Oshima and Okinoshima are visible on a clear day, where shrine buildings were established in the 13th century; and the Shimotakamiya ritual site, halfway up Mount Munakata, where a large amount of items thought to have been used in votive offerings similar to those undertaken on Okinoshima have been discovered (including sue and haji ware pottery, boat-shaped figures and objects made of talc).

While comparison with shrines from around the world is beyond the scope of this paper, two recent publications from English Heritage provide some useful comparators for Shinto shrine buildings and compounds.

> 'Information about pre-Roman religious beliefs in Britain and Europe is abundant but mostly indirect, with brief references in classical authors such as Caesar and a wide variety of much later (early medieval) written sources. Iconography and art history may also provide valuable insights but usually lack detailed context or chronology. For Barry Cunliffe, the complex patterns of Iron Age religious beliefs are now 'entirely beyond reconstruction', though from the written sources it seems that the natural world was suffused by a pantheon of gods and spirits whose influence was mediated by ritual behaviour in everyday life as well as in specific seasonal religious activities overseen by specialists, or Druids. There were celestial gods, mother goddesses, cults of fertility, healing, and war, and everywhere a vigorous belief in the spirits of nature and place. Sometimes these beliefs were manifested in propitiatory acts that have left an archaeological signature, in the form of votive deposits of metalwork, human or animal remains. These often occur in or at natural features like rivers, springs, bogs, caves, rocks and clumps of trees (the sacred groves referred to by classical writers), but are sometimes associated with built structures and enclosures.' (English Heritage 2011a).

English Heritage identify two main forms of prehistoric shrine in England: timber causeways and platforms associated with votive deposits in rivers and wetlands, especially from the Later Bronze Age and Earlier Iron Age (1500-300 BC), and small shrine buildings and associated enclosures from the Later Iron Age (400BC – 43 AD). Important examples of the former type include Flag Fen in eastern England, where a one kilometre long wooden causeway across an embayment connected the mainland to a two-hectare wooden platform. Ritual votive deposits included broken bronze swords and other objects.   Significant examples of shrine buildings and associated enclosures include Caesar's Camp at present-day Heathrow Airport, west of London, and Hayling Island in Hampshire, southern England. Most of these structures were relatively small, circular or rectangular, with the main shrine building being less than 10 metres in diameter. In some cases, for example at Fisons Way, Thetford, also in the east of England, small shrine structures were located in a larger enclosure (222 metres by 165 metres at Thetford). At some of these shrine structures, large quantities of artefacts were placed in the ground, apparently used as votive offerings. At Hayling Island, for example, these included pottery, metal brooches and other accessories, coins, fragments of a mirror, and warrior gear. Shrines continued to be constructed in Britain after the during and after the Roman period, and include altars, statuettes of particular deities, and objects of votive or talismanic significance, including for example phallic symbols. A good example of a later shrine complex from the Anglo-Saxon period was discovered at Yeavering in Yorkshire, in the north of England.

Comparison with Ise and Izumo

Architectural studies dominate our understanding and appreciation of Ise and Izumo, the two great centres of Shinto. This is also true of the Itsukushima Shrine on the island of Miyajima in Hiroshima. By way of comparison with Okinoshima and the Munakata Grand Shrine, I will review the recent study of Ise Shrine and the development of its relationship with Izumo. The intention is to demonstrate the potential complexity of factors involved in the development of the facilities which are known today, and is equally applicable to Okinoshima and the associated sites. These authors effectively show how architectural elements are deliberately manipulated in these shrines, from the numbers of battens on the roofs of the shrine buildings, to subtle differences in the height of platforms on which buildings were constructed, to differences in the numbers of fences that surrounded the complexes at different times and sequences of rebuilding, to express differences in authority and to create a hierarchy of access, both visual and physical (see especially Coaldrake 1996: 22 and 27). Comparable strategies were employed at Okinoshima.

What is now known as Ise Shrine (Ise Jingu) in fact comprises an Inner Shrine (*Naiku*) and Outer Shrine (*Geku*) and over 80 auxiliary shrines (*betsugu, sessha* and *massha*) in the lower valley of the Miya River at the foot of the northern slopes of Mount Takakura, overlooked by a number of smaller hills (Wada 1995: 63). Coaldrake suggests that there are in fact over 120 different shrines making up the Ise complex. The Inner and Outer Shrines are known to have been located here since at least the late 7th century. Ise Shrine is well known for the practice of rebuilding in an alternative location, every 20 years. This was first recorded in 804, although the practice may precede that date. The Shrine authorities themselves suggest a date of 690, in the reign of Empress Jito, while a special form of 'jewel-encrusted sword' (*tamamaki no tachi*) which is included as one of the shrine treasures, and also renewed every 20 years, are similar to example found from the late 6th century Fujinoki tomb in Nara, which has been interpreted as suggesting an even earlier date (Wada 1995: 64), although it is quite possible that such swords could have survived as heirlooms from earlier times and been subsequently included in the Ise repertoire. The most recent cycle of rebuilding (*shikinen sengu)* was completed in October 2013.

The Kojiki suggests that ritual observances were performed at Ise during the reign of the Emperor Suinin, calculated by some to be around 3 BC, i.e. in the middle of the Yayoi period, when the site of Yoshinogari in Saga Prefecture was at its height (Wada 1995: 75). Wada Atsumu reviews the various debates and concludes that Ise Shrine as we know it was founded in 537, the second year of the reign of the Emperor Seika, although prior to this the accepted date was 477 (Wada 1995: 77-78). This is important in regard to the Munakata Grand Shrine, as Ise was to become the main shrine for the imperial family, differentiated from 'other shrines throughout the country, where local inhabitants would communally worship various deities and clans would worship their ancestors and tutelary gods' (Wada 1995: 70). Munakata shrine was one of these 'other shrines'.

Wada suggests that the origins of Ise Shrine may be found in the context of certain locations in the landscape being perceived as particularly suitable for particular types of deity, in particular those relating to water and to cereals. This is a point also made in regard to deities in prehistoric and classical Europe (Bradley 1999: 25-28), and is relevant to Okinoshima through the association of the Munakata deities with the sea. In regard to cases of worshipping water divinities, notably springs and along the upper reaches of river, Wada cites the Jonokoshi and Rokudai sites in Mie, Sakahara and Furu in Nara, where concentrations of artefacts and features (including pillared buildings, wells, water races, ceramics, perforated discs and sword-shaped stone objects) thought to have been used in ritual contexts were found (Wada 1995: 78). The other major class of deities, those with power over cereals (especially rice) were 'often worshipped at downstream confluences and on river sandbars'. Other examples include the three Kumano shrines in Wakayama Prefecture and the Hirose shrine in Nara. Wada suggests that the Outer Shrine at Ise is associated with the worship of water spirits, being located on an old sandbar in the river, while the Inner Shrine is related to other deities:

> 'Ise shrine initially evolved along the following lines. First, in the early half of the sixth century, in the year *hinoto mi* (537), Ise Shrine, (that is the Inner Shrine) was established in the lower valley of the Kushidawagawa and the *itsuki no himemoko* was sent to attend to the worship of the sun goddess. It may be assumed that at this stage there was still no permanent shrine building, and only a temporary structure was erected whenever a religious ceremony was to be performed. After the Jinshin disturbance the site of the inner shrine was moved to the upper valley of the Isuzugawa, and one reason for this move was probably a desire to identify the chief deity Amaterasu Okami as divine progenitrix of the imperial family. At the same time, the gods worshipped by clans inhabiting the middle and lower reaches of the Kushidagawa were also enshrined in the Inner Shrine as attendant deities, while the god of cereals and food worshipped along the middle and lower reaches of the Miyagawa was made responsible for food offerings to Amaterasu, resulting in the establishment of the Outer Shrine. The, during the reign of the Empress Jito, the first periodic reconstruction of both shrines was carried out' (Wada 1995: 83).

The Ise Shrine took on particular significance for the ruling dynasty with the victory of Prince Oama, who subsequently became Emperor Tenmu, over his nephew, Prince Otomo, at the end of the Jinshin civil war (*Jinshin no ran*), a war of succession that broke out in 672 following the death of Emperor Tenji, father of Otomo and older brother of Oama. Legends held that a 'divine wind' blew from Ise Shrine where the Sun

Goddess Amaterasu, regarded since the time of Jito as the ancestral deity of the imperial family, was enshrined. This divine wind helped Oama win the battle.

Ise has a long and complex history, including: neglect during the Middle Ages when imperial power waned leading to a break in the practice of rebuilding between the 1460s and 1580s; unprecedented attention towards the end of the Edo period, with massive pilgrimages (over 4.5 million visitors recorded in just one year in the 1830s); being the most important shrine within the prewar State Shinto; transformation and rehabilitation first as an exemplar of Japanese aesthetics.

This long and complex history is sometimes masked by attempts to represent Ise as embodying 'some of the most treasured aesthetic values associated with Japan' (Reynolds 2001: 316), a timeless manifestation of the unbroken continuity of the imperial line, providing a prototype for Japanese architecture. Most recently, as argued by Jonathan Reynolds, a new postwar vision of Ise has been established 'compatible with the rhetoric of democracy that dominated postwar Japanese political discourse and was consonant with modernist aesthetic values' (Reynolds 2001: 316). To adapt a saying often applied to another World Heritage monument with a complex history, Stonehenge, 'Every age gets the Ise it deserves'. This line of thinking is further developed by Tze M. Loo in his paper 'Escaping its past: recasting the Grand Shrine of Ise', which brings the narrative up to date, and provides a critical appraisal of Ise Shrine's engagement with the World Heritage movement. Archaeological excavation at Ise, as at other important shrines, has been limited, although recent studies are casting light on the early development of the buildings present at Ise and at other shrines. Nonetheless, no other shrine complex has received the intense archaeological investigation afforded to Okinoshima, and herein lies part of Okinoshima's exceptional importance. There is further potential to compare with Mount Miwa and the associated settlement at Makimuku and burial complex in Nara (Barnes 2007).

William Coaldrake's comparative study of the Grand Shrines of Ise and Izumo (Coaldrake 1996: 16-50) is instructive for our consideration of Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region, as it shows how the struggle between Ise and Izumo for hegemony in the middle centuries of the 1st millennium BC was played out in architectural terms. Coaldrake argues that the buildings at these shrines 'do more than act as mere symbols of how they become part of the very fabric of authority and its institutional processes, in turn exerting their own powerful influence on the way that authority is defined, enacted and enforced' (Coaldrake 1996: 17). In addition, foreshadowing the comparative study required for World Heritage status, Coaldrake also makes the following point about different forms of monumentality in Europe and Japan:

> 'Monumentality, or the power of buildings "to impress and endure", is customarily expressed in large and visually imposing structures of solid and seemingly immutable character. Such is the timeless quality of the great cathedrals of Europe, their massive masonry forms an affirmation of belief in the immortality of God. Ise and Izumo … shed light on the meaning of monumentality to Japanese authority and its relationship to the pervasive counter-concept of the impermanence of all things' (Coaldrake 1996: 17).

He further argues for different conceptualisations of monumentality at Ise and Izumo:

> 'At Izumo the quest for monumentality was pursued in terms of the monolithic, that is, imposing size and permanence, a quest which reached its most ambitious expression in the Heian period. The massive pillars, bound together in clusters to create a structure as large as any built in the course of Japanese civilization, tell of an ageless ambition to reach for the heavens and defy the forces of gravity, even time itself. Although at Izumo the roofing materials required periodic maintenance, given the remarkable durability of Japanese cypress, the structural timbers could certainly have lasted a millennium had other structural problems been resolved. At Izumo, therefore, the role of renewal was subordinated to an inordinate ambition to create an architectural testimonial to eternity, which inevitably brought about its own destruction. This search for monumentality through physical size and permanence parallels the ambitions of the cathedral builders of medieval Europe, who pursued a similar quest for architectural form transcending temporal constraints and whose buildings on occasion met a similar fate.' (Coaldrake 1996: 50-51)

> 'Ise represents a very different approach to monumentality from that of Izumo. Its buildings were

ultimately to prove more enduring by virtue of a fundamental paradox: despite the rustic, self-effacing nature of the buildings, Ise has achieved permanence as an abiding presence in the national ethos of Japan. This has been accomplished by virtue of the continuing patronage of the imperial institution and by the hereditary infrastructure of craft and belief associated with the shrine. Buildings which have self-consciously glorified in the transience of the material have found in this sublimation of physical frailty a tradition which has both impressed and endured. Izumo, by virtue of its faltering political sponsorship and its structurally unsustainable architectural ambitions, concedes greater power to the monumentality of Ise, and the ultimate efficacy of the principle of dynamic renewal over the monolithic.' (Coaldrake 1996: 51).

What does this contribute to our understanding of Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region. We do not know so much about the role that Izumo and Ise played in international relations, but there are increasing studies (see Piggott 1989) on the archaeology of these areas that will doubtless cast further light on these questions in the future.

7. Encounters with the 'foreign': an archaeology of international networks

The votive offerings on Okinoshima represent the international networks that linked the Japanese archipelago to ancient East Asia, and on to the rest of the world. A recent travelling exhibition in Japan was entitled 'Okinoshima: the Shosoin of the Sea' (Munakata Taisha 2004). The Shosoin is the 8th century imperial treasure house built at the Todaiji Temple in Nara. It houses over 8000 objects that were acquired by the Imperial Family through exchange with Tang China, objects that give some idea of the range of objects that were exchanged along the Silk Road. These include fabulous musical instruments, garments of silk, paper, maps, mother-of-pearl inlaid furniture and items, including representation of foreigners, and seeds, bark and plants that must have been for medicinal purposes. These objects, which have survived as a result of their careful preservation at the Shosoin, give us a good idea of the range of perishable items that came into Japan at this time. Had any such items been deposited at Okinoshima, they would have long since disappeared.

Trade and international relations are cited in the justifications for a number of UNESCO World Heritage sites. These include ports such as Kilwa, Kisiwani and Loropeni, centres associated with the trans-Saharan gold trade, including Askia (Mali) and other trading centres in north Africa such as Sabrathe (Libya), Ancient Ksour of Oudane, Chinguette, Tichitt and Oualata (Mauritania); Saharan trading and religious centres from the 11th and 12th centuries, and Medina of Essaouira (Mogador) in Morocco; the Medieval trading centres of Novgorod (Russia), Provins (France and Torun (Poland), and post-Medieval ports such as Coro (Venezuala), Valparaiso (Chile), the wine port of Bordeaux in France and the industrial port of Liverpool in the UK. Through central Asia, a series of trading cities along the ancient Silk Routes have also been designated as World Heritage sites. These include Bukhara, Itchan Kala (Khiva) in Uzbekhistan, Sarazm in Tajikistan, and Urgenc (now Konye Urgench), considered one of the greatest cities of the Silk Road in Turkmenistan. Also in Turkmenistan is Merv, which flourished during the period when offerings were being made at Okinoshima. Some trading centres are also distinguished by their exceptional religious monuments, as at Palmyra in Syria. Trade in other commodities is also marked, as in the Land of Frankincense inscription in Oman.

Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region, however, do not compare well with these mainly urbanised trading centres and entrepots. And yet it is the exotic nature of many of the deposits, and the changing composition of the assemblages of offerings, from more local to those from distant parts, that demonstrates the significance of Okinoshima to the development of encounters with the 'foreign' at this crucial time in the history of East Asian interactions.

International relations in the period during which offerings were made at Okinoshima were structured around a number of different forms of encounter with 'foreigners': these encounters include immigration, diplomacy, tribute missions, trade and war. Okinoshima does not offer any direct evidence for any of these encounters. There are no records of Chinese or Korean ships stopping at Okinoshima unlike at Dazaifu further to the west, or of migrants setting up home on the island. There is no evidence for fighting or defence, such as suggested by the Kwangaetto stele or the defences constructed around the Tsukushi plain. Although many of the objects offered at Okinoshima may have started out their lives as diplomatic

gifts, they were probably only offered to the deities of Okinoshima once they had been received at court many hundreds of kilometres to the east. Rather than direct evidence of these encounters, the record at Okinoshima allows us a glimpse of the perception of, and attempts to control, these encounters: or rather attempts to propitiate the forces (which we would regard as supernatural but which were probably seen by those involved as being an ordinary part of the world they inhabited) that were perceived as having an impact on such encounters and their outcomes.

The role of migrants in Japanese history at this time is a recurring theme. There is continuing debate within Japanese archaeology about the nature and scale of migration during the 1st millennium BC accompanying the appearance of wet rice agriculture and metallurgy into northern Kyushu at the start of the Yayoi period. Thereafter there are many accounts of groups of migrants from Korea and China settling in Japan, often in relation to new technological introductions, such as stone ware pottery. Several deities who appear in the early chronicles, notably Susano'o, geographically associated with Izumo on the Sea of Japan coast, may have been introduced from Korea (see Grayson 2002). Groups of Chinese and Korean migrants take on important roles within the emerging court structures. As Michael Como makes clear in his analysis of the role of Chinese cults in the formation of Japanese belief systems from the 8th century onwards: 'to a very large degree immigrant and service lineages closely associated with continental technologies and cults shaped both the fabric and parameters [of the Nara and Heian texts] in terms of which courtiers and rulers conceived and expressed their visions of all under heaven' (Como 2009: xvi).

Just as debate continues around the nature and scale of migrant groups, the archaeological evidence for international warfare is limited. While the early chronicles make claim for a series of military engagements by Japanese forces on the Korean peninsula, material evidence remains elusive. What the chronicles make clear, however, is the perceived threat posed by potential military engagement of this kind.
The early chronicles describe groups of foreigners arriving and settling in Japan (Verscheur 2006: 7).:

660: Some 100 Chinese prisoners sent from Paekche and later settled in Mino Province

665: 400 Paekche refugees authorised to settle in Omi Province

666: 2000 Paekche immigrants permitted to reside in 'a northern region'

815: an official register describes '1182 families living in the capital or five adjacent provinces, of whom 324 were considered to be of Korean or Chinese descent' (Verscheur 2006: 7).

For much of the first millennium AD, while offerings were being made at Okinoshima, the polities of the Japanese archipelago proactively engaged in networking with both the Korean peninsula and the Chinese continent. Much of this networking appears to have been surrounded by ritualised behaviours informed by beliefs in spirits, and indeed the rationale behind the offerings made at Okinoshima is usually regarded as being to safeguard the maritime expeditions upon which the development and maintenance of these international networks developed.

Charlotte von Versheur has documented the shift in the nature of this networking from the 7th to the 16th centuries (Verschuer 2006). Japan was one of some 70 countries that formed part of a network of tributaries of China from the 7th to the 9th centuries. In the 7th century, Japan sent 10 missions to China, but was something of a 'resistant vassal':

> 'The Japanese court complied with certain rules of tributary etiquette but refused to follow others. It presented its native products as tribute and in exchange accepted gifts from the Chinese court. During audiences before the Son of Heaven, Japanese delegates took their places among the representatives of other tributary countries, but Japanese monarchs no longer were invested with titles by the Chinese court (they had been given them until the late fifth century) and their missions most likely were no longer supplied with tallies, which normally were obligatory. In their letters accompanying tribute shipments, Japanese sovereigns, at least Suiko, omitted any statement of allegiance to the Chinese Son of Heaven' (ibid 3-4).

The early Japanese chronicles provide some helpful information about these embassies. 'The Nihon Shoki

records about thirty Japanese missions sent to China and approximately one hundred delegations, principally Korean, that came to visit the Japanese court. The Japanese annals depict the Korean delegations as tribute-bearing embassies. It is difficult to verify their status and number because they are hardly mentioned in the official Korean histories, which nevertheless, frequently mention the submission of tribute to China. In turn, the sovereign country also sent representatives supplied with gifts for their foreign vassals. In this way, for example, some Chinese ambassadors accompanied Japanese envoys on their return to Japan' (ibid: 5).

The countries that Japan was engaging in exchange and trade with during the period of offerings at Okinoshima were China, Korea and Parhae. Each of these countries underwent considerable changes of their own from the 4th to the 9th centuries: dynastic changes in China; the development of a series of competing kingdoms on the Korean peninsula, all eventually subsumed within United Silla in 668; and the development of the kingdom of Parhae to the north, eventually conquered by the Liao Dynasty.

The exchange relationships took two major forms, often inter-related: official diplomatic embassies bringing gifts for rulers; and trade. The economic contexts within which these exchanges took place also dramatically changed, as parts of East Asia adopted a monetary economy, with the minting of coins. This affected the value of commodities, and therefore the understanding of the value of items deposited at Okinoshima. For much of the period under consideration, silk and cloth were the standards of value.

Silk Roads

During the Han dynasty in China (206 BC- 220 AD) exchanges across Eurasia, which has been going on maybe for millennia before this, as witnessed by the presence of highly valued stones such as jade, nephrite and lapis lazuli from central Asia in ancient China, Causcasian mummies from the Tarim Basin in China, and the presence of Chinese silk in ancient Egypt by the 11th century BC, was greatly facilitated following Chinese expeditions and the establishment of more formalised routes and exchanges. This network is now known as the Silk Road, and comprised a network extending over 4000 miles, linking China (and Japan) across central Asia, the Indian subcontinent, Arabia, Persia and to the Mediterranean and Europe (see Liu 1996, 2010). Silk was highly prized in ancient Rome. The Chinese were very interested in central Asia, extending their borders westwards in particular during the Han and Tang periods. They greatly valued the horses from Dayuan, essential in their long-lasting competition with the Xiongnu mounted nomads on their northern borders. Artistic influences and religion, notably Buddhism, travelled along with commodities such as silk and gold, and other, less welcome travelling companions, including Bubonic Plague. Several of the trading cities along the Silk Road are now World Heritage Sites. While the land routes flourished, from the 1st century AD so did the maritime trade routes, which linked Chinese ports to southeast Asia, via Vietnam and Sri Lanka, up the west cost of India and so to the Roman entrepots of the Red Sea and by water to the Mediterranean. Through these extensive networks, Okinoshima, and the lands ruled by both the Munakata Clan and the emerging Yamato centre in Kinai, became drawn into networks of exchange and tribute that criss-crossed Eurasia by camel train and ship.

Viking trade networks

In the 9th and 10th centuries, the Viking peoples of Scandinavia developed a very extensive trading and raiding network that stretched from the great centres of Hedeby (Denmark), Kaupang (Sweden) and Birka (Finland) across the Atlantic to Iceland and Greenland (or Vinland), south to through the Mediterranean to North Africa and Byzantium, and east through Russian trading centres at Staraya Ladoga and Novgorod to the Caspian Sea, Baghdad and beyond (see www.vikingheritage.org). Despite the far-flung reach of these centres, however, towns remained of limited size: the population of Hedeby is estimated at no more than 1000 souls. Although most trade was relatively short distance, Viking ships also carried cargoes of silk and spices from the Far East, and a few merchants from Asia mingled with those from Europe and the Arab world. Exchange took the form of barter, with silver as the main medium of exchange, obtained from the Near East and later from the Danegeld tribute from England and elsewhere. Viking traders were not professionals, but were mainly farmers who would take part in seasonal overseas expeditions, striking fear into the hearts of those who suffered from the Viking raids such as those that pillaged the great isolated monastic complexes around the coasts of the British Isles. Evidence for the richness of the exchange networks is seen at burial sites like Jelling in Denmark and Sutton Hoo in England, as indicated above. The range of commodities

exchanged include:

Vínland: timber
Greenland: walrus ivory, furs, skins, wool
Iceland: fish, animal fat, wool cloth and clothing, sulfur, falcons
England: tin, wheat, honey, woolens, silver, barley, linen
Russia: slaves, furs, wax, honey
Byzantium: silks, fruits, spices, wines, gems, silver, jewelry, brocade
Frankish kingdoms: weapons, jewelry, wine, glass, salt, woolen cloth
Shetland Islands: soapstone
Norway: timber, iron, soapstone, whetstones, barley, tar
Sweden: iron, furs
East Baltic regions: amber, slaves, furs

8.   Discussion and future research

I would suggest that future research on Okinoshima could usefully be structured around a series of themes, many of which overlap with the future research questions I proposed in my previous paper, and to the criteria being used for the nomination for World Heritage Status. These themes could help structure the visitor experience to a future World Heritage Site of Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region. These are: the significance of Okinoshima in the history of religion; how religion was used to create and maintain power within the context of the establishment of state level societies in Japan; how would different individuals at various times through Japanese (and East Asian) history have experienced and perceived Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region; how did traditions of religious and ritual practice change over time; and what is the significance of the transition from worship at natural places to worship at monumental sites (including the use of buildings such as shrines).

Theme 1: Religion and history: the significance of Okinoshima in the history of religion

Okinoshima is considered significant partly because of its religious importance. And yet the concept of religion is problematic in Japanese history. I have reviewed such ideas in my previous paper (see also Kaner 2011), and I conclude that as long as the discussion about Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region is set in the context of a generic 'archaeology of religion and ritual', rather than as something specific about the origins of Shinto (although there is a field of study known as 'Shinto archaeology', as described in Kaner 2011: 335-336), then it can be argued that Okinoshima and the associated sites are significant for understanding the history of religion. Steinhaus' (2012) discussion of the distinction between 'primary' and 'secondary' religions is of use here.

Much of the research commissioned about Okinoshima and associated sites in the Munakata region has emphasised the historically contingent nature of the tradition of religious observation on the island. This is in marked contrast to other forms of narrative which attempt to address the past in terms of broad processes and evolutionary schema, which are often teleological in nature (the spread of Buddhism, the rise of states and civilisation, the emergence of Shinto). These broad-brush histories often seem to suggest a degree of inevitability to the historical developments witnessed by the historical and archaeological record. Such inevitability would be much to the liking of those who commissioned many of the early historical works upon which we are dependent for written accounts of what happened in Japan and its relationships with East Asia through the middle of the first millennium.

Moving away from such broad-brush narratives requires a re-focusing of what we expect to be able to say about the significance of sites like Okinoshima. This re-focusing needs an attention to detail, the Geertzian thick description argued for by Steinhaus; nothing can be taken for granted; we should, where possible, be looking for micro-histories in order to understand change in religious practice (see Cornell and Fahlander 2007). In a previous paper I argued for an archaeology of religious experience: it is putting across this diversity of religious experience that will be the challenge for those charged with making the most of any World Heritage status for Okinoshima and the Munakata sites. Part of the Outstanding Universal Value of Okinoshima is, in this authors view, the potential it contains for such a microhistorical

approach.

A major change occurs in religious practice at Okinoshima and its associated sites. This is a shift from ritual observances being undertaken in the open air or in the shadow of rocks, i.e. in natural places (see Bradley 1999), to ritual observances being undertaken in and around buildings: in the case of Okinoshima, buildings known as shrines.

All of this requires a new kind of narrative for Okinoshima. Here we are aided by the Munakata deities themselves. They are deities associated with weaving, and weaving is a practice that provides a rich supply of metaphor from which we can draw in order to tell the most compelling stories about this remarkable site and its significance for the history of humanity.

Theme 2: Religion and politics: creating and maintaining a state of power

During the period when votive offerings were being made at Okinoshima, the political systems of the Japanese archipelago were transformed from a series of autonomous, sometimes competing, regional entities networked by shifting alliances based on kinship, to a centralised bureaucratic and institutionalised polity supported by the exercise of force, with appointment to positions of authority at least in part determined by merit and non-kin-based relations with the ruling elite. The process whereby this transformation, or series of transformations, came about is known as state formation. Ritualised practices and religious belief were an important element of this process, and the remains at Okinoshima and the associated sites provide a very rare, if not unique, survival of a regional cultic centre with significant associations for understanding secondary state formation.

William Coaldrake gives an effective summary of the nature of power in early Japan and its relationship to religion as part of his discussion of the relationship between the Ise amd Izumo shrines:

> 'Authority stemmed from ritual, in which the ruler served as intermediary between the world of gods and the world of human beings. Effective power derived from association with the supernatural, control over craft industries and the organisation of wet rice agriculture, and from some military force. The contemporary term used for 'government', *matsurigoto*, meant performing rites in honour of the gods, but was used interchangeably to describe procedural matters of religion and everyday administration. The elite of each clan built a hierarchy of status and title, and wove from fact and fiction elaborate mythologies establishing their own divine ancestries. They also used shrines as a setting for demonstrating their power prerogatives. It was the direct patronage of an elite preoccupied by such ambitions which elevated the vernacular forms of the secular storehouse and raised-floor residence to the level of sacred architecture, creating buildings which became the most pervasive icons of Shinto and the most compelling demonstration of their right to rule. For them, as for the kings of ancient Mesopotamia, to rule was to build and to build was to rule' (Coaldrake 1996: 18).

Werner Steinhaus' account of state formation in Europe and Japan has provided a comparative context with European studies of state formation, and the diverse nature of control at this time is further highlighted by Michael Como's characterisation of the early Yamato court:
> 'the court was not a discrete, unified identity, but rather a site of contestation among several lineages with discrete interests, cultic traditions and ties to disparate regions, cultic centres and deities' (Como 2009: xvi-xvii).

Theme 3: Religion and the individual: for whom did Okinoshima have significance?

Visitors to Okinoshima and the associated sites will all take their own experiences and memories with them when they leave. They will hopefully have their understanding of the relationship between religious practice and belief, traditions of offerings as seen at Okinoshima, and the complex interactions between trade, diplomacy, politics and belief, enhanced if not transformed. Such an understanding is offered through experiencing and appreciating the significance of Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region, in comparison with other sites of religious significance around the world.

Cultivating visitors' sense of engagement with the site not only enhances their own experiences, but is also a good way to help conserve this valuable resource for the future. These experiences can be mediated by knowing what other kinds of people might have made of Okinoshima. We are aware of a range of types of people who would have known about Okinoshima and would have had their own views on its significance. How would such people have made sense of what was happening there in their own terms?

One of the major challenges faced by those charged with fostering an understanding of the significance of Okinoshima is the issue of access. A large component of the narratives that surround Okinoshima are concerned with inaccessibility, secrecy and isolation. Future work on the presentation of Okinoshima and Munakata would benefit from a consideration of how the island was perceived by different rulers through the ages, including, for example, Himiko, Iwai, Shotoku Taishi and the Emperor Tenmu.

Theme 4: Religion and place: sacred geographies (centres, peripheries, underworlds and otherworlds)

One of the main sensations brought out by Okinoshima is isolation. Through much of human history, many religious practitioners have sought to develop a sense of isolation as a way of getting in touch with their own spirituality.

Okinoshima and the surrounding region with containing sites associated with the Munakata clan is regarded as being a special place, or a series of interrelated special places. I have elsewhere argued that Okinoshima is part of a special seascape, both bridging and separating the lands of western Japan and the Korean peninsula. It is a seascape full of dangers. For the Chinese, these seaways lead to the haunted islands of the immortals, which they called Fusang. For the Japanese they lead away from home and all its comforts.

This special nature is something to which future managers of the World Heritage site will need to pay particular attention, for it is the special, secret, nature of Okinoshima in particular that is what contributes so greatly to its Outstanding Universal Value. This would not be the only site to which the public will not be admitted. Uluru (Ayers Rock) in Australia, Mount Athos and the Seifa-Utaki sacred grove in Okinawa all have very restricted access, along with many of the sites inscribed using the natural criteria. In addition, however, Okinoshima and the Munakata region need to be explained in terms of their place in the often shifting sacred geographies of Japan and East Asia.

Theme 5: The ways that ritual practice change through time, and the relationship between such changes and the interaction between different traditions of religious and cult belief

A theme of exceptional interest in the study of Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region is that of the relationship between changes in ritual practice (as for example documented at Okinoshima) and the interaction between different traditions of religious and cult belief (in the case of Okinoshima the relationship between incoming beliefs around the worship of Buddha and the development of what was to become Shinto – usefully identified by Steinhaus 2012 as an encounter between primary and secondary religions).

Theme 6: The development of monumental places of ritual observance and their relationship to natural places

In his book, *An Archaeology of Natural Places*, Richard Bradley provided a very thought-provoking survey of why unaltered natural places, including mountains, caves, springs and rivers, came to assume a sacred character in much of European prehistory. This study followed on from two previous works which studied the appearance and development of monuments (for example large funerary monuments, stone circles, henges and ditch-enclosed settlements), *The Significance of Monuments* and *Altering the Earth*. Bradley has also written extensively on the ritual, or votive, deposits, often of weaponry, but sometimes including human sacrifice found through much of the European Bronze Age. Bradley restricts his survey to Europe, while noting that what he says may be of interest to other parts of the world (Bradley 2000: xii). His examples of natural places that take on sacred significance range from the Saami *siejdde*, or sacrificial sites, of Ukonsaari in Finland and Alta in Norway to sites from classical Greek antiquity such as Delphi and the Psychro Cave, the peak sanctuary at Juktas to the famous rock art sites of prehistoric Scandinavia including

Bohuslan in Sweden. Bradley says of these unaltered Saami sites:

> 'it is possible to specify some of the physical characteristics of the locations that were chosen and also to identify a number of the processes that took place there. These were unusual features of the natural topography – features that stood out from the surrounding country, some of which recalled petrified [i.e. turned to stone] people and animals – but they are even more important because we know a certain amount about their significance in Saami cosmology. The stones and other features that were selected from the wider terrain were credited with special powers and allowed contact with the supernatural. Those contacts were made through sacrifices that were entirely integrated into the daily lives of the Saami. At the same time those places were only the visible signs of a complex cosmological scheme that involved three different worlds. These came into contact at natural locations such as caves and mountains' (Bradley 2000: 13).

Comparison with Okinoshima is relevant because the rituals at Okinoshima begin in the open air, with no buildings or monuments, even though shrines are built later in the sequence. And because a lot is known about ritual practices in the periods during which the offerings at Okinoshima were made, we can begin to make statements about the place Okinoshima and the associated burial mounds and other sites held in the contemporary cosmology. The combination of archaeological evidence with what can be inferred through judicious and critical readings of later written records means that Okinoshima joins a short list of sites around the world where we can create narratives for the development of religious centres through from the veneration of 'unaltered places' to worship in monumental structures.

Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region offer a rare opportunity to study the development of monumental places of ritual observance and their relationship to natural places. Many of the major Japanese ritual centres are set in distinctive landscapes, even though most of the attention of studies to date has been on the forms of architecture eventually constructed there. As Coaldrake notes, however, we can already trace the development from sacred precincts to worship in buildings at Ise and Izumo (Coaldrake 1996: 19). This is a shift that happens in parallel with a move away from the construction of monumental tombs as the focus of community ritualised activity, to the construction of temple and shrine buildings.

9.   Conclusion

This paper has suggested that the outstanding value of Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region lies in the interwoven relationships between the development of religion, politics and international relations in East Asia from the 4th to the 9th centuries AD, the time which saw the emergence for the first time of a self-aware East Asian consciousness.

I have suggested a series of sites and networks with which Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region can be compared, ranging from the sacred natural places of the Saami peoples to the sanctuaries of Greek antiquity, sacred groves and shrines, to a series of sacred islands and sacred mountains, and mounded tomb cemeteries. I have suggested that each of these can be used to help foster an appreciation and understanding of the kinds of religious experience that played such an important role in the lives of the people who made votive offerings at Okinoshima and Oshima, and who were buried (some of them at least) in the burial mound complexes at Munakata.

Understanding these religious experiences through the microhistorical analysis of the archaeological remains of these traditions of ritual practice at Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region provides essential context for understanding the contemporary ritual practices still undertaken at the Munakata Taisha Shrine and the associated shrines on Okinoshima and Oshima. The long tradition of ritual at Okinoshima and Munakata doubtless includes some significant diversity in practice and significance: I have argued that the rituals that took place meant different things to different people at different times over the centuries: votive offerings made on behalf of the early Yamato rulers such as Yuryaku probably meant something rather different to those made on behalf of the rulers by the time of Tenmu or Shomu.

While I appreciate the pragmatic reasons behind the selection of the nominated properties for inclusion in

the nomination, the importance of understanding the East Asian context in appreciating the Outstanding Universal Significance of Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region, requires that the sites need to be presented to the visiting public in the context of nearby sites such as Dazaifu and the Korokan in Fukuoka, and indeed similar sites such as Chongmakdong (Woo 2011) and other ritual sites on the Korean peninsula (Ko 2011).

Lastly, with the historical records at our disposal, it should also be possible to give an impression of the atmosphere during at least some of the missions sent from the Japanese archipelago to the continent, and maybe vice-versa, which were the reason so many votive offerings were made at Okinoshima. J. Edward Kidder provides a lively summary of the nature of the exchanges both with Korea and China (Kidder 1999: 82 and 110-111), and indicates how little people from the centre in Yamato would have wanted to be dispatched either to Tsukushi or overseas. Poems surviving in the Man'yoshu, the 8th century anthology of 'a thousand leaves', include a partial account of a diplomatic mission sent from Yamato during the reign of the Emperor Shomu in 736. There is no doubt about the emotional wrench such a journey entailed for those involved, separated from the comforts and certainties of life in Nara (Horton 2012). These accounts, along with the details we have of the boats involved (Borgen 1982) add greatly to our appreciation of the experiences of those involved, which they would have sought to have made sense of through what we recognize as religious belief, and which they would have attempted to control through ritual practice.

Acknowledgements

References:

This paper drew extensively on the online descriptions of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and on accounts of these and other sites on Wikipedia and other online resources, backed up where possible by more formal published accounts. Entries marked 'nd' are the papers included in the Draft English Version Study Reports of the Okinoshima Island and Related Sites in Munakata Region (2011 and 2012).

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Site Name	Remoteness		Communications and trade	Place of confinement	Comment
	isolated	Outward looking			
A. ISLANDS					
A I. World Heritage Properties					
Churches of Chiloe		X			Jesuit missions
Cinque Terra offshore islands (Portovenere)	X				
Elephanta	X				
Ellis Island (Statue of Liberty)			X	X	Immigration
Goree Island			X	X	Slave Trade
Gusuku, Okinawa		X			Shrines, sacred forest
Itsukushima		X			Possibly closest parallel but is there any pre-shrine evidence?
Mont St Michel	X			X	Benedictine monastery
Okinoshima	X	X	X		
Robben Island				X	
SGang Gwaay (Anthony Island)		X			Native domestic and ritual
Skellig Michael	X				Celtic monasticism
Solovetsky Islands	X			X	Orthodox monasticism and Tsarist/ Soviet prison; Sacred sites from 3rd millennium BC
A II Coastal					
Mount Athos	X				Orthodox monasticism
B Non World Heritage					
BI Islands					
Anglesey		X			Druids but no tangible evidence
Farne Islands	X				Celtic hermitage
Gros Ile, Quebec			X	X	Immigration station
Iona	X	X	X		Celtic monastery + missionary centre
Lerins	X				Monastic centre from C6
Lindisfarne	X	X			Celtic monastery + missionary centre
Majuli Island		X			Shrines on island in River Brahmaputra
Noirmoutier	X				Monastic centre from early
B2 Coastal					
Wearmouth/ Jarrow; Hartlepool; Whitby; Burgh Castle; Bradwell; Reculver	X	X			Anglo-Saxon monasteries in coastal settings

Okinoshima Seen from Shintō

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Abstract: To the Japanese people, *kami* are beings that possess great power, at times posing a threat to human beings and impressing them with a sense of awe. According to this definition, any experience out of the ordinary may be considered *kami*. On the other hand, mythic episodes sugest that ancient people distinguished good *kami* from bad, and even killed those *kami* considered inimical to human progress. From this perspective, one cannot draw the concept of an absolute monotheistic God as found in major world religions. Although the majority of nature kami did not originally possess distinguishing names, some *kami*, such as the Three Goddesses of Munakata were assigned names by the Yamato kings as they incorporated regional "kami" in their own system of mythology. The reason why so-called "state" rituals were held on Okinoshima is deeply related to this phenomenon. For this reason, the island of Okinoshima is a remarkable case where not only the transition of ritual forms but also the transition of the view of *kami* can be discerned, from initially primitive natural anima until they were incorporated in the system of Yamato kingly power. Moreover, the very fact that the ritual artifacts have been preserved in their original form on Okinoshima is a prominent proof that the religious concepts and culture displayed at Okinoshima were not limited to the ancient period, but a continuing heritage. The artifacts found on Okinoshima have not merely been preserved physically, but as part of a larger cultural heritage still viable today.

Keywords: Shintō, Okinoshima, faith, *ukehi* (trial by pledge), Three Goddesses of Munakata, Yamato kingly power, prohibition of women, taboos

1. Introduction

This paper discusses the uniqueness of Okinoshima from the viewpoint of Japan's native religion of faith in *kami*, which came to be called "Shintō."

The important factor for the designation as a world heritage site is that the asset possesses an "outstanding universal value". However, though somewhat paradoxically, is this relatively ambiguous ethnic religion called Shintō capable of presenting such universal value? The universality can be classified into two categories as follows.

    A. Universality of the physical culture of humans (archaeological aspect)
    B. Universality of the mental culture (religion, views on the world)

This paper deals primarily with B as the topic of discussion. According to Jean Bottero (French scholar specialized in the Mesopotamian culture), the gods in the Mesopotamian culture became special beings by being given their specific names. In other words, a spirit or *anima* dwells in any thing or phenomenon that is given a name. That virtually all named things have such spirits reflects the animistic view of the world held by ancients. Namely, according to Bottero, the Mesopotamians believed an invisible world existed behind the visible world, and this dual structure characterized all existence, with vital force and sacred powers residing in the "back" side of the visible world.

Among the nations with advanced science and technology, Japan seems to be one of the few in which religious traditions and values exist that are traceable back to the times when humans exhibited primitive spirituality The concept of *yaoyorozu-no-kami* (literally, "eight million deities") which has been upheld by the Japanese people since ancient times is an expression reflecting the view that vital force potentially exists in all existing beings and phenomena, much the same way as in Mesopotamia. Also similar to the case in Mesopotamia, ancient Japanese believed that written characters and spoken words possessed non-everyday power, suggesting a close linkage between the vital force and language. In Japan, this power was referred to as *kotodama* (the vital spirit of language). This phenomenon of faith in the power of

language was characteristic of ancient peoples in many parts of the world .

In Japan, the primitive belief in animistic kami gradually became established as a relatively stable system called Shintō Although this paper is not meant to describe the course of Shintō's establishment in detail, it should be noted that the primitive cult of kami faith remains at the core of Shintō in its later development. In the protohistoric period, the Japanese archepelego and Korean peninsula can be considered to have existed within a single cultural zone, but while the primitive faith and ancient rituals that characterized that culture were largely lost on the peninsula, they continued to form the core of a living tradition in Japan, a phenomenon that must be rare among the advanced nations today. In that sense, what is today known as Shintō can be considered a remarkable ethnic religious tradition retaining a primal view of non-everyday power at its core.

Above all, it can be said that Okinoshima may represent the best field case in the study of ancient Shintō, in that the island demonstrates the continuing existence of the primitive faith and kami cult.. Therefore, the "universal value" of Okinoshima comes not only from the incredible number and kinds of ancient relics (type A as listed earlier), but also from the living culture which it reflects and illustrates (type B). Additionally, for greater convenience, I will make emphasize the "kami cults" which formed the primitive religion prior to the systematic establishment of contemporary Shintō, and maintain the term "kami" to refer to non-everyday powers (deities) in Japanese Shintō in order to avoid confusion with the concept of god or gods as found in other religions.

2.　Overview of the Worship of Kami in Japan

In the pre- and proto-historical period of the so-called "faith in kami" before the establishment of Shintō in Japan, the animistic faith flourished as represented by the expression "yaoyorozu-no-kami" (eight million gods), indicating not a specific number, but "innumerable." In that culture, treasures objects produced by combining the best technologies of the time were dedicated at rituals to the animistic spirits believed to dwell in natural phenomena such as mountains and rivers. This ancient "faith in kami" was characterized by a general sense of the awe directed toward the power of such spirits dwelling in nature. As a result, when cutting down trees or carrying out other development that encroached upon natural phenomena such as constructing a dam or opening up a mine, it was deemed necessary to placate or obtain permission from the spirits for the new development.

Followers of monotheistic religions such as Christianity or Islam may object to the kind of "nature worship" found in Shintō. It may be claimed that nature is nothing but the creation of God, with the result that it is God himself—the creator of that nature—who should be worshipped. Polytheistic or animistic beliefs are thus not only incorrect, but in Islam represent one of the worst sins—*shirk*—possible. On the other hand, the view of nature as creation or sheer materiality has been accused of leading to a logic of exploitation of nature. According to historian Lynn White Jr., medieval Christianity denied any spiritual value inherent in nature, thus legitimating its exploitation. From an ecological viewpoint, this attitude of denying the spiritual value of nature has the *potential* of becoming the weak point of monotheistic religion While the development or use of nature is obviously indispensable from the human perspective, it is becoming increasingly important that people reexamine our behavior and recapture some of the ancient attitude of respect and awe before nature.

In recent years, it might appear that the number of followers of Shintō has generally decreased. Many Japanese visit shrines only on the occasion of *Hatsumōde* (New Year's) and life-cycle rites such as *shichi-go-san* (shrine visits by children aged 7, 5 and 3), and even on those occasions, many fail to consider such visits as "religious" behavior, thinking of them as simple cultural expressions or markers of initiation without connection to any sense of religious belief. On the other hand, recent years have seen an apparent increase in interest shown by people outside Japan toward Shintō, and some view it as a complete "religion" as well as a culture of annual events

A shrine called Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America can be found in the suburbs of Seattle, Washington (U.S.A). An American serves as the shrine's chief priest and the community of worshippers is composed of an international body including Japanese, Japanese-American, other Asians, white Americans and

African-Americans. According to the chief priest, Shintō is nearly unique among modern active religions in directing its devotions to spirits in nature (*kami*), but this return to an animistic worldview is growing in popularity, so that he suggests that Shintō may prove to be the "natural spirituality" of the future. Not only does he view Shintō as a set of traditional daily life and annual events, but he considers it as a religion consciously, that is to say, he understands it as meaningful way of looking at or understanding the universe, with resulting standards of conduct.

When it comes to statistical information about Shintō, it is common to point to the annual Statistical Survey on Religions conducted by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, which lists the numbers of believers for Shintō, Buddhism, Christianity and other religions in Japan. It is often noted, however, that the total number of believers listed for Shintō and Buddhism is well above the total population of Japan. This anomaly occurs because the survey relies upon a self-reporting system, with the result that religious groups and organizations tend to exaggerate the number of their believers; another factor is that many Japanese consider themselves allied with more than one religion at the same time. This situation—in which Japanese may consider themseleves followers of multiple religious simultaneously—is difficult for many non-Japanese (particularly followers of monotheism) to understand.

Especially in countries where salvation religions founded by a prophet (founder), such as the case with Christianity and Islam, are prevalent, such belief systems form the central axis of people's perspective of the world. Within such a worldview, if one religion is considered true, others must be considered false or wrong. Believing in one religion means acceding to its teachings (doctrine), that is, maintaining an attitude of belief in "something" within the mind. In that situation, to believe in two religions simultaneously is viewed as a logical contradiction., Religion for the Japanese, however, tends to be considered part of traditional social life and rites of passage, and attending to multiple religions is considered merely an accepted part of everyday life.

This Japanese religious perspective may be attributable to customary beliefs existing prior to the establishment of today's Shintō. In ancient times, all of nature was potentially full of kami, as indicated by the expression *yaoyorozu-no-kami*. In order to seek one of the causes for the formation of notion of "kami" in Japan, I like to mention the Japanese conception of nature here.

While the Japanese people of today generally view themselves as nature-loving, the actual natural environment in Japan is not always treated favorably. And this fact is not a mere result of modernity or Western influence. In *Nihonshoki* (Chronicles of Japan), there is a passage stating in effect that when Takemikazuchi and Futsunushi-no-kami descended from heaven to prepare for the arrival of the "heavenly grandchild," fearsome deities were discovered in Ashihara-no-Nakatsukuni (central land of reed plains, referring to Japan) and even the trees and stones could speak. From the perspective of Takemikazuchi-no-kami and Futsunushi-no-kami, such kami represented "raw" nature, and should be "pacified" since they interrupted the progress of human beings. It could be said that this passage reflects the ancient people's recognition of nature as a kind of threat.

Moreover, according to an account in Hitachi-no-kuni Fudoki (an ancient gazetter for Hitachi Province), an individual named Yahazu no Matachi appeared in the gazeteer's section about the Namekata district. The account states that Matachi was attacked by a kind of snake deity called Yato-no-kami thus interfering with his work clearing land for rice fields. In response, Matachi killed some of the deities and expelled the remainder to the mountain. After that, he made a promise that he would distinguish the rice fields as human's domain from the mountain as deities' domain, and worship the deities so as to avoid curses. It can be said that the act of Matachi was a one-sided attempt to achieve harmony with nature.

In Japan, shrines are frequently found on small hills in the midst of rice fields, these shrines may be an indication that kami were enshrined in one place to avoid their retribution for humans' building rice paddies by destroying the forests where the kami lived. While such places are sanctuaries where rituals are held to placate the kami, the "harmony with nature" represented there has been achived to suit the convenience of the human residents.

While the Japanese attitude toward natural power is respectful, such power is not considered unequivocally good. The early Japanese stance toward indigenous peoples like the Hayato and Tsuchigumo was similarly ambivalent; in cases some they were considered troublesome representations of raw nature and thus

became the object of forced assimilation or extermination, an attitude comparable to white Americans' attitude toward the indigenous peoples of the American continent. .

The ancient people of the Japanese islands had a view of kami and nature that involved considerable ambiguity. Since the age of the primitive faith, Japanese kami have been considered to possess apparitions of great power, and thus respected as beings capable of destruction as well as blessing.. More than three thousand kami are listed in the *Engishiki Jinmyōchō* (a tenth-century register of shrines and deities), but only a few of the kami listed possess specific names. Most of the deities listed are referred to merely as "the kami from such and such mountain," or "the kami from such and such village," based on the place name. According to one researcher, in the oldest view of *kami* in Japan, the word itself may have been understood more as an adjective rather than as a noun, indicating that it was the human response of awe in the presence of a non-everyday power—the sacred--that was the most important feature. As an example, the word *kōgōshii* (神々しい) is composed of twin kanji for kami and means "awesome" or "numinous," thus suggesting that the most important feature of the kami phenomenon is that they provoke special emotions when in their presence. .

The early modern nativist scholar MOTOORI Norinaga (1730-1801) emphasized this aspect of the kami phenomenon in his definition:

> 「さて凡そ迦微とは、古の御典等に見えたる天地の諸の神たちを始めて、其を祀れる社に坐す御霊をも申し、又人はさらにも云はず、鳥獣木草のたぐひ海山など、其のほか何にまれ、尋常ならずすぐれたる徳のありて、かしこき物を迦微とは云なり。すぐれたるとは、尊きこと善きこと、功しきことなどの、優れたるのみを云に非ず、悪きも奇しきものなども、よにすぐれてかしこきをば、神と云なり」（『古事記伝』三之巻）

> Speaking in general, it may be said that *kami* signifies, in the first place, the deities [kami] of heaven and earth that appear in the ancient records and also the spirits of the shrines where they are worshiped. It is hardly necessary to say that it includes human beings. It also includes such objects as birds, beasts, trees, plants, seas, mountains, and so forth. In ancient usage, anything whatsoever which was outside the ordinary, which possessed superior power, or which was awe-inspiring was called *kami*. Eminence here does not refer merely to the superiority of nobility, goodness, or meritorious deeds, since evil and mysterious things, if they are extraordinary and dreadful, are also called *kami*
> (Commentary on Kojiki Vol.3, based on the version in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*)

Another aspect of the Japanese concept of kami that was once common in East Asia and continues to be prevalent in Japan is the historical background of the "syncretization" of Shintō with Buddhism. This combination again suggests one of the important characteristics of the kami concept in Japan. The syncretization of Shintō with Buddhism refers to a way of thinking in which Japan's indigenous kami were viewed as avatars of Buddhist divinities; in pre-modern Japan, kami were quite frequently fused with buddhas as suggested by the compound noun *shinbutsu* (kami-buddha). Although Shintō and Buddhism were forcibly separated in the Meiji period, manyJapanese continue to view the two with little distinguishing, thus referring to buddhas as kami. In short, "kami" can be applied to any object of worship or entity with non-everyday power, no matter whether that object be indigenous or imported.

While not identical, Hinduism is well known for demonstrating similar syncretic elements. Often referred to as a kind of monism, Hinduism looks for the singularity that lies behond all surface multiplicity. For example, Agni, the god of fire refers not only to the fire dedicated at the altar, but also to the "fire" of the sun, lightning or even the naturally generated heat called *tapas* experienced within the body of an ascetic. Agni may possess various identities and is sometimes assumed to adopt the identities of other gods. The *Rig veda*, for example, contains hymns representing Agni as Vishnu, Varuna or Mitra, thus demonstrating the philosophy that one entity incorporates all manner of plural realities.

A related phenomenon in the combination of Shintō with Buddhism is the idea of "illusion" or "mysterious transformation," in India called *maya*. When introduced to Japan, Buddhism brought with it this Indian concept that what appears to human sight may not be the true identity. A beggar walking on the street might actually be the incarnation of the bodhisattva Ksitigarbha (Jizō), because of the tendency of our

five-sensory perception to fall victim to illusion. The ninth-century *Nihon ryōiki* (Miraculous Stories from the Japanese Buddhist Tradition) is Japan's oldest collection of Buddhist tales, and one of its basic themes is the issue of the credibility of what we routinely see. Just as Brahman, the ultimate truth in Hinduism takes different forms, the various buddhas and bodhisattvas of Buddhism may take the form of local deities or kami .

Due to the Meiji government's edict forcibly separating Shintō and Buddhism, foreign visitors to Japan in modern times frequently assume that the two religions have always been independent due to theexistence of numerous shrines existing as physical representatives of Shintō. Shintō shrine buildings, however, have generally been constructed under the influence of Buddhism, most do not retain the original features of primitive kami worship. In ancient times no permanent buildings existed for the worship of kami, but temporary altars were built at ritual locations for the performance of seasonal observances, or else were held in front of, or on top of, large rocks. Such natural rock altars were called *iwakura* (rock-abode), or *iwasaka* (rock border), while temporary altars centered on evergreen trees were called *himorogi.* Of the cases of *iwakura*/*iwasaka* still extant, Okinoshima represents a remarkable case of preservation.

On the island of Okinoshima, the large rocks serving as *iwakura* stand out the same way they did in ancient times; it is unlikely that other cases exist in which such spectacular large rock altars are so well-preserved. The fact that valuable treasures were dedicated here for several centuries is evidence that such immense rocks were crucial locales for the ancient Japanese. Most surprising, immense numbers of artifacts offered there remain intact. The archaeological discoveries on the island of Okinoshima have attracted such a high level of interest is precisely the fact that in addition to the existence of the well-preserved rocks themselves, a large number of offerings made there remain unspoiled. No other place matches this level of preservation..

Somewhat regrettably, a shrine building (Okitsu-miya) was built directly beside the *iwakura* in the seventeenth century. After the arrival of Buddhism in the sixth century, it became common throughout Japan to construct permanent buildings at Shintō shrines, and even on the island of Okinoshima, historical records confirm the construction of the shrine Okitsu-miya in the early Edo period. As a representative case of the ancient *iwakura*, it might have been more appropriate to leave the large rocks in their original state, but despite this ahistorical addition, Okinoshima possesses great historical and culture value. Granted Okinoshima's geographical advantages as a solitary island in the distant ocean, it is still remarkable that artifacts that might have been stolen or destroyed by vandals had they been on the mainland, have been preserved in good condition.

Why were these treasures preserved? Unlike today, Shintō priests were not permanently stationed on the island, and although its existence must have been widely rumored, the treasure remains relatively intact, with some exceptions, not like the case of the Egyptian pyramids, where most objects of value have been lost to vandals. In view of this, it would appear that something other than its geographical condition as a solitary island has worked to protect the archeological treasures on Okinoshima from devastation. And at least one such element is that of religious belief.

The existence of taboos regarding Okinoshima, including the prohibition of removing the smallest of objects from the sacred island, have undoubtedly worked to preserve the island's ritual sites due to fear of being cursed. Such taboos likewise represent an element of the common religious faith directed toward the island and its ritual sites. The very fact that so many artifacts have been preserved in good condition serves as evidence that the religious consciousness directed toward the kamiof the island has been transmitted through the centuries. In short, the artifacts on Okinoshima have not been preserved through physical means but by the power of centuries of religious belief.

3.   Okinoshima and Yamato kingly power

Kojiki (Record of Ancient Matters) and *Nihon shoki* (Chronicles of Japan) are Japan's oldest historical materials. These works transmit the well-known myth that Tagorihime, Tagitsuhime, and Ichikishimahime, --the so-called Three Goddesses of Okinoshima--were born as the result of a trial by pledge (*ukehi*) between the goddess Amaterasu and her younger brother Susanowo. The female deities born by the *ukehi*

ritual included the three goddesses of Munakata, a unique fact pointing to their special nature. *Ukehi* is a form of ancient divination and can be considered an expression of the ancient religious belief in the mystical power of language.

According to the mythic records, Amaterasu questioned the troublesome Susanowo regarding his motive for ascending to Takamagahara (the plain of high heaven). In response Susanowo suggested they engage in the trial by pledge. "Let us exchange an element of our belongings and swear an oath. If I am innocent of evil intent, let male deities be born from the *monozane* (medium) we exchange. If my intent is evil, let female deities be born from the *monozane*". As a result, Susanowo produced five male deities from the monozane received from Amaterasu while Amaterasu produced three female goddesses from the *monozane* provided by Susanowo; these three became the three goddesses of Munakata. While this is a version of the text in *Nihon shoki*, an alternate version was inserted after the main body of text. In *Kojiki*, different descriptions are given of the conditions surrounding the *ukehi* and the parents of the three goddesses, but the important element is not about which deities produced the goddesses of Munakata, but the fact that Amaterasu, ancestral deity of the Yamato lineage, and Susanowo of the Izumo lineage were involved in the birth of the goddesses. In short, the goddesses of Munakata were produced through a form of "negotiation" between Amaterasu (Yamato) and Susanowo (Izumo).

Behind this, there is also the issue regarding the relations between Amatsu-kami (heavenly *kami*) and Kunitsu-kami (earthly *kami*), and relations between recent immigrant clans and "indigenous" clans. While the main text in *Nihon shoki* narrates the story from the perspective of Yamato kingly power, the alternative narrative, as well as the version in *Kojiki* or *Izumo-no-kuni fudoki* (Ancient gazeteer of Izumo province) reflect the fluid relations and unsettled disputes between the Yamato and other clans. Many foreigners as well as Japanese tend to assume that since Shintō is frequently called Japan's "indigenous faith," it must have existed from ancient times, unified by Yamato kingly power, but in reality, complicated issues remain regarding the relations of the Japanese rulers with the continent, and relations between the immigrant and indigenous clans behind the scenes.

As noted earlier, the three Goddesses of Munakata were born as the product of the ritual of *ukehi* between Amaterasu and Susanowo. Each of the three was given a unique name. In the myths found in *Kojiki and Nihon shoki* , important implications seem to accompany the birth of deities by giving them special names . The nature deities of ancient times were frequently considered fearsome beings that could threatened human lives if not duly propitiated. As a result, one of the important purposes of rituals was to appease the kami wrath. While at times demonstrating an ambiguous nature, it was believed that even malevolent *kami* could be transformed into allies by appeasing their rough spirit with rites and offerings.

As Yamato kingly power expanded its sphere of influence, however, it advanced into and brought new regions under its control, the local *kami* of the region were subsumed within the Yamato's system of kami mythology In the process, certain important deities were assigned names with meanings significant to the Yamato. To assign names to the *kami* represented the act of incorporating them into a system of mythology, namely, the Yamato kings' view of the world. Few people at the time could read and understand the names of the *kami* written in Chinese characters. That fact formed another reason that common nature *kami* were referred to by the very general expression "eight million deities," obviating the need to be named. Named *kami*, on the other hand, represented *kami* for those educated people who could read their names and understand their special significance. These were the *kami* adopted by the Yamato kings, deities with statuses higher than the local animistic *kami*..

The fact that kami were given names is a part of the personification of the deity against the background of ancestor worship. Powerful chieftains likely created family trees extending from their fathers back to the establishment of their line by a certain kami as ancestor, in this way legitimating the rule to worship his own genealogy (justify). At that time, "kami" as ancestor is given a particular name. In case of a big royal family, it is possible to manifest the legitimacy of its kingdom by connecting the genealogy of the kingdom's family with that of deities. For the "kami", being an ancestor god can be a status symbol. That is to say, the naming can be regarded as part of the sovereignty system.

The same theory may apply in Okinoshima's case as well, even if not identical with the cases of Ise and Atsuta. Especially in the later stage of the rituals, Okinoshima may have functioned as a religious shield in

the face of perceived threats from Chinese expansion on the continent. This may provide a hint toward understanding the reasons why such expensive rituals were performed on Okinoshima by the nascent Yamato state..

Given this perspective, it may be that a close connection exists between the naming of the Three Goddesses of Munakata, their high status in the order of Yamato kingly power, and the reason behind the origin of so-called "state rituals" on Okinoshima. The Okinosima rituals were supported by the Yamato kings in the process of subsuming the local nature kami of the region into Yamato's systematic construction of a mythic ancestry.

And that the attempt can be seen in the legend of the *ukehi* between Amaterasu and Susanowo found in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. Although it is not clear whether the names of the goddesses originated on the Yamato or Munakata side, it is quite easy to suppose that the Yamato kings placed importance both on the role of Okinoshima as a "shield," and the interchange with the local powers in Munakata who were engaged in ocean navigation in the Munakata and northwestern regions of Kyūshū. Not only does Okinoshima demonstrate the transition of ritual forms at the sites due to their long continuity, but it also demonstrates the transition of the notion of *kami* from primitive nature-deity to the time when they were incorporated into the system of named deities forming a brick in the Yamato kings' foundation of mythic legitimacy..

4.   Females and Taboos on Okinoshima

In 2009, Michael Como published a fascinating study of the ancient worship of female *kami* such as Amaterasu and the Chinese goddesses Seiōbo and Hataorihime (the weaver). Titled *Weaving and Binding: Immigrant Gods and Female Immortals in Ancient Japan,* Como's book reexamined the conventional view emphasizing the central role of the Yamato kings in diffusing new technology, social systems, and religious concepts and ceremonies to the local provinces. In place of the contentional view, Como suggests that immigrant clans such as the Hata, using their strong links with the Korean Peninsula, may have been responsible for introducing the latest contintental culture from the local regions where they lived to the central authorities in the Yamato region, namely, a reverse of the conventional view of cultural diffusion. In addition, Como suggests the important point that these new technologies, social systems and religious elements were not introduced piecemeal, but as intertwined complexes. The technology of weaving, for example, was not simply a material technique for making cloth, but one rooted in the social universe of women's society, and associated with specific religious ritual objects (e.g., silkworm deities) and concepts. When this schema is applied to the flow of culture from the local to central regions, the potential importance of the role of the Munakata clan becomes clear, since it would put them in an important place for introducing powerful technology and culture from the continent, thus exerting substantial influence on the Yamato kings.

At the same time, the relationship between the Munakata clan and the Yamato kings was not one merely of provider and receiver of new technology and culture. A daughter of Munakata-no-Kimi Tokuzen named Amako-no-Iratsume was sent to the newly titled "emperor" Tenmu as a consort, and gave birth to the emperor's son Tenchi. In this context, it is important to remember that women played crucial roles as mediums, both religiously and politically, in ancient Japan. This religio-political role is probably best demonstrated by the theoretical female-male paired form of governing known as the "*himehiko* system." According to this hypothesis, a female shaman (*hime* or *miko*) is thought to have ruled in concert with a brother or other male relative (*hiko*). The classic case in the proto-historical period is the legendary female shaman known as Himiko (or Pimiko), as related in the Chinese history of the Wei Dynasty (in Japan, called the *Gishi wajinden*). The Chinese records relate that Himiko lived in the transitional period between the Yayoi and Kofun (tumulus) periods, and ruled as a shaman together with her brother, who interpreted her inspired oracles and transmitted them to the people.

Another related demonstration of women's religious and political role may be seen in the institution of *uneme,* female court servants who were "donated" by the leaders of regional clans to serve the *ōkimi* (great king) of the central Yamato authority. This system has been understood as a kind of hostage arrangement, providing evidence of submission by the powerful regional clans to the Yamato kingship. On the other hand,

Kuratsuka Akiko argues that since most *uneme* were close personal relatives of the regional clan chieftains, they were not just any female "hostages" serving the Yamato king, but were a vestigal reflection of the earlier *himehiko* system in which the regional chiefs ruled in concert with their sisters (or other close personal female relative). As time progressed, however, the earlier governing forms gave way to male-centered systems based on the Chinese example, and *uneme* lost their religio-political character as *miko* (medium), taking the role of little more than serving women.

In this sense, I believe that the marriage of Munakata-no-Kimi Tokuzen's daughter Amako-no-Iratsume to the Emperor Tenmu can be understood as a product of the *uneme* system of previous eras, although Amako-no-Iratsume was distinctive since she was not mere a serving woman but a consort of Emperor Tenmu and mother of his prince Takechi, suggesting that the emperor's family was closely allied with the Munakata clan.

Taking all this into account, if the role of women had been important religiously, in particular, in the protohistorical ages when politics and religious rituals were not separated, it may be that women were involved in the rituals on Okinoshima. Although there is a description in *Nihon shoki* relating that Empress Jingū boarded a ship, apparently no records explicitly indicate that women boarded ships with the specific religious role of shaman or *miko*. .

This topic unavoidably leads to the sensitive issue of the taboos surrounding the island Okinoshima, one of which is the *nyonin kinsei* or "prohibition of women," meaning that women are not permitted to land on the island. As I suggested above, in the pre- and proto-historical periods, women were considered to be especially sensitive to shamistic induction and possession by *kami*..The example of Himiko noted earlier can be taken as an example of the religious power of women and their roles in kami cults. While Himiko is a shadowy figure whose biography is unknown save for the descriptions in the Chinese dynastic history *Gishi wajinden* but if historically accurate, the legendary account places her life toward the end of the third century and just prior to the start of the ritual activity on Okinoshima. If the existence of *miko* like Himiko was a central feature of *kami* worship in ancient Japan, it would seem unlikely that a taboo forbidding women to visit the island of Okinoshima would have originated with that same *kami* cult. The generalized taboo of women at religious sites was originally a Buddhist idea, and it has been abolished in most parts of modern Japan. Little direct evidence is at hand, but it would appear that the rule of "prohibition of women" at the island Okinoshima developed with strong input from Buddhist precepts at some stage, due to the combining of Shintō (kami cults) with Buddhism. The earliest official rituals on Okinoshima were not so distant from the time when Himiko of the legendary Yamatai- kingdom was alive. If so, then it would seem at least strongly possible that "miko" (female shamans) were onboard the ships alongside male priests as the ships traversed the sea between Kyūshū and the Korean Peninsula. At very least, we must hold it as a strong possibility, cnsidering the importance of women in proto-Shintō.

The ordinary reasons cited for forbidding women from visiting Okinoshima are that (first) women's visit to the island would make the goddess feel "jealous," and (second) that women experience menses. While the origin of the former explanation is unknown, the latter objection can be compared to a similar taboo at the Grand Shrine of Ise. During pilgrimage to the Grand Shrine of Ise, women who experience their menstrual period were prohibited from entering the sacred borders. In the legendary folk records titled "Okagemairi Bunsei jin'iki" ("records of the miracles of the kami at the occasion of the mass pilgrimages to Ise of the Bunsei era), one account saying that a woman on her pilgraimage to Ise became ill just after crossing the river Miyagawa. Upon investigation, it turned out that the women had experienced her menstrual period. As soon as she recrossed the river and departed the sacred precincts, she regained her strength. While this work is a collection of anecdotal tales stressing the miracle of the Ise gods, it shows that women's menstruation was a taboo event. Even at Ise, however, women who were not in their monthly cycles could visit the shrines in the same way as men. The taboo of blood is clearly an issue in modern Shintō (and Buddhism), but in that case the prohibition of blood at the Grand Shrine of Ise should be considered a general abomination of blood, rather than a specific taboo against women

Being a solitary island in the distant ocean, the ancient people who visited Okinoshima likely had to stay on the island for relatively long periods, in which case, the prohibition could be interpreted as meaning that women were prohibited from entering the island because they were likely to have a menstrual period during their stay In any event , the present-day prohibition against women remains something unique among the

Shintō shrines throughout Japan. In contrast to the taboos, Okinoshima shares interesting commonalities with the Grand Shrine of Ise. For example, of all the shrines in Japan, only Ise and Oknoshima were offered miniature, gold-plated weaving looms in the same pattern. In short, the persistence of the generalized prohibition against women at Okinoshima represents a rarity in an age when virtually all other temples and shrines have abolished the taboo.

Further, if the prohibition against women was based on then-current Buddhist concepts, the other taboos on Okinoshima should also be questioned regarding the influence of Buddhism. For example, the taboo against eating four-legged animals originates in the Buddhist precept of prohibiting the killing of living things (*ahimsa*), with the result that it can be assumed to have originated in Buddhism, not indigenous *kami* cults. Similar examples from the early modern period can be seen in the prohibition of wearing leather-soled sandals or eating deer meat at the Grand Shrine of Ise. To be sure, it is rare for modern shrines to make offerings of meat, with certain exceptions like that at the Suwa Shrine in Nagano, where deer meat is offered in the shrine's festival. In fact, however, animal sacrifice was a not-infrequent custom of ancient *kami* cults, and is thought to have been prevalent not only in Japan, but also in the Korean peninsula and China, members of the same general culture sphere. As a result, it is entirely possible that this taboo as well, was the product of Buddhist influence.

Although not all taboos on Okinoshima originate in *kami* cults ("proto-Shintō"), several of the remaining taboos demonstrate the peculiarity of *kami* worship.. The custom of performing ablution (*misogi* 禊), for example, is practiced in some sectors of shrine Shintō, but the style of entering the ocean naked for ablution by all visitors (including priests) is uncommon at ordinary shrines today.

In addition, Okinoshima is also known for the taboo called *oiwazu-no-shima* (the island not to be spoken about), in other words, a taboo against relating what one has seen and heard while on the island, and that taboo appears to be unique to Okinoshima, and one of the most peculiar of taboos, not found, for example, at Ise. Of course, in strict terms, this taboo has been infringed constantly by archaeological excavations and their description in texts, including the ones related to the current World Heritage project. Overall, given contemporary attitudes, there exist some rules which have undergone considerable change, and others which can still be observed easily at other shrines. In today's information society, it is difficult to avoid speaking about the island, to strickly observe the taboo of *oiwazu-no-shima* would be most inconvenient in terms of preserving the island. In order to preserve the island and transmit it unviolate to future generations, it appears that the relaxation of the taboo of *oiwazu-no-shima* is unavoidable.

Aside from the peculiar taboo of *oiwazu-no-shima*, other taboos in common with those at Okinoshima can be observed at other sites around the world. As similar instances where taboos continue to be strictly observed even today, there is the example of the monasteries of Mt. Athos in Greece, which observes a prohibition against women Also, in terms of prohibiting the presence of people from other religions, one can point to the case of Mecca, the holy city of Islam.

Finally, in a general sense it must be stressed that the evolution of today's Shintō was greatly influenced by Buddhism and other religious traditions from the Chinese continent, in order to avoid the assumption that the taboos on Okinoshima are inherent to Japanese Shintō culture. If these taboos are described as somehow inherent to Shintō, they may cause misunderstandings not only about Japanese culture, but about its relation to the cultures of the continent.. On the other hand, it must be recognized that the preservation of the island in its present condition is in substantial measure the direct result of such taboos, reflecting just how sacred the island of Okinoshima has been viewed.

5.   Conclusion

Western Europe is generally said to have experienced the entry into "modernity" variously between the fifteenth to the late eighteenth centuries. Although it may be unfair to make a direct comparison in the Asian context, Japan's large-scale experience of modernity in the Western sense dates back only to the Meiji Restoration (1868), less than a century and a half ago. Because of this proximity, despite rising quickly to the status of a leading actor in science and technology, Japan displays cultural aspects from an earlier time that continue to entrance and charm foreign visitors, and one rarely feels completely apart from

them. In a positive sense, Japan presents visitors with one of the most amazing combinations of modernity and tradition. In the introduction to his encyclopedic compendium *Japanese Things,* B.H. Chamberlain, first translator of *Kojiki* into English wrote that "To have lived through the transition stage of modern Japan makes a man feel preternaturally old; for here he is in modern times, with the air full of talk about bicycles and bacilli and "spheres of influence", and yet he can himself distinctly remember the Middle Ages." While one must not excessively "exoticize" modern Japan, Chamberlain's description, written at the turn of the twentieth century, is an apt description of the experience many Westerners have had when confronting Japan's unique mix of tradition and the modern.

It goes without saying that one element of this combination is the religious culture today known as Shintō, which itself bears the marks both of modern systematization and primal animisism. While the *kami* cults responsible for the first offerings on Okinoshima were probably similar throughout the culture sphere represented by the Korean peninsula and Japanese islands, Shintō today represents a uniquely Japanese religious tradition, one that preserves at its core the same primal beliefs in *kami*. It is in great measure those foundational beliefs that have made the continuing existence of Okinoshima possible up through the present day.

Speaking as a long-term foreign resident of modern Japan, the truly impressive element of my experience when visiting Okinoshima was the primal act of ritual ablution in the sea water immediately after arriving at the island. At such moments one is made physically aware of the gap between knowing and doing, and the continuing power of praxis in maintaining a traditional culture. The fact that the island retains such a remarkable degree of unspoiled natural habitat is a magnificent legacy for an advanced nation like Japan. And while the value for humankind of the island's ritual sites and artifacts is immense, the very fact that they have been preserved, transmitted to us in their original form, like the vicennial rebuilding of the Grand Shrine of Ise, reflects the importance of a strong continuing cultural tradition., The religious culture visible at Okinoshima is not merely limited to the ancient past, but a heritage that continues to be actively transmitted even today.

Okinoshima and State Formation

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to examine a possible link between Okinoshima and state formation processes in the Japanese archipelago. It draws on research mainly by European scholars focusing on comparable issues in Early Central and Northern European History, which is marked by an ongoing debate about the relative value of archaeological sources and written records. At a more general level, the aim is to shed light on the relationship of religion and ritual to power and state formation.

Rituals are closely tied to religion and cult and therefore play an important role in state formation processes. Their function is to help stabilize and consolidate social and political systems, particularly in early societies. Since one of the most important factors in state formation in the Japanese archipelago was exchange with the Asian mainland – which necessarily involved crossing the sea – it is likely that the rituals on Okinoshima accompanied and supported communication with the continent, particularly in the most intensive phase of this exchange.

With regard to ritual and religion as factors in the process of state formation, we must also take into account the fact that universalizing secondary or book religions, such as Buddhism, developed a far greater influence than primary religions like the uncodified indigenous beliefs and practices of the Japanese archipelago.

Keywords: state formation; early state; rituals; religion; sacred kingdom; state rituals

Introduction

A comprehensive exhibition of Japanese archaeology held in Germany from 2004 to 2005 showcased the outstanding archaeological site on the sacred island of Okinoshima, which is particularly significant for the archaeology of ritual and religion. The importance of the site in the general context of Japanese archaeology is addressed in the exhibition handbook (e.g. YUBATA Tadanori 2004). In a similar vein, IMAO Fumiaki's detailed discussion in his study on the world of the *kami* and ritual ("Götterwelt und Kult", 2004) highlights the unique position Okinoshima holds among sites of religious ritual in the Japanese archipelago. The latter presents a wider perspective and also examines how the rites of Okinoshima can be related to the burial rituals and mounded tombs of the Kofun period and the individuals interred within them. (IMAO 2004, p. 326) The author also addresses social structures and developments during the Kofun period which paved the way for the emergence of a centralized state during the Asuka and Nara periods as well as later epochs.

Discussions of the Okinoshima rituals and the ritual site itself often focus on the question of power and the means by which rulers sought to appropriate and control ritual practices on the island. The most common theory is that some form of centralized power controlled and performed rituals on the island, a role later claimed by the ruling local clans, e.g. the Munakata clan. The concept of "state rituals" is therefore central to any discussion of the site. (In the present collection see the essays by ODA, SHIRAISHI.)

A survey of existing research shows that this theory is rarely disputed. So far the significance of the sacred island of Okinoshima and the finds discovered there has been appreciated and explained exclusively in terms of state power and state ritual, i.e. by integrating the local phenomenon into a wider framework.

The present study focuses on this assumed link between Okinoshima and state formation processes in the Japanese archipelago. It draws on research by European scholars on comparable issues in Early Central and Northern European History in order to help shed light not only on this question, but on the relationship between religion and ritual, power and state formation as well. Here it is important to note that the European debate is marked by heated controversy surrounding the relative value of archaeological sources and written records.

It is clearly beyond the scope of this article to propose a new model of state formation processes or a

comprehensive overview of the various political systems existing in Japan from the Early Kofun period to the early historical period. An unambiguous and definitive description of developments from pre-state structures to fully centralized systems is beyond the scope of scholarly studies, nor will I undertake to provide an overview of the highly complex debate about state formation that is currently being carried out by historians and archaeologists in Japan and around the world. Instead, I will discuss the relevant theories, models, and ideas as need arises. Based on the methods and sources at their disposal, historians and archaeologists alike have produced useful concepts of the state. Each field certainly has potentials, but also limits, which become evident where these areas of study overlap and which need to be related to the case at hand if we are to seek a wider perspective.

Research in this area is heavily influenced by British and North American approaches, and this is also reflected in Japanese scholarship in the field. I would like to shift this focus to include research by central European and particularly German scholars, whose exploration of Hallstatt and La Tène cultures as well as the Early Middle Ages confronts similar issues to those raised by Okinoshima: How was the Early Medieval state formed? How was power organized? What was the role of rituals and religion? How can we define the different regional political and social entities? These questions outline an area of overlap and tension between archaeology and historiography that is significant for the study of all early societies, be they in Early Medieval Europe or in the Japanese archipelago during the Kofun and following periods.

In particular, research on the Early Middle Ages in Europe (see the exemplary study by Althoff published in 2003) has shifted its focus in the past three decades to include examinations of the power of rituals and the intersection of rituals with social and political power. However, one must keep in mind that there is no single universal explanation and that different periods and places require in-depth examination of the societies and cultures concerned.

In the context of religion and power I will compare the significance of Christianization in Europe and the introduction of Buddhism in the Japanese archipelago as important factors in the process of state formation – not to suggest any direct analogies, which would be highly problematic, but to benefit from the light shed by the European debate on the relation of ritual and religion to social change, formation processes, and power. At the same time it is clear that we are dealing with fundamentally different historical developments that cannot be interpreted in terms of universal principles.

I. The Framework of the State in Ancient Japan: What Is a State?

1.   The State in Ancient Japan

At the symposium accompanying the exhibition in Germany, in his presentation on the Asuka-Nara period TANABE Ikuo summed up what can be considered the generally accepted view of the situation existing towards the end of the process of state formation:

On the whole, two factors mark the beginning of a new period at the end of the state formation process in the Japanese archipelago. The first of these is the emergence and consolidation of a unified, autocratic state based on the rule of law, which replaced the Kofun period union of regional chiefs and would later develop into an imperial system with the *tennō* at its centre. Power was now administrated by a bureaucracy on the basis of a code of law. Since this was modelled on the Chinese penal and administrative codes, the adoption and widespread use of Chinese characters was an inevitable side-effect.

Correspondence sent by Japanese rulers to China – and the resentment it caused – illustrates that the Japanese had by this time developed a consciousness of a unified state and sought to deal on an equal footing with the emperors of the Sui Dynasty (581–618 A. D.).

The remains of the capital city built around 670–680 A. D. near Asuka (today Nara Prefecture) provide ample archaeological evidence for the emergence of a unified autocratic state during the reign of Emperor Tenmu. The establishment of a permanent capital in which central state institutions were concentrated also reflects the Chinese influence. Here we find the first use of the title *tennō*, the first attempts at codified law, and the first instances of organized bureaucracy – processes impressively illustrated by archaeological finds

at sites dating to the seventh to eighth centuries A. D., above all by excavations at the former capitals and surrounding sites.

The second factor heralding the beginning of this new period is the adoption of Buddhism. A number of material finds suggest that Buddhism was brought to the Japanese archipelago in the early sixth century by groups of immigrants from the Korean peninsula. By the end of the sixth century Buddhism had been adopted as state religion and the government actively and systematically promoted the building of Buddhist temples.

The Buddhist view of world and state made it a more suitable ideology for a unified, autocratic state, and with the official adoption of Buddhism came a rejection of previous beliefs and practices such as ancestor veneration or the worship of nature deities. Hence, many speculate that the adoption of Buddhism in the Japanese archipelago was motivated by the aim to protect the centralized state rather than by a desire for personal salvation. (TANABE 2006, pp. 150–152)

Three aspects of the situation as described by TANABE are relevant for our context: the establishment of a state based on the rule of law, the emergence of a consciousness of the state, and the introduction of book-based religion. Significantly, all three aspects are related to exchange with and influences from the Asian mainland.

The consciousness of a unified state, the introduction of the twelve-rank system (*kani taisei*) that came with the establishment of bureaucracy, and the abolition of private ownership of land and people, which the Taika Reforms (646 A. D.) declared public lands and public people (*kōchi kōmin*), defined a new direction in the system of government that included the reorganization of power structures on one hand and, on the other, the transformation of the people into *a* people. (WADA 2004, p. 386) Interaction with the Asian mainland and the establishment of a tribute system further consolidated state consciousness; from the early seventh century Japanese rulers no longer applied to Chinese dynasties to gain continental titles and the borrowed authority these had once conveyed. Thus a delegation sent in 702 A. D. to the Chinese court announced (among other things) that a new political entity had been formed which would henceforth be known as *nihon*, the name clearly implying that by the early eighth century the idea of a central kingdom governed by a heavenly ruler had established itself in the Japanese archipelago. (Ooms 2009, pp. 37, 104) Permanent exchange with the Asian mainland was crucial to the consolidation of centralized state power and the transfer of knowledge peaked during the first half of the seventh century. Continental culture arrived in various forms, be it as gifts from continental rulers or in the form of scholarly exchange, either in person or by the transfer of books and other materials. When Buddhist monks in the mid-sixth century brought their religion to the archipelago, they also brought with them knowledge ranging from the concept of yin-yang to divination, Daoism, and magic. Equally important were the delegations sent to the Sui and Tang courts to establish a direct line of communication with China. And although there are no precise figures, some knowledge transfer may also be attributed to immigration of various overseas groups. For Emperor Tenmu, for example, the continental blueprint for the centralization of continental knowledge used in the establishment of a state bureaucracy was an important priority. An even more important influence than that of Buddhism on the course taken by the government was the Tang Dynasty's system of interpreting portents, i.e. divination and astrology: an astronomical observation platform was erected and a Yin-yang Bureau (*onmyōryō*) established. (Ooms 2009, pp. 86–90)

In terms of its ritual-religious or cultic dimension, the system that emerged could be described as a liturgical or church state, particularly under Emperors Tenmu and Jitō, who organized the *ritsuryō* state along religious lines. Yet while they may have established a state liturgy, there was no full-fledged religious institution or state church to support it. Centred on harvest rituals, the liturgy was instead based on a widening network of shrines and deities (*kami*) serviced by local families or clans (*uji*). Religious liturgy was created for the state when required in a system where contributions for ritual purposes and regular taxes were often one and the same. By the time of Emperor Shōmu, however, Buddhism had asserted itself as the state church by establishing a network of Buddhist institutions that covered all provincial capitals consisting of temples, monasteries, and convents, most famously the great Tōdai-ji in Nara. (Ooms 2009, pp. 109–110; 196)

Even if we are to avoid discussing in detail how the modern concept of the state is to be defined, we can

still conclude that the political entity that emerged in the Japanese archipelago from the second half of the seventh century was a full-fledged state.

As we have seen, the underlying processes demonstrate the significant role played by Asian mainland cultures and, consequently, the importance of trade and travel routes to and from the Korean peninsula and China. Archaeological finds from Okinoshima provide clear evidence of this lively cultural exchange. Okinoshima could therefore be described as a way station, both as a literal stopover on the route to the Asian mainland and, metaphorically, during the transition to a new system of government in the Japanese archipelago.

2.   Concepts of the State

Concepts of the state such as those emerging from ongoing research on Early Medieval European polities attach great importance to the development of "state consciousness". According to these models, the existence of a state is contingent upon the abstract awareness, at least among its intellectual and ruling elites, of its "transpersonal" being. In such a framework, regional centres derive their power from the centralized state, which can demote office holders as and when it pleases. Statehood is thus more dependent on the enforcement of order and the institutionalization of supremacy than the much-cited monopoly on the use of force. (Pohl 2006, pp. 9–10; 32–33)

But there are many ways of defining statehood, many of which are synthetic in several respects. It is possible to define the state in terms of its assertion of authority, i.e. in the sense of Max Weber's "monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force", but this model hardly applies to Medieval European states. Following Weber, Ernest Gellner linked the element of physical force to the division of labour within a society, claiming that a state only exists once the organs of state authority have crystallized – something he expressly assumed about pre-modern societies. Other definitions highlight the purpose of the state, such as its role as a bulwark against internal and external threats (in our case vis-à-vis the Asian mainland), or seek to describe the relationship between rulers and subjects as a fundamental criterion. The most widely accepted introductions to political science usually mention the following three parameters as core features of states: "a political community formed by a territorially defined population which is subject to one government", (Hague and Harrop 2010, pp. 14–15) to which the Montevideo Convention of 1933 added "the capacity to enter into relations with the other states." (Montevideo CONVENTION ON RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF STATES, 1933, article 1; Pohl 2006, p. 10)

For the specific context of Early Medieval Europe, in his seminal study the Marxist historian Chris Wickham draws on Henri J. M. Claessen and W. G. Runciman when he defines the following parameters: "the centralization of legitimate enforceable authority", "the specialization of government roles", "the concept of a public power", "independent and stable resources for rulers", and "a class-based system of surplus extraction". (The Early State, ed. Henri J. M. Claessen/Peter Skalnik, The Hague 1978; Wickham 2005, p. 57)

Concerning the concept of the state in general, HIROSE Kazuo has contradicted prevailing conceptions of history: Although recent research no longer presupposes a close link between regional developments and the centre (i.e. Kinai), the dominant view still combines factors such as the size of burial mounds or the type of grave goods found within with largely uncritical references to the *nihon shoki* and the *kojiki* in order to describe how these regions and their chieftains came under the rule of a centralized, Yamato-based power structure. The received view is that the Kofun period paved the way for the *ritsuryō* state and neither archaeologists nor historians have consistently examined its role as an autonomous period independently of the one that followed it. Moreover, since the inception of the *ritsuryō* state is generally viewed as the beginning of civilization in the Japanese archipelago, the preceding phase is labelled as a politically immature precursor phase, in line with theories of civilization that stress the development from primitive to civilized. But if the Kofun system was merely a precursor to the *ritsuryō* state, HIROSE asks, how was it able to survive for nearly 350 years and produce such a large number of elaborate burial mounds? Instead he argues a division of labour between the centre and the periphery based on a system of personal rule, a theory that is corroborated by the sources. (HIROSE 2009, pp. 34–35.) It was not until after the coup d'état, the Taika Reform, and the Jinshin War (671) that the Kofun system was replaced by one organized

according to dynastic principles and the rule of law, with a central government and bureaucracy comprising two departments and eight ministries (*nikan hasshō*). Developments in China and widespread unrest on the Korean peninsula did much to spur the establishment of a centralized system of territorial rule in the Japanese archipelago based on state ownership of land and on the new ideology, according to which the state was spiritually protected by Buddhism. (HIROSE 2009, p. 35) The actual process of transition is difficult to ascertain, but according to HIROSE there is no evidence linking it to flaws in the Kofun system. He is critical of theories that fail to fully analyze the transition process itself and instead rely on concepts such as development and evolution to explain it. In his opinion, these theories are ideologically motivated, as is the view that a regional system of power distribution based on personal rule must be inferior to a centralized territorial system – an unsubstantiated claim frequently pushed as evidence. (HIROSE 2009, p. 35) According to HIROSE: "We must free our ideas from the systematic depictions in the *nihon shoki* of the legitimacy of the *ritsuryō* state and the developmental view of history that has restrained researchers engaged in archaeology and ancient history. In addition, using the massive quantity of archaeological data as a foundation, we must shed light on the 350-year Kofun period when politics was symbolized by mounded tombs as a single cohesive period without succumbing to doctrine centred on what came next." (HIROSE 2009, p. 146) In this context he also proposes the alternative term *zenpô kôen fun kokka* ("state of the keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mound") to describe this period. (HIROSE 2009, p. 131)

The problem addressed by HIROSE is one also confronted by scholars investigating the European Middle Ages: the tendency to project onto the past the concepts of the modern constitutional state or other state and legal conceptions. While it is generally accepted that contemporary historiography has overcome the problem, scholars in the first half of the twentieth century tended to lend more weight to legal history and to overestimate the importance of collective subjects and ideal categories such as State, People, Law, Kingship, etc. To counter this statist view of the past it has even been suggested that we avoid using the term "state" altogether, at least in the context of the European Middle Ages, since no such word existed at the time and the Latin *status* and all its derivations only acquired their current meaning during the Late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age. Exorcizing these projections is a continuous concern of contemporary research into this period. (Pohl 2006, pp. 9, 11)

II. State Formation Processes – Current Research
In the following I will briefly summarize the most important points of the scholarly debate, both in Japan and elsewhere, on state formation processes.

1. Japan

The state formation process in ancient Japan leading up to a regulated, centralized state based on the Chinese model is generally believed to have begun in the mid-third century. The keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mound of the standard type that were first built around this time are considered visible evidence of a new political order made up of alliances between chieftains. (SHIRAISHI 2004, pp. 277, 283)

Japanese scholars generally focus on developments between these two poles, meaning that the debate about the Kofun period is largely determined by the evaluation of the relationship between centre and periphery.

An important question in this context is whether the Kofun system can be characterized as a "state" to the same degree as the *ritsuryō* state that followed it, or whether it was merely a preliminary stage. The received view is that the emergence of the standard type of keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mound was the starting point of a development that inevitably led to the bureaucratic centralized state of ancient Japan. A different approach is not to look back from the *ritsuryō* state, but instead to examine the Kofun period and its polities, on the evidence of their strikingly elaborate burial architecture, autonomously and independently. Both perspective and whether historical processes are interpreted in terms of evolution, development, or simply change naturally affect the evaluation of the related phenomena. To illustrate this point, HIROSE 2009 provides an exemplary summary of recent debates and the main research questions, which display interesting parallels to the debate about state and state formation processes in the Early Middle Ages in Europe.
Perspective and method necessarily affect the interpretation of a site such as Okinoshima, too. An analysis

of historical processes that took place between the appearance of the first standard type of keyhole-shaped mounded tombs and the rise of the later, centralized *ritsuryō* state is entirely dependent on our modelling of basic concepts such as state formation, power, and the related social and political structures. Findings can vary wildly depending on the approach taken, and this is particularly relevant when evaluating the significance of the groups of mounded tombs in the vicinity of Okinoshima.

In Japan, Marxist and neo-Marxist concepts have had a marked influence on academic research in both historiography and archaeology. According to the trend first established in the 1930s, the concept of state is therefore generally defined in terms of historical materialism: the large mounded tombs of the Kofun period are evidence of class exploitation in a class society described as a state. This view changed in the 1970s and 1980s as scholars began to look to Friedrich Engels's *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884) for insight into the process of state formation and sought to fit the Kofun period into the category of tribal societies at the pre-state stage. The Kofun period was now described as a society that had not yet reached maturity, and the earliest dates for the emergence and establishment of a state were pushed back into the late sixth or early seventh centuries. Scholars drew upon written records as well as the framework described by Engels to determine that actual state formation did not take place until the second half of the seventh century, when the disappearance of the Kofun period mounded tombs coincided with the establishment of the *ritsuryō* system and a state entity. Proponents of this theory who defined the Kofun period as a pre-state society included the archaeologist KONDŌ Yoshirō.

Beginning in the 1990s the dominant view was that of TSUDE Hiroshi, who defines the Kofun period as the first phase in state formation leading to an early state – a view that continues to resonate today. Once again Engels's criteria dominate the picture, with the "superstructure" displaying features of a state. TSUDE assumes a system of rank in which the form and dimensions of the burial mounds reflect social status, with the large, keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mound reserved for the deceased from the top of the social pyramid. This is viewed as evidence of the emergence of a class system reflected by the type of burial mounds from the third century onwards that formed the backbone of Kofun society. Based on a re-interpretation of archaeological evidence, this new view of the Kofun period as an early state society combined Engels's approach with neo-evolutionist anthropology. The theory is still highly influential and has stimulated a lively debate about state formation in the Japanese archipelago. MATSUGI critically notes that this view has assumed a somewhat dogmatic character and points out that the continued, mechanistic application of Engels's theory of statehood and its associated labels can only lead scholars into a formalistic cul-de-sac. (MATSUGI 2004. pp. 319–20; FUKUNAGA 2004, pp. 146–45.)

TSUDE distinguishes chiefdoms from early states along such criteria as social stratification, the use of force to maintain internal order, and the regular production of economic surplus. He assumes that a state-level organization emerged during the late third to fifth centuries, an interval that comprises two thirds of the Kofun period. In his opinion the gigantic keyhole-shaped mounded tombs served as symbols of power, and he sees the existence of smaller, regional mounded tombs as evidence of the central authority's command over an army that enabled it to maintain order even in remote areas. The smaller, regional mounded tombs, he believes, were erected for warriors in that army, since the grave goods found within could only have been obtained through close contacts to the central elite. TSUDE has coined the term "order of the keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mound" for this system of government, which in his view emerged as an early state in the period between the third and fifth centuries. (TSUDE 1992, Edwards 2005, pp. 13–15)

Another highly influential explanation of the transition to a centralized state was put forward by SHIRAISHI Taichirō, who coined the term *yamato seiken* ("Yamato polity") to describe a specific form of political alliance covering a wide area and based on a sense of shared ancestry, a common ideology centred on mounded tombs (*kofun*), and communal participation in funerary rituals designed to affirm and strengthen the alliance. This alliance was led by the Kinai-based Yamato kingly power (*yamato ōken*), which gradually expanded its influence until, in the second half of the fifth century, the relationships within the alliance between regional chieftains and the central power underwent a fundamental change and a clear bias towards centralization emerged. Archaeological remains indicate that the changes and political processes unfolding during this period, which can be regarded as the prehistory of the state of ancient Japan, went hand in hand with the erection of mounded tombs closely linked to the political order. (HIROSE 2009, p. 40; SHIRAISHI 1999) Since SHIRAISHI's contribution to the present volume argues his theory

persuasively and in detail based on the example of the relationship between Okinoshima and Yamato kingly power, I will not go further into it here.

FUKUNAGA Shin'ya draws on the theory developed by Stanley Tambiah to produce a model of the keyhole tomb system as a "galactic polity", which is also interesting in our context. Despite the differences in regional topography and in the social organization of the groups, the practice of building keyhole-shaped mounded tombs spread fairly swiftly. According to FUKUNAGA, this indicates that rather than maintaining a complex system of governance, the centre concentrated on controlling funerary rituals and prestige goods and in so doing produced the framework for a unified polity. By adopting these funerary rituals, regional polities were able to strengthen their ties with the centre. FUKUNAGA does not assume any rigorous control exercised by the centre over the construction of these tombs, nor does he see their existence as evidence for any such control. However, he argues, it may be assumed that the alliance into which centre and periphery entered was beneficial to both, since at regional level it helped assert status while at the supra-regional level it affirmed the centre's leadership in strategic collaborations with regional powers. At the same time he assumes that this alliance was not brought about by military means or physical force, but on the basis of rituals that had their origin in the political centre. Tracing a process by which rituals were at their most innovative and elaborate at the centre and were increasingly simplified as they spread outwards into the regional polities, he identifies a process of hierarchization between the different polities. The significant point in this theory is that the state is essentially founded in ritual (see Clifford Geertz's concept of the theatre state) as a vast amount of social energy is devoted to funerary rituals. FUKUNAGA explicitly highlights this aspect, which Marxist and neo-evolutionist approaches tend to ignore. Nevertheless he defines the society of the Kofun period as an early state displaying several structural characteristics generally associated with a galactic polity, whereby the main difference between it and the *ritsuryō* state is the nature of the relationship between centre and periphery. In the *ritsuryō* state these structures can best be described as extending radially from the centre, while during the Kofun period individual polities formed a system of concentric circles around the central entity. In FUKUNAGA's view, the Kofun system does not meet the criteria for a full-fledged state because it lacks such structures as "a functionally divided governmental organization, investment mechanisms to strategically suck up social surplus and the presence of a legal system" (FUKUNAGA 2004, p. 147) – here it is important to note that he is referring to universal criteria of modern statehood rather than explicitly rejecting them. He assumes that in the further course of the Kofun period, regional polities generally lost strength and then reconstituted themselves as provincial organizations within the *ritsuryō* system of territorial rule. FUKUNAGA also distinguishes between primary and secondary states and describes the Kofun polity as a member of the latter, i.e. a state that interacts with a polity that has reached the stage of civilization – in this case the result of a formation process in which mid-third century links to China played a decisive role. (FUKUNAGA 2004, pp. 147ff.; FUKUNAGA 2005, pp. 54–57)

Research has yielded numerous descriptions of Kofun society that attempt to define and explain state formation processes and power structures. In general it can be said that TSUDE's theory has led to lively debate which has resulted in a number of different approaches. (For a helpful summary, see HIROSE 2009, pp. 127ff.)

To conclude this chapter I would like to take a closer look at the approach developed by HIROSE, whose description of the relationship between the Kofun period and the *ritsuryō* state differs from received theories. As I have explained above, HIROSE rejects evolutionary approaches and declines to define the Kofun system as a forerunner of the *ritsuryō* state. Nor does his theory require Kofun society to collapse before a new organization can emerge; instead it assumes complex changes in response to outside influences. Eschewing categories such as "immature" or "civilized", his terminology discusses Kofun society on the same terms and at the same level as the political entity that followed it. His use of "state" (*kokka*) in the term "state of the keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mound" is a deliberate rejection of previous categorizations, which predominantly describe the political system of the Kofun period as "immature". The definition he offers is based on the following factors: control over military matters and relations with other polities within a specific territory; a shared ideology; a revenue system controlled by a central elite (in our case, the Yamato power) that also maintains a network of objects, people, and knowledge while pursuing power, prestige, and technological progress, etc. The entity is centred around a redistribution system, which in our case involved Chinese bronze mirrors and objects made of jasper and above all iron, as evidenced by the increasing numbers of weapons. As long as an entity meets these four

criteria and is able to secure its own reproduction, HIROSE says, it can be defined as a state. In the Kofun period the organization of an army ensured a monopoly on the use of force and the control over external relations, and these developments helped generate and sustain a collective consciousness that is also reflected in shared grave rituals (*funbo saishi*), which from the mid-third century onwards helped sculpt a common identity out of what had once been separate regional chiefdoms. As noted above, cohesion is based on personal ties rather than an institutionalized system of territorial rule. HIROSE seeks to highlight the autonomy inherent to the socio-political structure of the Kofun period and links its transformation or the transition to the next phase to growing pressure stemming from developments on the Asian mainland. (HIROSE 2009, p. 131; HIROSE 2010, p. 191ff.) The fact that HIROSE assumes that there was a monopoly on the use of force as well as a transpersonal, collective consciousness reveal that his theory is based on a modern concept of the state, as does his reference to the purpose of the state, i.e. external defence. He uses the concept as a yardstick rather than discarding it altogether. As will become clear later, HIROSE's approach has a lot in common with the notion of the *Personenverbandsstaat* ("state of associated persons") of Early Medieval Europe, which depended on personal ties of loyalty rather than on transpersonal institutions.

To complete the picture I would like to draw attention to approaches developed by scholars from outside of Japan, most prominently G.L. Barnes, who has explored state formation in the Early Kofun period in the Japanese archipelago. Barnes also draws on neo-evolutionist notions and tends to define the Kofun period as a secondary state – a view that, while not uncontroversial, is prevalent in British and North American scholarship. (Recent criticism may be found, among others, in SHIRAISHI 2010). Pigott embraces a similar view but from a historiographical perspective. (Pigott 1997)

Another remarkable approach to hierarchization and networks in state formation is the application of social network analysis and derived concepts and methods set forth by MIZOGUCHI Kōji. (MIZOGUCHI 2009)

2.   Europe

Let us now examine some aspects of the debate outside of Japan, especially in Europe.

The evolutionist theory of socio-political organizations proposed by Elman Service in 1971 is widely known, so I will only give a brief outline here. Its principal concern was to identify universal laws governing cultural processes above and beyond cultural specificity. The focus was on describing the development not of specific cultures but of culture as such as a unilinear and evolutionary process. The classic example cited in this context is Service's four-stage model of social evolution: band, tribe, chiefdom, and state.

However, neo-evolutionist stage models have increasingly come under criticism in British and North American archaeology for their problematic assumption of general and linear socio-political development. A number of studies have revealed that these models fail to reflect reality and, while they seem to provide useful heuristic instruments, their orientation on abstract concepts and ideal types greatly reduce their value. Social conditions are too dependent on context, societies too multi-functional to lend themselves to this type of modelling. It has to be kept in mind that the terminology, concepts, and models developed by cultural studies are analytical constructs in the sense defined by Max Weber: they are abstract, not real. (Theel 2006, pp. 6–8) And there is yet another important dimension to the attempts to align archaeological features with the types of socio-political organization proposed by cultural anthropology: identifying a specific type requires diagnostic criteria that coincide with material evidence for it to be archaeologically recognizable. The British and North American archaeological literature of the past twenty years displays increasing scepticism regarding cultural evolutionist models and theories, a trend that began even earlier in cultural anthropology. (Eggert 2007, p. 270)

In the present context I would like to focus on the European Iron Age, especially the Hallstatt and La Tène cultures, and the period from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages and to examine concepts of state, state formation, and the social structure and organization of protohistoric societies in the archaeology of German-speaking countries and European historiography. In terms of the history of the research into these cultures, an internal link between these periods exists, for in the late 1960s the German archaeologist

Wolfgang Kimmig proposed an analytical model for the Late Hallstatt and Early La Tène cultures that borrowed terms such as "prince" and "nobility" from descriptions of the High Middle Ages and Absolutism in order to interpret those earlier periods. In the German-speaking world there is heated debate about Hallstatt and La Tène social organization, yet these archaeologists have only recently begun to access the spectrum of theories described above, probably because archaeology in the German-speaking world is traditionally rooted in historiography. (Eggert 2007, pp. 255ff.)

Amongst German-speaking archaeologists, Manfred Eggert is the sole champion of another culture-anthropological analogical model which uses comparative ethnographic or culture-anthropological methods without kow-towing to the neo-evolutionist or other systematic approaches that usually go with them. (Karl 2007, p. 326; Karl 2006, p. 53f.) From the 1970s Eggert critically followed the theory debate taking place outside of German archaeology and emphasized the vital role of models as heuristic instruments in methodology, although he was very clear about his own rejection of determinist explanations of the rise and fall of socio-political organizations of varying complexity. Similar to HIROSE, he prefers to speak of social and cultural change. In Eggert's view, structural correspondences between societies must be backed up by comparative studies.

The history of archaeological research in the German-speaking world is distinct from that in the rest of Europe in a number of respects. This is largely due to the impact of the writings of Friedrich Engels in the late nineteenth century. Engels drew extensively on the evolutionist theories of Lewis Henry Morgan, who in his path-breaking work *Ancient Society* traced a three-stage development from savagery to barbarism to civilization. While classical evolutionism was discarded around the turn of the twentieth century, it continued to live on in Marxist literature. V. Gordon Childe's emphatically evolutionist approach heavily influenced by Marxism had little influence on German scholars of Prehistory and Protohistory, however, who tended to reject comparative approaches involving several cultures. Political divisions within twentieth-century Europe naturally played a significant role in this context. All told, "historicist" is perhaps the best way to describe the methodology followed in German archaeology, where scholars avoided all forms of generalization, instead emphasizing the uniqueness of individual historical situations. (Eggert 2007, pp. 259f.)

This also holds true for historiography, although the study of the European Early Middle Ages, which followed its own route in exploring and describing state formation and societies from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages, has yielded a number of approaches that are significant for our context and of which I would like to give a brief overview here.

In terms of its history, the study of the European Early Middle Ages is marked by a paradigm shift in the perception of the transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages: whereas older historical theories generally assumed a break, current approaches are dominated by the idea of the "transformation of the Roman world" and highlight the continuities between the Roman Empire and its successors. Archaeology has had considerable impact in this context. (Goetz 2003, pp. 280-84) An examination of Early Medieval statehood and power, i.e. of the beginnings of modern statehood, was first undertaken in the early twentieth century based on traditional research using legal documents. Its recent re-examination has led to a redefinition of concepts such as state, institution, *Herrschaftsverband* ("sovereignty association"), and stateness or statehoodness.

Let us take a look at the concept of *Herrschaft* to illustrate this shift. A survey of research to date and revisions made in the course of several decades shows that *Herrschaft* is not a specifically Germanic or German phenomenon. The term is often translated as "power", but it is important to note that the German language has two distinct expressions for power, *Macht* and *Herrschaft*, and that in some contexts it may be more appropriate to use "rulership" or "exercise of power" for *Herrschaft*, while *Macht* is power pure and simple. In the real world *Herrschaft* manifested itself at many levels and the written records do not offer a consistent concept of the term, though it is clear that it was also linked to religious concepts. Moreover, the Early Medieval state was based on the cooperation of rulers, king and nobility, and subjects, and this relationship served as the basis for the sovereignty association (*Herrschaftsverband*). This notion is widely recognized in the literature, which identifies a network of personal bonds as the most important foundation of kingly rule. What is controversial, however, is the concept of state people held at the time. While it is possible to see the modern terms "institution" and "personal network" or "association of persons"

(*Personenverband*) as opposites, in the Medieval concept of state we can assume that personal networks and ritual, too, were viewed as essential traits of statehood. Gerd Althoff has shown that the entities often referred to by the Latin word *regna* ("region", "territory ruled by a king"; "royal power"; "kingdom") were certainly not without order. The Early Medieval state was no institution without institutions, even if its functioning was based on symbolic forms and personal bonds. The controversy among scholars mainly concerns the extent to which the state and its institutions made themselves felt. Today we conceive of statehood in terms of both the concept and the exercise of power, which leads to confrontations with systematic interpretations. Another important trend in the analysis of statehood which is particularly significant for the present context concerns the examination of symbolic forms of representation, such as symbols, rituals, ceremony, and the representation of power, and research seeks to examine these ritual forms, interactions, and public displays. (Goetz 2003, pp. 284–88)

Scholars such as Gerd Althoff, whose research focuses on ritual forms, postulate the existence of kingship without a state. Althoff argues against using the term "state" and, indeed, most scholars agree that the entities of the Early Middle Ages meet practically none of the criteria of modern statehood. Moreover, avoiding the term minimizes the risk of its conceptual force invading academic perspective. At the same time Althoff acknowledges the problems involved in not using "state", but so far no adequate terminology for the complex manifestations of statehood has been proposed. Althoff's research privileges the examination of rituals and acts of symbolic communication in establishing or maintaining order in Early Medieval society, an aspect that in his opinion is too often neglected when traditional categories (including "state") are used. (Althoff 2009, p. 391; Althoff 2003).

It is possible, however, to observe a gradual merging of the different European research traditions. One of the controversies surrounding state and statehood revolves around the importance of Late Antique and Roman traditions, the relationship between personal bonds and institutions, the beginning of the transition to transpersonal notions of statehood and institutionalization, and the extent to which people in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages conceived of the entity in which they lived as a "state". German scholars tend to avoid the term "state" and instead speak of "statehood", and historians in other European countries are at odds about how to define a state, either generally or with respect to the Early Middle Ages. (Goetz 2008, pp. 523f.) Similar questions regarding terminology, involving concepts such as state, early state, not-yet-state, also dominated the discussions at a recent symposium (Airlie 2006). Clearly there is a need for general criteria to use when discussing the concept of state, and suggestions include the ability to assert power and to act in concert when confronting external foes. On the other hand strategies of ideological legitimization and the formation of collective identities have been cited as being crucial to the survival of Early Medieval kingdoms.

By replacing political concepts with social ones, such as "association", it is possible to incorporate personal as well as transpersonal elements. An aspect that is decisive for the Japanese debate, too, arises from the modern bias that in the past has led to pre-state entities being described almost exclusively as weak and instable; this has now been largely overcome. It went hand in hand with an emphasis on the role of Christianity in boosting stability, the assumption being that people in the Early Middle Ages saw a close cooperation between king and church as a guarantor of state order by divine order. Nearly all scholars agree that Christianization was a major factor in state formation and the internal consolidation of kingdoms; the missions to Scandinavia and England effected a similar consolidation within Europe as a whole. The interaction between kingdoms is also an important element in state formation. (Goetz 2008, pp. 525–28)

While personal and inter-group bonds were clearly important, present-day studies no longer describe the Early Medieval polity purely as a state of associated persons (*Personenverbandsstaat*); instead, the picture of a society emerges that is structured by office, institutions, and spatial attachment. Other definitions even subsume personal bonds under state institutions, which obviously precludes a transition from personal to transpersonal ties. The existence and stability of Early Medieval states also depended on the resources at their disposal, another crucial factor in the emergence of statehood. The same holds true for the church: bishops played a very real role in politics, but also at an abstract level in Medieval concepts of statehood as guarantors of political stability. Networks with a spatial impact such as that of the *Pfalzen*, i.e. the imperial or royal palaces, can be seen as symbols of state power and, thus, of a transpersonal understanding of empire. While Early Medieval rituals could be described as marks of a pre-state society, they are today conceived of as forms of communication and no longer seen as irreconcilable with institutionalization. The

exercise of power rarely reflects its theory and the limits of Early Medieval statehood are obvious when it is compared to modern states. Rules which were based on ritual practice, for example, generally required a certain degree of self-commitment and self-compliance. As these were often subject to interpretation, however, they were also a source of weakness for Medieval statehood. (Goetz 2008, pp. 524; 529f.)

Scholars agree that in the Early and High Middle Ages no state existed in the modern sense of the term. Nineteenth-century historians tended to project their own, modern notions of constitutionality into the past; the response to this statist view of history has been a fundamental scepticism about using the term "state" at all when describing the Middle Ages. Yet modern terminology is an essential tool in establishing analytical distance to the subject, including the ideas held by those living during the time we seek to examine. Attempts at identifying early forms of modern statehood in Medieval institutions and concepts have further complicated matters, for while the related research has produced highly differentiated results, this has also prevented the emergence of more cohesive contemporary perspectives. Viewed as the genealogical ancestors of the modern state, the political entities of the Early Middle Ages are at best prototypes, rudimentary early forms. That scepticism about the assumption of a Medieval state has played an important role in German scholarship is reflected in the term *Personenverband* which, as mentioned above, was coined to describe social cohesion based on personal bonds. New horizons in research were developed when scholars finally overcame the tendency to project modern concepts of statehood into the past and adopted more contemporary perspectives and terminologies. (Pohl 2006, pp. 10f.)

At the same time, if we deny the Early Medieval state its "stateness" and instead choose to describe it as "archaic", this also means we put ourselves into the position of measuring the Early Middle Ages against later developments rather than highlighting the characteristics of its specific form of statehood. (Goetz 2006, p. 56)

Scepticism about the concept of state is still widespread in present-day study of the Early Medieval period. Overburdened with theory, its is always at risk of predetermining the research perspective. Historians have come to be aware of this, however, and know that their view of the data is inevitably coloured by both Medieval and modern interpretations. In the end, theoretical concepts are merely metaphors or complex interpretative figures. (Pohl 2006, p. 13)

When considering the processes and mechanisms that transformed individual kingdoms into viable entities, however, it is not actually relevant whether the term "state" is used or not. It is sufficiently clear that these are not segmentary lineage societies, so all we really need is a term to describe the nature of their system – preferably one that leaves wide interpretative leeway. Rather than drawing on categories based on modern concepts of the state and its institutions or getting involved with problematic terms from primary sources, recent Medieval studies in the German-speaking world have therefore increasingly tapped into the terminologies of ethnology and social anthropology. (Mary Douglas, Marshall Sahlins, Roy Rappaport, Clifford Geertz, Pierre Bourdieu) This might represent something of an "anthropological shift": historians have come to recognize the potential of concepts and methods such as symbolic capital or thick description of rituals and other forms of symbolic communication. The challenge in this context is to avoid generalizing models and instead systematically compare specific societies and phenomena, for any attempt to categorize Early Medieval *regna* in terms of universal typologies of early statehood would be haphazard at best. (Pohl 2006, pp. 16f.)

The archaeologist Heiko Steuer has proposed a model centred on a further factor in state formation: war. By waging war on Germania, the Frankish and Carolingian Empires, as the Roman Empire before them, triggered developments along the North Sea and Baltic coasts as well as in southern Scandinavia which led to the formation first of tribal societies and then of states and kingdoms. The mercenaries hired by the Merovingians, for example, might have played a role in the centralization of their regions of origin when they returned there. Danish and Scandinavian archaeologists have used archaeological evidence supported by written records in their analysis of this process of state formation; the result is a complete compilation of archaeological data about territories and landscapes detailing settlement patterns, settlement hierarchies, road networks, resources, places of sacrifice, and fortifications. In this way they were able to ascertain the existence of central places and persuasively argued that territories had come to be organized by new leadership groups exercising sacral and political power, a development that is also reflected in settlement patterns. (Steuer 2005, p. 504) Internal conflict and war with more strongly organized communities are the

engines of change, whereby clan societies are forced to form tribes. (Steuer 2006)

Scholarship in Japan differs from the European study of the Early Middle Ages in two remarkable respects: firstly, the influence of Marxist approaches was neither as great nor as lasting in Europe as it has been in Japan, and secondly, European scholars have mostly overcome the biased view of Early Medieval society from the perspective of modern constitutional states or, conversely, from that of the preceding Roman empire.

III. Social Structures and Rulership – The Interred of the Mounded Tombs – Sacral Kingship, Priest-Kings

1. Rites for the Deities and Mounded Tomb Rites

Central control of resources or the existence of a social rank system do not sufficiently or exclusively explain the huge mounded tombs erected particularly in the Early Kofun period. Indeed it is doubtful whether it would have been possible to establish a centralized control system covering such vast distances. Moreover, materialist approaches leave little room for the spiritual and religious dimensions of early societies, whose complex structures do not lend themselves to explanation in simplified terms. The mere fact that people in different areas practiced the same burial rites and burial customs does not necessarily point to a superordinate political authority. Researchers have been unable to ascertain how relationships between chieftains were organized in the different phases of the Kofun period, and a conclusive description may never emerge; for the time being all we have to approach the period are models, analogies, or "thick" description (Clifford Geertz). It may also be worthwhile to stop thinking about mounded tombs solely in terms of centralized control of labour and resources, i.e. as a reflection of a rank system. Instead, the erection of a mounded tomb could be conceived of as a communal project that both relied on and strengthened cooperation within a community. In the same vein, burial rituals could be interpreted as communal acts with functions that reach far beyond the legitimization of power. Shared traditions do not necessarily, or at least do not exclusively, point to control exercised by a specific group but also have an important identity-forming function. While elaborate burials were most likely conducted for the more important members of a community, the question remains whether the elaborateness of the ritual was a precise reflection of the social status of the deceased intended for them alone, or whether it had other functions, too. (Kienlin 2008, pp. 197f.; also see SHIRAISHI 2004, p. 281)

This theory is also supported by MATSUGI in a departure from previous Japanese scholarship, which predominantly embraced the view that the mounded tombs reflect the vertical stratification of society and its exploitative structures: the masses were forced to support the building of the tombs with their labour; the mounds are thus monuments to the economic culture of the time. From a horizontal perspective the relationships between the mounds, their interred, and those who built the tombs are also seen to yield information about social relationships and ties, which is read from the shape and dimensions of the mounds. In this view the mounds are essentially status symbols or manifestations of social order, be it the hierarchical order within a polity or the kinship-based order within a tribal confederation. While these theories have contributed much to the advance of research, the influence of Marxism is clear. Moreover, they draw extensively on the *nihon shoki*, which identifies those interred within the mounded tombs as emperors (*tennō*) and, hence, autocrats. The immaterial aspect, the religious dimension, and the notion that religion might be more than just a convenient tool of exploitation are usually ignored. The spiritual profit that elaborate tombs could have brought to those involved in their construction and to the society at large is not taken into account. Yet it would be blinkered to discuss mounded tombs solely in terms of force and coercion.

MATSUGI also suggests revisiting and revising the idea that some form of organization emerged early on in the Japanese archipelago. To date there has been little discussion of whether similarly shaped tombs are necessarily indicative of political integration. At the same time it is usually assumed that the Kofun tombs followed a general plan sanctioned by an integrated authority. MATSUGI argues that the mounded tombs do not necessarily mirror social or political structures, however, or even the existence of a tribal confederation or a state. Given that the tombs were part of a religious system – and their shape and dimensions part of a religious vocabulary – the interred clearly had a place in a religious world view,

however, although this does not preclude the possibility that the tombs reflect social structures or conditions. MATSUGI invites his fellow archaeologists to seek to understand as well as describe, to move away from the positivist focus on material sources. At the same time he addresses another important problem, namely, how the mounded tombs integrate with the real-life situation of Kofun people in their settlements, with their livelihood and technologies, as religious buildings or monuments. (MATSUGI 2004, pp. 321f.) These thoughts and theories are highly relevant in the present context, since they question premises that have rarely and only recently been contested in Japan, while in Europe they have long since been the subject of intense debate.

Who was buried in the mounded tombs? This question has been addressed by IMAO Fumiaki in a study of Okinoshima in which he examines the relationship between mounded tombs and ritual sites as well as between the objects found there and in adjacent territories. This is relevant for our context insofar as it sheds light on the relationship between tombs and Okinoshima. IMAO also discusses HIROSE's theory of the deification of the interred and highlights the great significance of Okinoshima for research. Many scholars see a link between the rites practiced at tombs and at places like Mount Miwa and Okinoshima which are dedicated to objects in nature. Some even go so far as to put them in the same category and, because of their similarities, assign an equal significance to sacrificed objects and grave goods. Based on the development of rites on Okinoshima, scholars assume that burial rites and other rituals were subject to continuous differentiation as the Kofun period progressed, resulting in the separation of deity worship and rituals for the souls of the dead. Ritual objects were invented and ritual sites established for the deities, all of which is associated with the phase of open air rituals at Okinoshima.

HIROSE assumes that the deceased were meant to rise from the dead and enter into a new form of social relationship with the inhabitants of their territory. In this view the emergence of keyhole-shaped mounded tombs is linked to the idea that the dead chieftain lives on as a deity protecting the community. The deification of the dead endowed Kofun chiefs with a new role, and it is assumed that some sort of control authority existed to maintain such a system. IMAO rejects this theory because the archaeological material does not support it for the envisaged extended timeframe. For the Early and Middle Kofun period, in contrast, quite a precise picture of ritual proceedings can be gleaned from archaeological studies and features, for example the arrangement of grave goods. Even if the interred could have initiated these proceedings while they lived, their successors would have been responsible for enacting the rites and building the burial facilities after their death, if not earlier. (IMAO 2004, pp. 326f.; HIROSE 2010, pp. 31–52)

IMAO's discussion draws on theories proposed by SHIRAISHI, who distinguishes between rites of deity worship and burial mound rites. In his view the depictions of agricultural tools found among the grave goods point to the chieftain's function as the leader of agricultural rites. To support this argument he cites the soft stone imitations of objects found in particular at ritual sites in eastern Japan, which mostly depict agricultural tools. As grave goods in tombs, such soft stone imitations began to appear in the second half of the Early Kofun period in central Kinki. It is therefore impossible, he argues, to establish a direct link between sacrificial offerings to deities and grave goods in mounded tombs, for even if the deceased was a priest, he is unlikely to have been a deity at the same time. (SHIRAISHI 1999) IMAO discards this theory as mere speculation, however, and cites the example of some large keyhole-shaped mounded tombs with satellite burial mounds to support the notion of an internal relationship between tombs and deity worship. He points out that apart from the Okinoshima findings, there is no evidence for the evolution and change of the forms of deity worship between the Early Kofun period and the emergence of statehood in the Japanese archipelago, which again highlights the importance of this site. Even if the function of the interred cannot be conclusively ascertained, it is conceivable that they played a leading role during rites and may even have been priests. Recent studies show, for example, that there is a link between *haniwas* depicting a facility equipped with a water conduit and sites with a similar structure. There appears to be a connection between rites practiced at settlements and burial mounds, all of which are assumed to be associated with a water cult. (IMAO 2004, pp. 326f.; Kashihara 2005)

This last point in particular, which explicitly focuses on the relationships between settlements and burial mounds, leads us to a similar complex of issues that arises in the context of the Hallstatt and La Tène cultures, where the relationship between large burial mounds and settlements as well as ritual sites is hotly debated by scholars.
Let us now return to the theory of the deification or, rather, the sacral character of the deceased and the role

of chieftains as priests, which is relevant insofar as scholars have always assumed that the chieftains were directly involved in the practice of rituals or at least controlled it.

2.   Sacral Kingship – Sacred Kingship

Sacred kingship and sacral kingship have long been the subject of intense debate in European archaeology and historiography. (Padberg 2004, pp. 179f.) "Sacral kingship" was originally introduced in ethnology to describe a specific type of leadership among African peoples, but today both the term and the interpretation model are controversial. It refers to a ruler upon whose life, strength, and ritual practice the prosperity of his people, the fertility of the land, and the growth of crops depend; it has been claimed that sacral kings were killed when their strength began to fail. The concept owes much to the British classical philologist James George Frazer (1854–1941) and his research on ethnology and the history of religion. His definition is based on a combination of divinity, priestly functions, and rulership; a king's reign could end in his sacrificial death if he failed to deliver. (Erkens 2005, p. 2) The current debate about the role of rulers in the Hallstatt and La Tène cultures up to Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages basically turns upon the same issues.

As an alternative to the concept of sacral kingship (*Sakralkönigtum*), the German medievalist Franz-Reiner Erkens has proposed the term "sacred kingship" (*sakrales Königtum*), which he defines by three central characteristics: 1. The king is chosen by one or several gods; in pre- or non-Christian contexts he is often of divine origin. 2. The king is the representative of god or the gods and their custodian on earth. 3. The king is answerable to god or the gods, his functions being or resembling those of a priest; in non-Christian communities this frequently involved conducting cult rites or at least ensuring that cult rites were conducted. This concept covers nearly all types of religious leadership, for we are dealing with different forms of sacred legitimate rule. (Erkens 2004, pp. 219f.; Erkens 2006, pp. 31f.)

Germanic kingship was long interpreted as a form of sacral kingship, but recent research has revealed the rather dubious methodology on which this interpretation was based. The proponents of sacral kingship had conflated documentary sources from different periods and geographic areas in one homogeneous construct from which a picture of a stable Germanic culture emerged which persisted unchanged for centuries, including its concept of kingship. The sacrificial death of Germanic kings has never been proved, however, nor has belief in the power of kings over the processes of nature, weather, and success in warfare. (Erkens 2005, p. 4) Yet the sacred dimension of kingship – which according to Erkens did exist among Germanic tribes and may therefore justifiably be attributed to them – is clearly a universal phenomenon, albeit with strong regional differences. The evidence is sparse and often obscure, however, since both ancient and Christian sources are coloured by their authors' bias, which makes it difficult to sift fact from legend. Germanic and Christian traditions appear to have formed a complex weave shot through with a greater number of ancient pagan threads than previously assumed. Scholars now believe that Germanic thought was open to religious concepts of kingship, including that of sacred kingship, just as it was open to Christianity. This enabled the Germans to integrate the notion of sacred kingship into their beliefs and practices, its sacred aspect strengthened by Christian tradition. (Erkens 2005, pp. 4f.; Erkens 2004, pp. 219f.)

The potentially sacral character of kings, rulers, or chieftains is also addressed in archaeological and historical research on Central and Northern Europe from the Bronze Age to the Middle Ages. It investigates the role such personages played in the enactment of rituals, with the debate focusing on whether the performing of rituals transformed them into sacred figures or, rather, demonstrated their inherent sacrality.

With regard to Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, some historians reject the existence of sacred kingship while others point to the kings' cultic functions and their conducting of community rituals as a mark of kingship's sacred dimension. With regard to early Germanic communities, however, it has been assumed that their rulers played an important role in the cultic system insofar as they were responsible for the community's welfare.

Written records offer few clues, however, and any equation of priests with kings or rulers must be considered mere speculation. It is likely that, as in other archaic communities, among the early Germans the

sacral sphere legitimized and stabilized the existing power structure. To a limited extent a critical reading of historical sources, for example Tacitus's *Germania*, may substantiate this, but only for some areas and periods. Apart from the small number of written sources about sacral conceptions and the sacral dimension of power among the early Germans, the main methodological problem is that the sources we do have were written by Roman and Greek authors (Tacitus, Caesar, Strabo, etc.). Not only was their access to first-hand information often limited, their perceptions and descriptions, including their terminology, are deeply coloured by their Graeco-Roman outlook, all of which detracts from their relevance. (Goltz, 2004, pp. 234; 237f.)

The archaeology of the periods from the Bronze Age to the Middle Ages emphasizes that, while it is possible to examine this complex of issues from theoretical and methodological perspectives, the character of the archaeological material does not allow us to either prove or disprove theories based solely on archaeology. (Steuer 2004 offers a summary of the main questions in this context, which I will briefly outline here.) Archaeology can only illustrate and substantiate results gleaned in other disciplines. Moreover, for many periods there is no evidence for the existence of kingship, so the terms "sacred rulership" or "sacral rulership" might better refer to all the different levels from village to empire at which rulership manifested itself. Scholars must also beware of projecting descriptions of sacral characteristics found in written sources onto archaeological features. The relationship between historiography (or other disciplines) and archaeology plays a crucial role, too, i.e. whether research is conducted separately according to each discipline's preferred methodology, or in close collaboration between several disciplines. (Steuer 2004, pp. 183f.) While archaeological features and findings allow us to identify with some degree of certainty sacrificial or ritual sites such as Okinoshima, which undoubtedly belongs in this category, it is only very rarely possible to demonstrate links to kingship or power.

Ritual processes and cultic activities are also reflected in archaeological features related to burials, such as processional ways or sacral and sepulchral landscapes with burial mounds and repeat examples of cultic activities or cultic sites. In this context it is important not to interpret individual symbols of power, religious symbols, or features such as richly endowed graves as evidence of sacred rulership, but to attempt a full and complex reconstruction incorporating all available archaeological data pertaining to sacred acts staged by a ruler. Such attempts were made with regard to the Hallstatt period Hochdorf Grave and the Early Medieval grave of the Merovingian king Childeric in Tournai. Archaeological data offer few leads when it comes to interpreting the significance of individual acts, ceremonies, or rituals in terms of sacral kingship, although scenes depicted on stone stelae and ornamental images on artefacts do offer some insight. With regard to grave goods the question always is whether these are sacrifices or sacrificial offerings made by the community or objects placed for the dead. Further complications arise from the fact that while there is no written evidence for the deification of rulers after their death, the archaeological evidence does indicate that cultic activities were carried out at their tombs. Archaeological features pointing to sacred events dating from as late as the Middle Ages have been found at ritual sites (as they were at Okinoshima) and other places (e.g. bogs) where the deposition of sacrificial offerings has been clearly identified. Yet there is no conclusive evidence to show that these were carried out on a ruler's orders or following an authoritative decision, since there is very little convincing evidence regarding the relationship between the spheres of the sacred and the profane. An example for such a setting would be a sacral landscape with a lordly residence that demonstrably served as a holy place or cultic site, or a central settlement with wide-ranging trade connections and prestige goods production that also features grave monuments as well as cultic and sacrificial sites that could reflect a link between the ruler and the sacred. Christian churches are a good example, since with them the link to rulership is clear. Ethnological observations suggest that it is very well possible for rulers to be cultic leaders that serve as link between gods and people. With cultic sites such as Gournay or Vix, from the Celtic, La Tène, or Roman Imperial periods, it may be assumed that cultic activity was carried out by the community, though here, too, the question is whether it was directed by a king or some other ruler, and this is difficult to prove on the basis of the archaeological evidence. If the grave of a prince or king served as a cultic monument, this can still be considered a form of sacred rulership, although a passive one. (Steuer 2004, pp. 191f.)

Let us take a closer look at one example. The grave goods from the Late Hallstatt Hochdorf Grave triggered a debate between Manfred Eggert and Dirk Krauße about who was interred in the Late Hallstatt burial mounds. Would a simple village community raise such a mound for village elders whose leadership was based on personal charisma? Or are the burial mounds evidence of a form of sacral kingship based at least

in part on a religiously motivated dynastic power? The answers to these questions have a significant impact on our reconstruction of Late Hallstatt society and, consequently, on our view of social systems in Iron Age Central and Western Europe in general. Eggert's model gives us small, segmentary societies with regional organization, while Krauße argues for early states with regional or perhaps even superregional organization. (Karl 2005, p. 192)

Krauße references Max Weber's notion of charismatic authority, which he combines with Elman Service's evolutionist model of cultural stages (1971). In this perspective, Hochdorf is the grave of a charismatic ruler from a privileged social class. The deposition of sacrificial implements reveal him to be a chieftain-priest, a political and religious leader in a theocratic system. (Theel, 2006, p. 3) Krauße's argument revolves around his interpretation of the knife, axe, spit, and an antler point found in the grave as butchering implements. According to him, the man interred in the Hochdorf Grave was a sacrificial priest who exercised a sacral form of rule in the Late Hallstatt period similar to that of the sacral kings assumed to have existed in the Middle East, the Mediterranean, and Early Europe.

The only problem with his well-argued theory is his interpretation of the finds as butchering tools, for they could actually be a number of other things, too. Nor do these items necessarily form a set; each object could have a significance or function of its own. Even supposing that they are butchering tools, this does not necessarily imply that the Hochdorf Man was either a butcher or a sacrificial priest. It is equally possible that the tools simply illustrate his profane role as a host who butchered his own meat. Regardless of the interpretation, one must naturally assume that the sacred and the profane were closely intertwined in early societies, although this does not inevitably involve sacral kingship. (Karl 2005, pp. 192f.) In his critique of this model, Eggert also highlights how problematic archaeological sources can be when it comes to describing social organization. (Eggert 2007, p. 269) Focusing on core economic indicators, he points out that the evidence of economic activity discovered so far yields very little information about the social makeup of the Early Iron Age. Recently launched studies, particularly those in the fields of archaeobotany and archaeozoology, may soon improve this situation, but the existing evidence requires careful interpretative handling. This is particularly true of implements for ritual butchering, which seem to trigger an automatic association with priest kings and sacral kingship. At present, most archaeological evidence hails from graves, but a systematic study of Iron Age economy and society also requires a comprehensive settlement archaeology, which has yet to be conducted. A further problem is the lack of information about the reach of the power of the interred; there is no reliable method of ascertaining the extent of their territories. The discovery of traces of honey, such as those found in the Glauberg Grave, or pine needles from distant areas does not in fact tell us anything about the sphere of influence of the graves or the interred. We might be able to establish such factors if it we knew that honey and pine needles invariably imply direct socio-political dependence, such as the payment of tribute to the Hochdorf and Glauberg rulers, for example. As things stand, however, it is equally possible that these items arrived by the usual goods exchange routes.

A great deal of research on the Iron Age economy will be necessary before a well-founded debate on power, the exercise of power, and society can begin. The relationship between economic and social structures as well as the economic foundations of Iron Age societies are crucial points. At the same time it is important "to look from the realm of the dead to that of the living". (Eggert 2007, pp. 284f.; 291; 294) An interesting parallel emerges with the miniature objects discovered in Kofun-period tombs. Believed to indicate a ritual role of the interred, these led to speculations about priestly kings or chieftains performing ritual acts and controlling ritual sites like Okinoshima. The discovery of butchering implements in Late Hallstatt sites gave rise to similar speculations about the role of the interred in ritual activity and their possible status as sacral kings. In both cases, however, this is difficult to prove with archaeological finds.

IV. The Power of Rituals – State Formation and Rulership in the Context of Ritual and Religion

1.   Rituals as Elements for Creating Order

The acceptance of a historical-anthropological perspective in Medieval studies in the German-speaking world significantly broadened the research spectrum. Gerd Althoff's studies of ritual gestures and the rules of the political game in particular have yielded path-breaking insights into the cohesive forces that held together the kingdoms (*Reiche*) of the Early and High Middle Ages in his analysis of medieval society and statehoodness. In his view, ritual was a central concept that played an integrative role in expressing relationships of power and authority as well as social cohesion. (Pohl 2006, pp. 16–18)

Let us take a closer look at Althoff's theories. He defines rituals of power as essential instruments for establishing and maintaining social and state entities – for creating order, so to speak. According to Althoff, Medieval society had no generally accepted hierarchy of norms to regulate social coexistence. This situation was quite unlike that in modern states, where the government claims primacy with respect to norms. Such a claim was never made – even in theory – by Medieval rulers, nor would the norms on which they based their rule have enabled them to assert it. Different social groups – the nobility, warriors, Christians – embraced different values, and the norms derived from these values differed accordingly; moreover, they often competed with each other or were mutually incompatible. This had a significant impact. At another level, norms resulting from bonds between individuals also made themselves felt. This included ties of kinship, friendship, and fealty with all the rights and obligations that went with them. Conflicts were usually settled on a case-by-case basis depending on the priorities. An awareness of the multiplicity of competing norms is crucial to any attempt at understanding the Medieval order. How did people manage to make decisions in this complex situation? What were the criteria? How did people maintain their ability to act? (Althoff 2009, pp. 392f.)

An essential point in this context is that the norms of each group were rarely fixed in writing; they existed solely in people's minds. Consensus could be achieved through consultation, although the results of such consultations were valid only for those who had participated in them. Discourse was the main instrument of political decision making, and consensus was personal and oral and intended as a basis for action. Apart from this instrument, and to some extent independently of it, the framework for creating order also comprised rituals whose function in the establishment of order is particularly relevant for scholars. As a non-discursive form of expression, rituals often served to proclaim what had been agreed in discourse. In order to serve as elements for creating order, rituals needed to be performed and could therefore rely on the Medieval fixation on precedent, i.e. habitual patterns which served as points of orientation and could be ritually staged. Conversely, ritual action also served to acknowledge the existing order; as a social practice it was predicated on the Medieval orientation on habitual patterns.

A crucial aspect in this context is that very large groups of people could participate in ritual action, and this makes ritual communication far more efficient than discursive or written communication. In the Middle Ages there was a common consensus that ritual actions were a means of expressing a binding agreement to perform certain duties; fairly complex matters involving all sorts of obligations and future promises could be condensed into one symbolic, ritual act. Examples include the gesture of homage in which a vassal laid his clasped hands between those of his liege lord, demonstrating his willingness to fulfil his oath of fealty. Royal investiture, peace treaties, acts of surrender, celebrations, and other such ritual acts directed towards the future and involving promises and obligations indicate that rituals were a constitutive element in Medieval statehood. Numerous examples show how revoking a ritual act was extremely difficult: its public performance established a precedent that was impossible to undo. (Althoff 2009, pp. 393f.):

It can therefore be said that rituals were a means for the actors to permanently reassure themselves about the world they lived in as they demonstrated to themselves and to the audience not just the order by which relationships were organized, but also their general acquiescence under this order. (Althoff 2009, p. 395)

While rituals alone cannot constitute a state, they were still an important element in the activities that allowed for order to be established and maintained. Ritual acts highlighted the permanence of social

behaviour. In a largely illiterate society, their public celebration – participation in which was, according to written records, completely voluntary – endowed rituals with a binding force unrivalled by any other means of creating order. At the same time they need to be seen and understood in context with other instruments, such as the consultations that usually preceded them. (Althoff 2009, p. 397)

Having described rituals and how they worked in the Early Middle Ages and in other periods, at this point I would like to highlight an important insight we owe to Catherine Bell, who has suggested abandoning the rigid term "ritual" and instead proposes the concepts of "ritualization" and "ritual action" to describe the different levels at which ritual manifests itself. In terms of methodology this means examining rituals not so much in context with other rituals – a universal, transcultural notion of ritual, she says, would be nearly devoid of content – but by relating them to other social and cultural practices in a specific social environment. This corresponds to efforts by historians to examine rituals in their specific historical context (Bell 1992, p. 90; Pohl 2006, p. 20) In the historiography of the Early Middle Ages, the practice approach to ritual as represented by Catherine Bell and also Pierre Bourdieu (*Theory of Practice*, 1977), who describes rituals as social actions and social strategies of integration and distinction in the social world (Verhoeven 2011, p. 123), has had a significant impact.

In a wider context rituals are closely linked to and form an integral part of religious practice. Religious rituals can provide the cohesive forces necessary for political integration and the stabilization of power. Rituals also play an important role in establishing religious communities, since they can generate and reinforce religiousness and also promote and support the institutionalization of religions or religious groups. Under some circumstances rituals are essential to institutionalization, and since religious communities cannot survive without a degree of institutionalization, rituals that reinforce this trend essentially secure the continued existence of such groups. When it comes to the formation of a collective that combines shared identity with clear boundaries vis-à-vis outsiders, rituals contribute to the religious legitimization and constitution of the internal, the external, and the socio-political order. (Paul 1997, pp. 6–11)

Against the background of the fundamental distinction between non-religious and religious rituals, here I would like to revisit Verhoeven's summary of the relationship between religion and ritual: "I think we have to agree with the premise of practice theory (*Bourdieu; Bell*) that ritual activity is not a secondary aspect of religion (subordinate to beliefs, which would be primary), but that it is central. It is through ritual action that religious beliefs are communicated, negotiated, and transmitted." (Verhoeven 2011, pp. 118; 125f.)

2.   Religion, State Formation, and Christianization

With regard to Early Medieval statehood in Europe, Christianity was as important a formative and supportive element in the establishment and maintenance of power as Buddhism was during the process of state formation in the Japanese archipelago.

Cohesive Early Medieval *regna* are inconceivable without *ecclesia*. There is not a single example in Medieval Europe for successful political integration without the backing of the ecclesiastical order. The Saxons, Danes, Poles, and in the final instance the Hungarians and Bulgarians, too, only managed to establish stable, centralized rulership after the arrival of Christianity. (Pohl 2006, p. 14)

The history of post-Roman polities in the Early Middle Ages is characterized by a complex web of mutual dependencies between rulers and their churches. (De Jong 2006, p. 243) De Jong emphasizes that any modern analysis of Early Medieval state formation must take account of the Christian cult as both institution and practice. While scholars of Medieval history have applied innovative methodologies to popular religion and culture, however, the history of ecclesiastical institutions and concepts has not received the same amount of attention, perhaps in the belief that this would be undertaken by church history.

While at one level *ecclesia* refers to the universal community of the faithful, above and beyond political boundaries, the term also describes the church hierarchy with all of its various institutions and possessions. The first meaning supposes the existence of a universal church independent of political structures, and it also underlies the powerful ideal of the separation of church and state developed in post-Medieval times as

a cornerstone of modern Christianity and secondary identity. Its counterpart is a well-organized, distinctive, clerical institution. This dichotomy is unproductive, however, when examining the historical dimension of Christianity in the Early Middle Ages, since the reality with which we are confronted is a rather different. Kings and bishops ruled together, with both secular rulers and clerics involved in church affairs; if a ruler's subjects were Christians he quite naturally sought to influence the church, while the clerics, nuns and monks as mediators between God and the people sought to protect the order sanctioned by God. This relationship of mutual dependence blurred the boundaries between the sacred and the profane, although the secular rulers especially made attempts to separate the two spheres. (De Jong 2006, pp. 242–44) *Ecclesia* is thus a key element in the conceptualization of political order. The Franks managed with some success to impose a framework which comprised concrete measures such as church building or the establishment of religious communities as well as eschatological concerns on the elites of the peoples they conquered and converted. The Saxons, for example, redefined their identity on the basis of Christianity and the emperor who had brought it to them. (Ibid., pp. 253f.) In the political system of the Early Middle Ages, Christianity, or, to be more precise, the church collaborating with the king, had a stabilizing function. This meant that the Medieval mind necessarily associated state order with divine order, which in turn had a significant impact on the process of identity formation in the different polities. The role that bishops played in politics can be seen to reflect the prominent place that the church held in contemporary concepts of the state – provided one assumes a direct link between *regnum* and *ecclesia*, which not all scholars do. (Goetz 2009, pp. 527; 529)

An illustration is offered by the spread of Christianity to Scandinavia and Central-Eastern Europe, and its relationship to the formation of new principalities and kingdoms. Religious change was thus associated with political change when, for example, local rulers consolidated their power in new territories by introducing Christianity. This was the case in the period from the late ninth century to the mid-eleventh century. Religion, i.e. Christianity, brought with it collective ceremonial and ritual activities that served to create or reinforce group solidarity. Public rituals and the close ties between religious and secular powers were significant features of Early Medieval Christianity, whose arrival in new territories was also characterized by the number of specialist outsiders who came with it and who were later integrated into society. (Berend 2007, pp. 1f.; 4)

The situation in these regions sheds an interesting light on the way pre-Christian cults, practices, and beliefs interacted with the new arrival. The first contact was generally established through trade; formal Christianization came at a later stage. Archaeological finds provide evidence of cultural loans in the material culture, for example when Christian objects were placed in non-Christian graves, evidencing a preliminary exposure to the Christian culture, as was the case in Scandinavia, before the new faith was officially established. In most cases it was only after a territory's ruler had converted that Christianity unfolded its full influence, and this can also be seen in Northern Europe. In this context a long literary tradition of kingly conversion starting with the Roman emperor Constantine emerged. Many princely converts, however, merely sought to boost their power or to outdo a rival by adopting the new faith, which in some cases enabled them to claim the support of powerful Christian "brother nations" such as the Franks. Secular rule and Christianity intersected at many points once a ruler had converted, such as in territorial and administrative organization or in the system of taxation. Administrative staff now included clerics, too. Apart from literacy, Christianity also brought a new type of ideological legitimization of kingship as the Christian rhetoric provided kings with a model of power with a tradition dating back to Late Antiquity.

Yet there is a distinction to be drawn between the period when Christianity first arrived and the role it played once the new faith was firmly established. Moreover, in the consolidation of kingly power, alliances of wealth and personal networks were also extremely important, and these could not be forged through Christianization alone. Military triumphs achieved under the sign of the cross proved to be a persuasive argument for conversion, since they demonstrated the new god's superior might. In Northern Europe it is possible to observe a top-down process, similar to the one that unfolded in Western Europe in the Early Middle Ages, where the key role of kings in the process of Christianization has repeatedly been highlighted. (Berend 2007, pp. 6–19)

Sverre Bagge has summarized the impact of the new religion on state formation and the situation preceding its arrival as follows:

There is also a correspondence between the formation of the Scandinavian kingdoms and the new religion, Christianity. As far as we know, religion and political power were closely connected in the pagan period. There was apparently no professional priesthood; the chieftains acted as cultic and religious leaders. We may imagine that the position of chieftain was not particularly stable; there was probably competition between several leading men for local power. Nor would it be impossible for a newcomer, returning from abroad with booty and armed men from Viking expeditions, to establish himself as the leader of some area. It would probably also be possible, although more difficult, for him to become the overlord of a larger number of such chieftains, as apparently Harald Finehair did when he "united the whole of Norway", or at least made himself the lord over the western coast. However, nothing in the pagan religion gave any support to this kind of lordship. By contrast, Christianity was a unitary religion, with one cult, one God and a professional cult organization that immediately abolished the religious importance of local chieftains. The sources occasionally draw the parallel between the rule of one king and the belief in one God, thus indicating the logical connection between the new religion and larger political entities. Further, although the king was not necessarily the head of this organization, he had considerable control over it in the early Middle Ages, notably in a country where Christianity was a new religion. Admittedly, the ecclesiastical organization must have been too weak in the beginning to add very much to the king's power. Nevertheless, Christianity had a centralizing effect in virtue of being a new religion . . . contemporary religion was not an objective system of dogma, but rather intensely personal, so that there was a strong connection between attachment to a leader and attachment to his gods. (Bagge 2008, pp. 150f.)

An examination of Early Medieval Christianization – or of the spread of Christianity in the Modern Age, for that matter – shows that social and family networks, socio-cultural cohesion, the nature of the prevailing worldview, and a society's stage of development had an enormous influence on the acceptance of the new religion, although what people associated with it, to which political purposes it could be harnessed, and how successful Christianized societies were also played a significant role. The arrival of Christianity was followed by interaction between pagans and Christians extending over varying periods of time. Although in theory Christianity defined itself as being completely apart from pagan religions, in practice adaptation and compromise were by no means unusual. The early phase of Christianity's spread was thus marked by a certain religious fluidity as pagan religions developed new forms and Christians adopted syncretic practices. Interaction could also mean confrontation, however, and in this respect written records and archaeological evidence reveal an interesting contradiction: penned by Christians and often adopting a church perspective, the documents tend to highlight confrontation and to gloss over the instances of peaceful coexistence suggested by archaeological evidence.

Once a ruler had decided to convert, one of the next steps in the process of Christianization involved establishing ecclesiastical structures. The basic unit was the diocese, a network of which was set up in the territories controlled by the newly converted ruler. These institutions required buildings and staff; in Scandinavia, for instance, the construction of wooden churches was an important side-effect of a ruler's conversion, although stone churches were also built. In this sense Christianization meant the physical conquest of pagan spaces, and in a deliberately symbolic gesture, many churches were erected on pagan cult sites. Furthermore, in many places the introduction of stone architecture was associated with the arrival of Christianity, which apart from its own terminology also brought new architectural and artistic styles and influenced newly emerging or evolving polities in a number of ways. Prime examples in this context are literacy, law, and coinage. Written codes of law were concomitant with Christianity, although in most places these did not usually evolve until after the Christian communities had been firmly established. (Berend 2007, pp. 21–30)

I have described the basic outlines of the role Christianity played in state formation and the consolidation of power in Europe. The question remains, however, why world religions such as Christianity were so attractive to traditional societies.

3.   Primary and Secondary Religions

As has been shown, religion can play a significant role in the political construction of increased centralized power, and the relationship between established religions and new arrivals is an important factor in this respect. To enhance our understanding of such processes and consider them within a larger context, let us

refer to the distinction between primary and secondary religions proposed by Jan Assmann, a German scholar in Egyptology and religious and cultural studies, which the Japanologist Bernhard Scheid has applied to the relationship between traditional beliefs and the newly arrived religion of Buddhism in the Japanese archipelago. (Scheid 2009)

Assmann's basic assumption is that at some stage in Antiquity a shift from polytheist to monotheist religion occurred, and this transformation brought with it not only a shift from cult to book religion but also from localized religions to world religions. To describe this process he uses the terms "primary" and "secondary" religion, while emphasizing that the transformation is not an evolutionary process but, rather, the result of a revolutionary act. The relationship of secondary religions (the book, world, and monotheist religions) to primary religions is nearly always marked by an attitude of superiority, as can be seen by the Christian concept of the "heathen". The exception in this context is Buddhism, and here it is important to remember that Buddhism is different in that it is not a monotheist religion. (Assmann 2003, p. 4)

A crucial element when considering Okinoshima is the distinction between primary and secondary religious systems. According to Assmann, primary religions – cult or traditional religions – are the result of centuries and millennia of organic growth within specific cultures, societies, and oftentimes languages, with which they are linked by indissoluble ties. Founded in traditions that usually hark back to a mythical, primordial time of world creation, they are centred on cyclical repetition rather than a teleological concept of world development. Primary religious systems naturally preclude any eschatological notions of personal or collective "redemption" or "spiritual illumination". They are coincident with specific cultures and create conditions of order that also include a harmonious relationship to the gods.

Secondary religions, on the other hand, are moved by the notion that the world is subject to an order based on principles of justice: in Christianity this is represented by the idea of the Last Judgment, in Buddhism by the notion of Karma, both of which include the assurance that there is a balance between Good and Evil. These concepts are manifested in a written moral code – hence the importance of writing as a new medium of cultural communication. Also known as "book religions", secondary religions are characterized by sacred scriptures, historical founding figures, and clearly defined beliefs. According to Assmann, writing is essential to secondary religions. It makes possible the emergence of scribes or religious specialists who interpret and spread the faith, working as teachers, theologians, and ideologues. Rather than merely transmitting religious matters or functioning as mediums that carry out rituals, scribes expand the dimensions of a religion, for example by claiming its universality. These developments are accompanied by the creation of superregional organizational structures such as churches and convents. (For more on this see Scheid 2009; Wagner 2006, pp. 31–33)

4. Religion, Rituals, and State Formation in the Japanese Archipelago

Let us now turn to the situation in the Japanese archipelago and examine the role of rituals in state formation and with reference to the exercise of power.

Around the time that the *ritsuryō* state emerged, ritual places were becoming permanently established in fixed locations. (Imao 2004, p. 325). If rituals in the open air can be seen as prototypical for the pre-Buddhist period, then the emergence of shrines as permanent establishments complete with priests and buildings is a decided innovation. At the same time, the highly diverse collection of individual ritual sites in the archipelago was only subsumed under a single, specific category ("shrines") once the imperial court decided to identify them as such. When centralized court worship of shrines arose in the seventh and eighth centuries, this marked an epochal step in the history of shrines. (Breen/Teeuwen 2010, p. 24)

The notion (in the Yahazu legend in the *hitachi fudoki*) of "heavenly and earthly deities" (Chin. *shenqi*, Jap. *jingi*) reflected an ancient Chinese categorization, attested in Confucius's Analects and other great classics. In Japan this foreign notion became the central concept around which the court organized its priestly power. The court absorbed local authority by incorporating local cults in the emperor's universal worship of the "deities of heaven and earth". In practice, this meant that the most important *kami* were integrated in a new court narrative, a "mytho-history" that established the origins of the Japanese state, and it implied that the court assumed the authority to make "heavenly" offerings to deities across the land. Together, this narrative

and ritual practice constituted a new cultic system that we shall call the *jingi* cult. (Breen/Teeuwen 2010, p. 27)

The analysis provided by Breen and Teeuwen concisely sums up why the centralized state dealt with traditional cults in the way that it did: the aim was to absorb local power bases by integrating ritual practices and creating a new identity that involved a more universal ritual form oriented on the purpose of the state, namely, stabilization. It has to be kept in mind, however, that our information about shrines within the context of the *jingi* cult derives almost exclusively from courtly documents. This confronts us with a serious source problem. The enumeration of a vast number of shrines, for instances, raises the impression that some places had more shrines than settlements. The cult put a number of these shrines under the nominal control of the court (e.g. Munakata) while at the same time priestly lineages used cultic shrines to augment their influence at court. Only few shrines were integrated into the courtly cult, however, and next to nothing is known about contemporary practice at other sites. (Ibid. p. 27)

At this point it is useful to recollect that one of the pillars of the *jingi* cult was what is known as "mytho-history", which served to legitimize the present within the narrative of a divine past. Documenting this narrative in writing, as happened with the *kojiki* and *nihon shoki*, allowed the court to lend permanence and canonized authority to its own version of the myth of origin. The lineages of the royal family and their allies were also codified in this fashion. Modelled on Chinese dynastic histories (it gives precise dates for all entries), the manner in which the information is presented in the *nihon shoki* in particular gives us an idea how history was made or constructed. The *jingi* myth was created around 700 A. D. when the Yamato kings transformed themselves into heavenly emperors in what was less a codification of an archaic oral tradition than the creation of a new discourse which was continuously rewritten and revised. (Breen/Teeuwen 2010, pp. 28–31) These sources are a heavily influenced by the ambitions of their authors, who chose their facts to reflect the interests of various factions and especially those of the state in a process of creative assertion of control. This of course leaves a great deal of room for interpretation and speculation. (Ooms 2008, p. 5)

The imperial court also focused on ritual performances that were intended to give visual expression to the divine and sun-like nature of imperial rule. Court priests performed a range of *kami* rituals that combined old rites with new procedures imported from Korea and Tang China. The court cult was coordinated by the *jingi kan*, the Council of [Affairs of] the Heavenly and Earthly *Kami* established in 689 A. D. The cult was a highly political construction which served to transform the Yamato kings into figures whose position on earth was as universal and unimpeachable as that of the sun in the sky, as is reflected in the *daijōsai* ritual performed to invest a new emperor. (Breen/Teeuwen 2010, pp. 32f.)

The *jingi* cult had its basis in Tang ritual codes, since Chinese procedures were adapted wherever possible to formalize *kami* worship, although yin-yang rituals and Buddhist practices were also popular at court. The *jingi* cult first and foremost served to establish the court as the centre of a new political regime. Brought to Japan by immigrants from the Korean peninsula, the yin-yang ritual was an integral part of the Tang model, as is reflected in the establishment of the Yin-Yang Bureau. Its rites overlapped with those of the *jingi* cult. (Breen/Teeuwen 2010, pp. 36f.)

All of this makes clear that rituals and their creation are strategically important steps on the way to a centralized state. Ritual communication at regional and superregional levels between the Old and the New functions as an element to create order, especially if accompanied by institutionalization and harmonization. This would not have been possible without Buddhism, however, which represented another important component in the courtly *jingi* cult. The fundamental difference to the other two ingredients is that Buddhism was well-established at court by the late sixth century and enjoyed the patronage of the leading lineages, much like in Tang China or Korea, where emperors and kings had established an expansive network of Buddhist temples in their territories and a large number of monks presented themselves as defenders of the nation. Buddhism was older than the *jingi* cult; moreover, it was experienced in dealing with local deities and traditions, since in the course of its history it had been able to develop mechanisms by which to integrate local deities into its cosmology. Thus Buddhism could act as a controlling force over violent deities and spirits, including *kami*. All over Japan, Buddhist temples were built near the shrines, and by the eighth century shrine temples (*jingūji*) were an established feature of the religious landscape. A fair number of important shrines were thus transformed from simple places under the open sky into

architectural complexes with closely linked temples and shrines. In its invasion of physical space, the spread of Buddhism in ancient Japan resembles Christianity's expansion in Early Medieval Europe: both were manifested by large construction projects and religious sculpture. The construction of Buddhist temples and pagodas had a direct influence on shrines and led to their transformation. (Breen/Teeuwen 2010, pp. 38f.; Grapard 2000, pp. 76f.)

Despite the council's prominent position at the top of all administrative organs, however, *jingi kan* officials had a much lower rank than other state officials; clearly the supremacy of the state cult among government organs was only nominal. (Naumann 2000, p. 50). In its daily workings the *jingi kan* was mostly concerned with administrative tasks and was not considered as a religious corporation. Its tasks were as strictly regulated and detailed as in the Chinese institution that had served as its model and mainly concerned the relationship between people and supernatural powers. The actual management was restricted to the top echelons of government, however, resulting in a system in which all religious and also political events were precisely planned in advance and performed in strict compliance with prescribed norms. (Naumann 2000, pp. 57f.) Only a limited number of deities received official sacrifices and offerings, however. Apart from the deities of the imperial family, these included deities such as the *ujigami* clan gods and shrines of local importance. On the whole it can be said that most shrines and deities had only local significance. While the state cult sought to create the impression of a homogeneous religion, the large number of individual cults of local or clan deities prevented the emergence of a coherent religious system. (Naumann 2000, p. 64)

This triangle of *jingi* cult, yin-yang ritual and Buddhism were the key elements in the apotropaic system by which the political powers sought to ward off evil. Centred around the "heavenly emperor", it could also be described as a form of sacred kingship, skilfully blending Buddhist, Daoist, and pre-Buddhist cults. Based on a state cult with a precisely structured hierarchy, the state emerges as the mediator between deities and people. The divine status attached to the emperor became increasingly important. What we observe here is a process of complex borrowing, a strategy that was not unusual in China, Japan, or Asia as a whole. (Ooms 2008, p. 29)

V. Conclusion

It is generally acknowledged that rituals, linked as they are to religion and cult, play an important role in state formation processes. Their function is to help stabilize and consolidate social and political systems, particularly in early societies. Since one of the most important factors in state formation in the Japanese archipelago was exchange with the Asian mainland – which necessarily involved crossing the sea – it is likely that the rituals on Okinoshima accompanied and supported communication with the continent, particularly in the most intensive phase of this exchange.

Changes in ritual practice reflect social transformations that extended into the cultic sphere as new religious influences arrived during the Japanese archipelago's development into the centralized state of ancient Japan; the establishment of rituals in a fixed location under the open sky evidences this. Successful efforts to establish a state cult linking up indigenous beliefs and practices with the newly arrived book religion and other practices from the Asian mainland were aimed at unifying and institutionalizing the state by legitimizing the power of the court at ritual level. Assuming the performance of state rituals, the mention of the Munakata clan in written sources is a significant clue to the site's importance, and its incorporation into the ritual network represents a logical move by the central power.

With regard to ritual and religion as factors in the process of state formation, we must take into account that universalizing secondary or book religions, such as Buddhism, developed a far greater influence than primary religions – in this case the indigenous beliefs and practices prevalent in the Japanese archipelago – which lack a coherent system and thus any great integrative force. Yet the integration of the previous system of beliefs, its rituals and sites, either by adaptation and transformation or the creation of new amalgamated forms is an important state strategy to create identity and a transpersonal, binding consciousness of state. Ritual thus forms an important element in polities' symbolic communication.

I am persuaded that the introduction of Buddhism, its encounter with existing cultic practices, and the system of beliefs to which they belonged played a key role in the development of ritual and cultic sites such

as Okinoshima and effected a transformation of rituals. Scholarly debate so far has tended to neglect this aspect.

The detailed archaeological study in this volume by SHIRAISHI Taichirō on the relationship of the Okinoshima rituals to Yamato kingly power sheds light on the difficulties involved in establishing a direct relationship between power or rulership and Okinoshima, both at the superregional level and locally, to individual tombs and the interred chieftains or groups of mounded tombs from specific phases. This has to do with the static nature of archaeological sources, for artefacts only rarely yield information about people and actions. As has been discussed here, it is therefore difficult to demonstrate a direct relationship or influence, much less control, exerted by rulership or individual persons or chieftains over ritual and sacrificial sites. Similar problems arise in the context of Okinoshima, but this does not mean that there was no marked internal link between the groups, the communities, or superregional rulers or associations and the rituals there.

In any case it is clear how great the significance of the relationship to the sea and the Asian mainland was for communities and polities in this area and, in a wider framework, in the Japanese archipelago. The question now is whether we are dealing with a site used by many different groups and interests which was not controlled exclusively by specific groups, people, or interests but was open to many different parties, ranging from local cults and practices to official state or other superregional missions. Contextualization is clearly the key to a better evaluation of these questions in future research, which must also address the relationship between settlements and ritual sites, including mounded tombs, in order to shed light on the site's relationship to rulership and power or other superregional forces.

The model we choose to explain the character of polities or the state formation process naturally affects the way we understand the relationship between power and cult or religion. We may describe the interred as sacral kings or priests, which then means that they were directly involved in the performance of rituals, on the island, in the case of Okinoshima, or we may say that they pressured specific groups or polities to perform rituals for them. Many questions remain open here, and we must keep in mind that both the (non-documentary) archaeological sources and the written sources set limits to our research.

Our interpretation of the mechanisms behind the existing ritual social systems also determines our view of the paths by which objects reached the island: Were they conveyed directly from the centre? Did the central power issue commands for rituals to be performed on Okinoshima? Or is it better to think beyond one-dimensional mechanisms of circulation and consider the roundabout routes by which precious objects might have come to the island? If we assume an early date for the establishment of a central power, for example, which exerted wide-ranging control over various spheres of life even in remote areas – including Okinoshima and the neighbouring regions – then this can also be applied to the cultic and ritual sphere. Yet areas with similar burial rituals do not necessarily coincide with spheres of political power, so we could also interpret these similarities in terms of the creation of identity and attribute a greater autonomy to the communities involved. Such an interpretation is hardly reconcilable with the notion of the direct influence and control of a central power over rituals during the Kofun period. One must therefore take care not to overrate the postulated "state rituals" since, as Eggert notes, this means attributing a semiotic content to objects that largely elude semiotic approaches. (Eggert 2010, p. 25)

It is not the emphasis on the state context that defines the significance of Okinoshima as an outstanding archaeological site. Because of its unique geographical location, the island yields information about the development of religious rituals in both space and time. That is why it is and will remain the starting point for present and future research and has already contributed significant insights to our understanding of ritual practice in the early history of the Japanese archipelago.

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