



The Old Kingdom Ryukyu Memory Strands in Okinawan Traditional Dance

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Dance is viewed as an iconographic repository
of the extinct Ryukyuan kingdom.

Its process of transmission via performance
is likened to a mnemonic device affirming collective identity.

The Poetics of Cultural Diplomacy in Dance

On 16 February 2000, a concert featuring traditional dance and music opened the Philippines-Japan festival. The fact that an Okinawan troupe was officially sent to the Philippines for the occasion is important for several reasons. First of all, it seems to indicate that Japanese ambivalence, at least in terms of diplomacy, towards its southernmost prefecture, one that had its own monarchy and distinct culture from mainland Japan, has declined significantly. Secondly, Okinawan culture appears to have made inroads into Japanese mainstream culture, moving from the margins into the center of national imagination. Thirdly, Okinawa's traditional role as Japan's bridge to Asia, specifically Southeast Asia is seemingly being revived. Finally, the fact that Okinawan culture is now recognized as a resource in Japan's cultural diplomacy holds a greater implication in how it views itself. It points to an evolving society moving towards a multicultural view of self, a position distant from ethnocentric views held in the past that often insisted on Japanese homogeneity, purity and uniqueness.

This study looks into Okinawan traditional dance as a source of memory of the Old Ryukyuan Kingdom. It limits itself to the study of the repertoire of the opening concert of the Philippines-Japan Festival 2000. This study views dance as a mnemonic of the past that allows the continuation of an Okinawan discourse of distinction. This discourse of distinction enables alternative identities to exist in a Japanese menu that has long characterized itself as “one.” In this study, memory in dance is located in five properties that by themselves also constitute forms of text containing symbols that could be interpreted into meanings by various agents of cultural production. These five properties are:

- **Performance Context** referring to a set of symbols and meanings derived from the venue of the performance, its audience, the even or occasion it celebrates, and the forces or sources of support that allow the realization of the performance;
- **Music Text** referring to a set of symbols and meanings embedded in aesthetic rules of sound and genre-specific techniques including the association of sound with affective values such as joy or longing;
- **Lyrics** referring to the recited, sung or chanted oral expression that accompanies music which may be descriptive, evocative, expressive or narrative in character;
- **Costumes and Property** referring to the material artifact of clothing and paraphernalia often subjects of sumptuary rules of social hierarchy, evocative of a certain place or period, and indicative of technological development or the extent of trade relations;
- **Movement Vocabulary** referring to a set of specific postures, connecting gestures, or units or movement imbued with particular meaning (kineme), ordered according to a hierarchy of taste (kinaesthetics), or classified into proper-improper movement in relation to specific roles (kinetics). This set constitutes the vocabulary of the dance that sets it apart (although admittedly similarities also abound) from other dance genre.

The concert started with *Kajadifu*, a dance belonging to the *rojin odori* or dance of the elders sub-genre of Okinawan traditional dance.

Performance Context: This dance is the oldest piece in the Ryukyuan Court dance repertoire. In the past, it was performed before the King to mark an auspicious event. In preset times, Okinawans all over the world normally dance this piece to open a social affair or celebration.

Music Text: In its most proper form, a Ryukyuan Court Music and Chorale Ensemble accompany this dance. More modest occasions in present times however permit scaling this down to a singer/*sanshin* (three-stringed instrument) player. The music is somber and very slow, almost procession-like in its pace. The melodic pattern is sparingly broken by the sound of a drum.

Lyrics: The verbal text sung in chant form spans the whole duration of the song. Syllables are extended as the follow the *ryuka* poetic form (four lines of 8:8:8:6 syllables in contrast to the Japanese 31 syllable form of 5:7:5:7:7) in the language of *Shuri* Court. The salutatory text compares the joy of the day to a “budding flower on which dew has come to rest.”

Costumes and Property: The brightness of the Ryukyuan *Bingata* (Okinawan women’s kimono made of rice-resist textile) celebrates Okinawan sense of color. The colors reflect the sub-tropical environment of the islands. Red and yellow figure prominently in marked contrast to the *wabi-sabi* or *shibui* aesthetics of the mainland. In this sense, in terms of dyeing technique and execution of motif the *bingata* holds a closer affinity to the batik textiles, most specially the brightly colored type from Cirebon, than to the restrained mainland weaves. It is also worth to note that the *bingata* kimono hangs loosely from the Okinawan woman’s frame. None of the tightness and movement constricting folds of the mainland kimono and obi (waist sash) are seen in the Okinawan version. As for other property, a woman’s *uchiwa* (round lacquered fan) affirms cultural borrowing from China while the men’s gold brocade kimono or Okinawan *monzuki* (black family crest) kimono worn with gold hat, gold fan and gold brocade obi offers an interesting case of hybridity. The brocade or black kimono with a family crest and the golden fan are adopted from mainland Japan fashion. All the rest, are Okinawan forms of elaboration.

This includes the golden obi with distinctive Okinawan cut and style of folding. **Movement Vocabulary:** As in the Noh theater of mainland Japan, gendered movement differentiation^{3/4}women as a rule keep knees close together at all times and arms are kept close to the body, full extension is not allowed, the “S” curve posture achieved with a low center of gravity through the bending of knees, sliding footwork and the aesthetics of stillness are seen in this genre. However, unlike the highly linear pattern of movement seen in mainland performance genre, Okinawan traditional dance often employs a curvilinear pattern seen in the wave-like rising and falling of the dancer’s body. The corresponding effect gives an impression of weightlessness or floating appearance. This technique is often used in Southeast Asian genres such as the Philippine *pangalay* and the Central Javanese *bedoyo*.

Kashikaki, another court dance, belongs to the technically challenging genre of *Onna Odori* (Dance of Women). The **Performance Context and Music Text** closely follow the conventions set in *Kajadifu*. **Lyrics:** The verbal text however is expressed in first person and a metaphorical device is found in the act of spinning as a means to express themes of love and longing...” Winding thread on the reel provides no consolation. Over and over my feelings well up in my breast.” **Costumes and Property:** Once again the *bingata* kimono appears, this time however with an accompanying set of reeling implements. **Movement Vocabulary:** The kinaesthetic rules seen in *Kajadifu* are followed. The act of manual spinning however effectively portrays feelings welling up from one’s breast. At one point, red undergarments are exposed during the chore of reeling. This action may be used to express intimate contact, to set the venue of the action (definitely a domestic setting and not in the court), or to emphasize the portrayal of a mundane activity or a chore.

Zei belongs to the *Nisai Odori* (Dance of Young Men) category of Court Dance. This dance, its name referring to the pennon or baton originally used to rally troupes in war, is specifically performed to usher in good harvest. The **Performance Context and the Music Text** are the same as the two discussed above. The **Lyrics** are salutatory alluding to

the blessings of nature: “The portents of a plentiful harvest/Have appeared for all to see/The blessings of rain and dew are bestowed/Heedless of the season.” **Costumes and Property:** The dancer’s appearance is decidedly militaristic, most specially with the white head cloth and the use of the pennon. The striped fabric seen just above the *zori* (white footwear/socks) suggests travel or movement across space, in this case, for the purpose of “war.” The convention of costume is not followed in mainland Japan. **Movement Vocabulary:** Choreographic technique deviates from the other two court dances. Movement passages are borrowed from martial arts resulting in a dance with more rhythmic effect yet still somber and ritualistic in ambiance.

Performed by at least a pair of dancers dressed as fisherfolk, *Tanchame* is a piece belonging to an entirely different category of dance called *Zo Odori* (dance of the Folk). Upon the abolition of the Ryukyuan Court in 1879, choreographers found themselves without a royal patron. They turned to the ordinary Okinawans for a new source of livelihood. **Performance Context:** Movement from the court to the village ushered in a new style more suitable to the tastes of the new patrons. **Music Text:** Although the *sanshin* was still dominant, the tempo became faster and the music style took on stronger percussive support. The singing style moved from the somber to a lighter ambiance. **Lyrics:** The verbal text became more narrative than was usually expressed in the dialogue form. Place names and local names of fish started to appear, thus grounding the dance to the setting of the locale. The language used was decidedly earthy as well illustrated by a passage which may be described as a treatise on the aesthetics of scents: “...How lovely/is the fragrance of the girls/after they have returned/from the fish market...” **Costumes and Property:** Court wear gave way to common clothing. Ryukyuan *Bashofu* kimono (Okinawan men and women’s kimono made of banana fiber or abaca textile) became more common on stage just like other common things such as fish baskets and boat oars. **Movement Vocabulary:** Movement like the language also sought to portray the everyday life of the people. Ordinary concerns seen in ordinary movements culled from activities such as fishing, marketing

and courtship were used as metaphorical device in choreography. Choreographic tempo also took on a more rapid pace and started to feature accentuated or broken movements.

Kanako Amaka is another paired dance falling under the *zo odori* category. The dance in two parts portrays romantic love. The first part (referred to as *uchigumi odori*) shows the couple exchanging tokens of affection. The second part (referred to as *Shimajiri Amaka bushi*) shows the couple at the edge of a lake, “playing with water.” The Performance Context is that if popular entertainment at the village level. The Music Text is similar to *Tanchame*. **Lyrics:** The text reveals the importance of tokens of affection. The *hanazumi tisaji*, a kind of kerchief placed on the shoulder, is typically given by a woman to the object of her affections. Reference to a *minsa obi*, a longer and tougher piece to weave seems to “raise the effective stakes” in a dialogue that suggests the value of one over the other:

“I shall weave a *hanazumi tisaji*/Inside the splendid pavilion in the garden/And give it to the man I love/But why a *tisaji* as a token of love?/Why not a *minsa obi*?/To bind tightly around his waist?”

Costumes and Property: *Kasuri* or *ikat* textiles that have rather complicated designs appear in this piece. This artifact suggests that “rich folk” and not members of fishing or farming classes are the subjects of portrayal. The *hanazumi tisaji* and *minsa obi* in the text are items akin to the Philippine *tubaw* head cloth and tough abaca-cloth *sawwal*. Both artifacts affirm Okinawa’s separate identity from mainland Japan and its links with Southeast Asian cultures. **Movement Vocabulary:** Although the dance unabashedly portrays love at some level of intimacy and proximity between sexes, the indirect contact between man and woman using property (holding the *tisaji* rather than each other’s hands) seen in the final exit of the couple suggest some degree of normative restraint.

Bu no Mai is choreographic work that culls movement from karate (literally, empty hand), the martial art form that developed in Okinawa as

a result of a ban on weapons after the Satsuma invasion of 1609.

Performance Context: This dance falls under *sosaku buyoh* (choreographed or “worked” piece), the newest category of Okinawan traditional dance. These are dances that were choreographed after the end of the World War. **Music Text:** In terms of instrumentation, this particular work significantly departs from other samples of Okinawan dance. The music is mainly made up of percussive sounds, chants and yells. Significant use of silence or “music rests” gives the dance a heightened ambiance of expressive tension. **Lyrics:** Unlike most Okinawan dance pieces, this one does not have a narrative or expressive text. The following program notes make up for the absence of expressive lyrics:

Okinawa is a piece-loving island where inhabitants did not believe in using weapons. Instead, they developed the art of self-defense such as karate, and *kobojutsu* using their bare hands and tools they use in daily life. These martial arts are even used to cultivate the mind and soul of the people. Hand props and application of the proper forms adds to the beauty of the expression of martial arts movement incorporated in this lively dance.

Costumes and Property: The use of “dojo wear” consisting of loose white pajama-like pants and upper kimono also corresponds to a major departure from the dance norm. **Movement Vocabulary:** Karate and *kobojutsu* movement vocabulary echo similar movements from other Asian martial art forms such as *silat*, *kuntaw*, *arnis* and *shao-lin* style *kung fu*. The use of breath as an aesthetic quality that controls stillness and overall body coordination is quite noticeable in this piece.

Shishimai is a mimetic dance of the shishi or lion, a favorite decorative motif seen on the rooftops of Okinawan homes and commercial establishments. **Performance Context:** This piece is another *sosaku buyoh* with its own departures from long established sub-genres. **Music Text:** Like *Bu no Mai*, *Shishimai* is danced to mainly instrumental music punctuated by yells and supported strongly by a rhythmic percussion. **Lyrics:** This piece also departs from the traditional song-dance format in

not having any lyrics. Its creator's text is however found in the following notes from the program:

The lion-king (sic) of the beasts, is a dignified and well-respected figure in Okinawa. Okinawans believe that if the lion dances it wards off evil and brings a rich harvest and prosperity to their descendants.

The lion from heaven visits a village with the rich harvest and the young people welcome it with great rejoicing and jubilation.

Costume and Property: *Shishimai* greatly departs from traditional costuming. In fact, technically there is no costume in this piece. Instead, two dancers manipulate a puppet with only their legs showing. **Movement Vocabulary:** As far as this researcher remembers, *Shishimai* is the only dance in the Ryukyu *Buyoh* genre that is purely mimetic in features. Mimesis allows for a total abandonment, albeit admittedly only in this very exceptional case, of the whole movement convention of the dance genre. The cat-like movement of the *shishi* endears itself to the highly responsive audience. Its antics like rolling on the floor, stretching itself, yawning, etc., makes it a lovable image with an effect of “Hello Kitty” garbed and framed by Okinawan culture.

Perceiving Differences: Some Personal Observations from the Researcher

“*Chigaimasu*” (Different). This was the word used by my sensei to describe Ryukyu *Buyoh* in relation to Japanese traditional dance. Re-living my dance training days during my participation in the year 2000 concert, I could emphatically say that indeed Okinawan dance is different. The way I see it is that it is related to Japanese performance, but exhibits significant differences. It seems to me as different as Italian would be to Spanish. Both belong to the so-called Romance family of languages but are still considered to be different languages. As there are families in language, families can also be considered in dance. Japanese and Okinawan

traditional performance would clearly be dance languages with their own set of movement vocabularies belonging to the greater *Sinic* Zone family of dance. A comparison of performances through an examination of repertoire can most eloquently underscore this point.

The first time that I saw *Kajadifu* was in a dance class in Osaka in 1999. One of the senior students of the school was practicing it in front of the *sensei*. Although she was dancing in rehearsal clothes, she was able to successfully convey the formal beauty of the court dance through her high degree of concentration and her very restrained movements, slow with great surety in poses. The chanting of the song played in small boom box reminded me of Japanese *nagauta* (literally: long song). Its syllables were, however, even more extended compared to the traditional singing genre of the Japanese mainland. The effect of her “rehearsal performance” was rather hypnotic. Perhaps, this effect was induced by the chanting that somehow resembles the chirping of the cicada, droning in crescendo and decrescendo. This wailing aesthetic in *Kajadifu*’s music reminded me of the “scooping” voices of the Philippine *pasyon* and the repetitive chanting of Buddhist sutra. This resemblance may very well be more imagined than real. Still, its existence across highly formal rituals across Asian societies cannot be denied.

Like *Kajadifu*, I also first saw *Kashikaki* in the setting of a dance class. In my opinion however, its beauty can only be fully appreciated in an actual performance replete with costume and property (and of course that nervous quality of the performance space transforming itself into an arena of success or failure). The theme of the dance needed no annotation to make itself into an arena of success or failure). The dance celebrates the nurturing quality of the woman of the court as she performs the simple act of spinning thread. As the thread is spun, so are memories of affection. Feelings of longing are all bottled up and intentionally repressed for proper court behavior. The dance does not allow emotional ostentation. This dance therefore evokes court protocol and norms that are no longer seen today.

Unlike the Noh theater and Kabuki, women are allowed, and I would like to even say “privileged” to play the role of women. In this particular performance, the dancer seemed to have been so overwhelmed by this narrative text of the songs that tears, albeit silent ones, were flowing down her cheeks after the first half of dance up to the very end of her dance number.

Tanchame is the liveliest dance in the repertoire performed to a relatively fast tempo. I remember this dance being taught by visiting artist Higa Izumi-sensei at the University of the Philippines Main Theater rehearsal hall to a group of dance majors. The students had a great time manipulating the boat paddle and fish basket props. Moving a tempo proved to be rather challenging while reciting the line: “*Tancha mashi mashi, tian soi soi...*” Several students clowned around by converting “*soi soi*” to “soy sauce” prompting loud laughter from Higa-sensei and this researcher. This kind of behavior would not have been tolerated by a Noh master or by my own Japanese dance master. Apparently, since the dance portrays fisher-folk in courtship “formality and restraint” was not at all required of the students or of the agent of transmission, whom in this case was Higa-sensei.

Kanayo Amaka is similarly lively in its portrayal of courtship among what appears to be members of the merchant class. Although the program notes do not mention the particular status of the persons portrayed their costumes appear to indicate that they belong to a richer upper class, neither belonging to the classes of farmers nor that of fisherfolk. My first exposure to Okinawan textiles in a visit made to Naha, the prefecture capital, in 1996 has taught me about the proximity of Okinawan culture to Southeast Asia. The *tisaji* kerchief seen in both *Tanchame* and *Kanayo Amaka* resemble the *tubao* of the Philippine South most especially in its use of supplementary warp weaving techniques. The *minsa obi* used by the male dancers also look more like a Southeast Asian artifact with its bold *ikat* motifs that are the same as those found in the Philippines and Indonesia. Doubtless, these artifacts conjure images of a past kingdom, more

particularly at the time of the Shuri dynasty, when Ryukyu connected Japan and other parts of Northeast Asia to Southeast Asia as far as Siam in its role as center of entrepot trading for the region.

As alluded to earlier, the performance of *Tanchame* and *Kanayo Amaka* transports the audience's imagination from the court of the Ryukyuan King to the site of the village. Whereas the former is known to "refine" through focused selection and arrangement of the elements of dance, the latter tends to innovate. I believe that this creative and symbiotic tension between the court and the village can be observed in other sites of creation throughout Southeast Asia. A striking parallel is provided by the case of Bali. Eventually when the courts of the rajah(s) fell to the Dutch, the villages took over as the repositories and creative centers of traditional dance.

I encountered *Zei* and *Bu no Mai* for the first time in the year 200 dance concert. It is therefore quite understandable if I say that both dances left quite a strong impression. Although the two dances belong to the *zo odori* sub category or class of dances created after the fall of the Ryukyuan court, I feel that these two dances may still be grouped into a more specific category of "martial arts dances." Instances of overlapping between martial and dance arts are likewise not rare in Southeast Asia as seen in the cases of *penchak silat* of Malaysia and *langka silat/kuntao* of the Southern Philippines.

I view *Shishimai* as another affirmation of Okinawan links to China and Southeast Asia. The *shishi* is a common sight on the rooftops of Southern Chinese and Okinawan houses. It is seen as a protector of the household and a bringer of good luck. In Okinawan, its popularity is such that several art shops have decided to specialize in it. Small ceramic figures of the *shishi*, almost always coming in pairs³/one male and one female, are popular gift items for visitors to the islands.

In China, the *Shishimai*'s equivalent, acrobatic Lion Dance is performed during New Year celebrations. Further south in the island of Bali, the *Barong*, the local version of the *shishi*, dances its triumphant

battle against Rangda, a powerful evil witch in the form of a masked dancer. In so doing, the Barong protects the village and brings it good luck.

Okinawan dance is an exercise of performative difference that does not fully negate similarity. It is less of a performance tradition of resistance as Irish tap (vis-à-vis the English) or the Hawaiian hula (vis-à-vis the WASP American). It seems to have evolved into a genre that exudes the message of accommodation that affirms similarity in the face of salient differences. In dance, the *Uchinanchu* as Okinawans refer to themselves perform their role of culturally bridging Japan with the rest of Asia. Their dances' colors, movements and themes celebrate the resilience of culture as it travels across time and space.

The journey of Okinawan dance to Manila marks an important point in Japanese cultural history and diplomacy. Presenting an artifact not coming from its usual orthodox core indicates maturation in seeing possibilities in a multi-cultural viewing of self that contrasts greatly from a homogenous portrayal that was rather characteristic of "Japan" in the past. This dominant discourse of cultural homogeneity therefore seems to be at a retreat. Perhaps cultural diplomacy simply reflects developments in national life. In the 1990s, Japan experienced a so-called "Okinawan Boom." Festivals of Ryukuan Culture or Ryukyu *matsuri* were organized yearly in Naha, Osaka and Honolulu. These were sites of cultural sharing of Okinawan culture with the mainland Japanese in food, dance and songs. In the popular entertainment scene, performers like Knia Shoich, Amuro Namie, The Rinken Band, Nenes and Diamantes paraded Okinawan culture and their respective interpretations of their Okinawan "Japanese" selves. On national television, the Japanese saw Okinawan history transformed into a so-called "tiger drama," a genre that used to be reserved for the portrayal of the heroic deeds of mainland nobility and samurai. This drama entitled "Ryukyu no Kaze" (The Winds of Ryukyu) was so popular that its set in Okinawa was converted into a tourist spot. Indeed, Okinawa Prefecture experienced an increase in number of tourists from the Japanese mainland upon the release of the said tiger drama.

All of the above-mentioned developments in Japan's popular cultural field foreshadowed the decision of the late Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi to host the G8 Year 2000 Summit in Nago City, a most beautiful and culturally rich municipality in the northern part of the island of Okinawa. Obuchi's diplomatic tour d'force can be seen as the culmination of Japan's 1970 Fukuda doctrine that expressed Japan's sense of belonging to Asia. The act of bringing an important summit away from the usual center of national life to what is considered by many as the margin may also be seen as symbolic breaking of the national discourse of homogeneity. And thus the dance reaffirms its age-old function of entertaining kings, of propitiating the gods, and of connecting peoples across time and space expressing themes that engage minds and create memories in what is truly a living tradition.¹

Note

- 1 I personally look forward to the day when the Embassy of Japan and the Japan Foundation bring performance ensembles from the Ainu, Koreans in Japan, the discriminated upon Burakumin and other marginalized and unrecognized people of Japan.

Notes on Sources

- Much of the author's reflections on Okinawan dance or Ryukyu *Buyoh* presented in this article is based on his experience as a student under Yamahata Keiko-sensei of the Tamagusuku-ryu, Gyokusen-Kai (Gyokusen Group of the Tamagusuku School) from 1998 to 1999 in Osaka.
- Information regarding the repertoire studied in this piece is mainly based on the author's participation in the said program as the performance annotator. Specific data on the individual dance pieces are based on the following:

Sakiyama, Ritsuko, original Japanese text. 1995. Ryukyuan Dance, Okinawa Department of Commerce, Industry and Labor, Tourism and Cultural Affairs Bureau, Cultural Promotion Division, Naha.

Traditional Okinawan Dance and Music Concert. 2006.

Program Notes, Cinema 1, Shangri-la Plaza, sponsored by the Embassy of Japan, Japan Foundation and Shangri-la Plaza, February 16.

Other helpful sources on Okinawan Dance used in this article are:

Makuta, Satoshi. 1998. *Okinawa no Odori: Ryubu to Tsukiau Ho* (Okinawan Dance: Appreciating Ryukyu Dance), Okinawa Bunko, Naha.

Nakachi Kiyoshi. 1996. *Ryukyu Islands: Sightseeing and Lifestyle*, Okinawa Times, Naha.

Gekkan Ryukyu Buyoh. 1999. *Monthly Ryukyuan* (dance magazine), Vol. 1-8, Okinawa: Shinapusu.

The main video source used by this author to review dance movement vocabulary is as follows:

Ryukyu Buyoh Tamagusuku Setsuko. 1992. VHS Format, Koten Classical Dance Volume, Vol. 1: Zo Odori 1, Vol. 2: Zo Odori 2, Vol. 3: Zo Odori 3, Okinawa Minyo Kikaku, Naha.

Appendix

Lyrics of / Notes on Dance Repertoire
(unless otherwise indicated from Sakiyama, 1995)

Kajadifu

To what may the happiness of this day be compared?/
To a budding flower on which dew has come to rest.
(*Kajadifu bushi*)

Kashikaki

Reeling threads thick and thin/
I shall weave for my beloved/
A robe as fine in texture/
As the wings of a dragonfly.
(*Fushi bushi*)

As I continue over and over/
To wind thread on the reel/
The image of my beloved appears/
And my longing grows.

Winding thread on the reel/
Provides no consolation/
Over and over my feelings/
Well up in my breast.
(*Shichihaku bushi*)

I have now finished winding the thread/
And will set out on the homeward path/
For the man I love/
Is awaiting my return.
(*Sasa bushi*)

Zei

The portents of a plentiful harvest/
Have appeared for all to see/
The blessings of rain and dew are bestowed/
Heedless of the season.

(*Agi Chikuten bushi*)

Today we have met/
And enjoyed ourselves in so many ways/
But when I think that tomorrow/
Your image will appear before me...
(*Ukishima bushi*)

Tanchame

How I wish to travel/
To Katsuren to be beside you/
But the sea at Wanya/
Blocks my passage.
(*Ishinari bushi*)

Shoals of sururugwa/
Have appeared/
Close to the shore/
At Tancha.
(Refrain)

They are not sururugwa/
But yamatu mijun.
(Refrain)

How lovely/
Is the fragrance of the girls/
After they have returned/

From the fish market.

(Refrain)

(*Tanchame bushi*)

Kanayo Amaka

When the image of the one I love/

Floats up in my mind's eye/

I can no longer remain at home/

Let us go off and seek distraction/

So that I may forget him.

I shall weave a hanazumi tisaji/

Inside the splendid pavilion in the garden/

And give it to the man I love.

But why a tisaji as a token of love?/

Why not a minsa obi?/

To bind tightly around his waist?

I cannot forget him/

No matter how much I dance/

Or seek distraction/

My feelings merely well up in my breast/

With greater intensity.

(sung to *Kanayo bushi*)

The lake of Amakawa/

Is ten fathoms deep/

May your love for me be yet deeper!

Bu no Mai

(from the Program Notes)

Okinawa is a peace-loving island where the inhabitants did not believe in the use of weapons. Instead, they developed the art of self-defense such as karate and kobojutsu using their bare hands and tools

they use in daily life. These martial arts are even used to cultivate mind and soul of the people. Hand props and application of the proper forms adds to the beauty of the expression of the martial arts movement incorporated in this lively dance.

Shishimai

(from the Program Notes)

The lion-king (sic) of the beasts, is a dignified and well-respected figure in Okinawa. Okinawans believe that if the lion dances, it wards off evil and brings a rich harvest and prosperity to their descendants.

The lion from heaven visits a village with the rich harvest and the young people welcome it with great rejoicing and jubilation.