

Christopher A. REICHL *

Transplantation of a Ryukyuan New Religion Overseas: Hawaiian Ijun **

Introduction

This paper introduces a religion founded in Okinawa in 1972 and shows how it has come to be transplanted in Hawaii. Based on traditional Ryukyuan¹ cosmology and creation myth, Ijun 龍泉 is classified as a new religion (see Shimamura 1992) due to the recent origins of its formal organization and syncretism of Buddhism, Shintō and Christianity. Ijun has grown to include about ten thousand adherents in Okinawa. It has been practiced in Hawaii since the early 1980s by about one hundred adherents, primarily Okinawan Americans.

The charisma of Ijun is expressed in its emphasis on spiritual healing, a central focus of belief and practice. Also notable is the social syncretism practiced by the founder, Takayasu Ryūsen 高安龍泉,² who introduces into the overseas branch spirit healers from other traditions in line with his universalist theology.

After two years of participant observation in the Hawaiian branch, fieldwork was conducted in 1992 at the central church in Ginowan City, at branches on the islands of Okinawa and Miyako, and at the Yokohama branch. In 1993, I observed the sister shrine of Ijun in Chang Hua, Taiwan. I continue to observe Ijun ritual on the island of Hawaii.

Ryukyuan thinking about the supernatural has been characterized by a “lack of imagination evinced with regard to the spirit world.” (Lebra 1966: 204) The “absence of complexity characterizing the belief system has constituted a survival factor” because it has enabled “assimilation of foreign traits” and has been a “barrier against sophisticated belief systems alien to Okinawan thinking.” (Lebra 1966: 204)

* Department of Anthropology, University of Hawaii at Hilo

** The author expresses special thanks to the adherents of Ijun on the islands of Hawaii, Okinawa, Miyako and Erabu for their cooperation with the research and patience in answering my questions. I am especially grateful to Mrs. Yoshiko Miyashiro, President of the Hawaiian branch of Ijun. Thanks also to Tomoko Kushida and Masami Otake for editorial assistance.

1. I use the term Ryukyuan to refer to religious and cultural practice that originated in the Ryukyuan kingdom, and to material that relates to the entire island chain. The term Okinawan refers to Okinawa island and the prefecture of Okinawa in contemporary times.
2. Takayasu changed his name from Rokurō 六郎 to Ryūsen 龍泉 in 1993. Ryūsen is the standard reading of the characters used to write Ijun. Takayasu's father was a theater manager.

This absence of complex theology was used by the founder of Ijun to construct a universalist philosophy that facilitates cooptation of adherents from other religions, attracting some adherents overseas who do not share Okinawan ethnic identity.

Some new religions “reach out to non-Japanese in their proselytization attempts.” (Inoue 1991: 9) K. Yanagawa, H. Nakamaki and N. Inoue surveyed Japanese religions in California in 1977, 1979 and 1981. (Inoue 1983: 2) At the time Sōka Gakkai had finished a decade of “fervent proselytizing activity” and claimed to have 230,000 adherents, “most of whom are non-Japanese.” (Inoue 1983b:101-102) Numbers of adherents abroad are as difficult to assess as numbers of adherents in Japan, but Sōka Gakkai probably has the most non-Japanese adherents, followed by Sūkyō Mahikari, PL Kyōdan, Sekai Kyūsei-kyō, Tenri-kyō, and Seichō no Ie. (Inoue 1991: 20) The majority of these non-Japanese adherents are in California and Hawaii, and in the states of Paraná and São Paulo, Brazil. (See Reichl 1988; 1992)

In the experience of Okinawans in North America, Japanese Buddhist sects and new religions such as Sōka Gakkai are notable, but participation in Christian groups is significant. As in Japan where Okinawans are more likely to be Christian than Japanese from other prefectures, in California Okinawan Americans are more likely to be Christian than Japanese Americans. (Okinawa Club of America 1988: 410)

Gedatsu-kai was founded in 1929 with headquarters in Tokyo, but its overseas wing includes “branches in Hawaii and Brazil in addition to the continental United States.” (Ishii 1983: 164) There are similarities between Gedatsu-kai and Ijun in terms of their size, reliance on Japanese language, and spirit healing. And, in Gedatsu-kai it is thought that “ancestral spirits trouble their descendants” (Ishii 1983: 187), a direct parallel with Ijun. Gedatsu-kai shows that immigrants change Japanese religion as their own cultural orientation changes. (See Yanagisako 1985)

Both Ijun and Sekai Kyūsei-kyō emphasize healing, ancestral spirits, multi-ethnic membership in overseas branches that are dominated by middle-aged females of the *nisei* generation, (二世, first generation born in the host country) and Japanese language services. (Yamada 1983) Ijun resembles less Tenshō Kōtai Jingū-kyō (TKJ), although both exist on the Big Island of Hawaii. (Nishiyama and Fujii 1991) Members of TKJ “formed communities of like faith with strong in-group consciousness that stood religiously isolated from the Hawaii Japanese American society.” (Nishiyama and Fujii 1991: 146) Ijun embraces those who belong to other religions, and adherents are well-represented in ethnic associations.

In his survey of Reiyū-kai, Risshō Kōsei-kai and Myōchi-kai, Kōmoto (1991) shows that Reiyū-kai and derived groups place particular importance on karmic hindrance due to ancestral spirits. The question is posed: “How [are] ancestors ... understood within the personal religious experience of the believers?” (Kōmoto 1991: 121)

Kreiner (1968:112) shows the basic shape of Ryukyuan religion: from a village near the sea one path leads up to sacred groves called *shizen utaki* 自然御嶽, for the nesting places for deities from heaven. Another path leads down toward the ocean to shrines called *ashiage* 足上 for deities that visit from the ocean and deities that

originate in *nirai-kanai*. (Kreiner 1968) Between the place for those that come from above (*utaki*) and those from below (*ashiage*) is the *ibe* or *mooya* mound, a place to worship local deities such as those of the village founder and official state priestesses called *noro*. (Kreiner 1968: 114) The Ijun pantheon also includes deities from above including Kinmanmon and the Great Kami of Ijun, deities in between such as ancestral deities and living beings with deity in them called *kaminchū* 神中, and deities from below that originate in the sea and in *nirai-kanai* and *Ryūgū* 龍宮.

Takayasu and the Founding of Ijun

Takayasu, born in Naha in 1934, was said to have spiritual sensitivity (*saadaka umare* サアダカ生まれ) after he predicted events and had a near-death experience in his youth. His apparent affinity with the supernatural led his mother to take him to Seichō no Ie.³ At first he acted to please his parents, but then he became serious, and was promoted to the top position in Okinawa by age thirty-six. (Shimamura 1992: 2) In healing he used Ryukyuan spirits, leading to criticism. He was forced to quit but took many adherents with him. After Takayasu was forced to quit Seichō no Ie he got the spirit calling (*kamidaari*), including disturbed sleep and vomiting. After the revelation of Kinmanmon in the early 1970s, Takayasu's condition stabilized. (Shimamura 1992:3) He then formulated Ijun theology and began to publish the journal *Ijun*.

Kinmanmon is described in the classic *Ryūkyū Shintō-ki* 琉球神道記 by Taichū Ryōtei (1552-1639). Taichū spent 1603-1606 in Ryūkyū. Waiting to sail to China he described what he thought were Buddhist deities. (Sakamaki 1963: 23-7; Ginoza 1988:137-44, 222-4) Kinmanmon has qualities of both impersonal supernatural force and personified deity, a syncretism of animism and animatism. (See Saso 1990; Sasaki 1984) Takayasu describes Kinmanmon as awakening and the universe itself: other deities are manifestations of Kinmanmon.⁴

Hori (1968:228-9) shows that the founders of Japanese new religions have charismatic personalities and shamanistic backgrounds. Takayasu fits this portrait. The voice of Kinmanmon identified itself to Takayasu as the primary deity of Ryūkyū, not worshipped for 360 years. (Shimamura 1992:3) Takayasu (1991; 1993) teaches that this was when the Ryukyuan kingdom lost its independent religious tradition to Japanese cultural domination.

Takayasu's experience with Seichō no Ie suggests he had knowledge of other religions when he founded Ijun. Ijun recognizes traditional deities overseas, such as the goddess Pele in Hawaii and directs adherents to pray at traditional Hawaiian prayer sites.

3. This Japanese new religion, founded in 1930 by Taniguchi Masaharu, is described in McFarland (1967) and Hori (1968:244-246). Takayasu was head of Seichō no Ie in Okinawa in 1970, just two years before founding Ijun. (Reichl 1999:120-138)

4. There are no images or stories of Kinmanmon in which we learn of his acts or personality. As a result, it is difficult to think of Kinmanmon as a personified spirit.

Service at the Hawaiian Branch of Ijun

The Hawaiian branch of Ijun near Hilo is called an *ashagi*, a place where the Ijun altar is located. The word is a variant of *ashiage* (足上). Okinawan-Japanese dictionaries define *ashagi* as a small out-building in the front garden of a main house, with varied use as guesthouse and storehouse. The meaning may come from the words leg (*ashi*) and raise (*ageru*), and be ‘raised up on legs.’ (See Kreiner 1968:112) Takayasu writes *ashagi* as 安舎祇. Lebra’s (1966:219) glossary lists *kami ashagi*, “a thatched roof supported by poles or stone pillars and without walls, used as the major site for public rites conducted by the community priestesses.”

Services are held twice a month. The first half is given to prayer and the remainder to healing. Only the fact of holding the power symbol distinguishes participants. In 1994 twelve power symbol holders led the Hilo Ashagi: four are Okinawan American *issei* (一世), immigrants born in Japan. There are Okinawan American *nisei* (二世), first generation born in the host country. One is Japanese American *issei*, three are Caucasian and one is Hawaiian (the only male). None are full-time specialists. Services are led by power symbol holders who have Okinawan ethnicity.

Scheduling of Services

The Hilo Ashagi meets on the first and fifteenth day of each month. Ancestral offerings in household shrines take place on these dates (Maretzki and Maretzki 1966: 69; Glacken 1955: 284), as do regular offerings to the hearth *kami*. (Lebra 1966: 68) Although requests to the *kami* can take place at any time, the senior female prays at the hearth on the first and fifteenth day of the month. (Lebra 1966: 186) Glacken (1955:293) describes Ryukyuan ceremonies that must be performed at high tide. With two fifteen days lunar cycles to a lunar month, Glacken’s (1955: 293) informants were able to mentally calculate the tides, as can Takayasu.

Content of Prayer: Prayers of the First and the Fifteenth Days

These prayers contain archaic language, Ryukyuan words, and in some cases, Japanese characters with non-standard readings. One prayer is repeated on the first and one on the fifteenth day of each month. The former is “Words of Prayer for the First Day: Thanks to the Kami” (*Tsuitachi no inori no kotoba: kami ni kansha*) and the latter is “Words of Prayer for the Fifteenth Day: Thanks to the Ancestors” (*Jūgonichi no inori no kotoba: senzo ni kansha*). The members refer to these as Thanking the Kami and Thanking the Ancestors. The following are my own translation of Ijun prayer sheets. Thanking the Kami contains the following:

We thank the Great Kami of Ijun for guidance, full of joy that we are able to see this wonderful first day of the month. My power goes out to everything in peace and harmony, helping my heart to blossom. Here, just as I am, I display a religious devotion. We are thankful that we are protected by the kami and

attain harmony between ancestors and descendants. From this day the wonderful, universal power goes out to all people and things, promoting love and peace everywhere.

Thanking the Ancestors contains the following:

Kami, we have been blessed with wonderful ancestors. As a descendant of (speaker's place of birth), I am thankful that I am here today. The kami have given me the marvelous Comfort of the Six Kami Powers (Nyo-i Roku Shin Tsū, also pronounced jin tsū). With this power we know that our honored ancestors lack for nothing and are being transformed into kami. With the guidance of the Great Kami of Ijun, the ancestral spirits are calm, harmonious and full of joy. The brilliant light and distinguished services of the ancestors fill us with joy. The brilliant light and distinguished services of the ancestors fill us with joy, harmony and peace. In the next world, we go with the ancestors, and now we humbly thank them for showing us the way.

These prayers reflect the Ryukyuan world view. After some time, an ancestral spirit is transformed into an ancestral *kami*, and then finally into a non-personified *kami*. In a figure of the cosmos constructed by Takayasu (1991: 230-231), non-personified and personified *kami* are shown. This double focus on ancestral spirits and non-personified *kami* is a structural part of the annual rites of the Ryukyuan kin group. (Lebra 1966: 171)

Offerings and Prayer Registration

Ashagi members in Hilo fill out a card each month. On the card the adherent writes a statement of the object of prayer, such as success in business or healing an illness. The cards are submitted with a cash offering and sent monthly to Ijun in Okinawa where the objects of prayer are reported to the *kami* via the hearth *kami*, called Fii nu Kang, by incineration.

The cards instruct adherents to pray to the hearth *kami* on the first and fifteenth days, and to accompany prayer by lighting 'twelve and three' sticks of incense.⁵ Prayer can be carried out in three places: the alcove (*tokonoma*), the hearth, and the ancestral shrine (*butsudan*). These three are the foci of traditional Ryukyuan domestic ritual. (Lebra 1966: 182-184) The god shelf in the Shinto tradition (*kamidana*), is less conspicuous in Okinawa.

Many Okinawans have simplified or discontinued ritual except for that of the hearth *kami* conducted by a household's senior woman. (Lebra 1966: 202) This rite is practiced by Ijun adherents in Hawaii. In place of the three hearth stones in the kitchen Ijun sells a wooden pedestal and two china vessels, called an *otoshidai* 御通台.

5. Also on the cards, printed in Japanese script, is the statement "Prayer of thanks to the ancestors and blessing for the family." Words of explanation specify that the *kami* are contacted every Sunday at a rite that is conducted at the central church in Ginowan City. The offering requested on the cards is three thousand yen but Ashagi members in Hilo do not give any set amount when they give dollars.

Adherents keep water in one vessel, changed daily, and salt in the other,⁶ changed on the first and the fifteenth days. When the water and salt are changed the following words are given in prayer:

We give thanks that once again today we are able to receive the blessing of, the continued use of, salt and water.

Some say the hearth *kami* itself is an object of worship. Others insist that it only reports to higher level *kami*. (Lebra 1966: 23; see also Robinson 1969: 64) In the Hilo Ashagi both are objects of devotion.

Power Cards and Power Play

A feature of the Ijun service is the power card (*parvaa kaado*). Each adherent brings one to the services at the Hilo Ashagi and to lectures by Takayasu. Power Cards, sold to members each year and also called power antennas, attract universal power. Reception of the power heals and revitalizes. During a power play members hold the power cards in silence with eyes closed for several minutes, keeping in mind the object of their prayer. What is gained is not the help of a deity but an infusion of universal power. In Ryukyuan cosmology, *mana* or impersonal, universal power is basic. (Sasaki 1984; Saso 1990; Lebra 1966: 21)

Takayasu says the power can be used to heal, that it works regardless of religious affiliation, and that it is best to maintain one's power level by participation in Ijun ritual. Lack of harmony in marital or filial relations, physical or psychological illness, traffic accidents and other misfortunes result from insufficient power. Adherents think the power card erases bad karma and makes life joyful.

Visual Ethos

In Ryukyuan ritual, the white gowns of priestesses in village rites (Maretzki and Maretzki 1966: 68), the white ceremonial robes of high ranking priestesses in the former state religion of the Ryukyuan Kingdom (Robinson 1969: 27-28), and the white robes of female *kaminchū* (Lebra 1966: 68) are all examples of the "absence of color in shrines, religious adornment, and paraphernalia." (Lebra 1966: 204) Takayasu and his assistants have white garments for ceremonial appearances, as do power symbol holders at the Hilo Ashagi.

There is no visual representation of any deity on the altar at the Hilo Ashagi. The center of the altar is a crystal ball. However, there is a painting of the Great Kami of Ijun, a female figure with a halo, that members enshrine in their alcoves next to pictures of Takayasu.

6. Salt is effective for protection against malevolent spirits in Okinawa (Robinson 1969:37), and in Japan in general. Among members of the Ashagi in Hilo, a member who feels that he or she is in crisis is given a small packet of sacred salt with the characters for *kami* and salt printed on the packet.



Illustration 1: Depiction of the Great Kami of Ijun

The crystal ball has a place in Ryukyuan myth and is central to the Lapis Lazuli Meditation that Takayasu (1991: 255-257) describes. He says a revelation led him to employ a crystal ball in place of the mythical gemstone lapis lazuli. Called Sankō Hōju, it controls the tides and is the treasure of Ryūgū. (Takayasu 1991: 269) The primary symbol of Ijun is its monogram, five circles arranged around a slightly smaller, darkened circle at the core. The monogram represents the religions of the world drawn together by Takayasu’s universalist philosophy. Or perhaps the monogram is the cross section of a neuron, symbolic of the role that the mind plays in the search for awakening. (Takayasu 1991)



Illustration 1: Depiction of the primary symbol of Ijun

Also symbolic are two characters used to write Ijun. The first is the character for dragon 龍. The second is the character for fresh-water spring 泉. The dragon is the symbol of the life force of Ryūgū and Kinmanmon; Ijun is the welling forth of this life force. Takayasu probably saw the two characters at Taoist temples in Taiwan on the water fonts used by visitors to rinse hands and mouth.

Concepts in Esoteric Prayer

These concepts from the Ryukyuan folk tradition are each a cornerstone of Ijun theology. (Shimamura 1992: 5-9) Their use by Takayasu shows that one element of Ijun is Ryukyuan ethnic revival.

Amamikyū and Shinerikyū

These are the sibling creator deities of Ryukyuan myth. (See Robinson 1969: 23; Kerr 1958: 35-36) As recorded in *Ryūkyū Shintō-ki*, at the beginning of time were sibling deities: a male named Shinerikyū シネリキユ and a female named Amamikyū アマミキユ. (Ginoza 1988) When a wind passed between their huts Amamikyū became pregnant. The first born was a son, the first political leader. The second born was a daughter, the first community priestess. The third born was another son, the first farmer. As the myth goes (see Takayasu 1991), the first fire was obtained from Ryūgū.

Ryūgū

Ryūgū is the magical palace under the sea that appears in Japanese myth. Ryūgū is the Sino-Japanese term, the Japanese is *tokoyo*. It refers to a “world of power beneath the water,” a spatially ambivalent otherworld where shamans seek power. (Blacker 1975: 75-6) The word Ryūgū, written with the character for dragon 龍 and the character for shrine 宮, emerges in most of the prayer at the Hilo Ashagi.

Nirai-Kanai

“Nirai-kanai is a bright and rich land, a paradise, lying in the east or southeast, where the sun rises every morning.” (Kreiner 1968: 108) Okinawan-Japanese language dictionaries list the word as *girē kanē*, *nirē kanē* or *girai kanai*, an otherworld that lies somewhere across the sea. To Takayasu (1991: 103), *kanai* is the world of shapes, forms and solid bodies, including the physical self, the indistinct body and the soul; *nirai* is the hollow world of mystery with the qualities of eternity and awakening to satori. In Takayasu’s (1991: 103) idealized structure of Ryūgū we see that *nirai* and *kanai* are within the confines of Ryūgū, as are Kinmanmon and the Great Kami of Ijun. Ryūgū is the cosmos itself.

In some parts of the Ryukyuan islands, men ritually represent deities from a land “called Nirai which, like Tokoyo, lies far away beyond the horizon of the sea.” (Blacker 1975: 73) Nirai-kanai was known in myth as the “place of origin of the Okinawan people,” an island in the eastern seas. (Lebra 1966: 221)

Lebra (1966: 99) found the word *girē kanē* (*nirai kanai*) in a song sung by the *noro* of Itoman, “who explained that *giree* was an old term for bone washing and that *kanee* had the meaning of beach.” Bone washing is a funerary custom performed several years after death (Lebra 1966: 200), formerly done on the beach. Thus, it is “feasible to speak of a dead person as going to *giree kanee* in the sense of having posthumous existence.” (Lebra 1966: 99)

Healing

Takayasu began as healer and healing was causal in his parting from Seichō no Ie. Takayasu's assistant (*sōshu bosa* 総主補佐) is described as a shaman who leads the Fire Festival and meets with individuals to heal them and predict their futures. (Shimamura 1993: 58) Takayasu has said that he himself is the only true *yuta* (shaman) in Okinawa.

Most Japanese new religions had initial periods when spiritual healing was a central part of belief and practice. In a typical example, early activity of Gedatsu-kai in the Tule Lake relocation camp during WWII led others to call it a healing cult. (Ishii 1983: 166) Watanabe and Igeta (1991: 163) argue that a "religious founder's charismatic authority is confirmed as he or she cures ill."

The Hawaiian branch had made spiritual healing a preeminent concern by its practice of individual healing. The two-to-three minute healing of each of twenty to forty adherents requires more time than the ritual itself. The healing ritual is described in Reichl (1993). There are oral and written stories of curing by Takayasu, his assistant, and other healers throughout the organization. Adherents believe that the ability to heal arises when healers reach a state of insentience, and that Takayasu is one of many religious leaders worldwide with this type of healing ability. (Takayasu 1991)

Lebra (1966: 39) explains the concept of *mani-gutu*, that the past activity of ancestors affects the living. If an ancestor was offensive to a *kami*, then the descendant is visited by misfortune. Takayasu tells those who have an illness that the cause is lack of ritual attention to their ancestors. Those who have recovered from illness are told to maintain proper ancestral relationships.

Change In The Hawaiian Branch During 1990-1994

In June 2002 Ijun celebrated its thirtieth anniversary. The Hawaiian branch began as a revolving credit association (*tanomoshi* たのもし) with Ijun services in the homes of members in the early 1980s. In 1984 Takayasu first performed the Fire Festival in Hawaii. In September 1989 the Hilo Ashagi received an altar from Okinawa and began services at a member's home. A woman was dispatched from Okinawa for some months to lead services and train others.

In September 1990 after ten years of coming to Hilo for lecture tours, Takayasu announced that he was promoting five women to power symbol holder. Four of the five have Okinawan ethnicity and one has Japanese. All are *issei* or *nisei*. The following year Takayasu came to Hilo in February and September, conducting the Fire Festival and public lectures. This time he designated another five power symbol holders, with three from among the growing number of non-Okinawan adherents, including a priest in the Hawaiian tradition.

Systematization of Ritual

Takayasu's tape-recorded voice was first used to lead prayer recitation. The dispatch of a woman from the main church in February 1991 helped the new power symbol holders learn the service. Later another woman from Okinawa took her place. Ritual has been systematized. Impromptu discussions decided how many times to clap between prayers. Newly designated power symbol holders learned to do Ijun healing. The role of non-Okinawan holders of the power symbol has not been passive. The Hawaiian priest suggested that the healer and supplicant be encircled by others holding hands. This suggestion was adopted and the practice became permanent. By the summer of 1992, the idea of holding hands during this ritual had spread back to the main church in Okinawa.

Nomenclature

The name Ijun has been used in Japan since the founding but in 1989 the name Okinawa Original was common in Hawaii. In early publications the name Ijun Mittō was written in Sino-Japanese characters 龍泉秘道. Mittō was dropped and Ijun is now written in *hiragana*. The name of the primary deity has also undergone a transformation. In its earliest form it was Kinmamon. (Ginoza 1988: 137) Adherents first pronounced the name Kimimanmomu and then Kimimanmon. Finally it became Kinmanmon.

Charismatic Image of Ijun

To attract adherents Takayasu gives public lectures. Using an interpreter, Takayasu lectures in Japanese, then conducts a power play and individual spiritual healing. At these times Takayasu is a charismatic figure, walking through the audience of fifty to one hundred people and offering advice, responding to questions, and healing. For example, he approaches a mother and child and asks if the child has respiratory ailments. The mother responds affirmatively, surprised at Takayasu's acuity. Takayasu then touches the boy's head and announces to all that his lungs will be stronger in the future. After Takayasu's visits in 1990 and 1991, a dozen new members started to attend the bi-monthly services. Paradoxically, there is no missionary work done by the local group.

Takayasu's religious philosophy draws adherents from other traditions. (Reichl 1993) He designed theological arguments to attract Christians and Buddhists, in addition to those from other new religions. The sister shrine of Ijun in Taiwan contains a folk deity called Sekitō-kō 石頭公 that Takayasu says healed him in the 1970s. Ijun adherents travel to this Taoist shrine, called Chintōgū 鎮東宮, as pilgrimage.

Takayasu's healing routine is part of his appeal. His ability to diagnose illness and prescribe remedy is legendary among Hilo Ashagi members.

Conclusion

Ijun is more concerned with practice and less concerned with belief. An influx of adherents led to questions that could not be answered by Hawaiian branch leaders. While this lack of explicit theology is typical of Ryukyuan religion, it was exaggerated by Takayasu to create a base for a world religion. The strategy has had some success in attracting non-Okinawan adherents.

In Hilo, larger congregations often have an ethnic mix but congregations the size of the Hilo Ashagi (twenty to forty-five participants) rarely include non-ethnic adherents, perhaps due to Japanese language. Japanese prayer at Ijun in Hawaii is brief and healing is an exercise in the control of universal energy. There is no sermon or attempt to teach laymen any details of the religion.

Many of the characteristics attributed to the new religions of Japan apply to Ijun, including charismatic leadership, concrete goals to alleviate suffering, syncretism, mystery and novelty. (McFarland 1967: 71-94) Takayasu is a *kami* person, called *kaminchū* 神中, and fits the image of the charismatic founder. The group has concrete goals for health and a healing process. There is syncretism, both social and ideological, mystery induced partly by lack of concrete theological formulation, and Ryukyuan novelty.

The founder is critical of established religions but models a new order on established precedents. (Hori 1968: 220) An example is Takayasu's idea that Kinmanmon has appeared to keep the wheel of life turning instead of Buddha.

Ijun shares many features with the Japanese new religions, including charismatic leadership by a founder who begins as shaman. (McFarland 1967: 71; Norbeck 1970: 24; Thomsen 1963: 26; Hori 1968) Also shared is the lack of importance placed on doctrine, "one of the least important aspects of the new religions" (Norbeck 1970: 23). Ijun theology contains contradictions that justify the gender of the ritual leader, changed from female to male in 1989. (Reichl 1993: 311-330) Like Ijun, the new religions are both this-worldly in their efforts to help the living and other-worldly in their attention to the ancestors and promises of heaven. (Norbeck 1970: 21-24)

Ijun has taken elements from Shintō, Buddhism and Christianity, and looks like Shintō in its ritual and visual ethos. From Buddhism is the concept of transmigration. (See Takayasu 1991) From Christianity is the idea of heaven as place for ancestral spirits to reside for all eternity. However, Ijun also includes unique elements from the Ryukyuan tradition such as *nirai-kanai*.

Unlike many of the Japanese new religions there is no parent-child model for social relations in Ijun. Social interaction among members of the Hilo Ashagi tends to be informal and egalitarian.

As a direction for future research, a systematic comparison of the Hilo Ashagi with Ijun as practiced in Okinawa would illuminate the articulation of Okinawan culture in Hawaii, just as the study of the Ijun branch in Yokohama would illuminate the articulation of Okinawan culture in Japan. The extent to which Ijun as practiced in the Ryukyuan islands differs from the new religions of Japan is also

of interest to those who would understand the range of religious variability in complex society. More importantly, we can see the actual process of transplantation by which the religion is adapted to another culture and society when we examine the growth of Ijun in Hawaii.

REFERENCES

- Blacker, Carmen. 1975. *The Catalpa Bow: A Study of Shamanistic Practices in Japan*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.
- Ginoza, Shigō. 1988. *Zenyaku: Ryūkyū Sintō-ki* 全訳 琉球神道記. (Complete Translation: Notes on the way of the Kami in Ryūkyū). Tokyo: Tōyō Tosho Shuppan.
- Glacken, Clarence J. 1955. *The Great Loochoo: A Study of Okinawan Village Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hori, Ichirō. 1968. *Folk Religion in Japan: Continuity and Change*. Joseph M. Kitagawa and Alan L. Miller (eds.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press Midway Reprint.
- Inoue, Nobutaka. 1983. "Introduction." In: Keiichi Yanagawa (ed.), *Japanese Religions in California: A Report on Research within and without the Japanese American Community*. Tokyo: University of Tokyo, pp. 1-7.
- 1983b. "NSA and Non-Japanese Members in California." In: Keiichi Yanagawa (ed.), *Japanese Religions in California: A Report on Research within and without the Japanese American Community*. Tokyo: University of Tokyo, pp. 99-161.
- 1991. "Recent Trends in the Study of Japanese New Religions." In: Nobutaka Inoue (ed.), *New Religions: Contemporary Papers in Japanese Religion*, 2. translated by Norman Havens. Tokyo: Kokugakuin University, pp. 4-24.
- Ishii, Kenji. 1983. "Transformation of a Japanese New Religion in American Society: A Case Study of Gedatsu Church of America." In: Keiichi Yanagawa (ed.), *Japanese Religions in California: A Report on Research within and without the Japanese American Community*. Tokyo: University of Tokyo, pp. 163-195.
- Kerr, George H. 1958. *Okinawa: The History of an Island People*. Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company.
- Kōmoto, Mitsugi. 1991. "The Place of Ancestors in the New Religions: The Case of Reiyūkai-Derived Groups." In: Nobutaka Inoue (ed.), *New Religions: Contemporary Papers in Japanese Religion*, 2. Translated by Norman Havens. Tokyo: Kokugakuin University, pp. 93-124.
- Kreiner, Josef. 1968. "Some Problems of Folk-Religion in the Southwest Islands (Ryūkyū)." *Folk Religion and the Worldview in the Southwestern Pacific*. March, pp 101-118.

- Lebra, William P. 1966. *Okinawan Religion: Belief, Ritual, and Social Structure*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Maretzki, Thomas W., and Hatsumi Maretzki. 1966. *Taira: An Okinawan Village*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.
- McFarland, H. Neill. 1967. *The Rush Hour of the Gods: A Study of New Religious Movements in Japan*. New York: Macmillan.
- Nishiyama, Shigeru and Takeshi Fujii. 1991. "The Propagation and Spread of Tenshō Kōtai Jingūkyō within Japanese American Society on Hawaii Island." In: Nobutaka Inoue (ed.), *New Religions: Contemporary Papers in Japanese Religion*, 2. Translated by Norman Havens. Tokyo: Kokugakuin University, pp 125-161.
- Norbeck, Edward. 1970. *Religion and Society in Modern Japan: Continuity and Change*. Texas: Tourmaline Press.
- Okinawa Club of America. 1988. *History of the Okinawans in North America*. Translated by Ben Kobashigawa. Asian American Studies Center: UCLA and Okinawa Club of America.
- Reichl, Christopher A. 1988. Japanese Newcomers in Brazil: A Social Model of Migration. Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Iowa. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International.
- 1992. "Kokusai ijū no riron to gainen: Nippaku ijū no ningen kankei" 国際移住の理論と概念: 日伯移住の人間関係 (Theory and Concept in International Migration: Human Relations in Japanese Migration to Brazil). *Ijū Kenkyū*. Vol. 29. March, pp. 1-13.
- 1993. "The Okinawan New Religion Ijun: Innovation and Diversity in the Gender of the Ritual Specialist." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*. Vol. 20, No. 4: 311-330.
- 1999. "Ethnic Okinawan Interpretation of Seichō no Ie: The Lineal Descendant Ijun at Home and Overseas." *Japanese Society* 3: 120-138.
- Robinson, James C. 1969. *Okinawa: A People and their Gods*. Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company.
- Sakamaki, Shunzō. 1963. *Ryūkyū: A Bibliographical Guide to Okinawan Studies*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Sasaki Kōkan. 1984. "Spirit Possession as an Indigenous Religion in Japan and Okinawa." In: George A. De Vos and Takao Sofue (eds.), *Religion and the Family in East Asia*. Senri Ethnological Series No. 11. Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, pp. 75-84.
- Saso, Michael. 1990. "Okinawan Religion." In: Joyce N. Chinen and Ruth Adaniya (eds.), *Uchinaa: Okinawan History and Culture*. Honolulu: Okinawan Celebration Education Committee, pp. 18-22.
- Shimamura Takanori. 1992. "Ryūkyū shinwa no saisei: shinshūkyō Ijun no shinwa o megutte" 「琉球神話」の再生: 新宗教「龍泉」の神話をめぐって (Revival of

- Ryukyuan Theology: The Theology of the New Religion Ijun). *Amami Okinawa Minkan Bungei Kenkyū*. Vol. 15: 1-16.
- 1993. “Okinawa no shinshūkyō ni okeru kyōso hosa no raifu hisutorī to reinō: Ijun no jirei” 沖縄の新宗教における教祖補佐のライフ・ヒストリーと霊能—「龍泉」の事例 [Spirit Ability and Life History of the Founder’s Assistant in an Okinawan New Religion: The Ijun Example]. *Jinrui Bunka*. Vol. 8: 57-76.
- Takayasu Rokurō. 1991. *Kuon no kanata: Ryūkyū no seisbin sekai, Nirai-kanai o kataru* 久遠の彼方: 琉球の精神世界, ニライ - カナイを語る (Beyond Eternity: Nirai-Kanai and the Spiritual World of Ryūkyū). Ginowan: Ijun Hōjin.
- Takayasu Ryūsen 高安龍泉. 1993. *Shūkyō kara no Dakkyaku* 宗教からの脱却 (Escape from Religion). Aoyama: Shikō Shuppan.
- Thomsen, Harry. 1963. *The New Religions of Japan*. Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company.
- Watanabe, Masako and Midori Igeta. 1991. “Healing in the New Religions: Charisma and ‘Holy Water’.” In: Nobutaka Inoue (ed.), *New Religions: Contemporary Papers in Japanese Religion*, 2. translated by Norman Havens. Tokyo: Kokugakuin University, pp. 162-264.
- Yamada, Yutaka. 1983. “Healing, Conversion and Ancestral Spirits: Religious Experiences among the Japanese American Members of the Church of World Messianity in Los Angeles, California.” In: Keiichi Yanagawa (ed.), *Japanese Religions in California: A Report on Research within and without the Japanese American Community*. Tokyo: University of Tokyo, pp. 197-239.
- Yanagisako, Sylvia Junko. 1985. *Transforming the Past: Tradition and Kinship among Japanese Americans*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.