

SHIMAUTA AND SOCIETY IN JAPAN'S SOUTHWESTERN ISLANDS

A new phase in the survival of Amami's shimauta born from the Japanese governmental and social assimilation policy

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A confrontational approach to Amami's shimauta

Amami's shimauta and Okinawa's shimauta (literally 'island songs') are both popular in Japan's southwestern islands. This research takes shimauta as an example of the survival of traditional music culture under the common fate of both island groups as well as in the face of ever-increasing globalization. Two people who will feature heavily throughout this paper are Tsuboyama Yutaka, a traditional boat builder from the Amami Islands, and Hajime Chitose, a young female singer from Amami who has had success in the Japanese mainland pop music scene. Tsuboyama aims at restoring the recent Amami shimauta, which had become a type of performance art, to the former style, which was based on village life. Hajime hopes that young people in Amami will come to like Amami and its culture through her pop songs.

The music performed by both of these musicians seems to belong to different genres. Also the difference between the approaches taken by both in an attempt to bridge the gap between the constraints of life in Amami and the mainland is vast, expressing a not-reconciled generation gap. However, from the experience of the shimauta from Okinawa further to the south, the objective factors that have created this gulf between Tsuboyama and Hajime can be largely understood.

When comparisons are made between the shimauta of Amami and Okinawa, most research has focused on what directly controls the characteristics of the music such as the techniques and social settings. In contrast, this paper looks at the continuity and discontinuity of the intergenerational music tradition that is shimauta. This means that factors outside of musical characteristics such as the economy and society have to be deliberated. One of the largest of these factors in the survival of shimauta is the common fate that has been thrust upon the two regions by the Japanese state. After World War Two, both Amami and Okinawa were occupied for differing lengths of time by the United States, and when they were returned to Japanese sovereignty a heavy-handed assimilation policy was put into place. How far do the differences in this fate and other socio-economic conditions go in explaining the maintenance of the two styles of shimauta?

Amami's shimauta in the spotlight - a sense of crisis among traditional musicians

The amount of traditional culture that has survived in the islands of Japan is comparatively large. This is one reason why island communities are sometimes thought to have been left behind by the socio-economic development that the Japanese mainland has experienced. Yet the opposite was often true in reality. It was not unusual for traditional island culture to change or decline considerably soon after these external policies were introduced. The same can be said of Amami's shimauta after the return to Japanese sovereignty. Before the war and during the US occupation, the shimauta were sung regularly in many different settings, however by the 1980s they were only being kept alive by a handful of devotees, a rate of decline much faster than could be seen in the folk music tradition of the Japanese mainland.

However, in recent years Amami's shimauta have been getting a lot of publicity not only in the Amami Islands but throughout the whole country. The catalyst for this was a smash hit by the pop musician Hajime Chitose in 2002. Following that, there has been a movement of pop musicians with their roots in Amami's shimauta wanting to crossover into the world of pop

music. However, Tsuboyama Yutaka, a representative traditional shimauta utasha, or singer, is skeptical of this trend.

At the local level, traditional shimauta have to be sung in shimaguchi, the local village dialects, to be able to convey their message faithfully. It is the way the music brings out the beauty of the dialect that makes shimauta so evocative. However, the young crossover musicians do not use all of the shimauta techniques in their music. Some may even say that crossing over into mainstream pop music with its different basis will mean that they will not be able to return to true shimauta (Yanagawa, 2006: 41). Even though he pointed out such problems, Tsuboyama did actually praise Hajime's shimauta technique (Nakai, 2002: 171-172). Since her debut, other young shimauta musicians have followed her onto the pop music scene. However, given the circumstances, and expanding on what Tsuboyama has said, the future survival of Amami shimauta is bleak.

The Amami Islands are a chain of 8 inhabited islands with a population of about 120,000. They are experiencing both depopulation and an ageing of society. A little further to the south, the Okinawan Islands have a population of 1,300,000, but in contrast they are experiencing a rise in population. Both groups of islands have suffered hardships in their history. Until the late 19th Century they were ruled by Satsuma, modern-day Kagoshima Prefecture. Okinawa also saw the only battles on Japanese soil between the Allied Forces and the Japanese Imperial Army towards the end of World War Two. After the war both areas were separated from the Japanese mainland and brought under American control. This lasted for 8 years in the Amami Islands and 28 in Okinawa. Even today Okinawa is still home to several large American military bases. Despite the fact that the Amami Islands were returned to Japan long before Okinawa, for mainland Japanese shimauta conjures up images of Okinawa. The recent heightened interest on the mainland in Amami's shimauta has turned the conventional wisdom of mainstream music scene upside down; pretending to be indifferent toward this new trend, Tsuboyama has been watching from the sidelines, skeptical that traditional shimauta will be usurped.

Hit singer Hajime Chitose has displayed an extraordinary talent for Amami's shimauta. She started training as a child and was the youngest ever winner at age 17 of an Amami folk song contest singing a shimauta. Even today, she uses many shimauta influences in her pop music; one of them being her use of the falsetto. Having said that, according to Takashima (2002: 137), her 'primitively sensual' voice alone is enough to give the listener the feeling of shimauta. Furthermore, many older people in Amami who are used to listening to shimauta have said that Hajime's music contains the soul of the shimauta. Initially Hajime released a string of pop records with Amami-based content, such as *Wadatsumi-no-ki*, *Mihachigatsu*, *Kimi wo omofu*, and *Hainumikaze*. More recently, the subject of her songs has tended to stray away from Amami themes, which Tsuboyama sees as cause for concern.

On the face of it, Tsuboyama and Hajime are in two different music fields. It could even be said that this apparent difference is a choice based on the values of not only the individual but also their generation. At the same time though, from the point of view that they are contributing to the survival of Amami's shimauta, it is clear that they both have the similar understanding of Amami society. The Amami Islands retain many restrictions regarding the conditions for the survival of shimauta. This rigid framework in Amami can be easily understood when compared to the shimauta of Okinawa further to the south.

Two shimauta, one common fate

The more traditional a society is, the more closely music is linked with all of its different ceremonies and celebrations. Even though the origin of the musical technique is the same, over the course of time there has been variation in the different areas. So with this similar development one would expect there to have been a similar result caused by the implementation of the same assimilation policy. More specifically, has the series of post-war policies had a similar effect on the survival of the two regions' shimauta? In other words, the survival of the two shimautas gives us the rare chance to see whether outside common policies on different island regions have the same result or not.

While the shimauta of Amami and Okinawa have the same roots, in recent years, not only their musical characteristics but also the way they are perceived by their respective communities has begun to differ vastly. After World War Two, both types of shimauta suffered the same common fate. That was the separation from the rest of the Japanese mainland when the islands were under direct United States rule after the war and then the rapid assimilation policy that was introduced by the Japanese government after they were returned to Japanese sovereignty.

However, there is one important difference with Okinawa. It is still home to several large American military bases. This big United States presence on Okinawa has led to a wide variety of serious problems, not least in business and law and order. At the same time, in the music world, there has been more opportunity for contact with the outside world, especially with music from the United States. Meanwhile, the assimilation policy course that was followed in place after the return to Japanese sovereignty was the same as that for the Amami Islands. People were more interested in the large sums of Japanese government money pouring into the region to improve infrastructure. From the point of view of the shimauta, there were two large impacting factors: the banning of the use of the local dialects, and the intensive introduction of western style music into the school curriculum.

What is interesting however, is that despite the fact that both the Amami Islands and Okinawa underwent the same common fate, the effect on shimauta has been vastly different. What caused this difference was the original social composition that was necessary for the music, as well as the strength of the socio-economic change generated by that common fate. In order to illustrate this further, we need to look at the two shimauta before the separation from Japan.

All of the shimauta have the same roots. Nonetheless, over the years the way in which they have become to be expressed and the way in which they are perceived by their communities has diversified greatly. Tsuboyama stresses the fact that compared with Okinawa's shimauta, which were composed as part of court life, Amami's tell about emotional events in everyday village life.

The shimauta from Amami and Okinawa differ so much that for the untrained ear it is hard to imagine that they have the same roots. For example, Amami's shamisen has thin strings that produce a higher sound. In Okinawa the strings are struck in a downward motion only, yet in Amami players also use an upward motion to achieve a softer tone. The plectrum is made from bullhorn in Okinawa and a flat piece of bamboo in Amami. In the performance of the songs too, Okinawa's shimauta tend to avoid having a male voice sing falsetto, which is a common feature in Amami.

Historically, the two shimauta have also differed greatly on their role in society. In Okinawa the shamisen was originally a court instrument, and only in the last 100 years or so has it begun to be played by the general public. In the Amami Islands shamisen could only be bought by the wealthy, so for a long time many people would use easier to come by alternatives in order to be able to accompany the shimauta.

In Okinawa the teaching of shimauta was carried out in schools by people who sang and played for a profession. These specialists or iemoto, would receive money for teaching the so-called 'correct' way to sing and play from prepared musical scores. This is still the case in Okinawa today. Over time each of these schools developed their own individual styles. In Amami on the other hand, there were no professional singers or players. All of them worked in other jobs, but were invited to perform at special events. In addition, it was not until recently that Amami's shimauta were transcribed to musical scores. There are several different styles to the Amami version, and unlike in Okinawa these are named after the community where they originated. This partly reflects the enjoyment that can be found in the Amami shimauta. The dialects in every village differ slightly and this has produced differences in the shimauta. Also, in Amami they do not divide into singers and audience, rather everyone sings and improvises together further developing the songs (Unattributed, 2003). With these differing characteristics, it is necessary to look at how the shimauta were affected by that common fate.

If we simplify what Tsuboyama's advocacy for the survival of shimauta in Amami means, there needs to be a return to the pre-war and immediate post-war shimauta. This would include not only the musical techniques, but also increasing the opportunities for people to get together and sing and improvise. In fact, in Amami today, there is some interest in trying to return lifestyles to a more traditional level, but just how far this can be achieved is debatable. To think about this more, we need to look at the serious impact of that common fate on the everyday and cultural lives of the islanders.

Both Amami and Okinawa were under US rule for differing lengths of time. This caused a long period of relative poverty as well as other social difficulties, however for the survival of the shimauta it was not such a bad thing. This is because the local people only knew their traditional way of life, which meant a life full of singing shimauta. However, after being ruled by a foreign power before being returned to Japanese sovereignty, the island people were very positive towards the Japanese government's assimilation policy due to dreams of becoming a modern society.

It is worth mentioning the cultural environment of Okinawa before its 1972 reversion to Japanese rule. During US rule there were still professional shimauta singers in Okinawa, because for some parts of its complex society the traditional lifestyle continued. However, there was little to connect it to the musical culture of the Japanese mainland. What is more, on a day to day basis the young Okinawans became culturally centered around the vast American bases, giving them much greater exposure than those on the mainland to American music. It is from those young people that one revolution current in shimauta was born. This stronger connection to the international music scene gave these revolutionary Okinawa shimauta musicians a smooth start in collaborations on the international level, more than was happening with mainstream Japanese pop music. Of course the professional shimauta schools are still the main embodiment of the genre, but exploration of many different possibilities has over a long period of time gained a stable foundation through continual international contact.

In contrast Amami's shimauta went into decline after the islands returned to Japanese power, adopted the assimilation policy and underwent modernization both economically and socially. This decline connects directly to the various official policies on one hand, as well as the extensive campaign to adopt a mainland lifestyle on the other. Examples include the banning of dialect use in formal meetings and the introduction and intensive spread of western music in and outside the education system. Directly before and after the reversion to Japanese rule the idea of catching up quickly with all aspects of mainland life had infiltrated Amami society deeply through large and enthusiastic social campaigns, such as the Kakusa Zesei campaign (aimed at catching up with the mainland) and the Shinseikatsu Undo movement (aimed at introducing a new mainland lifestyle into the islands). These movements regarded Amami's shimauta as one aspect of traditional culture and customs that people should throw out (Yamashita, 1989: 58). This was accepted by the majority of Amami people because almost all high school graduates went to the mainland to find work. (Yamashita, 1980: 68-70.)

Furthermore, Amami's shimauta with their tales of everyday life had been very much intertwined with the collective lifestyles and the economies of their villages which all changed very rapidly after the return to Japanese power.

The previous lifestyle based on a collective self-sufficient system producing their daily necessities mainly within a village soon shifted to people purchasing the necessary goods in cash. As people left the villages in pursuit of money-paying jobs, the family became the centre of the consumer's life and no longer the village (that is, the communal lifestyles of the people in the villages began to visibly disappear). With them disappeared the opportunities for people to get together and sing shimauta. Before long, shimauta only came to be performed by singers before audiences. However, unlike Okinawa with its professional school system and large tourist industry, shimauta musicians were not able to make a livelihood out of performing the music professionally in the Amami Islands.

Incidentally, the majority of Amami Islanders maintained their families within small village communities with little economic potential. With the modernization of their economy, many people found themselves worse off than before and left the region in vast numbers to work in the booming economy of the Japanese mainland. For young people, Amami's job market has given few opportunities for stable employment, so much so that 90% of school leavers have to find jobs on the mainland. As a result, the islands' population dropped from 200,000 (1955) to 120,000 (2005). In contrast, the number of Amami Islanders (including second and third generation) in Japan's big cities is estimated to be between 400,000 and 500,000 today. Many of them are concentrated often in cities which have ferry routes to Amami (such as Tokyo, the Osaka area and Kagoshima, and so on).

However, in their quest for affluence, many of the Amami Islanders found themselves facing discrimination in the big cities. Being treated like a minority in their new homes only served to strengthen their Amami identity. In so doing, they began to rely on their shimauta as a way to remind them of Amami. This led to the establishment of schools to teach Amami's shimauta on the mainland, which taught the former shimauta genuinely. Today these schools, in their effort to maintain the former music style for those who had left the islands, are now generally the same as other folk music associations in Japan. This is how the Amami shimauta on the mainland began to lose their characteristic tales of everyday life.

Amami's shimauta today and different approaches toward their survival

A core problem for policy concerning traditional island culture is, as with the shimauta, how to maintain musical activity in the face of the attrition caused by the modernisation of both society and the economy. However, the survival of traditional music is not an important policy subject, despite the tendency for the attrition of island cultures, if two conditions for an active market in the island societies can be met: stable groups of musicians who want a career in music, and a music market that can support them economically - both of which are the case in Okinawa. However, in Amami, the music scene is extremely small and a career for anyone wanting to become a professional utasha is in effect out of the question. This is the economic problem concerning the survival of Amami's shimauta.

Next the reasoning behind trying to hand down pre-war style shimauta to the next generation, as Tsuboyama is, can be called into question. The preservation of traditional music adhering to historically original musical expression usually aims to bring forth nostalgia for a Japan of times gone by. Yet as Tsuboyama points out, the soul of Amami's shimauta is their musical ability to represent the emotions of everyday village life. From this two questions arise: firstly, people's lives have changed completely, so how should that be expressed in shimauta?; and secondly, is it right to regard the changes that can be seen in today's shimauta as negative? These two questions are complexly related, but here we will first look at the changes in shimauta briefly.

From their origins as tales of everyday life, Amami's shimauta have now become a refined art form that is performed before an audience. The catalyst for this was the start of a shimauta song competition that began in 1975 as a means to promote the genre. The competition is still being held today, and has been regarded as a qualifying round for the national Japanese folk song competition, which has exposed Amami's shimauta to a nationwide audience. In fact three shimauta singers won the national contest between 1979 and 1990, giving the islanders a renewed sense of pride in their music.

Since Hajime Chitose's massive hits, the number of people who have started to learn shimauta has mushroomed, however there was already even an increase in the 1990s. At the same time, as the shimauta have become a performing art, a number of changes has become evident: the tempo of the songs has slowed; the pitch is higher and the plaintive falsetto has become more popular; children sing the melody not understanding the island dialect the songs are sung in; and the types of songs being taught are those which can show-off the skill of the performer (Nishimoto, 2004: 27). With this, many older traditional singers have a negative view of the shimauta schools, the styles they promote and those who make a living off teaching in them. However, without a firm root in the music market, the survival of shimauta would not be economically viable.

In addition to the changes in lifestyle, thought needs to be put into what direction music is to take if it is to be capable of representing everyday life. Tsuboyama, who himself attempted to make a crossover from shimauta early on in his career, has been working on this from two perspectives. Firstly, he has been trying to increase the opportunities for people to get together and sing. Secondly, he has been trying to adapt the shimauta to fit today's moods. What he arrived at is contemporary shimauta, in the form of the song *Waidobushi*. This modernised melody has already become popular and can be heard at events throughout Amami.

Although the song has found an audience among the older generations, for young people it remained old-fashioned - that was until a pop songwriter on the mainland arranged the melody, which subsequently became immensely popular with young people and later achieved a huge hit on the islands' music scene among young people (Unattributed, 2003: 22). What can be noted here is that for the survival of shimauta in Amami, you first need to establish emotional appeal amongst the young local people. This is very different to the situation in Okinawa, where the question of survival is not serious and the different music genres run into a very congested music market since there were always singers open to the Japanese mainland and even the outside world; on the other hand the traditional iemoto teachers are able to maintain their singing style.

For a music style to survive to the next generation, it needs them at first to have interest and respect for the established music of the current generation. However, when the fabric of life has completely changed, it can be very difficult for the younger generation to fully relate to the lifestyles and sensibilities of the older generation. What is more, in the Amami Islands, for most young people it goes without saying that when leave high school they will have to leave the islands to find work. Today's lifestyle means the younger generation who should be in charge of the maintenance of their culture, find themselves having to learn to adapt to life on the mainland even during their school education so that they can avoid discrimination.¹

Faced with this, the approaches taken by Tsuboyama and Hajime for the survival of shimauta are poles apart. Tsuboyama bases himself in the Amami Islands, making catchy contemporary shimauta and promoting the use of shimauta in schools. Hajime on the other hand along with the musician Rikki (Nakano Rikki) before her has taken a different path in pop music. To this day Rikki continues to promote the charms of Amami's shimauta in the pop world (Unattributed, 2003: 20).

In Hajime's case, her stance has been to call for the young islanders who have little to do with shimauta to care more about the microcosm that is Amami. That is where she decided to use pop music as the most effective medium to reach the younger audience. On the cover of one of her albums aimed primarily for the younger Amami market, she writes that she hopes young people will wake up to the appeal of real shimauta. In doing that, she begged the consent of the older generation of expert shimauta singers for her pop-orientated shimauta at the same time (Motoyama, 2002: 126-127).

In fact, Hajime's pop hits have lead to a remarkable increase in the number of people in the islands as well as islanders on the mainland who have started to learn shimauta. These include not only young people, the next generation of Hajimes, but also many middle-aged people too, who have become able not only to express their Amami identity through shimauta and strengthen their roots with the nuances and subtleties of the island dialects, but who also have a conscious respect for the songs and in that respect are able to act as the intermediaries between the utasha of before and the next generation.

How do you go about capturing the hearts of the young Amami islanders who have grown up to believe that they must have the same lifestyles as those on the Japanese mainland? Those who are involved in trying to maintain Amami's shimauta in the islands have shed light on differences of approaches dealing with this issue. The music from these small islands reflects the characteristics of the social space, and its survival cannot get away from limitations of that space. Despite these strict limitations, the more music can plentifully ferment emotional sensibility into musical expression, the more power it has to appeal to a wider audience

beyond the islands. How can this potential music from these small islands establish a line of defense for its own survival against the cultural offensive of the national or even international music scene? This is where shimauta comes up against a music industry which is so often regarded as a typical example of commercialism.

Some of Okinawa's utasha, who often collaborate with musicians from other countries, are critical of commercial efforts to bring Okinawa's shimauta closer to pop music. Their emphasis that fusions between Okinawan music and western music are on an equal footing are more interesting (Hirayasu, 2002: 78-80). This gives us a clue to understanding the distinctive charm of Hajime's pop music. Hajime Chitose is not a songwriter herself, but the singer of a group which includes songwriters and lyricists. None of the other members of the group are from Amami, however they all have great respect for the shimauta and find pleasure in fusing the yearning inspiration found in shimauta with modern pop music.²

For the few years she was working on the mainland after leaving high school, Hajime kept her shimauta to herself. She did not want to have to make compromises for people who cannot feel a deep affection for the sights and sounds of the Amami Islands. She was, in fact, waiting until she found musicians who would embrace her musical self-expression based on the spirit of the shimauta. When eventually she found those musicians and started to sing pop music, she was able to develop a new style incorporating shimauta (Motoyama, 2002: 124). Hajime was extremely lucky to be able to collaborate with open-minded musicians from a progressive subculture from her outset in the world of pop.

Looking at this from the Amami Islands where the fabric of life had changed so radically, this could be called kind of experiment into the innovative regeneration of shimauta. What is more, this impact goes far beyond innovation in the shimauta genre in a strict sense of the word. Hajime's nationwide smash hit shimauta reminds the young Amami islanders, who have become linguistically and musically separated from their own traditional culture, of the appeal of the genre. If this trend is to persist, then it will become one sure route for the survival of shimauta in the future, despite the small and economically stagnant society in Amami.

If we look at what has been mentioned above in broader terms, what is needed for successful collaborations between Amami's shimauta and music from outside? The collaboration of Okinawa's shimauta and guitars offers a good example. American guitarist Bob Brozman has released two CDs of collaborations with an Okinawa utasha. His guitar considerably extends the range of shimauta on the albums. According to him, three characteristics are necessary to be creative in collaboration with island music: first, you have to be a master in traditional music; secondly, you have to be completely open and adventurous and harbour no prejudices about one genre of music being better than another; and finally you do not need a big ego but rather possess a positive child-like view of the world (Brozman, 2002: 86). These characteristics should be common to all musicians who want to collaborate on a broader scale including the shimauta's utasha. It was these characteristics that united Hajime and her group in their quest for a new style of pop music.

The significance of the approach chosen by young musicians from Amami is that they have succeeded, albeit partially, in incorporating highly-sophisticated Amami music into mainland music culture. This goes in completely the opposite direction to that taken by people from Amami who have congregated in large cities on the mainland and are maintaining the former genuine shimauta before leaving Amami. Hajime is also clearing a new path for the survival of shimauta dependent on the microcosm of Amami by collaborating with mainland musicians.

Delayed policy response and the recreation of village life

We can say that as creative utasha, both Tsuboyama and Hajime fulfill Brozman's criteria. They both share a deep passion for their homeland and their shimauta. Nonetheless their focus and music styles differ. Tsuboyama has based himself in the island society, whereas Hajime is trying to wake young islanders up to the appeal of Amami's microcosm from the Japanese mainland. This paper has looked for clues as to why these two musicians have taken different paths through a comparison with Okinawa's shimauta.

Okinawa has a much larger population and a string of cities with differing cultural markets, is geopolitically important and is a tourist centre; all of these factors have enabled Okinawa to produce a varied music market of professional musicians and local creativity. In contrast, the Amami Islands is lacking on all three counts. The Japanese government's assimilation policy lasted much longer and went much further than in Okinawa. As a result, Amami's shimauta suffered the loss of its inspiration, village life, and furthermore (due to a lack of economic power) a viable music scene with professional utasha was unable to start up. These are the practical constraints of the Amami Islands.

As representatives of the both the older and younger generations of islanders, Tsuboyama and Hajime have been searching for a way to help the shimauta survive within these limitations. From their musical careers, we can see the two have taken a confrontational approach in their aim to proliferate shimauta. However, they both have same desire that Amami's shimauta should be preserved as a representative of Amami culture. In the promo for the CD she released on Amami, Hajime explains her role as mediator between genuine shimauta and young people who had never heard them before. It is this role which has Tsuboyama concerned, since he does not regard her fully as a practitioner of genuine shimauta. Looking in from the outside, one would say that for the shimauta to survive, two conditions need to be met: firstly, a viable music market needs to be established in the private sector; and secondly, the culture of village life with its story telling needs to be resurrected.

The establishment of a varied music scene in the islands has already seen some success. About 10 years ago, a project began to invite pop musicians from the mainland to perform in the Amami Islands. In recent years, this has expanded to include shimauta and pop-oriented shimauta and is becoming popular among the young islanders. However, the market among young people is still small since, as has been previously mentioned, most high school graduates leave Amami. The situation at present in the Amami Islands is that a music market for shimauta is barely viable. As a result, the decisive factor in establishing that market will be whether the number of people interested in shimauta from outside the islands can be increased or not.

Recreating today small communities of village life that is at odds with the rapid globalisation of big cities is a bold yet appealing idea. In comparison with Okinawa, Amami has retained more of its traditional farming environment, communication-oriented village lifestyle and traditional events. It is a promising idea that Amami people combine farming events with experiencing the attraction of Amami's shimauta as tales of everyday life. In contrast to Okinawa, in Amami (with its strong rural traits), the original village lifestyles have been maintained through traditional events and so on. However, in these rapidly ageing communities, it is difficult for people to reach for that ideal unaided.

This is where public-sector support in creating a musical environment befitting Amami would be effective. At the same time, this differentiation with the resort development of neighbouring Okinawa would also be good for tourism. What is needed now from the public sector, after having been devoted to the assimilation policy for so long, is the ability to develop regional policy on a high creative level that takes into consideration the identity of the islands.

Endnotes

¹ A small percentage will return to the Amami Islands in their middle ages, however

² One of the songwriters had a hit in Amami with an adventurous arrangement of Tsuboyama's *Waidobushi*.

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