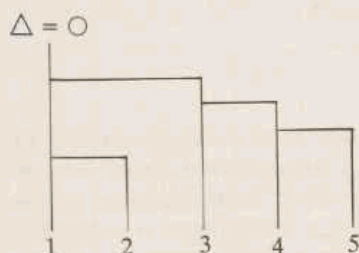


Map 1: Ryukyu Island

before marriage with the *ie* which he joins, and even a direct adoptee is often a total stranger although sometimes an uncle's younger son is transferred from one *ie* to another if one is available. To make this point clear see the following diagram

Diagram 1: Founding couple (*gwansu*)

All the persons in segment 5 will worship the graves of segments 5, 4, 3 and 1. The persons in segment 3 will only worship in segments 3 and 1. This would be the system among the noble Okinawans. In Japan each segment would be separate, so each segment would only worship the *ie* line of its own number. Only 1 would be responsible for worshipping the founding couple. But among the commoner Okinawan group since all would be buried in the common grave, made by the founding couple, their descendants would all be together in the *munchū-baka* and worship segments 1 to 5. Among the noble Okinawans, if a line above 1 were to be terminated, then the son of a lower line, even if he were the only successor, might have to terminate his section and transfer, although the ideal would be of course to have two sons.

Thus even when Japanese terms are used to describe the house or the *honke* there are fundamental differences in structure between mainland Japan and Okinawa. Moreover, in the noble Okinawan system there is a restriction for the

most part on having two brothers (*choo:rei-kasabai*) or two cousins (*ichiku-kasabai*) occupying the same level on the domestic altar. If a ceremony is undertaken which commemorates the spirits of brothers or cousins at the same ceremony it is believed that a calamity such as *ju-jiri* (ending of the line) will happen. This problem is one that clearly can never trouble a Japanese because the division of the descent line takes place at the marriage of the second sibling when he founds a new *ie* never to return to his father's family. But in the noble Okinawan system the patrilineal lines continue to be associated with the founding ancestor.

So far I have dealt with these two systems as though they are clearly distinguishable. I have described the Japanese system as unilineal descent and an *ie*-oriented kinship system, and the noble Okinawan as a patrilineal descent system from a common ancestor. The commoner system will be shown as a cognatic household oriented system with a bilateral kinship base. But before discussing this third system I should make it clear that the Okinawans use the term *munchū* in practice to apply to any group larger than the domestic unit. Nakane Chie has compared the *munchū* on Amami-Oshima (the northernmost island) to the New Zealand Maori *hapu* which is an extremely flexible organization, membership of which is often determined by the person himself or herself choosing between different alternative lines (ambilinearity). Moreover, sometimes a woman after marriage still remains with the *munchū* of her brother and in some cases is even buried within her brother's traditional corporate grave after marriage. There is a certain sense in Sakeshima (southern Ryukyus) in that the sister is regarded as the domestic priestess of her brother's family, and brother/sister solidarity (*bigiri-bunari*) is certainly much stronger in many islands than emphasis on lineal descent.

I think that it is clear that there is a basic incompatibility between these three different forms of kinship organisation.

Japanese System	A	Single unilineal descent
		Exclusion of non-members on marriage from <i>ie</i>
Noble <i>munchū</i> system	B	Common patrilineal descent from founding ancestor
		General responsibility for senior <i>bara</i> , including worship
Commoner <i>uji</i> system	C	Emphasis on household and bilaterality