

Kijimun's Monologue -No.1-

Topic: *Hamaui*

Keywords: *Hamaui*, annual festival, Okinawan narrative

A column, "Kijimun's Monologue" starts from this month. We, library staff will introduce some recommended books about Okinawan representative annual events depending on the seasons every month. The first topic is "*Hamaui*."

On March 3rd of the lunar calendar, an event called "*Hamaui*" is held in every region of Okinawa. This event is to pray for women's good health. It is believed that stepping on a sandy beach and bathing the feet in a sea will expel impurities of women. There are many people who dig for clams with their family on that day. I remember I went to clamming and taking lunch on a beach with my grandmother and my mother when I was a child. In connection with this custom, an interesting legend was passed down.

Legend of *Akamata* (=Ryukyu odd-tooth snake)

Long, long ago, there was a handsome man who called on a beautiful girl every night. In fact, this man was the incarnation of an *Akamata*. The girl conceived a child of *Akamata* without knowing. To regain her virtue, she needed to purify her body bathing in the sea. As she did it on March 3rd, her body returned to the way it was before.

(Uezu Hitoshi, *Okinawa no Matsuri to Nenchūghōji – Okinawa Minzokushi III* extracted from p17)

Some miscellaneous about *Hamaui*

Hamaui was not only held on March 3rd. There is a description about *Hamaui* in "Kashirayaku Oosetsukerare sourou irai Nikki" from Miyara Douch/Dunch collection.

It explains that there was a ruddy kingfisher often flying into *Kuramoto* (a government office), officers went down to a beach for *Hamaui*. At that time, people believed it was a bad omen that a bird flew into a house. Therefore, they thought it was necessary to expel impurities by holding *Hamaui*.

Besides this episode, praying for the good health of the family, praying for a safe voyage and a rich haul, and holding a memorial service for the dead in the sea are seen throughout Okinawa today.

For Okinawan people, *Hamaui* is an event to expel impurities, to pray, and to hold a memorial service. And it probably reflects how they think about the sea and beaches.