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“‘Invented Tradition,’ Legend and History: Yaeyama Minsaa, Tiisaaji and the Spiritual Power of Women”

「「作られた伝統」、伝承、歴史：八重山ミンサー、ティサージ、とをなり神のこと」

According to a legend attached to a sash from the Yaeyama islands of Okinawa, for the past 300 years every woman on one of the islands wove such a sash for her love, patterning it with clusters of five (*itsu*) and four (*yo*) white rectangles read as a rebus, “*Itsu yo made mo*” (Yours forever more). Now recognized as an invented tradition created in the mid-1960s, the legend echoes associations with another cloth object, a scarf, gifted by a woman to a man.

The scarf is closely tied to a narrative once common throughout the Ryūkyū: the gift of a scarf by the weaver to a man in her care as a protective talisman or a love token. Pre-war ethnographic writings associated this with beliefs in the spiritual power of women. In Ryūkyū poetry, the scarf appears frequently as a love token. Gifts of cloth that bestow power and spiritual protection on the recipient are found far beyond the Ryūkyū, in East, South, and Southeast Asia, linking the Ryūkyū scarf and Yaeyama sash, and pointing to the strategic location and history of the Ryūkyū Islands as a maritime crossroads for human migration, culture, and trade.

I will focus on sources in Ryūkyū and Japanese ethnographic writings and in literature connecting the invented tradition of the sash to the scarf; on experiences and memories of living weavers, and to the broader notion of the gift of cloth from a woman as a love token; and, more significantly, as a protective talisman.