

LOCATING *SHIMA* IN ISLAND DRUMMING

Amami Ōshima and its Archipelagic Drum Groups

HENRY JOHNSON

University of Otago <henry.johnson@otago.ac.nz>

SUEO KUWAHARA

Kagoshima University <kuwahara@leh.kagoshima-u.ac.jp>

Abstract

Amami Ōshima to the southwest of Japan is an island between cultures. Geographically situated between Okinawa prefecture to the southwest and the much larger island of Kyūshū to the northeast, Amami Ōshima is the largest of a chain of islands known as Amami-guntō (the Amami archipelago) within Kagoshima prefecture and the Nansei archipelago. In the contemporary sphere of global cultural flows, some new traditions of group drumming have emerged on Amami Ōshima that have recognised roots either in Okinawa, in mainland Japan or in Amami Ōshima itself. This article focuses on these new traditions of ensemble drum performance and has the aim of showing not only where, how and why such groups have been established but also how a notion of community is constructed within these groups on several different levels of island and archipelagic identity. In doing this, the discussion draws on the notion of *shima*, meaning both 'island' and 'community', as a way of discussing select drum groups on the island as case studies for cultural analysis. As well as outlining the background of the drum groups, the article focuses on exploring the notion of *shima* from different perspectives that cover local, regional and national cultural flows. The article argues that the unique geographic terrain of the island is inextricably linked to a specific notion of islandness, and that this relates to further spheres of belonging in an islandscape of drum groups, villages, islands and archipelagos.

Keywords:

Amami Ōshima, community, drum groups, Japan, *shima*

Introduction

Amami Ōshima (Amami Large Island) is located to the southwest of Japan at 28°20' N and 129°26' E (Figures 1-2).¹ After Okinawa-hontō (Okinawa island), it is the next largest island in the Nansei-shotō (Southwest archipelago). Amami Ōshima has various local performance traditions that include drumming, either solo or ensemble, and has historically been influenced by islands to the south as part of Ryūkyūan culture

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(especially from Okinawa island), and from the north by mainland Japan (ie the main Japanese islands of Honshū, Hokkaidō, Kyūshū and Shikoku).

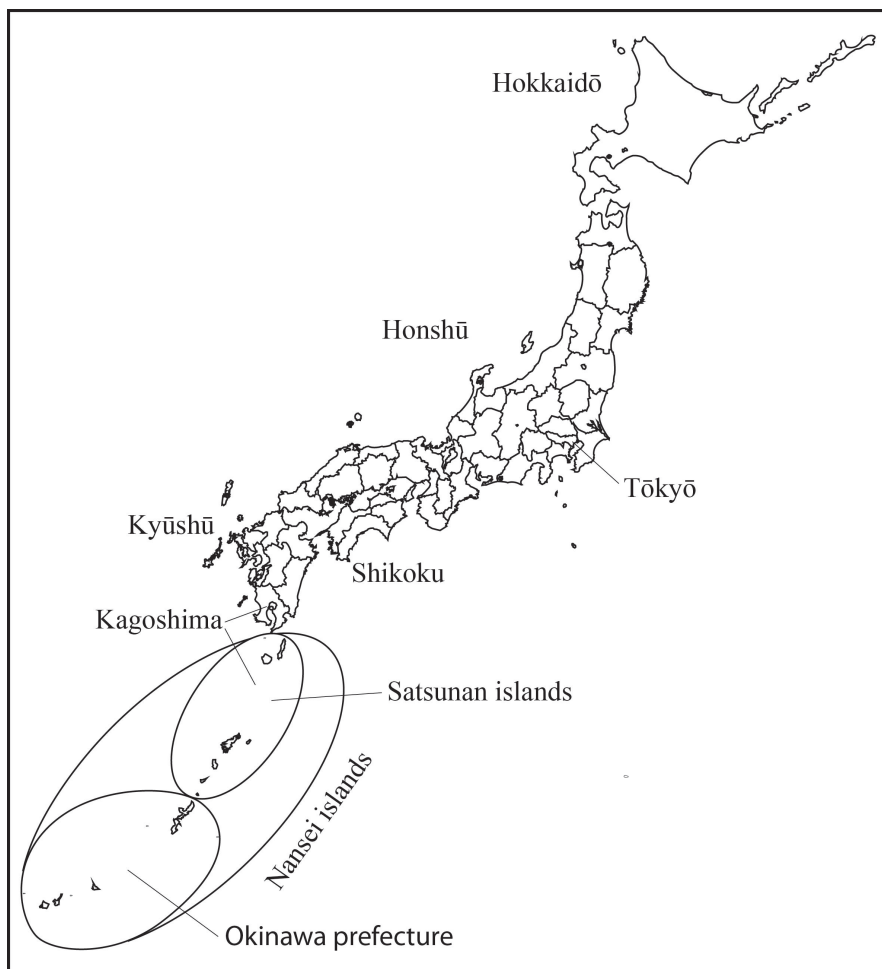


Figure 1 - Map of Japan showing location of Nansei Islands
(Derived from: www.kabipan.com/geography/whitemap/index.html)

Amami Ōshima is geographically situated more or less between Okinawa island to the southwest and the much larger island of Kyūshū to the northeast.² The distance between Naha, the capital of Okinawa, and Naze (formerly Naze city), the largest urban centre on Amami Ōshima, is about 298 km. The island is about 374 km south of Kagoshima city (towards the south of Kyūshū). More broadly, the island is part of the Satsunan-shotō (Satsunan archipelago) within Kagoshima prefecture in and to the south of Kyūshū. The island is also a part of the Nansei-shotō (Southwest archipelago), which is a chain of about 90 small islands that runs between Japan's third largest island, Kyūshū, and the Asian mainland via Taiwan, and a part of the national Japanese archipelago (Nihon-rettō) of 6,852 islands (including territorial claims), of which over 90% are unpopulated (Nihon no Shima e Ikō, 2012).³ Amami Ōshima is the largest island within a chain of islands known as Amami-guntō (Amami archipelago).

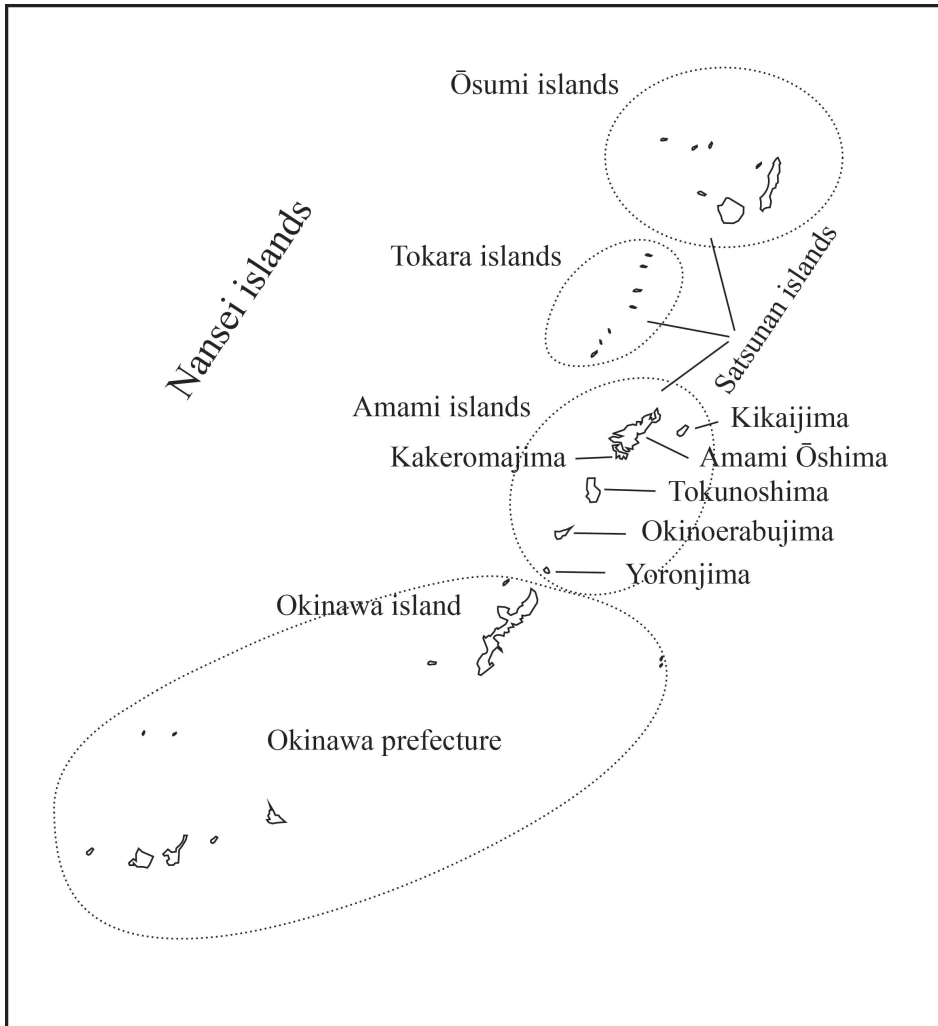


Figure 2 - Map of Nansei islands.
(Derived from: www.kabipan.com/geography/whitemap/index.html)

Amami Ōshima is almost triangular in shape (Figure 3). It is about 60 km long, and at its widest point to the south is about 29 km wide. Progressing northwards its width gradually diminishes to about 9.5 km. The island is about 712 km² but has an extended coastline of about 461 km, which is a result of numerous natural harbours and inlets. As of 2010, the island had a population of 64,049 (Table 1) and, over the past 55 years, the population has reduced by about 37% as a result of migration (usually to the Japanese mainland). Even though the island is relatively large in terms of its landmass in comparison to some of its smaller island neighbours, it has numerous rugged mountains that often reach the coastline, making much of the land extremely difficult for settlement, cultivation and land travel.

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Population	
Year	Amami Ōshima*
1955	103,907
1965	94,348
1975	85,171
1980	85,600
1985	84,799
1990	79,302
1995	75,832
2000	73,896
2005	70,462
2010	65,770 (64,049)

Table 1 Population Amami Ōshima [* Including the nearby small islands of Kakeromajima, Ukejima and Yorojima, which are part of Setouchi-chō (Setouchi town). The figure in parenthesis shows only the island of Amami Ōshima (Kagoshima-ken Ōshima Shichō, 2012: 51)]

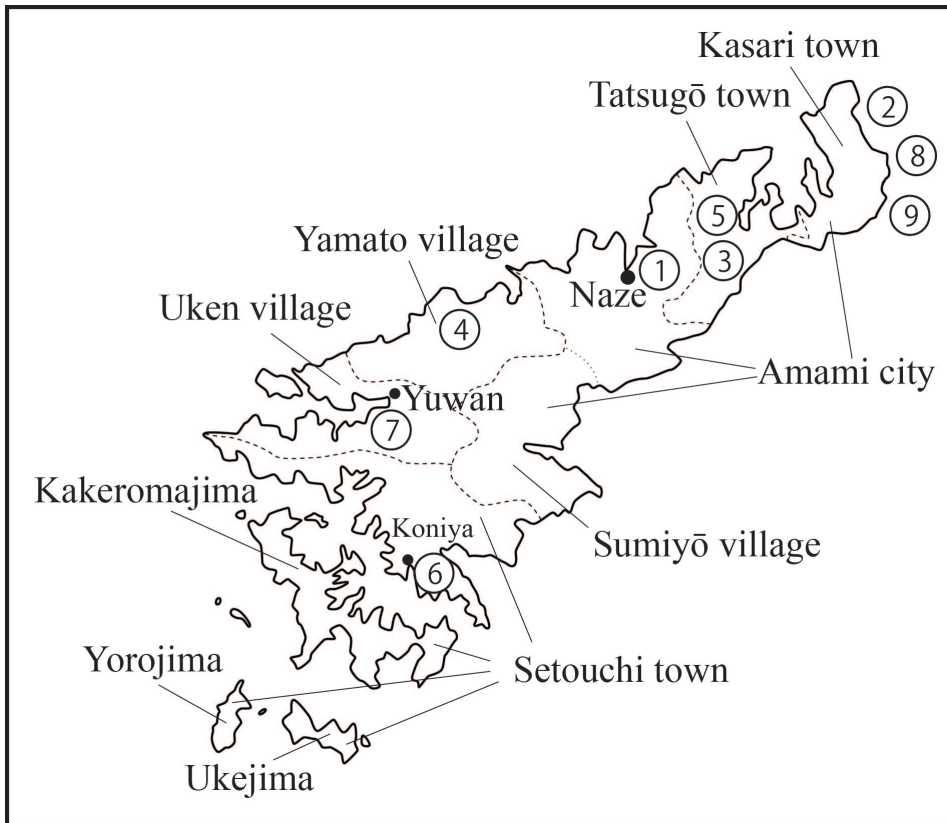


Figure 3 - Map of Amami Ōshima with main place names and locations of drum groups discussed (refer also to Table 2).

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Amami Ōshima divides into several main administrative parts, with the last restructuring in 2006 producing the following divisions: Amami city (including three main parts: Naze, Sumiyō village and Kasari town), Yamato village, Uken village, Setouchi town and Tatsugō town (Kagoshima-ken Ōshima Shichō, 2012: 25). Each division has its own smaller parts, and Amami-Ōshima has a total of 168 settlements of one type of another, 80 of which are in Amami city (ibid: 25).

Even though the history of Amami Ōshima is sometimes obscured in discourse on the Nansei islands, especially in connection to the Ryūkyū Kingdom and Okinawa, it is an island with a unique past and present (see further Matsushita, 1983). Trade between mainland Japan and Amami has been known since at least the Nara period (710-794), and some musical instrument treasures in the Shōsōin Repository in Nara are decorated with shells from Amami (Nelson, 2006: 372-373). Existing with its own village chiefs for many centuries, by the 16th Century Amami Ōshima, along with many other islands in the Nansei arc, were incorporated into the Ryūkyū Kingdom, which emanated from Okinawa island to the south. Such was the Ryūkyūan influence that “the Okinawans had enough strength and self-confidence in their dealings with powerful figures in Japan to place islands within sight of the mainland of Kyushu under their own tutelage, albeit briefly” (ibid: 385). The Ryūkyū Kingdom’s northern frontier was as far north as Kikaijima until 1537 when it invaded Amami Ōshima, an occupation that did not last as a further invasion was made in 1571 (Kerr, 2000: 123). However, when under control of Ryūkyū, the Amami islands were seen as outer islands (ibid: 116). Even before this time, but under the influence of the Yamato court (of mainland Japan, in present-day Nara), Kikaijima had been an important border as early as the Heian period (794-1185), the rulers of the time seeing the island as their *western-most* frontier (Nelson, 2006: 387). By the Kamakura period (1185-1333), as noted in the Nagato edition of the 12th Century *Heike Monogatari* (‘The Tale of the Heike’), a number of the Nansei islands had not yet been incorporated into the ruling court’s sphere of control, some of which are actually visible from the Kyūshū coast (Nelson, 2006: 387).

The Amami islands were taken over by the Satsuma clan in 1609.⁴ While the Satsuma clan conquered the Ryūkyū Kingdom, including the Amami islands, it allowed the Kingdom to continue to administer the southern part of the Nansei archipelago, leaving the Amami islands for the Satsuma clan. The Ryūkyū Kingdom dominated the Amami islands until 1609, and, according to the Korean manuscript on Japan, *Haedong Chegukki* of 1471 (Japanese: *Kaitō Shokokki* [‘Record of the Countries East of the Sea’]), the small island of Kogajajima towards the north of the Tokara archipelago in the Satsunan islands was divided between Satsuma and Ryūkyū (Nelson, 2006, 389). As a group of islands on the edge of both Ryūkyū and Satsuma, Amami was known for its unique cultural traits that did not appear elsewhere in Japan, something that was culturally distinct to the islands, but at the same time different to the two dominant cultures north and south. Indeed, “early in his exile on Amami Ōshima, Saigō [1828-77; a *samura*] dismissed the islanders as *ketōjin*, ‘hairy Chinamen,’ or, more loosely, ‘filthy foreigners.’ But Saigō also made enduring friendships with members of the local elite” (Ravina, 2006, 422). “His opinion of Amami improved markedly, however, after he had two children with a local woman” (Howell, 2005: 163).

Maritime travel between the Nansei islands and the mainlands of Japan and Asia means that with good visibility many of the islands are within sight of one another, thus allowing ease of passage from one island to another. While the term Ryūkyū arc (Ryūkyū-ko) refers to the Nansei islands, this southern *aquapelago* (cf Hayward, 2012) actually forms part of a longer archipelagic arc from China to Japan, and then to Korea (a further extension is from Japan to Russia to the north, which branches in two

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directions). The Sino-Korean archipelagic arc is one that has included marine networks with much mobility of people and artefacts between the Asian mainland and Japan, with the Ryūkyū Kingdom and the Nansei islands linking the cultures (not always via the Satsuma province; Nelson, 2006: 378). Indeed, the Ryūkyūan influence from the south on mainland Japan extended throughout the Nansei islands, either as rulers or traders, and it is in this archipelagic setting that different levels of islandness begin to emerge. Such a maritime context might be compared with Hayward's use of the term "aquapelagic", which he uses to stress:

a social unit existing in a location in which the aquatic spaces between and around a group of islands are utilised and navigated in a manner that is fundamentally interconnected with and essential to the social group's habitation of land and their senses of identity and belonging. (2012: 5)

However, in this article, the archipelagic context moves from the island and within the island, as outlined below.

In its more usual definition the term *shima* means 'island', but in Amami and Okinawa the term is also sometimes used to refer to 'community' or 'village' (Hayward and Kuwahara, 2008; Suwa, 2007). As Suwa has articulated when drawing on the work of Takara (1993; see also 1987):

In Japanese... the idea of shima always contains a double image: shima as a geographical feature and shima as a community. In Okinawa ... shima was a political unit equivalent to a village and the term still retains such connotations there. (Suwa, 2007: 7)

In other words, "neighbourhoods are imagined as if they are separate islands" (Suwa, 2007: 8). With this definition, this article discusses drum groups from a further analytical perspective that includes a notion of 'islands within an island'. Rather than being a homonym with a different meaning, it is suggested that the physical geography of Amami Ōshima has helped local communities to function as *shima*. Drawing on Howell's (2005) work on Japanese geographies of identity, this article argues that in this archipelagic arc of island identities there are not only national, regional, cultural and island borders but also internal island borders that create a further level of 'island' community.

The first major anthropological research on Amami Ōshima was undertaken for six months between 1951 and 1952 by Douglas Haring (1894-1970), professor of anthropology at Syracuse University in New York. Haring was in Japan and Okinawa as a member of the Pacific Science Board of the National Research Council in Washington DC. The purpose of his research was to produce a report to the US military government office in Okinawa about the socio-cultural and economic situation of the people in Amami Ōshima (Haring, 1952).⁵ In his report Haring suggested that Amami should be returned to Japan immediately if the military situation allowed. Following his fieldwork and report, Haring wrote further articles about the island, especially emphasising the importance of understanding its physical landscape, a point that is especially relevant for this part of the discussion:

Rugged mountains and deep fjords offer thrilling scenery and meager subsistence for the 110,000 people who eke out a precarious livelihood from tiny valleys and crudely terraced mountainsides. Naze, the capital, contains about 34,000 people and one other large town has perhaps

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10,000. The remainder dwell in tiny hamlets in isolated valleys and sheltered bays, often accessible only from the sea. (ibid: 255)

A glimpse at Haring's work helps show the island's physical, social and cultural terrain in which he was working. In this context, "each tiny hamlet – often out of touch with the hamlet across the mountain – preserves its dialect,⁶ its special folklore, songs, dances, festivals, technology, poetry, and economic organization; no single village is typical" (ibid: 256-257). Moreover, the physical inaccessibility of some of the villages is also related to social difference. As he continues: "my native helpers at first were reluctant to venture into villages where they had no kin" (ibid: 257). Japanese anthropologists too have emphasised the isolation caused by the island's terrain. For example: "villages, whose foresides were located in front of the vast sea and also whose backlands were hampered by the mountains of 200-300m high, had little contact with the outside and thus were heavily isolated" (Mizuno, 1974: 93, translated by authors; see also Kagoshima Minzoku Gakkai, 1970). This environment of near isolation amongst settlements helps in understanding how a village or community can act as a metaphorical island. Such a notion is also found elsewhere in the Nansei archipelago. For example, writing about rural life on Okinawa's main island in the 1950s and early 1960s, Lebra and Marezki point out that:

in most instances... the impression is one of spatial isolation for each community. That a real sense of isolation exists for the inhabitants as well can be shown in the language, for though the Japanese terms, buraku, aza, and ku now find common application, the Okinawan term is shima, which connotes both "island" and "village." (1963: 226)

The Ryūkyū Kingdom was also a context of enforced isolation amongst such "island" communities. That is, "the very real spatial isolation of the community was further buttressed by a rigid rule of community endogamy and by governmental restrictions forbidding a peasant to change his place of residence or occupation" (ibid: 227). Today, however, this mountainous island has a network of tunnels that connects many previously difficult to access parts and villages. There is also reclaimed land in some of the urban areas, and an infrastructure and services provided by national and prefectural governments that the island would not otherwise be able to afford on its own. It is these previously difficult to access settlements that created 'a land of islands'. Their physical location was analogous to reaching an island by sea, and with the sea acting as a network system to other coastal villages, as well as nearby and more distant islands.

Island drumming (*shimadaiko*) on Amami Ōshima usually refers to drum accompaniment on the *chijin* (double-headed barrel drum with tuning wedges – see Gunji, Takano and Yamada, 1980). This type of drum is local to the island and primarily the Amami islands, and is often found in a group context at festivals that include dance and song, such as *Hachigatsu Odori* ('August Dance'; Figure 4; cf Kumada, 1989; Nishimoto, 2006). Traditional drumming such as this permeates many other performance domains in local culture (as well as neighbouring islands), including single drum accompaniment to *sanshin* (three-string lute)⁷ performance in genres such as *shima uta* (island song) and *min'yō* (folk song). On Amami Ōshima the type of drum used in such contexts is almost exclusively the *chijin*, which is distinct in this part of Japan.⁸ However, in the contemporary world of rapid local, regional and global cultural flows, not only have some new traditions of drum performance emerged on Amami Ōshima that distinctly show influences from elsewhere in Japan (eg Okinawa and mainland Japan), as they have in many other Japanese and non-Japanese contexts (see Bender, 2012; Wong,

2004), but the *chijin* has also sometimes been recontextualised in new hybrid settings of group drumming performance on the island itself.



Figure 4 - *Hachigatsu Odori* ('August Dance'). As depicted in *Nantō Zatsuwa* (1850-55) by Nagoya Sagenta (1819-81) (Nagoya [1850-55], 1984: 75).

In this cultural and archipelagic setting of inbetweenness and cultural flows, whether within or between islands and mainlands, several new drum groups have been established in various locations on the island over the past few decades. Each of these groups has a distinct sense of island identity in its Amami Ōshima performance context, as well as community identity in a more specific locale on the island, yet the groups also often reflect contemporary local, regional and national cultural flows with various other influences and performance characteristics. A study of such representative drum groups helps show a range of island identities that embody a sense of islandness within, between and across various spheres of island and archipelagic identity. This identity is also expressed on a community level of locality on the island itself, and it is here that the term "*shima*" (island) is used in this article to refer not only to the island itself, but also metaphorically to the various levels and dimensions of community in which the groups exist.

These new traditions of local and more recently introduced or adopted ensemble drum performance form the focus of this article. The aim is to show not only where, how and why such groups have been established (cf Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983), but also how they are linked with local and island identity on Amami Ōshima from different cultural, community and geographic perspectives. The article provides insight on these

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diverse ensemble drum traditions not only in terms of the island as an independent entity in the way that Japanese novelist Shimao Toshio (1917-86) aimed to decentre Japan (see Gabriel, 1996), but also as a part of an archipelagic arc of land and maritime cultural identities and flows that foregrounds one part of Japan with the aim of contributing to discourse on drumming through an Island Studies lens (ie interpreting culture as a result of its island context). That is, a study of the drum groups within the paradigm of island drumming and community reveals unique cultural identities and flows, some old, some recent and some new, which contribute to several spheres of belonging, and each of which helps show Amami Ōshima as an island with multiple island identities.

Undergirding this discussion is the notion of *shima*. Usually translated as 'island', the term is also known especially in the Okinawa and Amami islands to refer to the idea of village or community (eg Gillan, 2012; Hayward and Kuwahara, 2008; Lebra and Maretzki, 1963; Peters, 2011; Suwa, 2007). It is with this community reference that the place of ensemble drumming is especially understood as a metaphor for group, village, island and archipelagic identity. As a way of discussing select drum groups on the island as case studies for cultural analysis in an island context, the discussion is also influenced by contemporary culture theory concerning inbetweenness, which is used here to provide a framework for interpreting the globalisation, localisation and music adoption that is inherent in these new drum groups (cf Anzaldúa, 1987; Appadurai, 1996; Bhabha, 1992; 1996; Pratt, 1991; Um, 2005a and 2005b). Moreover, with some drum groups it is shown that inbetweenness provides eclecticism, includes influences from nearby cultures, and also strengthens the island's own distinctive culture. However, the drum groups discussed in this article are also influenced by social and cultural forces beyond the *shima* notion of 'community' or 'village'. That is, in the same way that Hayward and Kuwahara (2008: 68) commented on *shima uta* being connected to "an imagined past that can act as an anchor in a period of profound change" (cf Gillan, 2012: xiii, 9), so too are many other spheres of contemporary culture on Amami Ōshima, including ensemble drumming as outlined below.

This introductory section has outlined Amami Ōshima in terms of its geography, history and island setting. This part of the discussion establishes the underpinning historical and theoretical framework that the article proposes: that Amami Ōshima is not only on various levels part of a "sea of islands" (cf Hau'ofa, 1993) in an archipelagic or aquapelagic (Hayward, 2012) sense, but it is also a 'land of islands'⁹ that is defined in terms of the notion of *shima* (island) as community. The next part of the article outlines five significant and particularly active drum groups on Amami Ōshima with the aim of providing a succinct background on each group. The final part of the article provides a discussion of these drum groups in terms of the dual meaning of *shima* (ie island and community identity). This analysis is focused on four themes that emerged during the research (group, village, island and archipelagos), ones that help show how a study of ensemble drumming on Amami Ōshima can reveal knowledge not only about the drum groups themselves but also about the various levels and dimensions of community that are an inherent part of drumming for these groups in their island contexts.

Drum Groups

There are several active and recently established drum groups on Amami Ōshima. As shown in Table 2 and Figure 3, eight main groups have been identified on the island. These include various types of drum groups: *wadaiko* (Japanese drums/Japanese group drumming), *eisā* (Okinawan drums/dance) and *chijin* (Amami's own small drum). These

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three spheres of influence (from the north, from the south and local, respectively – there are some crossovers) help show historical and contemporary cultural influences on the island. Table 2 includes several school groups, and is representative of the last few years of active performance on the island (other groups undoubtedly exist or have existed, although their presence was not noted during fieldwork).

Map (Fig 3)	Name of Group	Genre	Location	Context
1	Amami Kōkō Kyōdo Geinō Bu “Tida nu Kwa”	<i>Chijin</i>	Naze	High School
2	Amami Michi no Shimadaiko	<i>Wadaiko</i>	Kasari-chō	Community
3, 4	Amami Ōshima Uruma Eisā	<i>Eisā</i>	Tatsugō-chō/ Yamato-son	Community
5	Aranami Daiko	<i>Chijin</i>	Tatsugo-chō	Community
6	Honohoshi Daiko	<i>Wadaiko</i>	Setouchi-chō	Community
7	Kaiun Daiko	<i>Wadaiko</i>	Uken-son	Shōchū factory
8	Ōshima Kitakō Taiko-bu	<i>Chijin/ Wadaiko</i>	Kasari-chō	High School
9	Setta Amandī Daiko	<i>Chijin/ Wadaiko</i>	Kasari-chō	Primary School

Table 2 – main drumming groups in Amami Ōshima

Five groups were selected for closer study as a result of their diverse location on the island and their availability during fieldwork in 2012.

Kaiun Daiko. The *wadaiko* group called Kaiun Daiko (hereafter KD; Figure 5) is based at the *shōchū* (distilled liquor) factory, Amami Ōshima Kaiun Shuzō, in Uken village in the coastal southwest of Amami Ōshima at the end of one of the island’s longest natural and rugged harbours around 15 km long. The area is surrounded by steep mountains, and at the head of the harbour there is a small amount of flat land with a population of 506 living in a settlement called Yuwan (Uken-son, 2012). KD was established in 2007 by the company for its employees. The reason why the company established a drum group is that its president had heard *eisā* and liked it. However, rather than establishing an *eisā* group he chose to purchase *wadaiko* instruments that could be used as an activity for his employees and to help promote the company and the local village. The factory has about 50 employees, and membership of its drum group has ranged between 13 and 16, with players in their 30s to 50s. The members are mostly men, although several women also play, and the group has at times included a few non-company employees from the local community. The group rehearses on Sundays, although only for several weeks at a time before performance events. In other words, the group functions sporadically depending on upcoming performances rather than being a regular weekly activity. During public performance, the players wear *happi* (festival) coats that show the company’s name. KD plays at various events for the company, as well as for the local village, including its *Natsu Matsuri* (‘Summer Festival’). The group has performed further afield at Amami Park (a venue and cultural theme park devoted to the island) to the north of Amami Ōshima as part of Amami’s annual *Taiko Matsuri* (‘Drum Festival’) in 2009 (see later).

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The *shōchū* (distilled liquor) produced at the factory is a type known as *kokutō-shu* (made from brown sugar and malted rice) and is unique to Amami. In 1953, with the restoration of the Amami islands to Japan, the Japanese government's tax law did not classify *kokutō-shu* as a type of *shōchū*, and thus its tax rate was high. Following complaint from Amami, the Japanese government introduced a special act that allowed Amami to produce *shōchū* from brown sugar and malted rice. Since then, this type of *shōchū* has been a special product that can only be produced in the Amami islands. One of the main differences between the types of *shōchū* made at the factory is in their alcohol content. FAU is the highest at 44%, Rento is 25% and Ukare Kenmun is 30%. The other main differences are that Rento is made by using the natural local water, and FAU is made from local brown sugar which is harvested from local sugarcanes in Uken village.



Figure 5 - Kaiun Daiko performing in factory showroom (company promotional photo, date unknown)

KD has a number of drums of various shape and size. The group has one very large *okedōdaiko* (double-headed cylindrical laced drum; the group refers to it as an *ōdaiko* [large drum]), eight *chūdaiko* (medium size barrel drum; four are painted red like the *eisā* drums of Okinawa), six smaller *okedōdaiko* that are often strapped around the player's body when played, several shallow barrel drums, and several *shimedaiko* (double-headed shallow barrel/cylindrical drum).¹⁰ It also has more than 50 small drums that are used for audience participation at some performances. The drums were imported to Amami and are thought to have been made on Japan's fourth largest island, Shikoku. Such drums represent ones that are typical in Japanese ensemble drum performance on mainland Japan, and can be understood as a recently adopted instrumental ensemble within a paradigm of intentional intra-cultural appropriation (cf Eisenraut, 2001).

The group has a fixed repertoire of four pieces. Three of these pieces are named after the company's brands of *shōchū*, with another functioning as an introductory piece. The pieces are all recently composed and were written by a short-term resident female school teacher who was based in Uken village for about three years. Together with an

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expert of Ryūkyūan dance who was also in the village at the time, they also helped devise some choreographic moves for the players. The pieces that have been named after *shōchū* are *Rento*, *Ukare Kenmun*, and *FAU* and the introductory piece is called *Tsunagi*. Two of the pieces have further meaning that is local to the factory and village. *FAU* is actually an English acronym that stands for ‘From Amami Uken-son’. The piece called *Rento* (‘Lento’, meaning slow in Italian) is not only for *wadaiko* but blends a live recording of European composer Dvořák’s (1841-1904) symphony *From the New World* (1892-95). The piece represents the sounds of the local environment. The *shōchū* called *Rento* is matured in tanks for about three months. During this time, the factory transforms classical music into micro-vibrations by using transducers that are attached to the tanks. This manufacturing method is thought to make the taste of the *shōchū* mild and smooth. *Ukare Kenmun* is named after *Kenmun*, an Amami spirit (*ukare*: “make merry”), and *Tsunagi* is an introductory piece to *Rento*. In this context, the group plays a mix of original and layered music that is specific to the factory, and something that helps the group perform their company identity, whether locally or elsewhere.

Honohoshi Daiko. Honohoshi Daiko (hereafter HDD; Figure 6) is based in the south of Amami Ōshima in Setouchi town. Setouchi covers a large area and includes the nearby islands of Kakeromajima, Yorojima and Ukejima. The main urban area of the village is located on a thin strip of land in a settlement called Koniya, which in 2010 had a population of 4,381 (Sōmushō Tōkeikyoku, 2012). Koniya is a popular centre for visitors, either travelling to the village or to the offshore islands, and it is host to a number of festivals, many of which feature HDD.



Figure 6 - Honohoshi Daiko – (HDD promotional photo, date unknown)

HDD is a *wadaiko* group and dates from 1984, and members began by practising on logs and tyres. The name of the group refers to a local coastal area, Honohoshi Kaigan, and the sounds of the group’s drums represent the sounds of the waves breaking along this shoreline. This nomenclature helps show the island context in which the group exists, with water acting as an important point of reference. Indeed, the group’s village

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setting directly faces the sea, as with many similar villages on the island, and sea transport is an important part of everyday life. For example, the southern part of Amami Ōshima was an important centre during the island's Ryūkyūan era, and even today not only is Koniya the port for travel to the nearby islands, but it also has shipping routes to Naze to the northwest of the island, as well as other islands in Amami, Okinawa and Kagoshima.

HHD has about 23 drums of various size, with their main *chūdaiko* ranging in width from 1.1 shaku to 2 shaku (33.3-60.6 cm). The group has one *ōdaiko* (large barrel drum with skins tacked to the body) and one large *okedōdaiko*. These two instruments are placed on high stands and create a central point with the barrel drums placed in front of them. As there are no *wadaiko* makers on Amami Ōshima, the group's drums were purchased over the years from various locations in Japan.

The current membership of the group is 11 adults, and about 30 children take part in some rehearsals. Anyone can join the group, and there are no membership fees. There are no original members from 1984 still in the group. HHD's primary purpose is to promote the local region through its performance activities. The group plays mainly at events and festivals in the local town, and also occasionally at weddings, but also takes part in some other events around Amami Ōshima, including the Amami Drum Festival. The group has also played further afield in Tōkyō, Ōsaka and Kagoshima city. Whilst active in various local performances, the group noted its main annual performance as the Setouchi-chō *Minato Matsuri* ('Harbour Festival'), which is a two-day summer event held in August. HHD has five original pieces in its repertoire. The group also play the *Rokuchō*¹¹ rhythmic patterns that are prevalent all over Amami Ōshima during the *Hachigatsu Odori* ('August Dance') celebrations in August or September each year. For this context they include a *sanshin* and *yubibue/hatobue* (whistling), both of which are common to this part of Japan.

Amami Michi no Shimadaiko. Amami Michi no Shimadaiko (hereafter AMNSD) is based towards the northeast of Amami Ōshima in Kasari town. Kasari, which in 2012 had a population of 6,295 (Amami-shi, 2012), is now a part of Amami city, and it occupies a narrow and protruding part of the island that is less than 1 km wide at its narrowest point where it neighbours the next town to the south. Indeed, this peninsula "is joined to the main portion by a low isthmus, so that from N[orth] or S[outh] it appears as an island" (National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, 2008: 134).

AMNSD is a *wadaiko* group and uses a number of different instruments, including *chūdaiko*, *okedōdaiko*, *shimedaiko*, *chijin* and large *chijin*. The largest of their drums are the *chūdaiko*, which provide the main rhythmic patterns in their music. As well as having several *chijin*, which function in the same way as *shimedaiko* in some other *wadaiko* groups, one of their members has made two larger drums that have the form of large *chijin* but with a much longer body (Figure 7).¹² These homemade drums are large barrel drums, but they utilise the same wooden tuning wedges as found on the *chijin*. These large *chijin* offer a unique component to this group. Together with the more usual *chijin*, which are placed on high stands so the players can stand while playing the instruments, these new island drums (*shimadaiko*) help localise the group firmly in the Amami context. The *chūdaiko*, *okedōdaiko* and *shimedaiko* show a Japanese mainland influence, while the *chijin* and large *chijin* offer a distinctly local emphasis.



Figure 7 - Large *chijin* drum belonging to Amami Michi no Shimadaiko (photograph: Henry Johnson, 2012).

The idea behind AMNSD emerged in 1987, and with the opening of the island's new airport in 1988, when the group played at the opening ceremony, the group became firmly established. The name of the group translates as 'Island Road Taiko' and it refers to the chain of small islands that links Japan with the Chinese mainland, thus signifying part of not only the group's identity, but also a part of the island's culture that is linked with archipelagic mobility. Over the past few decades, the membership of AMNSD has changed as players have come and gone, and currently it has 15 members. The leader of the group has been pivotal in helping to establish an annual *taiko* festival in Amami, and has also helped some other drum performers from other Amami islands establish their own groups (ie Kikaijima Daiko on the nearby island of Kikaijima).

While AMNSD has played several pieces of music over the years, the group currently has one long piece in its repertoire, which is structured in several main parts. It is an original piece played by the group, and its name is the same as the group. AMNSD rehearses once a week for about two hours, although it would normally have extra practise sessions in the weeks leading up to a public performance. It currently rehearses in the open air outside a local gymnasium (Taiyōgaoka Sōgō Taikukan) in the town. As well as performing at various local events in their town, AMNSD has been particularly active in the Amami Drum Festival, which the leader currently organises, and has played further afield in Japan, not only in all the main islands in the Amami archipelago during the Amami Drum Festival, but also in such places at Tōkyō, Nagano and Okinawa. Furthermore, the leader has also played *wadaiko* in the United States of America.

Amami Kōkō Kyōdo Geinō Bu 'Tida nu Kwa'. The drum group called Amami Kōkō Kyōdo Geinō Bu 'Tida nu Kwa' (often abbreviated to Tida nu Kwa; hereafter TNK; Figure 8) is based at Amami Kōtō Gakkō (Amami High School) in Naze, Amami city. The group has been active for about 15 years and is the initiative of one of the school's teachers. It

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is organised as a voluntary activity primarily outside school hours, and members range in age from 15 to 18. The name of the group, Tida nu Kwa, means 'Child of the Sun', and it uses the Amami dialect. Drawing on the ideas of Hokama Shuzen (scholar of Okinawan studies), and commenting that the names of several Ryūkyūan kings included the name Taiyō ('sun', or similar), Kreiner notes that:

According to the Kyūyō [an official history of Ryūkyū], Eiso's [1229-99, a Ryūkyūan king] mother dreamed of a ray of sunshine which made her pregnant, therefore her son Eiso was called "child of the sun" (tenjitsu no ko [ie Tida nu Kwa]....) ... It might well be that with this new dynasty coming from the island of Iheya [northwest of Okinawa island] a particular or perhaps local tradition had strengthened the ideology of a connection of the king with the sun. (2008: 395)

The instruments used by TNK are mostly *chijin*, but the group also uses several *chūdaiko* (ie large two-headed barrel-shape drums with skins tacked to the body), two slit-drums (*take*) and several *sanshin*. Most of the drums and other instruments were donated to the group, and the *chijin* come from Amami Ōshima. The group's repertoire is primarily based on *Rokuchō* rhythmic patterns, as found in *Hachigatsu Odori* ("August Dance"), and it includes a mixture of *chijin*, *wadaiko*, slit-drums, *sanshin*, ceramic percussion plates (played like castanets), song and *yubibue/hatobue* to produce an original repertoire unique to the school, the area and the island.



Figure 8 - Amami Kōkō Kyōdo Geinō Bu 'Tida nu Kwa' (photograph: Henry Johnson, 2012).

The number of players in TNK fluctuates on an annual basis as students leave the school and others become interested in playing, and there are currently about 15 members. Most of the current players are girls, but there are also several boys in the group. While the group plays at various school and local Naze and Amami Ōshima events, its main annual performances are during the *Hachigatsu Odori* celebrations that

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are held in August or September (depending on the lunar calendar). The group has participated in the Amami Drum Festival and, further afield, it has played in Kagoshima city on Kyūshū. TNK has drawn from various sources to produce its new type of ensemble drum music. These include Yamato poems (*waka*), Okinawan whistling, Pacific island log drums, *wadaiko*, Amami *sanshin* and Amami *chijin*. Such influences are from several different cultural flows. That is, the *sanshin* and *chijin* are symbols of local Amami Ōshima culture, the whistling stands for Okinawa and is predominant in much Okinawan folk music, the Yamato poems are from mainland Japan, and the log drums bring in an element of Pacific identity.

Amami Ōshima Uruma Eisā. Amami Ōshima Uruma Eisā (hereafter AOUE; Figure 9) was established on the island in 1998. *Eisā* is a style of group drumming and dancing that originates in Okinawa, primarily in a traditional form performed during the ritualistic Buddhist *Bon* Festival in August, but in recent decades it has been modernised as secular entertainment in Okinawa as well as being transmitted to some of the other Nansei islands, and further afield in Japan and internationally (whether amongst the Okinawan/Japanese diaspora, or enthusiasts alike – cf Johnson, 2008; Okaze, 1992; Terada, 2005). As an organisation, Uruma Eisā was established in Okinawa in 1992 by the singer and political/peace activist Kina Shōkichi (b. 1948). The first leader of AOUE was inspired by Kina's peace movement, which included Kina travelling in a traditional Okinawan boat (*sabani*) to some of the Nansei islands and part of Kyūshū and Honshū (see Satō, 1996), as well as peace performances at the Atlanta Olympic arts events in 1996 (United Nations, 2012). Currently, Uruma Eisā has several branches in the Nansei islands including Amami Ōshima (Amami Ōshima Uruma Eisā, with practice locations in Tatsugō-chō and Yamato-son), Okinoerabujima (Erabu Yununushi Uruma Eisā), Okinawa island and Kikajima (Kikajima Uruma Eisā). The organisation also has branches in Kagoshima city in Kyūshū, and further afield in Tōkyō.

There are currently 12 players in AOUE, ranging in age from young teenagers to people in their 50s. The majority of the players are women. The group practices in Tatsugō town, but has in the past had a further rehearsal space in Yamato village, which is soon to be started again. The group currently has about 11 pieces in its repertoire, which comprise music and dance that accompanies recordings of music performed by Kina. The use of a backing track in this context helps give the style of drumming/dancing/singing a unique place in the contemporary world of mediated music. Such a performance might be considered dance music; that is, the players dance to Okinawan popular music, albeit in a performative context and with the use of drums. The live performers do, of course, have the main visual attention of the audience.

As with other *eisā* groups, AOUE uses several large barrel-shape drums (the group has four), and smaller drums called *shimedaiko* (the group has 14). The wooden body of some of the drums is painted bright red. The drums were purchased from Okinawa island by the first leader of the group, and are particularly light as they are carried by the players as they dance to background recorded music. In this style of drumming, the players strike the upper drum skin with a single beater held in the right hand. The existence of an *eisā* group on Amami Ōshima helps show that there are still contemporary cultural flows from Okinawa to Amami. In the Amami context, AOUE is an example of adopted music; that is, while Kina Shōkichi was pivotal in influencing its establishment, it has been adopted by enthusiasts of a music style who are connected with the cultural place of origin as a result of cultural interest rather than any direct social movement.



Figure 9 - Amami Ōshima Uruma Eisā (promotional photo, date unknown).

Shima and Island Drumming

The notion of *shima* (island) is embodied in the drum groups in several ways. As noted above, the term *shima* is defined in two main ways: island and community. This part of the discussion identifies four key levels of community that emerged during the research, either as articulated by informants, or through observation and cultural analysis: group, village, island and archipelago. While other concepts might be applied, the ones discussed below help illustrate how these drum groups not only stand for the island as a whole, but also for the diverse communities (on various levels) of which they are a part.

Group. The notion of *shima* exists within each drum group in terms of its community. The groups function as social and cultural units that bring people together with a common interest in drumming and performance. One way of looking more closely at what a drum group represents is to look at its name. In other words, the name of a drum group is an emblem of its community and identity. It is something that the group represents, and as such can offer insight into where, when and why the group was established in the first place. The use of the term *daiko* (*taiko*: drum) in the names of three of the groups reflects the type of name found in many *wadaiko* groups elsewhere in Japan (and beyond). That is, the groups have a predominance of large barrel-shape drums, which provide the main rhythmic patterns, even though one of the groups includes *chijin* (also referred to as *shimadaiko*: island drum) in place of the more usual *shimedaiko* in such ensembles. Also, the group Tida nu Kwa, which has a predominance of *chijin*, uses several *chūdaiko* (medium-size barrel drum), but with this group the *chūdaiko* serve to provide a bass beat for the multiple *chijin* that have a lead role in the group.

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The term *eisā* in the name of one of the drum groups immediately shows that the style of drumming/dancing/singing has been transmitted from Okinawa. Moreover, the term *Uruma* itself refers to an older name for Okinawa island and reinforces the signification of this part of Japan. Several other terms also help provide locality for some ensembles in terms of the cultural group they represent. For example, Kaiun Daiko is the drum group of a *shōchū* factory. In this context, the factory is the main social and cultural group, although the local village in which the factory is located also provides a sphere of performance opportunities and therefore extends the *shima* metaphor into the local community. Likewise, Honohoshi Daiko is named after a nearby beach, which is known for its pebbles rather than sand, as well as the loud crashing of waves as they hit the pebbles. Amami Michi no Shimadaiko is located in the north of the island. The first part of its name, *Michi no Shima*, means literally 'Island Road', and refers to the hundreds of islands to the southwest of Japan that form an arc that links all the Japanese islands with Taiwan and then the Asian mainland. Tida nu Kwa is the only one of the drum groups studied that includes the Amami dialect (*hōgen*) in its name. The name means literally 'Child of the Sun'. For this group, its name makes a strong statement about an older Amami identity that is embedded in Nansei cultural history.

Each of these names is important for helping the drum groups provide a label for an audience who they represent. To use the community sense of the term *shima*, the drum groups offer several ways to stand for the places in which they exist. For some of the groups, their locality is not apparent in their name, and for others the locality is explicitly defined. Different spheres of island identity are shown, ranging from direct reference to a chain of islands, reference to Okinawa, the types of drums used, and the location on the island where the drum groups are located. Each offers a type of community; a place of belonging; and a type of *shima* that helps create identity for each group and its performers.

Village. The geographic spread of the groups in different locations around the island allows each group not only to form its own *shima* as a drum group, but also to represent the geographic locale in which it is situated. This is where *shima* is defined as village (or larger urban setting), where the drum groups are often particularly active by including players from the local community, and by performing in and for the local community, whether a village festival, town celebration, school or *shōchū* factory.

In comparison to the four main Japanese islands of Honshū, Hokkaidō, Kyūshū and Shikoku, Amami Ōshima is small. While travel around the island is relatively easy today due to a modern road system with numerous tunnels that cut through the island's mountains, historically, the island was big enough and with a mountainous terrain to make movement on land between settlements extremely difficult. As noted above, most populated areas on Amami Ōshima are found on thin strips of land in a few low-lying areas. The main settlements are coastal, and maritime travel was the quickest means of transport, not only for travel to other islands, but to other settlements on the island. In such a setting, these populated areas can be viewed as *shima* – communities that are defined by their geographical location on Amami Ōshima, and as a result of available land and sea travel.

Island. In terms of the island's history over the last five hundred years or so, it has been an island of chiefdoms, ruled by the Ryūkyū Kingdom, ruled by the Satsuma clan, and more recently incorporated into Kagoshima prefecture as part of the Japanese nation state. In this context of changing political hegemonies, the island's identity can be viewed as between cultures: those from within, those from the south, and those from

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the north. Indeed, the island's geography has experienced different degrees of influence with the Ryūkyū Kingdom's stronghold in the south of the island, and the Satsuma clan's influence in the north, each facing their main locations of political power and homeland. Even the island's dialect has two distinct variants based on north and south of the island.¹³ Amami Ōshima is therefore an island with cultural roots and routes (cf Clifford, 1997), flows of influence from surrounding dominant cultures, along with modes of passage that have allowed the island to function as a place between cultures, and an island in a sea of islands linking to influential cultural spheres. Here, Amami Ōshima is both a physical island in terms of its geography and landmass, and an island community whose identity has been shaped by flows of political power from the archipelagic south and north.

Archipelago(s). The identity expressed through the drums used by the drum groups extends beyond the group or immediate geographical setting in which they primarily function, and move into the Amami, Nansei and Japanese archipelagic contexts. The instruments show an inherent identity that either explicitly expresses one location, or creates a hybrid context that represents various cultural flows. For example, the *chijin* is considered a unique instrument to the Amami islands. While the term *chijin* is also used in some parts of Okinawa, the instrument in that context is usually one that has a slightly different form to the *chijin* as found on Amami. That is, the Amami *chijin* uses tuning wedges under the cord bracing along its sides to stretch its skins on either side of the instrument. Such a drum is nowadays considered an Amami instrument, with the Okinawan version not having such wedge bracing.

Amami Taiko Matsuri	
Year	Island
2000	Kikaijima
2001	Tokunoshima
2002	Amami Ōshima (Yamato-son)
2003	Okinoerabujima
2004	Amami Ōshima (Kasari-chō)
2005	Yoronjima
2006	Kikaijima
2007	Amami Ōshima (Naze)
2008	Tokunoshima
2009	Amami Ōshima (Kasari-chō)
2010	Kikaijima
2011	Tokunoshima

Table 3 – Locations of Amami Drum Festival

The drum groups outlined in this article are not only part of an island community, both in the sense that they are from Amami Ōshima, and that the island creates its own community of island drummers, but they are also a part of an Amami archipelagic community of island drummers. This is especially expressed through the Amami Drum Festival, which helps in creating a wider archipelagic community of drummers in Amami. Indeed, if one of the notions of *shima* is to signify community, then the Amami Drum Festival creates both an event that is a community of drummers who meet once a year to celebrate drumming in the Amami archipelago, as well as drumming in their particular location on their island, and also an event that has an imagined community for most of the year (cf Anderson, 1991). This coming together reinforces a sense of Amami island identity, and the festival is held as a celebration for the various drum groups that have emerged in the islands over the past few decades. It shows a confluence of several

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different styles of drumming, each of which helps to illustrate some of the varied cultural flows that influence the island's performance culture in the present era. As shown in Table 3, the festival has been held once a year in different locations around the Amami archipelago since 2000, and it attracts groups from each of the main islands: Amami Ōshima, Kikaijima, Okinoerabujima, Tokunoshima and Yoranjima.

As noted on the festival's website, the Drum Festival has the aim of creating a venue for drum performance, providing an opportunity for interaction amongst different groups, and offering a setting for each of the three main styles of drumming that are currently predominant on the islands: Amami Rokuchō Daiko (ie *shimadaiko*), Okinawan *eisā*, and Japanese *wadaiko* (Amami Taiko Matsuri, 2012).

More broadly in terms of archipelagic community, the Nansei islands provide a setting in which many of the drum groups have particular significance. For example, *eisā* drums maintain inherent cultural connections with Okinawa, whether through the purchase of instruments, the transmission of music or other social, cultural or media flows. These bright red drums of various size are visual emblems of Okinawan identity, but are expressed in the Amami Ōshima context as a sign of a cultural flow that is simultaneously historical and contemporary in terms of the island's past and geographic proximity to Okinawa.

The group Amami Michi no Shimadaiko also expresses a Nansei identity as signified in the group's name. As noted above, the name refers to the numerous islands that link Japan and China, and the name of the group is therefore symbolic of island and archipelagic identity. This type of reference shows the group to exist in several island spheres: archipelagic, Amami Ōshima, urban and performance group. For both this group and Amami Ōshima Uruma Eisā, the notion of *shima* as community is extended through a notion of island on various levels of identity.

Conclusion

Five drum groups on Amami Ōshima have been studied as a way of showing how they represent different layers of community as expressed through the notion of *shima*, both the definition of the term to mean a physical island, and also in connection with its local meaning of village or community. The study revealed not only information about the *raison d'être* of each group, but also a unique component of community when explored broadly through different degrees of geographic analysis in terms of different types of islandness. The drum groups show various levels of local, regional and national cultural flows that express a range of island identities. Each of the five drum groups was established on the island over the past few decades, and each reveals multiple island identities, whether local on the island, local to the island, archipelagic or inbetween.

Amami Ōshima is an island of islands. It is part of the island nation of Japan; it is part of the Nansei islands that form an archipelagic arc between Japan and China; and it is an island with its own archipelago of 'island' communities. Amami Ōshima is an island that has a natural landscape that made it historically dependent on the sea as a means of travel where marine networks linked different islands, and especially different ruling powers, whether from Okinawa to the south, or Satsuma to the north. It is the island's terrain and coastal settlements that helped create communities that are islands on an island. That is, only a small part of Amami Ōshima has flat land around its coastline that is ideally suited for settlement and cultivation, and many communities were primarily accessible only by sea. Travel to and from such communities was akin to travel

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between islands, and it is with such a metaphor of *shima* that the different levels of island drumming and their communities have been outlined.

Through ethnographic and cultural analysis with these drum groups, different levels of *shima* (island and/or community) emerged. These include 'island' communities in terms of the group, village, island and archipelago(s). Each level of community shows a notion of islandness, whether physical or metaphorical, and each helps in understanding how the drum groups relate to their island home on Amami Ōshima or in another sphere of community, island or archipelagic identity. This study of drum groups has revealed that ensemble drumming on Amami Ōshima has varied forms and affiliations. There are distinct cultural flows from islands from the south and from the north, as well as historical cultural flows from within the island itself. There are adopted drum styles, as well as hybrid forms. As a contribution to discourse on Island Studies, the article has revealed that islandness is embodied in community identity for drum groups on Amami Ōshima in varied ways. In this context, the notion of *shima* as 'island' or 'community' helps in comprehending some aspects of the social and cultural identities of those living in an island landscape.

End Notes

¹ The research for this article was undertaken during a field trip to Amami Ōshima in August 2012. Select drum groups (the main ones that are currently active) were observed during rehearsal or performance, and key informants in each group interviewed by one or both of the researchers. We would like to thank the leaders and members of the drum groups and organisations for their help in making this research possible. Special mention should also go to Ikeda Tadanori, Takarabe Megumi and Hanai Kōzō who helped with local knowledge, making contacts and providing transport. The research was made possible with the support of Kagoshima University and the University of Otago.

² The statistics and data on Amami Ōshima in this section are mostly sourced from Kagoshima-ken Ōshima Shichō (2012), Time Hall (2012) and Distance Calculator (2012).

³ The islands are defined as being over 100 metres in circumference.

⁴ As well as the Ryūkyū Kingdom considering the Amami islands to be on the periphery of its territory, the later northern rulers, the Satsuma clan, perhaps considered them a part of its southern periphery. That is, *samurai* Saigō Takamori (1828-77), the leader of the 1877 Satsuma Rebellion against the ruling Meiji government, was exiled there from 1859 to 1864, first to Amami Ōshima and a few years later to Tokunoshima just to the south (see Ravina, 2003). This story is featured in the film *The Last Samurai* (directed by Edward Zwick, 2003).

⁵ On Haring and his work see also Yamashita (1994).

⁶ Within the Amami archipelago, of which there are five main islands (Amami Ōshima, Kikaijima, Tokunoshima, Okinoerabujima and Yoronjima), Haring noted that, "Sixteen local dialects, unintelligible to the average Japanese, survive in as many mountain-girt hamlets or isolated islands" (1954: 256).

⁷ The *sanshin* is made in two main types that differ slightly in terms of form and performance practice. One is local to Okinawa, the other to Amami (Hayward and Kuwahara, 2008, 65).

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⁸ The term *chijin* (also known as, for example, *tidimi* and *tsuzun*, using several local names) is also used in Okinawa prefecture. However, the type of drum used in that context usually refers to a small drum without the wooden tuning wedges as found in Amami. On the *chijin* in Amami and related drums in Okinawa and Asia see Kagoshima-ken Rekishi Shiryō Sentā Reimei-kan (2002).

⁹ We have tentatively referred to this phenomenon as a *terrapelago*.

¹⁰ The form of the *okedōdaiko* is slightly different to the *chūdaiko* in that the former has a cylindrical body and two drum heads that are laced to the body, while the latter has a barrel shape with two skins tacked to the wooden body.

¹¹ The term *Rokuchō* refers to a style of music often played at the end of festivals and incorporating complex drum patterns and hand dancing.

¹² See Kagoshima-ken Rekishi Shiryō Sentā Reimei-kan (2002) for several examples of similar drums elsewhere in Japan.

¹³ On Amami's different dialects see material online at the Ethnologue website: www.ethnologue.org/show_language.asp?code=ryn and www.ethnologue.org/show_language.asp?code=ams – accessed October 2012.

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