

Udo Shrine: *Undama*

Visitors to Udo Shrine can improve their luck by throwing *undama*, or “lucky orbs.” These clay pebbles are tossed toward the small pool of water, marked with a rope, on a turtle-shaped rock below this ridge. The custom is that men throw with their left hand and women with their right. If the pebble lands in the pool, the thrower’s wish is said to come true. Before the 1950s, people would throw coins instead of these pebbles. This was stopped because children would try to retrieve the money by climbing down to the pool, putting themselves in danger. The rock is called *kameishi* (“turtle rock”) which is a reference to a myth associated with the shrine’s primary deity, Ugayafukiaezu. Abandoned at birth by his mother, the daughter of the god of the sea, Ugayafukiaezu was raised by his aunt, who traveled to meet him on the back of a giant turtle.