

Doctoral dissertation

The Dynamics of Gender Roles in Intangible Cultural Heritage:
A Case Study of Japanese Yama Hoko Yatai Float Festivals

無形文化遺産におけるジェンダーに基づく役割分担のダイナミクス —
日本の山・鉾・屋台行事を事例として

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Abstract

Gender and intangible cultural heritage are linked. Gender roles often play a part in traditional practices, while traditional practices affect gender codes and expectations. Both gender and intangible cultural heritage are dynamic constructs, constantly being created, reiterated and renegotiated, and they are both factors in the construction of the other. This research examines the dynamics of this relationship through case studies of a specific type of festival in Japan – the Yama Hoko Yatai float festivals. These festivals make for an interesting arena to study the dynamics between intangible cultural heritage and gender, since while the festivals are traditionally male events, some festivals have seen changes to allow for female participation in roles that were earlier only open to men. A multi-step methodology was employed in order to examine both overarching structures as well as local circumstances. A survey was conducted among the 36 festivals' preservation associations to map current gender roles and restrictions, map changes that have occurred in said gender roles, and to identify what factors triggered those changes. Upon analysing the results of the survey, interviews were conducted with a selection of preservation associations where changes in the gender restrictions had occurred, with the aim of examining whether the changes had become naturalized and how they had affected the festivals. The research also includes an analysis of how gender is handled in the official descriptions of the festivals within the national as well international intangible cultural heritage safeguarding contexts. The research results provide valuable information to an under-researched area and offer insights into under which circumstances – and how – gender roles and restrictions within intangible cultural heritage can change, and also provide indication of how the festivals might change in the coming years.

Key words: intangible cultural heritage, gender, Japan, festivals, matsuri, gender roles

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Abbreviations and glossary

2003 convention	UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage
<i>Hayashi</i>	Band/accompaniment for festivals and traditional performances. Also used for the role of such a musician.
<i>Hayashikata</i>	Musician (see <i>hayashi</i> above)
<i>Hikite</i>	Role of pulling the ropes attached to the festival float to move it forward
<i>Hozonkai</i>	Preservation association
ICH	Intangible cultural heritage
<i>Nyonin kinsei</i>	Customary prohibition of women in access or participation
RL	UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity
<i>Shōshika</i>	Declining birth rates
<i>Shōshikōreika</i>	Declining birth rates combined with an ageing population
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<i>Urakata</i>	Role of person active 'behind-the scenes'

1. Introduction

This dissertation sets off with a seemingly straight-forward question: what role does gender play within intangible cultural heritage? While gender evidently plays a role in many traditional practices, it is also evident that both the gender roles and the traditional practices can and do change. This study seeks to understand the dynamics between gender and intangible cultural heritage and how it functions, by examining how and why changes occur in the gender roles of traditional practices.

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and gender are interconnected. For example, some traditional practices have gender coded restrictions regarding participation and access. At the same time, ICH is not constant. ICH is dynamic and constantly being recreated. Neither are gender roles and gender codes constant. They are similarly being constructed and recreated continuously. Gender affects what roles are available to a certain practitioner, and social practices affect the reiteration and construction of gender. In other words, ICH and gender interact – ICH being a factor in the construction of gender, and gender being a factor in the construction of ICH. Both gender and ICH are constantly being reiterated, renegotiated and recreated, and are constantly changing. How does the dynamic between gender and ICH function?

This research examines the interaction and connection between ICH and gender by focusing on gender roles and gender restrictions within ICH. In particular, the study is focused on changes in gender roles and gender restrictions within ICH. Under which circumstances do changes to gender roles and gender restrictions occur, and how do they change? This is examined through case studies of a certain type of festival taking place in various regions throughout Japan – the so-called *Yama Hoko Yatai* float festivals. These festivals make for an interesting arena to study the dynamics of gender roles in ICH, and why and how changes occur. The festivals are/have typically been male events. Women are/have traditionally been prohibited from participating, and in some cases also from touching the festival floats, with reference to religious concerns about purity – an idea stemming from the *kegare* belief involving the idea that blood from menstruation and childbirth is defiled/defiling. As the results presented in Chapter 6 will show, in many of the festivals, women's participation is restricted to some particular roles or prohibited entirely. However, a number of festivals have seen changes to allow for (increased)

female participation. By studying the changes in gender roles in these festivals, and what triggered those changes, new knowledge can be gained about the interaction between gender and ICH.

The Yama Hoko Yatai float festivals take place in various locations in regions all over Japan and are major local events. While there are differences between the individual festivals, all of them center around a procession of large floats. The festivals are traditionally organized and managed by the local residents of the concerned float neighbourhoods. Nowadays, the festival communities also have an official organizational structure in the form of preservation associations (*hozonkai*). The various local festival associations are also organized on a national level. The National Association for the Preservation of Float Festivals represents the preservation associations of 36 Yama Hoko Yatai float festivals, all protected by Japanese heritage legislation as ‘Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties’. These 36 festivals are the target of this research. In 2016, 33 of the festivals were inscribed on UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (RL) pertaining to the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. As such, the Yama Hoko Yatai float festivals are recognized within both national and international safeguarding systems.

The interaction between gender and ICH is approached by using a combination of methods: a survey among the preservation associations connected to the festivals, interviews with a selection of preservation associations following the survey, and analysis of the official descriptions of the festivals within the national and international safeguarding systems. The survey and the interviews are used to examine the on-site situation, as perceived by the local stakeholders and practitioners, while the analysis of the official descriptions of the festivals is used to examine how gender is handled and described in the safeguarding systems. In the examination of the on-site situation, a particular focus is placed on changes in gender roles and restrictions. Key themes in the examination are the reasons for the changes, how the gender roles and restrictions have changed, whether those changes have been naturalized or not, and whether the perceived value or meaning of the festival has changed. The methodology is explained in section 1.3 of this chapter. See Figure 1 below for a map of the locations. See a list of the locations in Table 1 in section 1.3 of this chapter.

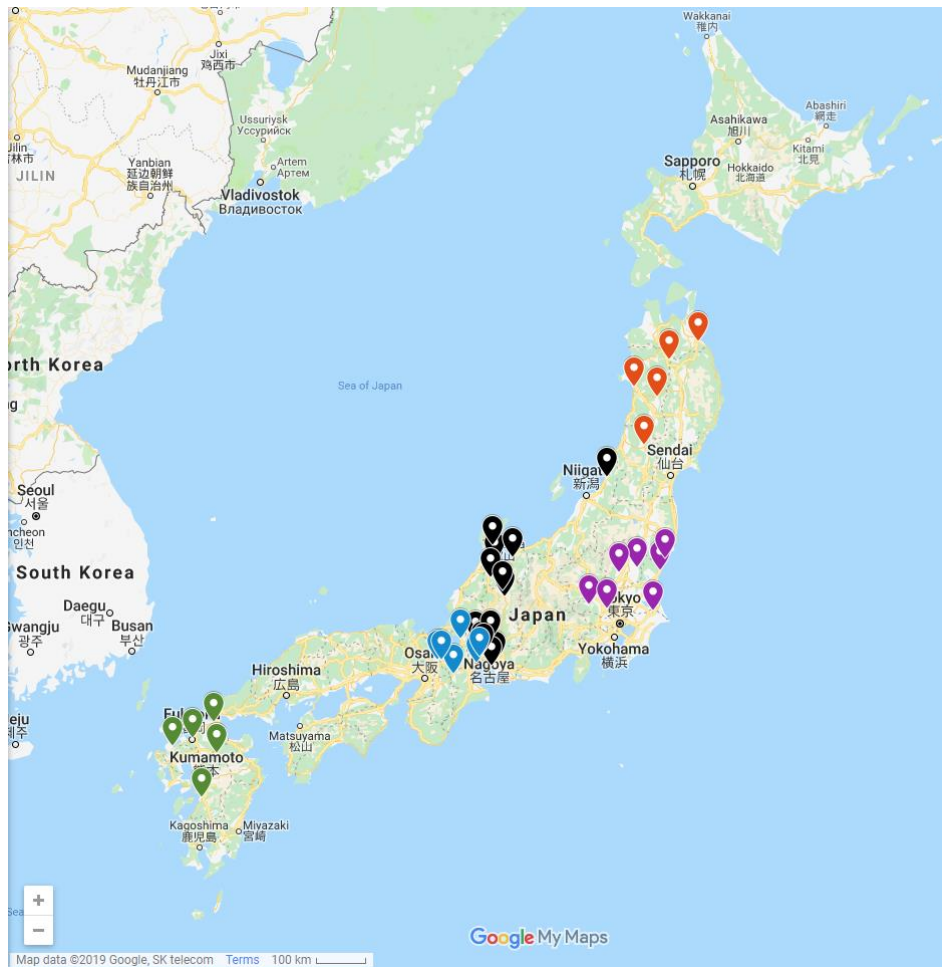


Figure 1. Location of the 36 float festivals. Colour coded by region: Tōhoku – red, Kantō – purple, Chūbu – black, Kinki – blue, Kyūshū - green.

Purpose, aim and goals

Within the cultural heritage field, gender is often treated as a ‘niche topic’ (Wilson 2018, p.3). Nevertheless, gender is an important factor to acknowledge in the critical examination of heritage. As Smith (2008) argues, heritage is gendered (more on this in Chapter 3). Especially gender within traditional practices is a topic that needs more focus within the heritage field. However, how to approach gender within heritage, and especially within ICH, seems to be problematic as matters regarding gender and culture are often target to contestation, with the ideological debate between universalism and cultural relativism as an underlying factor. How gender within ICH should be approached in the heritage field is a matter laden with potential conflict, making the topic of gender easier to avoid than to address. The difficulties in how to approach gender in ICH is

visible also in the handling and implementation of the 2003 convention, where matters regarding gender have started receiving increased attention in recent years (more on this is Chapter 3). It is essential to deepen the understanding of the dynamics between gender and ICH and of how changes occur. Specifically, it is essential to deepen the understanding of the interaction between safeguarding systems, cultural heritage and social cohesion, to better predict the actual effects of heritage legislation and normative instruments.

Gender and ICH is a complex topic, and an area that needs more research. In particular, more research is needed on what role gender plays in the transmission of ICH. One part in this is examining the gender roles and gender restrictions within traditional practices – such as the Yama Hoko Yatai float festivals. In the case of traditional practices with gender-based restrictions or role separations, it is relevant to assess what role the restrictions play in the transmission of the tradition. Are the gender restrictions essential components of the traditional practice or does the practice continue ‘undamaged’ even if the gender restrictions change? Why do the rules change the way they do and are there limits to what roles are made accessible to women? In order to grasp the ‘gender situation’ within the Yama Hoko Yatai festivals, it is relevant to examine both the complexities of individual festivals as well the larger structures and contexts. To that end, this study employs a multi-stage approach (see section 1.3 of this chapter).

The aim of the study is to provide valuable information and knowledge about the interaction between gender and ICH which will be useful for state parties and other stakeholders when revising policy, legislation and other instruments, including the 2003 convention. The goals of the study are to map the current gender roles and changes that has occurred in them, identify factors/triggers of change, examine whether the occurred changes have been naturalized, and examine whether the occurred changes have affected the sense of value and/or meaning of the festival.

Drawing from the resulting information and conclusions from these investigations, this study sets out to answer some overarching questions concerning the underlying mechanisms of the changes and of the gender roles being upheld. In the festivals where the gender roles/restrictions have changed – is there a pattern to how they have changed? What do gender roles mean for the continuation of the practice? Why have some festivals changed and not others? These questions are addressed in the discussions in Chapter 8.

1.1. What is Intangible Cultural Heritage and what is the role of gender?

Intangible cultural heritage is a complex topic. To begin with, the concept itself is hard to define, and there are several different viewpoints regarding what the term ICH means and includes. In some contexts, the term ICH is used in a sense that is encompassing the values ascribed to all things, places and practices that are labelled as heritage. Also, in acknowledging the subjectivity of heritage and destabilizing the idea of heritage as objective, it can be argued that, in a sense, all heritage can be rendered ‘intangible’ (Smith 2006, p.54).

In some contexts, we can find sentiments such as ‘the building has intangible values too’. Smith and Campbell (2018) have explored the problems related to talking about ‘intangible values’, and what it means for the conceptualization of intangible cultural heritage. They argue that the terms ‘intangible value’ and ‘tangible value’, while often used in an effort to bridge the divide between the concepts of intangible and tangible heritage, (inadvertently) serves to uphold the authorized heritage discourse (Smith 2006) and maintaining the dichotomy between intangible and tangible heritage (Smith and Campbell 2018).

There are various definitions of intangible cultural heritage. In the context of the 2003 convention, intangible cultural heritage is defined as “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage” (UNESCO 2003, Convention text, article 2.1). The definition also contains a set of criteria, referred to by the author as the ‘goodness criteria’, clarifying that “[f]or the purposes of this Convention, consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development” (ibid).

While the definition of ICH in the convention text is wide, five main categories, which are referred to as domains in the context of the 2003 convention, are pointed out. These are: (a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage; (b) performing arts; (c) social practices, rituals and festive

events; (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and (e) traditional craftsmanship (UNESCO 2003, Convention text, article 2.2).

In Japan, national legislation protecting intangible cultural heritage existed since before the creation of the 2003 convention. In the Japanese heritage legislation, there are three categories directly relating to intangible cultural heritage: Intangible Cultural Properties, Folk Cultural Properties (which is divided into Intangible Folk Cultural Properties and Tangible Folk Cultural Properties), and Conservation Techniques for Cultural Properties. While the first category covers drama, music, craft techniques and similar of “a significant historical or artistic value to Japan” (Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, article 2.2), the second category covers folk performing arts, folk skills, manners and customs related to for example religious faith and annual festivals, as well as objects relating thereto, “which are indispensable for the understanding of changes in the modes of life of the Japanese people” (Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, article 2.3). The third category covers “traditional techniques or skills which are indispensable for the conservation of cultural properties and which require positive measures for their preservation” (Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, article 147). Regarding the first category, individuals or groups can be recognized as ‘holders’ of the intangible cultural property in question. Similarly, concerning the selected preservation techniques, both individuals as well as preservation bodies can be recognized under the law.

The classification that the Agency for Cultural Affairs uses for folk performing arts is based on a classification developed by Honda Yasuji (Lancashire 2016, p.8). In Honda’s classification system, the float festivals are classified as a sub-category of *furyū* – a category mainly consisting of group dances. In Lancashire’s (2016) proposed categorization, which can be seen as a revision of Honda’s system, floats are separated from the group dances and given their own category.

It can be problematic to use the term ICH, partly because of unclear definitions, but also because of the range of the concepts included. If the term ICH includes such various concepts as knowledge, customs, festivities, rituals, performances, and handicraft, from a safeguarding point of view, it would be hard to argue that the same approach should be appropriate for all concepts. Kubota (2019) argues that, in discussions concerning ICH, it is necessary to develop a framework where the classification of ICH

is based on and suited for the topic at hand. In connection to this, it may be mentioned that this study is centred specifically around the Yama Hoko Yatai float festival.

ICH and gender

Concerning the safeguarding and preservation of heritage, it may be pointed out that cultural heritage, including ICH, is not inherently nor necessarily 'good'. While cultural heritage has often been used a tool for creating an image of a glorious past (Lowenthal 1998), cultural heritage can also be used for dealing with a painful history. While there has been an increased focus on so called negative heritage for example in the context of the World Heritage Convention, negative heritage has yet to receive the same attention within the field of ICH. Partly, this probably stems from the wording and implementation of the 2003 convention.

As mentioned in section 1.1 above, the 2003 convention has a set of 'goodness' criteria attached to its definition of ICH. In order to be recognized as heritage within the framework of the convention, the element in question must be "compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development" (UNESCO 2003, Convention text, article 2.1). In theory, the 'goodness criteria' would mean that traditional practices that cannot be considered to be in line with existing human rights instruments should not be recognized as elements by the convention and should therefore not be inscribed on the lists of the convention. However, as Blake has pointed out, it is difficult to find a clearly defined line separating acceptable practices from non-acceptable ones (Blake 2015, p. 286). More on this in Chapter 3.

This also means that it is difficult to approach the subject of gender, since gender discrimination within cultural practices is a contested topic. As Shaheed (2014) has pointed out, gender-discriminatory practices are often condoned by reference to culture. Shaheed writes that "gender-discrimination is so frequently defended by reference to culture, religion and tradition that it seems safe to conclude that no social group has suffered greater violation of human rights in the name of culture than women" (2014, foreword). A component of the contestation is the underlying debate between universalism and cultural relativism. There are differing views on whether human rights

standards always should apply to everyone equally, or if they must be seen in their respective cultural contexts. More on this in Chapter 3.

A point in question is whether gender restrictions within a certain cultural practice can be justified or not. This becomes an issue when it comes to safeguarding. It is easy to argue for the importance of preserving so-called negative heritage when it comes to documenting and safeguarding knowledge and information. However, when it comes to safeguarding an actual practice, the situation is different.

Another point in question is to what extent gender restrictions within a certain cultural practice can be argued to be necessary. The question is whether the gender roles/separations/restrictions are indispensable features of the practice or not. Could the practice live on even if the gender rules were changed? Or do the gender rules provide a meaning which makes the practice valuable? There are numerous examples of the former case. Some people might argue that the Kabuki theatre tradition offers an example of the latter case. In traditional Kabuki, the female role of *onnagata* is performed by men. Blake writes that the practice of men performing as *onnagata* presents “a subversive gender role” and that this expresses “a gender ambiguity and transformation that challenges binary female/male gender systems” (Blake 2016, p. 56).

However, as is also described in the inscription of Kabuki on the RL, it is also interesting to note that Kabuki theatre was originally performed by women, but that women were later banned from performing (Periodic report, Japan 2010 and 2016). As such, seeing how the gender rules have changed and how the theatre tradition is still performed today, it would be hard to argue that the gender restrictions were indispensable. However, it could be argued that seeing a man perform a characterization of femininity is interesting, and as such provides a valuable feature. This however raises several other questions concerning for example the characterization of the other roles. It also raises the question of what it would mean for a woman to perform a characterization of femininity. According to Butler (1993, 1999, 2004), gender itself is performed. From a research point of view, it is relevant to ask how it can be determined whether certain gender rules within a certain cultural practice are crucial features of the practice or not.

The float festivals are practices. It is not the floats themselves, but rather performing the procession of the floats, that is central to the continuation of the practice. As such, the continuation of the festivals is dependent on people wanting to and being

willing to perform them. In this, the transmission of knowledge is an important issue from a safeguarding point of view. In order to ensure the continuation of the practice, there needs to be a transfer of knowledge between generations. In the case of the festivals, apart from the practical know-how of how to for example manoeuvre the floats, it is also arguably a matter of transferring a sense of responsibility. As such, a key question is how the transmission is handled within the festivals and whether gender is a factor in that transmission.

1.2. Theoretical approach and framework

This study applies a critical heritage approach and asks how the festivals are being utilized as a tool in the creation, reiteration and renegotiation of gender, and how gender is being utilized in the creation, reiteration and renegotiation of the festivals. The focus of this research is on the dynamics of gender and ICH, and the float festivals are an interesting arena to study gender roles and restrictions and under which circumstances changes in these occur.

The theoretical framework of this study is informed by the works of Butler, West and Zimmerman in its approach to the social construction of gender, the works of Smith, amongst others, in its approach to the social construction of cultural heritage, and the works of Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Hafstein in regard to the act of listing heritage. In other words, both gender and cultural heritage are approached from a standpoint of regarding both concepts as social constructions. Furthermore, gender and heritage are regarded as not only the resulting construction, but also as the construction process.

Smith has written that “[t]here is, really, no such thing as heritage” (2006, p. 11), arguing that heritage can be understood as “a social process concerned with the creation and maintenance of certain social and cultural values” (ibid, p. 42). In this research, cultural heritage is viewed as a social construction., where the things and places proclaimed as artefacts, monuments, cultural landscapes etc. do not possess intrinsic heritage values. Rather, it is deemed that the values and meanings are ascribed to them, by us. As such, by ascribing certain values and meanings to things and places, we make them artefacts, monuments and cultural landscapes.

Lowenthal was early to explore how heritage is utilized as a tool. Lowenthal makes a distinction between history, aimed to uncovering and explaining the past, and heritage, used to exaggerate, hide, or other ways fabricate a suitable version of the past (Lowenthal 1998). Heritage is created in self-interest – to attest our identity, to promote a national myth, to affirm our worth (ibid, p. 122). Lowenthal writes that there is no point in vilifying heritage as biased, since creating a “[p]rejudiced pride in the past” is essentially its very purpose (ibid). Lowenthal writes that “[h]istory and heritage both refashion the past in present garb. But the former does so to make the past comprehensible, the latter to make it congenial”, arguing that while presentist reshaping is unavoidable for historians, for heritage, it is not only a necessity but “a virtue that fructifies links with the past” (Lowenthal 1998, p. 148).

In domesticating the past we enlist it for present causes. Legends of origin and endurance, of victory or calamity, project the present back, the past forward; they align us with forebears whose virtues we share and whose vices we shun. We are apt to call such communion history, but it is actually heritage. The distinction is vital. History explores and explains pasts grown ever more opaque over time; heritage clarifies pasts so as to infuse them with present purposes. (Lowenthal 1998, p. xv)

Gender performativity

“Discrete genders are part of what ‘humanizes’ individuals within contemporary culture; indeed, we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right.” (Butler 1999: 178)

Butler’s work on gender performativity has gained recognition for its influence on gender studies/queer studies. Butler’s work challenges the construction of ‘natural’ binary sex and the sex/gender distinction itself. In Butler’s notion of ‘performativity’, gender is performed. Gender is not something we are, but something we *do*, repeatedly and partly involuntarily.

If gender is a kind of doing, an incessant activity performed, in part, without one’s knowing and without one’s willing, it is not for that reason

automatic or mechanical. On the contrary, it is a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint. Moreover, one does not “do” one’s gender alone. One is always “doing” with or for another, even if the other is only imaginary. What I call my “own” gender appears perhaps at times as something that I author or, indeed, own. But the terms that make up one’s own gender are, from the start, outside oneself, beyond oneself in a sociality that has no single author (and that radically contests the notion of authorship itself). (Butler 2004: 1)

Butler writes that gender is also about repetition. It is not about a single act but about a repetition of acts that come to be seen as ‘natural’. Gender is at the same time the result of those repeated actions. Gender can be seen as the effect of a “stylized repetition of acts” (1999: 178-179). In other words, it is not that we learn to act a certain way because of our gender – gender itself is the result of those repeated actions.

West and Zimmerman (1987) write about gender as an accomplishment. They argue that “gender is not a set of traits, nor a variable, nor a role, but the product of social doings of some sort” (West and Zimmerman 1987, p.129). In other words, gender is something that we *do*. They write that “the ‘doing’ of gender is undertaken by women and men whose competence as members of society is hostage to its production” (ibid, p. 126).

Doing gender means creating differences between girls and women and men, differences that are not natural, essential, biological. Once the differences have been constructed, they are used to reinforce the “essentialness” of gender. (ibid, p. 137)

Gender and sex

A distinction is often made between sex and gender, where sex is seen as biology, while gender is seen as a social construction. Both sex and gender are often seen as binary. This view is not unchallenged however. In *Doing Gender* (1987), West and Zimmerman propose a distinction between *sex*, *sex category*, and *gender*.

Sex is a determination made through the application of socially agreed upon biological criteria for classifying persons as females or males. The criteria for classification can be genitalia at birth or chromosomal typing before birth, and they do not necessarily agree with one another. Placement in a *sex category* is achieved through application of the sex criteria, but in everyday life, categorization is established and sustained by the socially required identificatory displays that proclaim one's membership in one or the other category. In this sense, one's sex category presumes one's sex and stands as proxy for it in many situations, but sex and sex category can vary independently; that is, it is possible to claim membership in a sex category even when the sex criteria are lacking. *Gender*, in contrast, is the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category. Gender activities emerge from and bolster claims to membership in a sex category. (West and Zimmerman 1987, p. 127)

Butler disrupts the sex/gender distinction further by saying that the notion of sex itself is already gendered. Butler writes that the “sex/gender distinction and the category of sex itself appear to presuppose a generalization of ‘the body’ that pre-exists the acquisition of its sexed significance” (1999, p. 164). The body, however, is gendered before it comes into social existence, meaning that there is no ‘natural body’ which exists before being culturally inscribed (Salih 2007, p. 55). What is seen as sexual differences then, although often seen as an issue of material differences, is according to Butler “never simply a function of material differences which are not in some way both marked and formed by discursive practices” (1993, p. 1).

But how, then, does the notion of gender performativity relate to this conception of materialization? In the first instance, performativity must be understood not as a singular of deliberate “act,” but, rather as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names. What will, I hope, become clear in that follows is that the regulatory norms of “sex” work in a performative fashion to constitute the

materiality of bodies and, more specifically, to materialize the body's sex, to materialize sexual difference in the service of the consolidation of the heterosexual imperative. (ibid, p. 2)

Listing heritage

The Yama Hoko Yatai float festivals are recognised within two safeguarding systems – the national heritage legislation and the international UNESCO convention. The festivals are processed – handled and described – within these systems, both with their own contexts. The contexts formed by these safeguarding systems are separated from the local circumstances where the practice actually takes place.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004) notes how far it is between the formal systems designed for safeguarding intangible heritage and the actual practice, pointing out “how different the professional heritage enterprise is from the heritage that is to be safeguarded” (p. 55). While ICH tends to be regarded as collective practices, being ‘transmitted’ in a way that often implies a sense of passivity on behalf of the ‘carriers’, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett highlights the agency of those who practice the traditions in question.

Unlike other living entities, whether animals or plants, people are not only objects of cultural preservation but also subjects. They are not only cultural carriers and transmitters (the terms are unfortunate, as is ‘masterpiece’), but also agents in the heritage enterprise itself. What the heritage protocols do not generally account for is a conscious, reflexive subject. They speak of collective creation. Performers are carriers, transmitters, and bearers of traditions, terms which connote a passive medium, conduit, or vessel, without volition, intention, or subjectivity. (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004, p. 58)

Hafstein, who has written extensively about the 2003 convention, notes that the use of lists itemise culture (2009). Hafstein writes that the lists of ICH “artificialise cultural practices and expressions, decontextualizing them from the social relations in which they take place in order to recontextualise them in national inventories with reference to other practices and expressions under the same national government and in international lists

with reference to other ‘masterpieces’ of humanity”, and thereby rendering the practices transferable (ibid, p.105). Hafstein writes that the use of lists as instruments and heritage as category have similarities.

Both depend on selection; both disembed their objects from previous contexts, rendering them discontinuous in some aspects from their surroundings; and both recontextualise them with respect to other objects similarly selected, according them a generality and value that is derived from the authority of the persons or institutions that sanction the selection. (ibid, p.108)

Hafstein (2004 and 2009) has also written about how the convention was created and about the negotiations preceding the creation of its lists. In *Intangible heritage as a list; From masterpieces to representation*, Hafstein (2009) writes that the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in particular is the result of a compromise between three different conflicting views since some delegates wanted a List of Masterpieces/Treasures, some preferred a more inclusive universal inventory, and some wanted no list at all. Hafstein discusses the uses of lists and the implications of listing heritage and reflects upon what listing has meant for the 2003 Convention thus far.

As defined by UNESCO’s Convention and its activities in this field so far, intangible cultural heritage *is* a list. Intangible heritage is a mechanism of selection and display. It is a tool for channelling attention and resources to certain cultural practices and not to others. Intangible heritage is both a dance-band *and* a hospital: a serious enterprise concerned with the life and death of traditions and communities *and* a fund-raising dinner dance party with colourful costumes, glaring spotlights, and rhythmic tunes. (ibid, p. 108)

Heritage management and heritage listing systems can be seen as bureaucratic practices, and Tauschek (2013) has highlighted the bureaucratic aspects of heritage protection systems. Tauschek also notes that the bureaucratic heritage management systems, once in

place, tend to have lingering effects, writing that “once legislation is constituted, it cannot easily be changed; once heritage lists are installed, they will be constantly replenished” (ibid, p. 208).

1.3. Methodology

A point in question is how the ‘gender situation’ within the festivals can be clarified. Each festival is unique, and the complexities of the ‘gender situation’ within the individual festivals are connected to the local circumstances. As such, grasping the ‘gender situation’ of a particular festival calls for in-depth examination of how the local stakeholders experience the festival. At the same time, gender can also be understood on a structural level. The individual festivals and their festival communities do not exist in a vacuum. How the gender roles and gender restrictions of the individual festivals form, and are part of, larger gender structures can be understood by looking at the festivals on a collective level. Furthermore, it is also relevant to look at the festivals not only from the ‘inside’ (i.e. by using primary data such as first-hand accounts from the actual festival practitioners), but also from the ‘outside’. To that end, this study applies a multi-step approach using a combination of methods. The aim is to gain a good understanding of the gender circumstances by looking at both the complexities of individual festivals as well as the larger structures. The research design is geared to strike a balance between width and depth. In the interest of finding meaningful patterns in this specific type of festival, the festivals are approached collectively, but at a sufficient depth to understand the relevant circumstances. It may be reiterated that the research is aimed at understanding the role of gender within traditional practices, and why and how gender rules change, and that the festivals make for an interesting arena to study this topic.

A permission to conduct a survey and interviews was requested from the University’s Ethics Committee in June 2018. A permission was granted from the Arts Division Conflict of Interest Committee in July 2018 (file no *Gei* 30-3). See detailed descriptions on methodology in respective chapter.

One point in question is who (what roles) are considered to be participants and who are not. Participation can be viewed from different viewpoints. On a formal level, participation can be seen as membership in the preservation associations, while on an

informal level, participation can be seen as a matter of recognition. The question of who should count as participants remains an open question. In this study, the focus is placed on participation according to the preservation associations.

Questionnaire/survey

A survey was conducted among the preservation associations connected to the 36 festivals. The purpose of the survey was to map the current gender situation in the respective festivals. The questionnaire which was sent out inquired about the preservation associations' membership structure, gender roles and restrictions in the festivals, as well as changes that have occurred in these roles and restrictions.

There is a limit to the level of detail that can be expected in the replies from a survey by questionnaire. By requesting a high degree of detail, by for example listing roles and requesting information on gender tendencies and rules for each role, there is a risk that the survey will go unanswered, and that the structure of the questionnaire might affect the replies. On the other hand, by allowing a high degree of freedom in the replies, there is a risk that the obtained information might be scarce. In other words, the questionnaire could not be expected to provide exhaustive information about all roles and structures of the festivals. However, the questionnaire could nevertheless provide valuable information about the individual festivals – also allowing overarching structures to be rendered visible. In order to examine the situation in depth, interviews were conducted with a number of selected preservation organisations.

Interviews

Upon analysis of the results of the survey described above, a number of festivals where changes in the gender rules had occurred were selected, and the respective preservation associations were contacted for interviews. Interviews were conducted with a total of seven preservation associations. The aim was to grasp the circumstances of the gender situation within the individual festivals. The interview questions were mainly focused on the details of the different roles and rules, the changes that had occurred in the gender roles and rules – what had changed, why it had changed, and how it happened – and on whether the changes had been naturalized and whether they had affected the perceived value or meaning of the festival.

Analysis of the official descriptions of the festivals within the national and international ICH safeguarding systems

It is also relevant to understand the wider context. To that end, the official descriptions of the festivals within the contexts of the relevant national as well as international safeguarding systems were also analyzed. The Yama Hoko Yatai float festivals are recognized in two heritage safeguarding systems – the national legislative system and UNESCO’s Representative List. This means that, as part of those designation and inscription processes, the festivals have been handled and described within those respective contexts. The official descriptions of the festivals within these two systems were analysed in order to examine how gender is approached in the descriptions of the festivals within those respective contexts. In terms of research material, the study uses material published by the Agency for Cultural Affairs¹ as well as the nominations files and periodic reports submitted by Japan to UNESCO.

Research questions and scope

In accordance with the goals of the study (see the beginning of this chapter), in conducting the field work and analysis, the investigation was guided by a set of research questions: 1) What is the current gender situation (current gender roles and current gender restrictions) within the 36 float festivals?, 2) How and why do changes to gender roles happen?: How have gender roles and gender rules changed?; What caused the change?; Has the change been naturalized?; Has the change affected the perceived sense of value or meaning of the festival?, 3) How is gender approached and described within the ICH safeguarding system(s) in Japan? As mentioned earlier in this chapter, based on the resulting information and conclusions from these investigations, overarching questions concerning the underlying mechanisms of the changes and of the gender roles being upheld will be discussed in Chapter 8.

Concerning scope, this study targets the 36 festivals represented by the National Association for the Preservation of Float Festivals. See Table 1 below for a list of the

¹ Upon designation, cultural properties are announced by the Agency for Cultural Affairs in the *Gekkan bunkazai* journal.

locations and names of the festivals, as well as their year of designation as protected heritage properties under Japanese heritage legislation. See map in of the locations in the beginning of Chapter 1. Population data can be found in Appendix III.

Table 1. Overview of the 36 festivals examined: name, location and year of designation as Important intangible folk cultural property.

Region	Prefecture	City/town	Name of festival	Year of designation as Important intangible folk cultural property
Tōhoku	Aomori	Hachinohe	Hachinohe Sansha Daisai no Dashi Gyōji	2004
Tōhoku	Akita	Senboku	Kakunodate Matsuri no Yama Gyōji	1991
Tōhoku	Akita	Akita	Tsuchizaki Shinmeishasai no Hikiyama Gyōji	1997
Tōhoku	Akita	Kazuno	Hanawa Matsuri no Yatai Gyōji	2014
Tōhoku	Yamagata	Shinjō	Shinjō Matsuri no Yatai Gyōji	2009
Kantō	Ibaraki	Kita-ibaraki	Hitachi Ōtsu no Ofunematsuri	2017
Kantō	Ibaraki	Hitachi	Hitachi Furyūmono	1977
Kantō	Tochigi	Nasukarasuyama	Karasuyama no Yamaage Gyōji	1979
Kantō	Tochigi	Kanuma	Kanuma Imamiya Jinjasai no Yatai Gyōji	2003
Kantō	Saitama	Chichibu	Chichibu Matsuri no Yatai Gyōji to Kagura	1979
Kantō	Saitama	Kawagoe	Kawagoe Hikawa Matsuri no Dashi Gyōji	2005
Kantō	Chiba	Katori	Sawara no Dashi Gyōji	2004
Chūbu	Niigata	Murakami	Murakami Matsuri no Yatai Gyōji	2018
Chūbu	Toyama	Takaoka	Takaoka Mikurumayama Matsuri no Mikurumayama Gyōji	1979
Chūbu	Toyama	Uozu	Uozu no Tatemon Gyōji	1997
Chūbu	Toyama	Nanto	Jōhana Shinmeigūsai no Hikiyama Gyōji	2002

Chūbu	Ishikawa	Nanao	Seihakusai no Hikiyama Gyōji	1983
Chūbu	Gifu	Takayama	Takayama Matsuri no Yatai Gyōji	1979
Chūbu	Gifu	Hida	Furukawa Matsuri no Okoshidaiko Yatai Gyōji	1980
Chūbu	Gifu	Ōgaki	Ōgaki Matsuri no Yama Gyōji	2015
Chūbu	Aichi	Tsushima/Aisai	Owari Tsushima Tennōsai no Danjiribune Gyōji	1980
Chūbu	Aichi	Chiryū	Chiryū no Dashi Bunraku to Karakuri	1990
Chūbu	Aichi	Inuyama	Inuyama Matsuri no Yama Gyōji	2006
Chūbu	Aichi	Handa	Kamezaki Shiohi Matsuri no Dashi Gyōji	2006
Chūbu	Aichi	Kanie	Sunari Matsuri no Danjiribune Gyōji to Miyoshi Nagashi	2012
Kinki	Mie	Yokkaichi	Toride Jinja no Kujirabune Gyōji	1997
Kinki	Mie	Iga	Ueno Tenjin Matsuri no Danjiri Gyōji	2002
Kinki	Mie	Kuwana	Kuwana Ishidori Matsuri no Saisha Gyōji	2007
Kinki	Shiga	Nagahama	Nagahama Hikiyama Matsuri no Hikiyama Gyōji	1979
Kinki	Shiga	Ōtsu	Ōtsu Matsuri	2016
Kinki	Kyōto	Kyōto	Kyōto Gion Matsuri no Yamahoko Gyōji	1979
Kyūshū	Fukuoka	Fukuoka	Hakata Gion Yamakasa Gyōji	1979
Kyūshū	Fukuoka	Kitakyūshū	Tobata Gion Ōyamagasa Gyōji	1980
Kyūshū	Saga	Karatsu	Karatsu Kunchi no Hikiyama Gyōji	1980
Kyūshū	Kumamoto	Yatsushiro	Yatsushiro Myōkensai no Shinkō Gyōji	2011
Kyūshū	Oita	Hita	Hita Gion no Hikiyama Gyōji	1996

Notes:

1. Japanese names and words have been Romanized according to the Modified Hepburn system.
2. The festivals are listed in geographical order of the regions and prefectures, from north to south/east to west.
3. All festivals except for Ōtsu Matsuri, Hitachi Ōtsu no Ofunematsuri, and Murakami Matsuri no Yatai Gyōji are inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Delimitations

It may be noted that while the festivals are at the centre of the study, the focus is entirely on the gender aspects of the festivals. Therefore, topics such as the details surrounding the history of individual festivals and the construction of the floats, will not be addressed in detail in this study. The main topic is the interaction between ICH and gender, and the Yama Hoko Yatai festivals provide an interesting arena for studying changes in gender roles and gender restrictions.

Concerning the changes in gender roles, this study is focused on changes that are remembered and known by the local stakeholders, rather than historical changes. In other words, the purpose is not to map all changes in gender roles and restrictions that have occurred in the festivals since their beginning until today. Rather, this study is focused on what role gender plays in the transmission of the practice today.

The Kyōto Gion festival holds a special place among the festivals, being the oldest and arguably the most famous of the Yama Hoko Yatai festivals. Unfortunately, there was no reply from Kyōto to the survey sent out by the author. Consequently, since the interviews were conducted as follow-up studies based on the results of the survey, no interviews were conducted in Kyōto. While it is unfortunate that no in-depth studies could be conducted concerning the Kyōto Gion festival, it could also be seen as an opportunity to let other festivals take centre stage. While the Kyōto Gion festival has been examined in numerous studies, some other Yama Hoko Yatai type of festivals are less well-known. As such, the interviews conducted in this study, as well as the survey, provide valuable sources of information.

The survey and the interviews were conducted by the author in Japanese. It should be mentioned that Japanese is not the author's native language, and it is possible that some information might have been missed in the interviews. Furthermore, it may be noted that, while arguably problematic, a binary gender system is frequently used in this study. Regarding the distinction between the terms gender and sex in English, it should be noted that the interviews and the survey were conducted in Japanese, and the data examined in Chapter 4 is similarly in Japanese. For example, concerning the survey, both the terms sex ratio and gender roles are used in the English translation of the questionnaire. However, in the original Japanese version, the terms *danjohi* (which can be translated into either sex ratio or gender ratio), *danjo no yakuwari* (which can be roughly translated

to ‘the roles of men and women’) and *danjo no yakuwari buntan* (which can be roughly translated into ‘the role division of men and women’) are used. Concerning the categorization of people into the two groups ‘women’ and ‘men’, it should be pointed out that this study is interested in the social significance associated with and implications connected to these social categories. Also, as have been mentioned in Section 1.2 above, while a distinction is often made between socially constructed gender and biological sex, Butler (1999) has argued that the notion of sex itself is already gendered.

Notes on the spelling of Japanese words

Japanese words and names are romanized using the Modified Hepburn system. However, exceptions are made in some cases. For example, well-established place names, such as Tokyo, are spelled according to the commonly used name. As such, the place names Tokyo and Osaka are used instead of Tōkyō and Ōsaka. The city of Kyoto is in this study referred to both as Kyoto as well Kyōto, depending on the context. Since Kyōto is home to one of the Yama Hoko Yatai festivals being examined in this study, this place name is mainly handled in the same way as the other festival locations, i.e. in accordance with the Modified Hepburn system. The author mainly uses the commonly used spelling – Kyoto – when referencing other material, as this spelling is frequently used in the reference material. Regarding the use of personal names, Japanese names are written in the order *family name* followed by *given name*. Western names are written in the opposite order.

Japanese words, such as *hozonkai* (preservation association) are generally italicized. However, well-established words, such as sumo wrestling, are not italicized and are spelled in accordance with the commonly used western spelling. As such, the wrestling sport is referred to as sumo instead of *sumō*.

Chapter layout:

Chapter 1 introduces the research topic and presents the research design. Chapter 2 gives an introduction to the float festivals and gives an outline of previous research concerning gender within the practice of Japanese festivals. Chapter 3 outlines the scholarly debate on gender within the international heritage field. Chapters 4 and 5 examine the handling and descriptions of the Yama Hoko Yatai float festivals within the contexts of the national and international safeguarding systems – the national legislative system and UNESCO’s

Representative List. Chapters 6 and 7 are focused on the on-site situation as recognized by the current practitioners, where Chapter 6 presents the survey conducted among the 36 preservation associations, and Chapter 7 presents the results of the interviews conducted with seven preservation associations. Results are summarized and discussed in Chapter 8.

2. The floats festivals – a background

The first part of this chapter provides a background and introduction to the Yama Hoko Yatai float festivals. The second part of this chapter outlines the scholarly debates concerning gender in Japanese festivals. A special focus is placed on the Kyōto Gion festival. Moreover, the second part also addresses topics such as the social significance of festival participation and customary female exclusion.

2.1. What are the Yama Hoko Yatai float festivals?

The Yama Hoko Yatai float festivals take place in various locations in regions all over Japan. While there is a large variety among the festivals, which differ from each other in a number of ways, they all center around a procession of floats. These floats are called by various names, for example *dashi*, *danjiri*, *yama*, *hoko*, *kasaboko*, *yatai*, et cetera, depending on the structure of the float as well as on the location and regional dialect. The floats are pulled, pushed and in other ways manoeuvred around town (or on water), usually with *hayashi* music or some other performances, such as *karakuri* (mechanical dolls and devices), taking place atop the floats.

The author has visited three festivals (one of them twice), all located in the vicinity of the Tokyo area: the Chichibu Festival, the Kawagoe Hikawa Festival, and the Sawara Float Festival. All three festivals feature processions of carefully ornamented festival floats but have distinctly different characters. The festivals are festive events and the most popular ones attract big crowds of spectators. While the festivals are usually crowded, the float ‘crew’ are easily recognizable as they wear special festival outfits. The festival outfits vary between float neighbourhoods and also between different roles. The floats are manoeuvred through the streets as onlookers take pictures. Some of them feature large dolls, as in for example the Sawara festival, mechanical puppets, or other performances. Turning the floats is a laborious operation and a point of interest for some of the onlookers. Other popular points of interest include when meeting floats engage in musical ‘battles’, such as for example in the Kawagoe festival, or clash against another, the manoeuvring of the floats through an especially challenging section or terrain, and the sight when all the floats are lined up. The music being performed on the floats is also a distinguishable

feature of the festivals and the drums can be heard from far away when nearing a procession. The festivals also draw commerce, and food stalls often line the streets.

Most floats are pulled using long ropes. Pulling the ropes to move the float forward is one of the major roles of the festivals. Since the floats are heavy, this task requires a certain number of people on each float in order to move it around. In some festivals, there are also steering poles attached to the platforms/base of the floats. These are used for example when changing the direction of the float.

It should be mentioned that the construction of the floats varies in several ways, such as shape, ornamentation and assembly technique, as well as in terms of how they are manoeuvred. Most of the floats are wheeled constructions, pulled by ropes. Some are not pulled by using ropes but are manoeuvred using only the steering poles (such as for example in the Inuyama festival) or by gripping the floats (such as for example in the Toride festival). Although rare, instead of wheels, some floats have a sled-like construction, as in the case of the Uozu festival. Some floats are boats, as in for example the Owari Tsushima Tennō festival, being manoeuvred on water instead of around town. Other floats are in the shape of boats, but are wheeled constructions paraded around town.

Another major role is that of *hayashi* (musician). In a number of festivals, this task is carried out by children and youth. The musicians usually sit on top of the floats, or inside them. Common instruments are drums, flutes and bells.

There are many different roles and the festivals differ somewhat in organisation. For example, some festivals also have the role of escort/guard, and in some festivals there is the role of dancer. There are various roles concerning the operation of the floats. Some of these include supervisor, (traffic) negotiator, directing the floats using wooden clappers, etc. In Uozu for example, there is also the role of handling the ropes attached to the top of the floats, used for stabilization. There is also the role of climbing up to light or replace lanterns. While the organizational composition, and sometimes the terminology, differs between different festivals, a lot of the main roles are the same. Some of the commonly occurring roles/assignments are: playing instruments (*hayashi*, *hayashikata*), pulling the floats (*hikite*, *hikiko*, *hikitsuna*), and manoeuvring the floats using the poles and levers attached to the platform (*katsugite*, *teko*).²

² In colloquial speech, the name of the instrument/tool is often also used as a name for the role.



Photographer: Helga Janse, 13 October 2018, Katori, Chiba prefecture. To the left: Musicians (hayashi) sitting on a float. To the right: Hikite preparing to pull a float.

The origin of the Yama Hoko Yatai festivals can be found in Kyōto. The year of the earliest reliable accounts of the Kyōto Gion festival seems contested. While the 9th century – and the year 869 in particular – is sometimes referred to as a starting point (National Association for the Preservation of Float Festivals 2000, and the UNESCO nomination file for ‘Yama, Hoko, Yatai, float festivals in Japan’ 2016), scholars such as Ueki (2001b) mention records of the Kyōto *goryō-e* (see below) from the 10th century (p. 45).

The origin of the festival seems to be connected to the occurrence of diseases running rampant in the hot summer months. In order to prevent such diseases, the restless spirits (*onryō* or *goryō*) believed to be connected to these epidemics needed to be placated and amused. These restless spirits were often believed to be the souls of important noblemen having suffered a violent death (Brumann 2012, p 165) and the spirits of powerful people who had been subjected to an injustice were to be especially feared (Plutschow 1996, p 72). Events to appease the spirits and put them to rest, so-called *goryō-e* were held. In Kyōto, these *goryō-e* were originally held outside the city gates (Plutschow 1996, and Brumann 2012). Eventually, when instead of restless spirits, deities were attributed control over the epidemics, the events moved into the cities and became fixed annual events (Brumann 2012, p. 165f).

According to Ueki (2001b), calamity was associated with the gods, and the purpose of the festival was to disperse those gods (p. 14-15). This way of thinking was the start of the start of the Yama Hoko Yatai festivals. The basic concept involves building a *shinza* ('seat of the god') for the gods, and when the god 'inhabits' that seat, moving the seat to a different location, and then sending the god off. From around the Middle Ages, *furyuu hayashimono* was added. During the movement of the *shinza* (with the god in it), the idea is to please and entertain the god, in order to suppress its anger, by playing music (*hayashi*) and dancing etc. (Ueki 2001b, p. 14-15)

The *hoko* can be said to be imitating a *shinden* (sacred place, such as a shrine or temple), as the *hoko* resembles the 4 sacred pillars surrounding the *shinden* (Ueki 2001b, p. 15). According to Ueki, this was the original meaning of the *hoko*. As the years passed, the *hoko* took on another meaning and got to be associated with spears. (Ueki 2001b, p. 15) The *yama* floats are imitating the sacred god-mountains (ibid, p. 15).

According to Ueki (2001b), in the 8th Kyōto, the Kamo festival was a major festival (p. 31). Before the Kamo festival, so-called *miare* and *mikage* festivals were held (ibid, p. 13-14). These were festivals for greeting (*omukae*) the gods coming from holy mountains (ibid, p.14). In these festivals, a *kamiyama* ('god-mountain') was used. In other words, a tradition of (going and) greeting the gods who were coming was already existing (ibid, p. 14).

Starting with the Yamaboko festival of Kyōto, this type of festival later spread to other regions (Ueki 2001b, p. 159). From 1432, there are written records of the festival in Hakata, with 12 *yama* (Ueki 2001b, p. 161). It is not known when the festival in Tsushima started, but the earliest written records are from 1522 (Ueki 2001b, p. 172).

According to Kobayashi (2017), the festivals began in (pre)medieval cities such as Kyoto and Hakata, and later spread to Hansei period core cities in various regions. The festivals developed as distinctly urban festivals, different from the festivals in rural areas (Kobayashi 2017, p. 6). The Yama Hoko Yatai festivals found in Japan today, Kobayashi writes, have been influenced considerably by the Kyōto Gion festival. The lavish Kyōto Gion festival became an attraction, and later spread to the provincial and rural towns. And then, when the monetary economy became established in the middle of the early modern period, many festivals centred on Yama, Hoko, and Yatai floats appeared in large numbers throughout the country (ibid, p. 7).

There is a wide variety of floats and the various festivals differ in character. While some are luxurious displays of wealth, other are most modest. Regarding the types of floats found in the festivals today, Ueki (2001b) mentions the *yama* (constructed in the image/concept of a mountain), *hoko* (with a long object carried atop the float), *kasaboko* (constructed in the shape of a *kasa*), and *geiyatai* (a movable stage on a float) which can be either carried or pulled (Ueki 2001b, p. 62). Some festivals were/are celebrated as prayers for prosperity, others for maritime safety, or staving off epidemics. There are various types of performances taking place on top of the floats, such as *hayashi* (festival band/orchestra), dancing, puppet theatre, *karakuri* displays, etc.



Photographer: Helga Janse, 21 October 2018, Kawagoe, Saitama prefecture. Three festival floats face off in a musical showdown ('hikkawase').

The festivals are organized by the local residents. Nowadays, the festival communities also have an official organizational structure, in the form of preservation associations (*hozonkai*). The operations and management of each festival is in general handled by the preservation association. Usually, each float neighbourhood also has its own organization, with sub-groups based on age (and in some cases gender). Different sub-groups are assigned with different tasks.

As such, in general, the roles are connected to the festivals' organizational structure, which is based on age (and in some cases gender). Certain roles are performed by people of a certain age (and gender) group. In other words, the (eligible) participants

move through the organization, performing various duties/roles within the festival, as the years go by.

2.2. Gender in Japanese festivals

Float festivals are common in Japan, and women are traditionally restricted from participation, for reasons pertaining to religious concerns about purity (Suzuki 2002, p. 13). As such, the Yama Hoko Yatai float festivals are traditionally considered to be male events. As will be shown in Chapter 6, many of the festival have restrictions on female participation in certain roles, and in a number of festivals, women are entirely prohibited from participating. However, Wakita's research on medieval Japan calls that unambiguous maleness into question.

According to Wakita (2016), based on the depictions from the early Edo period of women riding on *hoko* floats, women probably participated in the Kyōto Gion festival in the early days. The concept of *nyonin kinsei* (the customary prohibition of women from accessing certain spaces and participating in certain practices, see end of this chapter) gained foothold in the mid to late Edo period society and spread to festivals as well. This was connected to the *kegare* belief, involving the idea that blood from childbirth and menstruation is filthy, and thus leading to rejection and discrimination of women (Wakita 2016, p. 215). Seen from this perspective, the *nyonin kinsei* tradition of the Kyōto Gion festival can be considered to be an invented tradition (Suzuki 2002, p. 12f).

The Kyōto Gion festival of today is largely segregated by gender, although some changes have occurred in recent years (see below). Brumann writes that “until after the war, women were prohibited from mounting the *hoko* and *hikiyama* before the festival, and three *hoko* still observe this taboo in the present day” (Brumann 2012, p. 195). Furthermore, women are not supposed to step over the ropes of the Naginataboko float or touch the *chigo* (sacred child) of this float, who is also restricted from eating food prepared by women during the period leading up to and during the festival (ibid). Brumann describes the division of labour in the Miyabiyama-chō neighbourhood, where the floats are male domains but where men's participation is made possible by the support of women's work behind-the-scenes (2012, p. 195).

The gender roles and gender restrictions of the modern-day Kyōto Gion festival have been subject to debate and discussion. In 1996, the Heisei Onnaboko float, intended for an all-female hayashi troop, was created. They started recruiting members the same year and received around 200 applications (Heisei Onnaboko Sayanekai 2016). That same year, the group participated in the Kyōto festival (different from the Gion festival), as well as in a dedication ceremony (*hōnōbayashi*) at Yasaka Shrine (ibid). The float has also been displayed in the new station building (Brumann 2012, p. 197). However, the Heisei Onnaboko float has yet to take part in the main events of the Gion matsuri, but the hayashi troop continues to take part in the dedication ceremony at Yasaka Shrine every year (Heisei Onnaboko Sayanekai 2016).

However, an important change concerning women's participation happened in 2001. At a public panel discussion about female participation, a member of the audience revealed that in his float neighbourhood, women had been participating as *hayashikata* for years (Brumann 2012, p. 198). Since the secret was out, the matter had to be addressed. Later that year, in June, the central festival committee chairman “declared that, reflecting general societal change, women would henceforth be allowed to participate in the parade, on the condition that the committee is informed in advance and that the women wear the same dress as men” (ibid). According to Brumann, there was a public support for allowing women to participate, with the press generally hailing the decision, and an informant of Brumann's on the committee reportedly commented that it was “the only thing they could do, given also that there was no way to defeat public opinion on this point” (ibid). Two floats announced that women would be participating as musicians, and the Agency for Cultural Affairs ruled that since the gender of the participants is not mentioned in the designation of the festival as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property, there was no problem in allowing this (Inoue 2006, p. 64). Brumann has described how the heritage status of the festival was used in the discussions:

Gion matsuri committee officials were wise enough not to play the religious card and rather argued against female participation because the cultural-property status demanded the painstaking preservation of the festival's form. When the Dōjiyama did not back down, however, this also provided a convenient way out for the supreme authority over the heritage

aspect. Rather shrewdly, Agency for Cultural Affairs officials stated that the gender of participants was not mentioned in the tenets for the designation as intangible heritage in 1979 (when, of course, nobody had even thought of female participation). (Brumann 2012, p. 199)

As such, in 2001, a total of five women on two floats participated, thereby officially breaking the rule of female exclusion (Brumann 2012, p. 198). In 2002, the number of female *hayashikata* had decreased from five to three, and the intense media coverage from the previous year was gone (Brumann 2012, p. 201).

According to Brumann, it seems that many women in the concerned neighbourhoods were against the change to make it possible for women to participate. Reportedly, most of the supporters of female participation were men. Several men also reportedly assumed that the festival would see more female participation in the future. (Brumann 2012, 199f)

The modern-day gender restrictions have also been scrutinized in other festivals, for example in the Hakata Gion Yamakasa festival in Fukuoka. Up until 2003, women were denied access for reasons of ‘impurity’ but were allowed access after claims of sexual discrimination (Lancashire 2016, p. 179).

Another example is the Hita Gion festival in Oita prefecture. In 2017, it was announced that women would be allowed to participate as *hayashi* in the pre-event taking place a couple of days before the main festival event in the Hita Gion festival (Nishi Nippon, news article published 2017-06-25, accessed 2019-09-16.). However, the event was cancelled due to heavy rainfall. The following year however, in 2018, women successfully participated in the pre-event for the first time (Nishi Nippon, news article published 2018-06-19, accessed 2019-09-16.).

Oguni (2014) categorizes festivals into five categories, based on their gender restrictions: Gender equal type, where participation does not depend on gender; Traditional female exclusion type, where women are restricted from participation, Traditional role division type, where women and men have (traditionally) separate roles; Declining birth-rates type, where female participation has been allowed due to declining birth-rates, and; One-section participation, where women are allowed to participate in a special frame/setting.

Social significance of festival participation

The social significance of festival participation has been studied by Roemer (2007). Roemer's study on the Kyōto Gion festival finds that festival participation is associated with a positive sense of community, yielding lasting social support networks. Noting that while women are often active behind the scenes and allowed to participate to a limited extent in certain events, participation in the most significant events and key roles are restricted to only men, Roemer writes that “the kinds of communal bonds formed and social support received reflect the predominantly paternalistic nature of this traditional festival hierarchy” (2007, p. 190).

The aspect of the social significance of the festivals is also mentioned within the context of the 2003 convention, in the nomination file for the inscription of ‘Yama, Hoko, Yatai, float festivals in Japan’ on the RL. In the description of what social functions and cultural meanings the element has for its community, the nomination file mentions how the festival “lies at the heart of the lives of all members of the concerned community as the main event of each region” and how the festivals “also have significance in the spiritual lives of the community members as sources of their vitality” (Nomination file of Yama, Hoko, Yatai, float festivals in Japan, p. 5).

In order to successfully prepare for and celebrate the festivals, each member of the communities takes charge of his/her specific role and works together. Such cooperation creates bonds within the communities that transcend age, status and gender. The float festivals therefore fulfill the social functions of uniting all community members and allowing them to reaffirm their identities as members of the community every year. (Nomination file of Yama, Hoko, Yatai, float festivals in Japan, p. 5)

A study by Morinaga and Doi (2016) examines men's and women's perception of the Hakata Gion Yamakasa festival. Their study found that women and men, having different roles, showed differences in their awareness of the festival. Namely, their study found that while men were focused on the ‘festival in itself’ (*matsuri sono mono*), women were focused on support and looking after the family. (Morinaga and Doi 2016)

While addressing the matter of folk performing arts in general and not the Yama Hoko Yatai festivals specifically, Ueki mentioned the behind-the-scenes roles in a 2001 keynote lecture. Speaking about the significance folk performing arts can have on strengthening community bonds, Ueki mentioned the joy of performing, and how this feeling can be shared also by the people working in the background.

I believe that folk performing arts can play a great role in efforts to bring back to life the power to instruct and build character in people which local society has in the past demonstrated. Participation in these arts brings together various people into one body with a common goal, and gives birth to a special feeling that I would call the joy of performing, and which is also experienced by those working behind the scenes. (Ueki 2001a, p. 37)

More research is needed on the attitudes among the people active in behind-the-scenes roles and those whose participation is restricted. In other words, more research is needed on how the gender roles and gender restrictions are experienced by the people affected by them. The ‘joy of performing’, as Ueki (2001a, p. 37) mentioned, is one aspect which is interesting to examine. However, aside from the matter of enjoyment, another point in question is how the social bonds created due to participation affect other areas in a person’s life, such as for example career opportunities.

Although focusing on a different type of festival, Traphagan (2000) has examined how ritual performance functions to reproduce elder male power. The study offers an interesting description and analysis of the age-based structure of the concerned neighbourhood associations. In the study, Traphagan notes how gender is an aspect in the reproduction of power.

The ritual contributes to representing and reproducing the power of older residents in a rural Japanese community, partly due to its being administratively situated within an age grade system that is part of the political organization of area neighborhoods. The ritual reproduces stratified social structures that concentrate power in the hands of male members of the senior age grade. As such, elaboration of the ritual

performance serves to strengthen what is, in many respects, a gerontocratic form of social organization operating in some parts of Japan. (Traphagan 2000, p. 82)

Female exclusion

Nyonin kinsei and *nyonin kekkai* are two terms used for the customary exclusion of women.³ DeWitt (2015) writes that, while used interchangeably today, the terms differ in historical context, and describes how religious regulations, restricting the access to the use of a space for only certain people or groups, turned into a permanent exclusion of women, on the grounds of the idea of female impurity. DeWitt writes that in Japan, “women’s temporary ritual exclusion (e.g., Buddhist rituals held at a temple complex, household or village rituals involving gods) at some point gave way to women’s permanent exclusion from shrines and temples, sumo wrestling platforms, festival floats (although this has recently changed), kiln firing, and hunting and fishing practices” (DeWitt 2015, p. 12). This exclusion is commonly linked to the *kegare* belief.

The Buddhist notion of “restricted zone” (*kekkai*) at some point becomes linked with purity and pollution discourses in Japan, specifically the avoidance of or taboo against matters deemed “dirty” (*kegare* 汚れ) or “impure” (*fujō* 不浄). The forms of blood pollution women alone embody – menstruation and childbirth – become particularly acute aversions. (DeWitt 2015, p. 12)

An area often associated with female exclusion concerns sacred mountains, and the restrictions on female climbers. One of the most well-known examples is arguably the *nyonin kinsei* practice at Mt. Ōmine. In the study of practices connected to the *nyonin kinsei* practice, a point in question seems to be how to approach the topic of gender, and how to address the practice of gender-based restrictions.

³ While the *nyonin kinsei* practice is often associated with the exclusion of women from sacred mountains, the practice can also be found in other areas, such as tunnel constructions and sake brewing. Various examples of the practice can be found in Minamoto’s (2006) 「*Nyonin kinsei*」 Q&A.

Kobayashi (2017) applies a gender perspective to the study of sacred mountains and their cults, and challenges commonly recurring narratives found therein. In surveying the research field of Japanese folklore and religious studies, Kobayashi finds that the gender perspective is largely missing, or has been downplayed (p. 109). Kobayashi also points out that “there is a bias towards the perspective of gender that sees it as an emotional approach incorporating a political agenda, and lacking academic objectivity and neutrality” (p. 110).

In the book *Nyonin kinsei*, Suzuki (2002) provides an overview of the *nyonin kinsei* practice and concept. Suzuki acknowledges in the prologue of the book that the *nyonin kinsei* custom is a regulation imposed on women by men, while stating their intention to approach the topic with ‘calm eyes’ (*reiseina me*) (2002, p. 4). Kobayashi (2017) offers criticism on Suzuki’s stance, writing that “[t]he phrase ‘with calm eyes’ seems to suggest that he considers the recent insistence of people who oppose *nyonin kinsei* from positions that emphasize the human rights of women or researchers with a gender or feminist studies approach as lacking the calmness of academic objectivity and neutrality” (p. 109). While recognizing Suzuki’s ambition to consider the point of view of how women have accepted/received, opposed and reshaped the regulations (Suzuki 2002, p. 4), Kobayashi writes that Suzuki “eschews judging whether *nyonin kinsei* is a discriminative practice” (Kobayashi 2017, p. 109).

One arena where the *nyonin kinsei* practice has recently been subject to public debate is sumo wrestling, where women are traditionally banned from entering the wrestling ring. In 2018, there was debate following an incident where the women who rushed in to try to help the mayor who suddenly collapsed while giving a speech in the sumo ring were told to leave the ring. This incident echoed another debated instance of the *nyonin kinsei* practice preventing a woman from entering the sumo ring, namely when the then-governor of Ōsaka prefecture, Ōta Fusae, was refused to present the champion of the local tournament with the winner’s cup.

3. Gender in ICH – international context

The first part of this chapter provides an outline of the wider scholarly debate on gender and heritage. The second part of this chapter outlines the gender equality legislation in Japan. It can be argued that while there is research published on ‘gender and heritage’ and on ‘intangible cultural heritage’, research on ‘gender and intangible cultural heritage’ is still scarce. While the topic of gender is often approached as a side interest, separate from the main topic, there are nonetheless studies addressing a gender perspective in various areas within the larger heritage field. However, while ICH has been receiving increased attention within the heritage field in recent years, research concerning matters of gender within ICH is still limited.

3.1. Heritage and gender

In the cultural heritage field, gender has frequently been treated as a ‘niche topic’ (Wilson 2018, p.3), adding an extra layer of analysis to the main subject, but without being part of that main subject. Wilson (2018) argues that this liminal position is not without merit. While there is a need to emphasize the relevance of gender perspectives, a position on the edges allows for gender as a critical perspective. Wilson writes that it is “from this position that a critical gender heritage studies can thrive, serving as a means of addressing inequality and absence for communities as well as undermining the forces that constrain the majority” (ibid, p. 11).

Gendered heritage

As have been argued by Smith (2008), heritage is gendered. Smith argues that heritage often tells a “predominantly male-centred story, promoting a masculine, and in particular an elite-Anglo-masculine, vision of the past and present” (2008, p. 159).

It is gendered in the way that heritage is defined, understood and talked about and, in turn, in the way it reproduces and legitimizes gender identities and the social values that underpin them. A range of assumptions about the experiences of men and women are embedded in the definitions and discourses of heritage. (Smith 2008, p. 161-162)

This also pertains to what Smith calls the *authorized heritage discourse* (AHD) (Smith 2006). The AHD, focused on materiality and on visually appealing objects and sites, and seeing ‘heritage’ as possessing innate value, is concerned with protecting and saving heritage for the future, serving to validate the role of the ‘expert’ in the handling of heritage (Smith 2006). Smith writes that one underlying idea is that the “proper care of heritage, and its associated values, lies with the experts, as it is only they who have the abilities, knowledge and understanding to identify the innate value and knowledge contained at and within historically important sites and places” (ibid, p. 29-30). As such, the AHD can be seen as the notion of the professional discourse surrounding heritage, often dominating ‘Western’ international as well as national debates on heritage, affecting how heritage practitioners and other stakeholders speak about and handle heritage (Smith 2008, p. 162). Smith writes that in the AHD, there is a focus on materiality and an assumed innate value possessed by heritage, and this it draws upon and reinforces a “consensual view of nationhood and national history”, and that AHD supports the view of heritage experts as stewards as stewards, entrusted with persevering the past for the future (2008, p. 162).

Smith notes that “[o]ne of the many consequences of this discourse is that it has been masculine values and perceptions, particularly masculine values from the elite social classes, that have tended to dominate how heritage has been defined, identified, valued and preserved” (2008, p. 162). In other words, the types of things and places that are identified as heritage are those that correspond to the AHD, which is in turn “influenced by certain social experiences and values”, as the AHD was “built not only on professional values and concerns, but also on certain class and gender experiences and social and aesthetic values” (ibid).

Gender and the 2003 convention

As discussed above, heritage is gendered in the sense that the underlying discourse is gendered. Within the area of traditional practices, the ‘genderedness’ of heritage is not seldom explicit. For example, traditional practices can be gender coded or have gender restrictions affecting access and participation. Some traditional practices are discriminatory. However, how do deal with discriminatory practices has proven

problematic within the framework of the 2003 convention, as the convention is restricted to only acknowledging ‘good’ ICH.

UNESCO’s Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage sets out to safeguard intangible cultural heritage, while adhering to UN standards concerning human rights. The 2003 convention is formulated in such a way that considerations of human rights, mutual respect as well as sustainable development are built into the criteria of the definition of ICH (the author refers to these as the ‘goodness criteria’). Article 2.1, defining ICH, contains criteria stipulating that only such intangible cultural heritage “as is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development” are to be considered by the convention (UNESCO 2003, Convention text, article 2.1). In theory, this would mean that practices that are not up to par with these standards should not be acknowledged as ICH within the framework of the convention, and consequently should not be inscribed on the lists of the convention either.

However, the intersection of safeguarding traditional practices and promoting gender equality is laden with potential conflict. While traditional cultural practices are not necessarily in conflict with gender equality considerations and human rights, neither are they necessarily in unison with such considerations. In the case of the 2003 convention, Blake writes that when it comes to traditional cultural practices, it can be hard to determine “on which side of the ‘human rights line’ a cultural manifestation falls” (Blake 2015, p. 286) The question is how to handle this. Blake writes that recently there is a growing acceptance that the ICH Committee needs to define where the limits lie in regard to what is to be regarded as violations of human rights standards (2015, p. 182-183).

At the same time, there seem to be a reluctance to addressing the topic of gender discrimination, and Blake detects a nervousness among the state parties, the ICH Committee of the Convention, and UNESCO of addressing this topic since it may lead to having to deal with elements that are not up to par with the standards – including elements that might already be inscribed on the RL (Blake 2015, p. 182).

Since much traditional culture, in one way or another, would seem to undermine human rights notions of gender equality, there has been an

understandable fear that a high proportion of ICH might be excluded from the Convention's scope if such a test were too strictly applied. (Blake 2015, p. 182-183)

Criticism of the 2003 convention's lack of consideration for the human rights of women has been expressed by Moghadam and Bagheritari (2007). They write that the lack of reference to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the gender-neutral language of the convention pose a risk that the convention might fail to protect the rights of women, writing that the convention "could be vulnerable to manipulation or dismissal of women's participation and rights" (ibid, p. 16) They argue that "there must be agreement that 'culture' is not a valid justification for gender inequality" (2007, p. 11).

In the context of the 2003 convention, gender has until recently been treated like a grey area, easier to ignore than to address. In a 2013 evaluation of the convention, conducted by UNESCO's Internal Oversight Service, the integration of gender equality⁴ into the mechanisms of the convention was pointed out as 'the elephant in the room', writing that "everybody is aware of its importance, but nobody wishes to acknowledge it" (UNESCO Internal Oversight Service 2013, paragraph 72). However, matters concerning gender has received an increased attention in the practical handling and in the discussions in later years. Discussions on gender at the committee meetings are explored below.

Discussions concerning gender at committee meetings

Gender has been getting increased attention within the mechanisms of UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in recent years. At 2011's Committee meeting, the Consultative Body reported being "struck by the invisibility of women" (UNESCO 2011, Report of the Consultative Body on its work in 2011, paragraph 29), and a Committee decision was taken to encourage State Parties to

⁴ UNESCO has listed gender equality as one of its two global priorities, and the medium-term strategy for 2014-2021 states that "UNESCO considers gender equality as a fundamental human right" (UNESCO 2014, Medium-term strategy, p. 16). UNESCO's gender equality approach is twofold, consisting of gender-specific programming as well as the mainstreaming of gender equality considerations in its existing policies, programmes and initiatives (ibid).

address the participation of women in nominations, proposals, and in the implementation of safeguarding measures (UNESCO 2011, Decisions). Following an evaluation of UNESCO’s standard-setting work of the culture sector, conducted by the UNESCO Internal Oversight Service in 2013, examining the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, major revisions of the relevant forms and documents of the convention were carried out in the following years (UNESCO Internal Oversight Service 2013, Evaluation). The nomination forms and periodic reporting forms were revised to include gender-specific questions, the operational directives were revised and a section on gender equality was added, two training units on gender for the capacity building programs were developed, and a brochure on gender was published.

Below follows a summary of how matters concerning gender have been handled and discussed by the Committee, the General Assembly, and in the Operational Directives, from 2003 until 2016. The summary is based on the official documents pertaining to the sessions of the Committee (Decisions, summary records, reports, etc.) and the General Assembly (Resolutions, summary records), as well as the Operational Directives.

Table 2. Summary of handling and discussions of gender matters within the framework of the 2003 convention from 2003 until 2016.

2003	(Convention is adopted.)
[...]	
2006	(Convention enters into force.)
[...]	
2010	Gender first introduced in the Operational Directives (OD). Matters relating to gender is discussed in the committee meeting.
2011	Committee decision to encourage State Parties (SP) to address the participation of women. The Consultative Body reports being “struck by the invisibility of women” (UNESCO 2011, Report of the Consultative Body on its work in 2011, paragraph 29).
2012	Committee decision to further encourage SP:s to give greater attention to gender aspects in their reports. The Consultative Body reports that the invisibility of women continues to “be a matter of no small concern” (UNESCO 2012, Report of the Consultative Body on its work in 2012,

	paragraph 30). A document listing Transversal Issues created by the Secretariat, where gender is also addressed.
2013	Distinctively increased focus on gender. The Evaluation brings about a plan of action to revise all relevant forms (including the Operational Directives, the Periodic Reporting formats, and nomination files) to include gender-specific guidance and questions. Capacity-building training material on gender is being developed. The document Transversal Issues is updated and added to.
2014	Forms of periodic reporting revised with gender-specific questions. Secretariat is developing training material on gender. Secretariat is about to publish a pamphlet on gender.
2015	Pamphlet on gender published. Two training units on gender (in the toolbox) made available. Nomination forms revised with gender-specific guidance. Decision to encourage SP:s to give more emphasis to gender roles in their reports. Decision to endorse new draft chapter of OD. Code of Ethics introduced.
2016	Major revisions of and additions to the OD. Gender is a focal point. Section on Gender equality included in the OD. Decision to encourage SP:s to pay special attention to issues related to gender and to include gender roles in the periodic reports. The Evaluation Body reiterated the need to clearly define the communities etc. including the gender dimension. Secretariat report based on a UNESCO results framework (38 C/5 programme and budget 2016-2017) includes number of periodic reports addressing gender issues and describing policies promoting equal access to and participation in cultural life.

In terms of practical policies for the implementation of the convention, one point to consider is whether and to what extent UNESCO should encourage gender equality in the traditional practices. For example, in the case of potentially discriminatory practices, should UNESCO push for a change in the gender rules or not? Should the priority be to keep the traditions unaltered, or should UNESCO work to promote gender equality, even if that means encouraging changes in the traditional practices?

The nomination and examination of ‘Mongol Tuuli: Mongolian epic’ offers an interesting case. While the practice is traditionally restricted to men, the nomination file

opens up for female participation. The nomination file also contains an interesting note on balancing tradition and reform.

In order to keep and maintain aforementioned customary practices, while introducing new ways of epic performance, epic training and transmission, it is important to keep the balance of tradition and reform. Some customary practices could be not very suitable to observe in modern era, and in that case, we could reform and continue it. For instance, traditionally, Mongol epic is not performed, trained and learned by women; however, nowadays we could reshape this tradition and open the way for women to possess and/or master this rare and unique cultural element by their interest. In other words, gender equity is also to be kept on maintaining the tradition. Some customary practices should be transmitted and maintained with its original tradition. For example, practitioners of Mongol epic must learn it and perform it as whole, but not in part or in alternate ways. (Nomination file for ‘Mongol Tuuli: Mongolian epic’ 2009, p. 15-16)

The summary records from the fourth session of the Committee 2009 show that the element was inscribed on the Urgent Safeguarding list without any objections (UNESCO 2010, Summary records of the fourth session, paragraph 447). The summary records also offer information on the examination of the nomination.

Both examiners agreed that the nomination satisfied all five criteria for inscription. The possibility of encouraging women to take up the epic singing, which was traditionally restricted to men, was noted. This aspect of the nomination attracted particular attention from both examiners. Both welcomed this possibility while emphasizing that customary practices should nevertheless be respected and that the communities themselves should manage this innovation. (UNESCO 2010, Summary records of the fourth session, paragraph 446)

Another point in question is where to draw the line between what is acceptable and what is not, in terms of gender rules within a traditional practice. An interesting case can be found from the twelfth session of the Committee in 2017, which the author also attended as an observer. In the examination of proposals to the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices, the Evaluation Body recommended the Committee to not select a proposal from Egypt, on the grounds of concerns about gender equality (UNESCO 2017, Examination of proposals to the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices). Said nomination was withdrawn by the submitting state party. The Evaluation Body also address gender equality in its overall report.

33. **Gender.** The Body encountered issues in cases where it was unclear whether women's participation in certain practices of intangible cultural heritage was voluntary. In those cases, the Body was particularly concerned about the implications of such participation on the conditions of women. For example, when the purpose of young girls' participation is to find a suitor for marriage, there is an issue around whether the girls agreed to partake of their own free will or whether an element of coercion was involved. While some elements of intangible cultural heritage attribute gender-specific roles, without necessarily contributing to gender inequalities, other intangible cultural heritage practices may in fact be seen as reinforcing gender inequalities and thus not in the spirit of the Convention. States Parties are reminded to pay due attention to specific gender-conditioned roles regarding practices of intangible cultural heritage in their respective countries.

34. **Gender and economic revitalization.** Efforts to restore certain traditions for the economic benefit of communities are not necessarily linked to promoting gender equality or empowering women. A project can be successful in economic terms but may still fail to achieve particular social goals such as the empowerment or emancipation of women who are the tradition bearers. It is important to follow up on the real impact of such practices within the community in the long term. (UNESCO 2017, Report of the Evaluation Body on its work in 2017)

It is also interesting to note that in comment to the Evaluation Body's report, the delegation of Hungary pointed out that practices that are reinforcing gender inequality should, according to the rules of the convention, not be considered as intangible cultural heritage under the convention in the first place (UNESCO 2018, Summary records of the twelfth session, paragraph 362).

Gender is another important issue. Indeed, it is very important that intangible cultural heritage be compatible with human rights instruments, as stated in Article 2 of the Convention, which refers to mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals. The delegation also drew attention to a slight discrepancy in the text in paragraph 33, which read, 'other intangible cultural heritage practices may in fact be seen as reinforcing gender inequalities.' Strictly speaking, in the language of the Convention, if a practice reinforces gender inequality then it is not intangible cultural heritage under the Convention. It suggested avoiding using this terminology in which intangible cultural heritage is said to reinforce gender inequalities. (UNESCO 2018, Summary records of the twelfth session, paragraph 362)

About rights instruments, discrimination and social equity

Human rights and traditional practices are two concepts that are not always compatible. It is easy to imagine situations where human rights and traditional practices come into conflict, perhaps especially when it comes to the human rights of women. Shaheed, former UN Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights, noting that human rights violations pertaining to gender are often defended by explaining them in terms of culture, has stated that "it seems safe to conclude that no social group has suffered greater violation of human rights in the name of culture than women" (Shaheed 2014, foreword).

One point in question is whether gender restrictions within heritage practices can be seen as acceptable or not. Are all-female or all-male practices always discriminatory? Pertaining to the 2003 convention, Blake writes that all-female or all-male practices are

not necessarily discriminatory (2014 and 2015), but that “it is worth considering the implications more fully” (2015, p. 184).

In an interview in the *World Heritage* magazine, Shaheed was asked about her view on heritage sites with restricted access to either men or women, and whether this was compatible with human rights or not. Shaheed replied that while most heritage sites have “gendered dimensions of access”, and more research is needed on the origin as well as the meaning of the roles and spaces that are ascribed to men and women, nevertheless, it was important to consider the consequences such practices might have in upholding stereotypes and discrimination (Shaheed 2016, interview in *World Heritage*, p.50).

Gender-specific restrictions and practices do not stop at cultural heritage sites. These are found in cultural or religious practices, customs and traditions that prohibit women from engaging in interpreting and applying particular texts, rituals or customs. Likewise, the practice of ancestral medical techniques, sometimes associated with the performance of ritual ceremonies, dancing and the playing of music, may be reserved for men, possibly leading to the exclusion of women from medical and pharmaceutical knowledge. As suggested in my report on women’s cultural rights on a basis of equality with men, such practices need revisiting in the light of contemporary realities and international human rights standards. For this, internal discourses are needed within communities using human rights standards as a reference point. (Shaheed 2016, interview in *World Heritage*, p.50-51)

Logan has explored human rights and cultural heritage in several articles, and in *Playing the Devil’s Advocate: Protecting Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Infringement of Human Rights*, Logan (2009) explores issues raised concerning the 2003 Convention and touches upon problems concerning human rights infringements and the listing system. One of the issues raised concerns voluntariness, and Logan writes that it is important to “allow for change and let people decide their future for themselves”, arguing that communities should not be locked into life-styles they do not value anymore, regardless

of how exotic they might appear to people from outside of the concerned communities (ibid, p. 17).

In a 2012 article, Logan argues for a human rights-based approach to heritage conservation, saying that “human rights can and should be brought to the centre of conservation activity, both as a theme in heritage identification and as a set of policy principles underlying conservation processes” (Logan 2012, p. 233). In the article, Logan explores the conflict between different rights, and noting that the concept of cultural rights can have two different meanings – one of universal character as a part of the human rights package; and one of relativistic character pertaining to cultural diversity – Logan writes that claims to protect cultural heritage sometimes contravene human rights instruments and the rights of an individual in her/his life choices (ibid, p. 239). Logan writes that it is a major issue “that some of the cultural rights and values still practised by particular religious or ethnic groups contravene individual human rights or those of the less powerful groups in society, such as women and children, stateless persons and the poor” (ibid).

Against the background of the underlying debate between universalism and relativism, matters concerning discrimination within the field of cultural heritage can often be contentious. However, while discrimination and social injustices are arguably sensitive topics within the heritage field, the subject matter itself is ubiquitous.

Nancy Fraser has explored the relation between redistribution and recognition, and how to deal with simultaneously cultural and socioeconomic injustices, such as those pertaining to gender and race (1995). In the article *From redistribution to recognition? Dilemmas of justice in a post-socialist age*, Fraser starts off by noting that in the ‘post-socialist’ age, cultural recognition has displaced socioeconomic redistribution as the remedy for injustice, and writes that “justice today requires *both* redistribution *and* recognition” (1995: 69). Fraser examines these two aspects of justice, redistribution and recognition, by combining them with two types of remedies, affirmation and transformation, thereby creating a four-cell matrix. In this matrix, affirmative redistribution connotes the liberal welfare state and affirmative recognition connotes mainstream multiculturalism, while transformative redistribution connotes socialism and transformative recognition connotes deconstruction (1995: 86-87). Fraser argues that while affirmative redistribution paired with affirmative recognition might seem like a

promising solution, since both politics promote group differentiation, it is a problematic approach. Instead, Fraser argues that transformative redistribution combined with transformative recognition, both tending to undermine group differentiations, offers a better solution. (1995)

In *Rethinking recognition* (2000) Fraser further develops this proposed solution. As a starting point, Fraser notes that since the turn of the century “struggles for recognition often assume the guise of identity politics” (2000: 119). Fraser calls this approach to recognition ‘the identity model’ and outlines problems connected therewith, such as *displacement* and *reification*. Fraser rejects the identity model of recognition and suggests replacing it with a model that sees recognition as a question of social *status*.

From this perspective, what requires recognition is not group-specific identity but the status of individual group members as full partners in social interaction. Misrecognition, accordingly, does not mean the depreciation and deformation of group identity, but social subordination—in the sense of being prevented from participating as a peer in social life. To redress this injustice still requires a politics of recognition, but in the ‘status model’ this is no longer reduced to a question of identity: rather, it means a politics aimed at overcoming subordination by establishing the misrecognized party as a full member of society, capable of participating on a par with the rest. (2000: 113)

A point in question is how to assess discrimination. Although dealing with another type of discrimination, *Measuring Racial Discrimination* (National Research Council 2004) offers insights into methods for assessing discrimination. The definition of racial discrimination used in the report consists of two components: “(1) *differential treatment on the basis of race* that disadvantages a racial group and (2) *treatment on the basis of inadequately justified factors other than race* that disadvantages a racial group (differential effect)” (National Research Council 2004, p. 39). The report introduces a system of key points for identifying potential discrimination within different domains (for example health care or housing). These key points include *access to institutions or procedures, while functioning in a domain*, and *movement through a domain* (National

Research Council 2004, p. 66 ff). Although the primary focus of the report is on racial discrimination, it is stated that “much of the discussion can be readily applied to measurement of closely related topics, such as gender or age discrimination” (National Research Council 2004, p. 72).

3.2. Gender equality legislation in Japan

In the post-war years following the Second World War, during which time Japan was ruled by an Allied Occupation, several reforms took place. The revisions of the Constitution and Civil Code meant that women were given the right to vote, run for election, own property, receive inheritance, to get an education equal to that of men, as well as more equal rights regarding marriage and divorce (Bullock, Kano, and Welker 2018, p. 5). However, the decades following the Occupation saw a conservative backlash (ibid).

Japan signed the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1980 and ratified it in 1985. In response to the convention objectives, the Japanese government “began creating legislation ostensibly to fulfill the aims of the convention” and among these the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOL) which was enacted in 1986 (Bullock, Kano, and Welker 2018, p. 7).

The 1990s brought policy changes (such as the possibility of fathers to take parental leave), as well as a change in the view on women in Japanese society (Frey 2016). Gender equality was to be achieved by ensuring equality in not only the public sphere, but also in the private sphere, which also meant a move towards a more gender-neutral approach instead of, as earlier, differentiating between genders (ibid). In 1999, The Basic Law for a Gender Equal Society went into effect. This law introduced a more genderless approach toward gender equality (ibid).

In the mid- to late 1990s, around the same time as queer theory began to influence the academia in Japan, the term ‘gender free’ (*gendā furī*) appeared (Bullock, Kano, and Welker 2018, p. 7). This referred to the efforts of public-school teachers to make changes to lift the normative restrictions on gender expression from the children (ibid), for example by mixing the names of female and male students during roll call (Yamaguchi 2018). However, this prompted a conservative backlash (ibid). Yamaguchi (2014) writes

that while the introduction of policy changes (including the introduction of The Basic Law for a Gender Equal Society) marked the mainstreaming of feminism in Japan, it was met with intense conservative criticism, and the term ‘gender-free’ became a target in that anti-feminist wave.

Reports regarding the current state of gender equality in Japan

While it is inherently difficult to assess how gender equal a country is, there are various global measuring systems and reports. Concerning the current state of gender equality in Japan, it may be noted that Japan’s global rank differs significantly between different reports. In UNDP’s Human Development report for 2018, Japan ranks 19 out of 189 countries in the Gender Inequality Index (UNDP 2018). This index is based on maternal mortality ratio, adolescent birth rate, share of seats in parliament, population with at least some secondary education, and labour force participation rate (ibid).

In contrast, according to the 2018 Global Gender Gap Report from the World Economic Forum, Japan ranks 110 out of 149 countries, with a score of 0.662 (0.00 meaning imparity and 1.00 meaning parity). This places Japan below the global average, and third from last among the examined countries in the East Asian and Pacific region. In the four areas Economic participation and opportunity, Educational attainment, Health and survival, and Political empowerment, Japan scores lowest in Political empowerment, followed by Economic participation and opportunity. (World Economic Forum 2018)

Challenges within the areas of political empowerment and economic participation and opportunity are also addressed within the UN Human rights country reporting system. Concerning the UN Human Rights treaties, Japan ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR) in 1979, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1985.

Regarding CESCR, in the Concluding observations on the third periodic report of Japan, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights addresses concerns about gender stereotypes.

The Committee is concerned that the entrenched gender role stereotypes in the State party continue to prevent women’s equal enjoyment of

economic, social and cultural rights. The Committee also notes with concern that, in spite of steps taken such as the adoption of the consecutive Basic Plans for Gender Equality, no sufficient measures have targeted a change of attitude on gender roles in society at large. Moreover, the Committee is concerned that, in spite of the commendable efforts by the State party, progress is slow, as shown by the still drastic vertical and horizontal gender segregation in the labour market and the high percentage of women who have to leave work or move to part-time employment after childbirth. (UN 2013, paragraph 13)

Concerning CCPR, in the Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Japan, the associated committee expresses concern regarding the “low levels of women carrying out political functions” (UN 2014, article 9).

Regarding CEDAW, in the Concluding observations on the combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of Japan, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women expresses concern regarding “the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and deep rooted stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society” (UN 2016, paragraph 20) and urges the state party to “intensify its efforts to change social norms that reinforce the traditional roles of women and men and to advocate positive cultural traditions that promote the human rights of women and girls” (ibid, paragraph 21).

4. Description of the float festivals in the national ICH safeguarding system

This chapter focuses on the national heritage safeguarding system and how the float festivals are described, in terms of gender roles and gender restrictions, within that context. The chapter consists of three parts. The first part gives a background to the heritage legislative system. The second part focuses on the official descriptions of the float festivals and how they are depicted within that context in terms of gender roles and gender restrictions. Results are summarized in the third part.

4.1. Background

The Japanese heritage legislation covers tangible as well as intangible heritage categories. Legal protection for intangible cultural heritage was introduced with the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties in 1950. Since its establishment, the law has been amended on a number of occasions, seeing adjustments of existing categories and additions of new categories. The current version of the law has three categories directly concerning intangible cultural heritage. These categories are: Intangible Cultural Properties, Folk Cultural Properties (divided into the two subcategories Tangible Folk Cultural Properties and Intangible Folk Cultural Properties), and Conservation Techniques for Cultural Properties (Law for the Protection of Cultural Property). The 36 festivals examined in this study are all designated as Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties.

New designations are decided by the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, after consultation with the Council for Cultural Affairs. The designations are preceded by and based on preliminary surveys (Miyata 2009). While preliminary surveys concerning the categories Intangible Cultural Properties and Conservation Techniques for Cultural Properties are primarily conducted by investigators from the Agency for Cultural Affairs, the national surveys concerning the category Intangible Folk Cultural Properties are based on already existing surveys on the prefectural and municipal levels (*ibid*).

[B]ecause there are numerous applicable intangible folk cultural properties in existence nationwide, it would be difficult to have sufficient basic surveys conducted by only investigators working for the Agency for Cultural Affairs (of which there are six in charge of intangible folk cultural properties). However, most intangible folk cultural properties have already been designated at the prefectural or municipal level prior to being designated at the national level, which means that surveys required for a certain degree of basic value assessments have already been made; in many cases, survey reports and video recordings are also available. Accordingly, surveys at a national level are conducted on the basis of these existing survey results. (Miyata 2009, p. 4)

4.2. Handling and description of the float festivals

How is gender handled and described in the official descriptions of the festivals (within the national heritage safeguarding system)? New designations of cultural properties are published by the Agency for Cultural Affairs in the *Gekkan bunkazai* journal.⁵ The author examined the descriptions in the *Gekkan bunkazai* journal of the 36 individual festivals upon their designation. The oldest designation dates back to 1977 (Hitachi Furyūmono in Ibaraki prefecture) and the newest one to 2018 (Murakami Matsuri no Yatai Gyōji in Niigata prefecture). Information on cultural properties are also available in an online database provided by the Agency for Cultural Affairs (<http://bunka.nii.ac.jp/db/>). The descriptions in the database are similar, in some cases nearly identical, to those in the *Gekkan bunkazai*.⁶

Before going into the descriptions of the individual festivals, it is relevant to briefly mention some of the terminology used in the descriptions. While gender is mentioned clearly in some cases, in other cases it is merely indicated by the choice of words. A frequently used term is *wakashu* or *wakai shu*, a word usually denoting young

⁵ The designation dossier that is examined before the decision is a draft, and after the designation decision has been made, the information is reformatted by the Agency for Cultural Affairs and released through the *Gekkan bunkazai* journal (e-mail conversation 2019-05-06 with the author's academic advisor, following meeting of said academic advisor at the Agency for Cultural Affairs 2019-04-24).

⁶ The author started by examining the descriptions in the database, and then compared them to the descriptions in the *Gekkan bunkazai* journal.

men. *Wakamono* is another word used to denote young people, but without implying gender. *Seinen* is another used word to describe young people, usually a young man. Younger still are *shōnen*, used for primarily young boys. Youngest are the *chigo*, a word meaning child, connoting a certain role in the festival. *Odoriko* is a word meaning dancer, usually connoting women dancers. *Geiko* usually describes traditional performers and is associated with women.

It should also be noted that the preservation associations have internal organizational structures with subdivisions. A festival *hozonkai* is typically made up from and divided into different groups according to age (and in some cases gender), with each group having its own set of responsibilities and tasks.

4.2.1. Gender in the designation information in the *Gekkan bunkazai* journal

The Grand Hachinohe Sansha Festival

The Grand Hachinohe Sansha Festival in Hachinohe in Aomori prefecture, *Hachinohe Sansha Daisai no Dashi Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 2004. The description of Hachinohe gives that this *sansha* (three shrines) festival is a joint festival of three shrines, but started as a festival of the Ogami Shrine, which was first associated with the guardian deity of Kashiwazaki, and later developed into the protecting deity of the castle town, especially after the establishment of the Hachinohe domain in 1664. The description mentions both *miko* (shrine maidens), *geiko* and *chigo* in the processions. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 2004)

The Float Festival of Kakunodate

The Float Festival of Kakunodate in Senboku in Akita prefecture, *Kakunodate Matsuri no Yama Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 1991. According to the description in the *Gekkan bunkazai* journal, the Kakunodate festival developed as the town flourished as a castle town, and the oldest written account of the festival is from 1701. The description mentions that mainly *wakamono* (youngsters) are in charge of moving around the floats. It also mentions dancers, although not gender-coded. However, the description mentions that the dancing/dancers adds a touch of colour/beauty (‘decorate with flowers’) to the float procession (‘手踊りが繰り広げられ、

曳きまわしに華を添える”) (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 1991, p. 6) – an expression arguably often used in connection to (young) female beauty. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 1991)

The Tsuchizaki Shinmei Shrine Festival

The Tsuchizaki Shinmei Shrine Festival in Akita City in Akita prefecture, *Tsuchizaki Shinmeishasai no Hikiyama Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 1997. The origin of the festival is not known, but there are reportedly historical records mentioning the festival and the floats from the 18th century. The description mentions the history of the Tsuchizaki harbour district and the shrine the festival is associated with. There is a clear mentioning of gender roles in the description. It is mentioned that the festival floats were earlier forbidden for women, but that women are nowadays participating in large numbers. The procession makes a stop every now and then, and the *wakamono*, women and children pulling the floats (alternatively: the *wakamono* pulling the floats, and women and children) perform a dance (‘hand dance’) to the tunes of the music from the *hayashi*. It also mentions *miko* (shrine maidens), together with Shinto priests, being involved in the ritual purification at the beginning of the festival. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 1998)

The Hanawa Festival

The Hanawa Festival in Kazuno in Akita prefecture, *Hanawa Matsuri no Yatai Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 2014. According to the description in the *Gekkan bunkazai* journal, the beginning of the festival is not clear but there are records dating back to 1765. There is a Youth Association (*wakamono kai*) for every float, in charge of its operation. The heads of the Youth Associations form the Youth Council, in charge of the management of the whole festival. The Youth Associations consist of members in a certain age group, stretching from after graduating high school to the age of 42. While gender is not mentioned regarding the Youth Associations, it can be noted that 42 is the *yakudoshi* (unlucky year) for men. The members of the *wakamono kai* perform various roles as festivals officers. Apart from the roles of the festival officers, there are also other roles, such as that of pulling the floats and musician. It is mentioned explicitly that both women and men, from the upper grades

of primary school and older, can participate as musicians and in pulling the floats, but people in mourning are not allowed to participate. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 2014)

The Shinjō Festival

The Shinjō Festival in Shinjō in Yamagata prefecture, *Shinjō Matsuri no Yatai Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 2009. This festival is said to have started in 1756, after a bad harvest had struck, causing a large number of people to die of starvation. The feudal lord at the time is said to have started the festival to mourn for the deceased, to pray for a good harvest, and to cheer up the people. In the description, gender is not mentioned at all. The description mentions the tasks of the Youth Association (*wakaren*), but its members are not described in terms of gender. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 2009)

The Hitachi Ōtsu Boat Festival

The Hitachi Ōtsu Boat Festival in Kita-Ibaraki in Ibaraki prefecture, *Hitachi Ōtsu no Ofunematsuri*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 2017. According to the description in the *Gekkan bunkazai* journal, the festival, where a *mikoshi* (portable shrine) is placed on a decorated boat and paraded around town, is an event for praying for good catches of fish and maritime safety. While the beginning of the festival is not clear, written records from 1726 mention such an event. The description mentions various roles. The *mikoshi* is carried mainly by men of the age of 42 (*yakudoshi*, unlucky year, for men), as well as 41 and 43 (the year before and after *yakudoshi*), and the *mikoshi* is escorted by men from certain households. *Wakashu* pull the float. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 2017)

Hitachi Furyūmono

The Hitachi Furyūmono festival in Hitachi in Ibaraki prefecture, *Hitachi Furyūmono*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 1977. The description is short and does not mention gender at all. Nor does it mention the history of the festival or any roles. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 1977)

Karasuyama Yamaage

The Karasuyama Yamaage festival in Nasukarasuyama in Tochigi prefecture, *Karasuyama no Yamaage Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 1979. According to the description in the *Gekkan bunkazai* journal, the festival was started in 1560. At that time, an epidemic plagued the region, and the festival started as part of an effort to ward off disease and misfortune, and to pray for an abundant harvest and for peace and tranquillity. The description mentions dancers, *odoriko*, who dance on the street in front of the floats, as well as the tasks of the *wakashu*. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 1979)

The Kanuma Imamiya Shrine Festival

The Kanuma Imamiya Shrine Festival in Kanuma in Tochigi prefecture, *Kanuma Imamiya Jinjasai no Yatai Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 2003. The description mentions the history of the city. While it does not mention when the festival was started, it does mention records showing that one of the festivals floats was constructed in 1814. There is no mention of gender directly, although the description mentions the tasks of the *wakashu*. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 2003)

The Chichibu Festival

The Chichibu Festival in Chichibu in Saitama prefecture, *Chichibu Matsuri no Yatai Gyōji to Kagura*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 1979. The festival floats were constructed in the latter Edo period, at a time when sericulture was booming in the area around Chichibu, and the city of Chichibu flourished as a distribution and trading centre for silk goods. There is no mentioning of gender, nor any descriptions of roles. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 1979)

The Kawagoe Hikawa Festival

The Kawagoe Hikawa Festival in Kawagoe in Saitama prefecture, *Kawagoe Hikawa Matsuri no Dashi Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 2005. It is said that the festival started in the beginning of the Edo period,

when the feudal lord donated *mikoshi* (portable shrine), *shishi* ('lion', as in the lion costume used for lion dances) and drums. At the time, the area was thriving as an economic centre based on trade and the transportation of goods to and from Edo. The festival has continued, under the patronage of generations of feudal lords, since that time. Gender is not mentioned in the description. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 2005)

The Sawara Float Festival

The Sawara Float Festival in Katori in Chiba prefecture, *Sawara no Dashi Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 2004. According to the description in the *Gekkan bunkazai* journal, the festival started around 1716, under the influence of the festival culture in Edo, during a time when the area prospered as an economic centre. The festival has an organization characterized by age-based groups with different tasks and responsibilities. The *koyaku* (古役) have an advisory role, the *tōyaku* (当役) have the main responsibility and oversee the operation and procession, and the *wakashu* take care of the manoeuvring of the floats. The description also mentions *wakamono*. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 2004)

The Murakami Festival

The Murakami Festival in Murakami in Niigata prefecture, *Murakami Matsuri no Yatai Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 2018. According to the description in the *Gekkan bunkazai* journal, the festival is an event to pray for rich harvests and for peace and prosperity in the households. The castle town of Murakami, with its strategically important location, became an economic and political centre in this region in the Edo period. The beginning of the festival is believed to spring from the relocation ceremony of the Senamihaguro Shrine in 1633. Regarding the floats, the description relays that while it is said that the festival started with the residents of a certain neighbourhood borrowing a wagon used when building the castle and parading it while playing drums, there are records from 1667 indicating that floats from other neighbourhoods preceded that one. According to the description, the described floats in an account from the year 1734 are believed to be similar in shape to the floats of today's festival. Gender is mentioned in relation to some of the described roles. Boys around the

age of 10 perform the role as horsemen in the *Arauma* procession, and men sing the festival songs sung during the event. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 2018)

The Takaoka Mikurumayama Festival

The Takaoka Mikurumayama Festival in Takaoka in Toyama prefecture, *Takaoka Mikurumayama Matsuri no Mikurumayama Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 1979. It is said that the start of the festival was when the feudal lord Maeda Toshinaga distributed festival floats to the neighbourhoods of the castle town of Takaoka. The description mentions roles, but not in terms of gender. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 1979)

The Tatemon Festival of Uozu

The Tatemon Festival of Uozu in Uozu in Toyama prefecture, *Uozu no Tatemon Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 1997. According to the description in the *Gekkan bunkazai* journal, the festival offers prayers for safe voyage and a bountiful catch of fish. While the origin is the festival is not clear, it is said that starting from the Edo period, each neighbourhood started hanging lanterns on stands which were carried around the town. The number of lanterns later grew. Gender is mentioned clearly in the description. Earlier there was a rule saying that women could not participate, but now women are participating in large numbers. The lanterns are adorned with the names of women and children. The description also mentions the tasks of *wakamono*, *chigo*, and newly-wed brides. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 1998)

The Jōhana Hikiyama Festival

The Jōhana Hikiyama Festival in Nanto in Toyama prefecture, *Jōhana Shinmeigūsai no Hikiyama Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 2002. The description does not mention the history of the festival directly, but mentions that from the early modern period, the town prospered due to its silk textile production. The festival organization is described, where in the *wakarenchū* (youth group), headed

by the *wakarenkaichō*, forms a part. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 2002)

The Seihaku Festival

The Seihaku Festival in Nanao in Ishikawa prefecture, *Seihakusai no Hikiyama Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 1983. According to the description in the *Gekkan bunkazai* journal, there are records dating the festival back to 1685. The description mentions gender clearly. It mentions tasks performed in the floats, carried out by boys, and mentions that boys of the age of five carry out the task of *shinsen* (offering food and alcohol to the gods). It also mentions the *wakamono* in the *wakarenchū* as forming part of the festival organization. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 1983)

The Takayama Festival

The Takayama Festival in Takayama in Gifu prefecture, *Takayama Matsuri no Yatai Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 1979. The description does not mention the origin of the festival but mentions that the festival floats were developed under the late Edo period. The description does not mention gender. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 1979)

The Furukawa Festival

The Furukawa Festival in Hida in Gifu prefecture, *Furukawa Matsuri no Okoshidaiko Yatai Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 1980. The Furukawa festival consists of several events, where the two main events are the procession of the festival floats, and the Okoshi Daiko drum event. The Okoshi Daiko is described a brave/heroic/lively (*yūsōna*) event, where a great number of half-naked *wakamono* participate, evoking the excitement of this manly (*danseitekina*) festival. The festival floats are of a type typical for the latter Edo period, some of them also featuring mechanical dolls. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 1980)

The Ōgaki Festival

The Ōgaki Festival in Ōgaki in Gifu prefecture, *Ōgaki Matsuri no Yama Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 2015. From the early modern period, as Ōgaki flourished as a castle town, it also developed as a post station town, and as a transportation hub. The Ōgaki festival is a castle town festival started in 1648 by the feudal lord Toda Ujikane. Gender is not mentioned in the description. Children dance *teodori* ('hand dance'). (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 2015)

The Owari Tsushima Tennō Festival

The Owari Tsushima Tennō Festival in Tsushima/Aisai in Aichi prefecture, *Owari Tsushima Tennōsai no Danjiribune Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 1980. The Owari Tsushima Tennō festival is a river festival where the festival floats are boats. The description mentions how some tasks are performed by nude *wakamono*, although gender is not mentioned specifically. The description also mentions the role of the *chigo*. The history of the festival is not mentioned. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 1980)

The Chiryū Festival

The Chiryū Festival in Chiryū in Aichi prefecture, *Chiryū no Dashi Bunraku to Karakuri*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 1990. This festival features *ningyōjōruri* (puppet theatre) and *karakuri ningyō* (mechanical dolls) performances on the floats. According to the description in the *Gekkan bunkazai* journal, there are historical records of *ningyōjōruri* and *karakuri ningyō* in that area from the middle of the Edo period. Gender is not mentioned in the description, nor is the festival organization. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 1990)

The Inuyama Festival

The Inuyama Festival in Inuyama in Aichi prefecture, *Inuyama Matsuri no Yama Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 2006. During the Edo period, Inuyama flourished as a castle town. According to the description in the *Gekkan bunkazai* journal, the festival started during the Kan'ei era (1624-1644) as a *nerimono* procession by the parishioners. In the Keian era (1648-1652), by order of the

feudal lord at the time, the whole town of Inuyama started participating, and the festival grew into the shape it has today, with festival floats and *nerimono* processions. The *hayashi* (musicians) sit on the floats and play music; children play the small drum and *wakai shu* play the flute. The responsibility to arrange with the ornate costume worn by the *hayashi* children used to fall on the wife's parents' household, but nowadays the neighbourhoods make arrangements concerning the costume. The people pulling the floats are called *teko*. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 2006)

The Kamezaki Shiohi Festival

The Kamezaki Shiohi Festival in Handa in Aichi prefecture, *Kamezaki Shiohi Matsuri no Dashi Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 2006. According to the description in the *Gekkan bunkazai* journal, roles are assigned to the *wakamono* the day before the event. It is said that in the earlier days, when the men of Kamezaki were making a living on the sea, even if they would not come back for New Years, they would make it back in time for the assignment of roles. The description mentions various roles in the organization, also mentioning that the men of Kamezaki want to shoulder the role of 車元 (the top position in each float organization) once in life. The history of the festival is not mentioned. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 2006)

The Sunari Festival

The Sunari Festival in Kanie in Aichi prefecture, *Sunari Matsuri no Danjiribune Gyōji to Miyoshi Nagashi*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 2012. According to the description in the *Gekkan bunkazai* journal, the original meaning of the festival was as a prayer for eliminating epidemics, by parading ornate festival boats and by performing *miyoshi nagashi* (神葭流し), a ceremony where one year's worth of uncleanness is swept away by placing reed in water and setting it adrift. While the beginning of the festival is not clear, legend has it that reed washed away at the Tsushima Shrine Tennō festival was picked up by the *wakamono* in Sunari. It is believed that the festival is first mentioned in records in 1755. The description mentions gender clearly. The role of *wakashu* is available to men who have become adults but are not yet married. The participants are mentioned as being male in the description of the events of the

festival a number of times. The description also mentions the role of *chigo*. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 2012)

The Kujirabune Festival of the Toride Shrine

The Kujirabune Festival of the Toride Shrine in Yokkaichi in Mie prefecture, *Toride Jinja no Kujirabune Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 1997. The festival floats are made in the image of whaleboats. On the floats ride the *hatashi*, performed by 12-year-old boys, kept steady by two people holding his feet and his body, the *rokogi*, performed by 6-12 year-old boys, and drummers. Whales made of papier mâché on bamboo frames are also used in the festival. The manoeuvring of the whale is done by several *seinen*, and in the case there is a whale with a calf, the calf is manoeuvred by *shōnen*. Children are in focus in pulling the ropes of the floats, and *seinen* are controlling the sideways movement of the floats. The description does not mention the history of the festival, but it is mentioned that the festival carries an auspicious meaning and can be seen against the background of praying for a wealthy livelihood in the fishing villages. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 1998)

The Ueno Tenjin Festival

The Ueno Tenjin Festival in Iga in Mie prefecture, *Ueno Tenjin Matsuri no Danjiri Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 2002. The description briefly mentions the history of the city and of the shrine the festival is associated with, but not the history of the festival itself. The description mentions the role of *chigo*, but it does not mention gender. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 2002)

The Kuwana Ishidori Festival

The Kuwana Ishidori Festival in Kuwana in Mie prefecture, *Kuwana Ishidori Matsuri no Saisha Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 2007. According to the description in the *Gekkan bunkazai* journal, the original meaning of the festival was as a summer purification ritual, in which pure stones are brought to purify the festival grounds. During the early modern period, Kuwana was a castle town of the Kuwana feudal domain, and also functioned as a postal town along the Tōkaidō road. The

first historical records are from 1613, and while the *ishidori* ('taking/bringing stones') event mentioned in these records is believed to not have been a religious festival, that event have evolved into the festival of today. In terms of festival organization, the *seinen* group/association consists of members from the age of 15-16 to 35-40. The middle age group/association's members join after leaving the *seinen* group/association, and usually leaves around the age of 50. The members of the *shōnen* group/association are junior high school students and younger. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 2007)

The Nagahama Hikiyama Festival

The Nagahama Hikiyama Festival in Nagahama in Shiga prefecture, *Nagahama Hikiyama Matsuri no Hikiyama Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 1979. According to the description in the *Gekkan bunkazai* journal, the festival is said to have originated in Toyotomi Hideyoshi giving the townspeople money for celebrations, and thus the festival floats were created. During the Edo period, the area flourished because of its production of silk thread and silk crepe etc., and against this background, the festival floats grew lavishly decorated. The description does not mention gender, but it does mention *kyōgen* performances performed by children (*jidō*). (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 1979)

The Ōtsu Festival

The Ōtsu Festival in Ōtsu in Shiga prefecture, *Ōtsu Matsuri no Hikiyama Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 2016. According to the description in the *Gekkan bunkazai* journal, Ōtsu developed as a port town of Lake Biwa, and then developed further as a postal town along the Tōkaidō road, thriving greatly. The Ōtsu festival is an urban-type festival which developed in this strategically located town, against the background of the town's economic foundation. It is not clear how the festival started, but its procession with floats and *karakuri* mechanical devices gradually developed. According to the description, the first record of what may have been a start of the festival is from 1635, describing how, inspired by a person dancing at a festival wearing a *tanuki* (raccoon) mask sometime in the Keichō era (1596-1615), a racoon *karakuri* was placed on a float in 1622, which was later equipped with wheels in 1635.

Gender is not mentioned in the description. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 2016)

Yamahoko, the float ceremony of the Kyōto Gion festival

Yamahoko, the float ceremony of the Kyōto Gion festival in Kyōto City in Kyōto prefecture, *Kyōto Gion Matsuri no Yamahoko Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 1979. The description in the *Gekkan bunkazai* journal is short. Kyōto Gion float festival is a festival of the Yasaka Shrine, earlier called Gionsha. According to the description in the *Gekkan bunkazai* journal, the origin of the festival can be found approximately 1000 years ago, in the *goryōe* (ceremonies held to appease restless spirits), which developed into a form where music and dancing was performed during the greeting and sending off with the portable shrine. This event gradually developed into the festival of today. The role of *chigo* is mentioned, but the description does not mention gender. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 1979)

The Hakata Gion Yamakasa Festival

The Hakata Gion Yamakasa Festival in Fukuoka City in Fukuoka prefecture, *Hakata Gion Yamakasa Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 1979. According to the description in the *Gekkan bunkazai* journal, it is said that the origin of the festival is connected to a ritual performed by Enni Ben'en, praying for eliminating epidemics. In terms of the festival organization, the roles are assigned in a system based on age, and the description mentions the senior group, the middle age group, and the *wakamono* group. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 1979)

The Tobata Gion Festival

The Tobata Gion Festival in Kitakyūshū in Fukuoka prefecture, *Tobata Gion Ōyamagasa Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 1980. The description is short and does not mention the history of the festival. The description mentions *wakamono*, but it does not mention gender. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 1980)

Karatsu Kunchi

The Karatsu Kunchi festival in Karatsu in Saga prefecture, *Karatsu Kunchi no Hikiyama Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 1980. The oldest records of the festival are from 1763, but the oldest float currently in use (the red lion) is from 1819. It is said that this float was constructed by the local resident Ishizaki Kahei after coming home after a pilgrimage to Ise, having passed through Kyōto and seen the Gion festival. After that, each neighbourhood constructed floats of their own, in various shapes. Gender is not mentioned in the description, nor is the festival organization. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 1980)

The Yatsushiro Myōken Festival

The Yatsushiro Myōken Festival in Yatsushiro in Kumamoto prefecture, *Yatsushiro Myōkensai no Shinkō Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 2011. According to the description in the *Gekkan bunkazai* journal, the oldest records of the festival are from 1515, although the festival has undergone changes since then. The festival has developed under the patronage of the successive generations of rulers of the castle town of Yatsushiro, and from the early modern period, the townspeople started participating and various floats were added. A picture scroll believed to be from the 18th or 19th century depicts the festival containing roughly the same elements as the festival of today. Gender is mentioned in connection to one of the floats, manoeuvred from the inside by five men. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 2011)

The Hita Gion Festival

The Hita Gion Festival in Hita in Oita prefecture, *Hita Gion no Hikiyama Gyōji*, was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 1996. The oldest records mentioning the *yamaboko* floats are reportedly from 1665. It is also mentioned that the festival floats grew large in size between the Edo period until the early Meiji era, and that the installation of power poles with aerial wiring initially caused some trouble for the procession of the tall *yamaboko* floats. Gender is not mentioned in the description, nor are the festival roles. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Cultural Properties Division 1996)

4.3 Summary of results

The examination of the descriptions of the festivals in *Gekkan bunkazai* revealed that gender roles and gender restrictions are generally not clearly described aspects, with some exceptions. In roughly half of the festivals, the descriptions did not contain any mentions of gender. In relation to this, it may be relevant to point out that in the discussions preceding female *hayashi* to be allowed in the Kyōto Gion festival, the non-mentioning of gender in the designation documents played a role (see Chapter 2.2).

Approximately one fourth of the descriptions mentioned gender in a direct way. In the cases where gender was clearly mentioned, two of them mentioned gender restrictions. In the descriptions of the Tsuchizaki Shinmei Shrine Festival and the Tatemon Festival of Uozu, it was mentioned that gender restrictions for women had existed earlier but that women were nowadays participating in large numbers. It can be noted that both these festivals were designated in 1997.

In around one third of the descriptions, gender-coded words were used, thereby implying the gender of the participants partaking in the various roles. However, it should be pointed out that the usage of the gender-coded words is not unequivocal. For example, as will be shown in Chapter 7, the Inuyama festival nowadays has both male and female *wakai shu*.

5. Description of the float festivals in the international ICH safeguarding context

This chapter focuses on UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) and how the float festivals are handled and described, in terms of gender roles and gender restrictions, within that context. The chapter consists of three parts. The first part provides a brief background to the Japanese implementation of the convention. The second part focuses on the inscription of the Yama Hoko Yatai float festivals on the Representative List and how the festivals are depicted within that context in terms of gender roles and gender restrictions. To offer context to the inscription of the float festivals, the second part starts with an analysis of all of Japan's inscribed elements on the Representative List. This analysis aims to assess the gender balance and gender representation within these inscribed elements. As such, the second part consists of two sections. Results are summarized in the third part.

5.1. Background

By the establishment of UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in 2003, there is now an international normative instrument for safeguarding ICH. In Japan, a national normative instrument for safeguarding ICH existed already before the creation of the ICH through its national legislation for protecting cultural heritage. As mentioned in Chapter 4, legislation for the protection of intangible heritage was established with the introduction of the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties in 1950, and the law has been amended a number of times since then, seeing additions of new categories. Japan also stands out among the state parties to the ICH in other ways. For example, Japan played an influential role in the creation of the convention (Hafstein 2004).⁷ It may also be mentioned that Japan currently (October 2019) has the second largest number of inscribed elements on the RL (21 elements), followed by the Republic of Korea (20 elements) and topped by China (32 elements).

⁷ For descriptions of the creation and development of the convention, see also Aikawa (2004 and 2009).

5.1.1. Implementation of the 2003 convention

Japan accepted the convention in 2004 (as the third earliest country to deposit instruments of ratification, acceptance or approval, following Algeria and Mauritius). The convention dictates that the ratifying state parties shall create one or more inventories over ICH existing within its territory (UNESCO 2003, Convention text, article 12). The inventories can be created in a manner suitable for the situation of each individual country (ibid). Since the Japanese legislative system for ICH existed before the acceptance of the convention in Japan, the national inventory could be created based on already existing registries over intangible heritage properties protected by the national legislation (see notes on the national legislation and the designation and inventorying procedure in 4.1).

The Japanese inventory is comprised mainly of the recognized properties in the following three categories: Important Intangible Cultural Properties, Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties, and Selected Conservation Techniques. Two of these are divided into subcategories; Important Intangible Heritage Properties is divided into the two subcategories Individual Recognition and Holder (Collective Recognition)/Holding Groups (both of which are further divided into the two subdivisions Performing Arts and Craft Techniques), and Selected Conservation Techniques is divided into Holders and Preservation Organizations. In addition to the aforementioned categories, the inventory also includes the following category: Included element based of the decision of the Council for Cultural Affairs of the Government. So far, this category holds one element – ‘Washoku: Traditional Dietary Cultures of the Japanese’. (The Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Japan as of March 2015)

From the inventory, state parties can nominate elements for inscription onto the international lists of the convention. All of Japan’s currently inscribed elements are inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, i.e. Japan has no elements inscribed on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.⁸

The element ‘Yama, Hoko, Yatai, float festivals in Japan’ is a group element consisting of 33 different festivals. Before ‘Yama, Hoko, Yatai, float festivals in Japan’

⁸ Nor does Japan have any proposed programmes, projects or activities for the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices.

was inscribed in 2016, two of the festivals had already been inscribed individually on the RL – ‘Hitachi Fuyumono’ (2009) and ‘Yamahoko, the Float Ceremony of the Kyoto Gion Festival’ (2009). The inscription of the group element replaced the two earlier inscriptions.

5.2. Handling and description of the float festivals

The Yama Hoko Yatai float festivals were inscribed on the RL in 2016. This section examines how the festivals are depicted within that framework. However, in order to offer context to the gender approach in the description of the festivals, this section starts with an analysis of the gender representation in Japan’s listed elements on the RL.

5.2.1. The context – Japan’s inscribed elements on the RL

Analysis of Japan’s inscribed elements

Japan currently has 21 elements inscribed on UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. See list of the examined elements in Table 3 below. Some of them are group elements, such as for example ‘Yama, Hoko, Yatai, float festivals in Japan’ and ‘Washi, craftsmanship of traditional Japanese hand-made paper’.⁹ The elements inscribed on the RL are the result of a selection process (there are many elements on the national inventory) and can be argued to represent an image of Japan being projected in the international context of the convention framework.

As such, a quantitative analysis was conducted by the author in order to assess the gender balance and gender representation in Japan’s projected image in this international context. The results of the quantitative analysis were presented at the biannual conference of the Association for Critical Heritage Studies in September 2018 in Hangzhou, China. Additionally, a thematic analysis of the elements was conducted as well. A full paper, presenting both the quantitative and thematic analyses, is scheduled for publication in June 2020 in the conference proceedings (Janse 2020 [in print]).

⁹ Similar to the inscription of the float festivals as a group element, the element ‘Sekishu-Banshi: papermaking in the Iwami region of Shimane Prefecture’, which was inscribed in 2009, was later replaced with the inscription of the group element ‘Washi, craftsmanship of traditional Japanese hand-made paper’ in 2014.

Table 3. Year of inscription and available data sources (all elements as of 2017)

Basic information		Available data sources (o = available, x = not available)		
Name of element	Year of inscription	Nomination file	Periodic report 2010	Periodic report 2016
Kabuki theatre	2008	x	o	o
Ningyo Johruri Bunraku puppet theatre	2008	x	o	o
Nôgaku theatre	2008	x	o	o
Akiu no Taue Odori	2009	o	o	o
Chakkirako	2009	o	o	o
Daimokutate	2009	o	o	o
Dainichido Bugaku	2009	o	o	o
Gagaku	2009	o	o	o
Hayachine Kagura	2009	o	o	o
Koshikijima no Toshidon	2009	o	o	o
Ojiya-chijimi, Echigo-jofu: techniques of making ramie fabric in Uonuma region, Niigata Prefecture	2009	o	o	o
Oku-noto no Aenokoto	2009	o	o	o
Traditional Ainu dance	2009	o	o	o
Kumiodori, traditional Okinawan musical theatre	2010	o	x	o
Yuki-tsumugi, silk fabric production technique	2010	o	x	o
Mibu no Hana Taue, ritual of transplanting rice in Mibu, Hiroshima	2011	o	x	o
Sada Shin Noh, sacred dancing at Sada shrine, Shimane	2011	o	x	o
Nachi no Dengaku	2012	o	x	o
Washoku, traditional dietary cultures of the Japanese, notably for the celebration of New Year	2013	o	x	o
Washi, craftsmanship of traditional Japanese hand-made paper	2014	o	x	o
Yama, Hoko, Yatai, float festivals in Japan	2016	o	x	x

Methodology

Available data on gender in the official documents (nomination files, periodic report 2010 and periodic report 2016) was extracted, analysed, sorted and aggregated. The extracted data was analysed to determine what kind of information was common and available among the elements, in order to isolate a number of questions which could be posed to the material. The questions were the following:

- Concerning gender restrictions: Are there any gender restrictions? If so: Are there any gender restrictions for women? Are there any gender restrictions for men? What is the restriction?
- Concerning the practitioners: Are all practitioners women? Are all practitioners men?
- Concerning the preservation association members: Are all members women? Are all members men?

The resulting data was then sorted into corresponding categories: gender restrictions, participation as practitioner, and participation as preservation association member. By combining the results of the analysis of these three categories, the author created a so-called *character index*, used to indicate the overall character of the element. The character index can be either ‘female’, ‘male’, or ‘mixed’. The label ‘mixed’ means that the practitioners as well as the preservation association members include both women and men, and that gender restrictions are *either* non-existing *or* existing for both women and men.

The group element ‘Yama, Hoko, Yatai, float festivals in Japan’ – consisting of 33 of the 36 festivals targeted in this study – was inscribed on the RL in 2016. Elements inscribed after 2017 however are not included in this analysis.¹⁰ As mentioned above, the results of this analysis were originally presented at a conference in 2018, and a full paper is scheduled for publication in the conference proceedings (Janse 2020 [in print]).

¹⁰ In 2018, the group element ‘Raiho-shin, ritual visits of deities in masks and costumes’ was inscribed on the Representative List. The already individually inscribed element of ‘Koshikijima no Toshidon’ was thereby replaced by the inscription of the group element, since it forms a part thereof.

Notes on Data Interpretation

The available information on gender is not in all cases explicit, and therefore the information has been subjected to interpretation and approximation by the author in the data extraction process. Regarding for example the existence of gender restrictions, the examination of the elements was based on the description of roles and the participants, and whether any existing role divisions were described as free and voluntary or not. As such, a distinction is made between restrictions and tendencies. As an example of the former, the description of ‘Mibu no Hana Taue’ relays how some of the roles are performed by women and other roles are performed by men (Nomination file for Mibu no Hana Taue, ritual of transplanting rice in Mibu, Hiroshima 2011). This is interpreted in the following way: gender restrictions do exist; they exist for both men and women; the restrictions consist of separate roles for women and men.

In comparison, and as an example of tendencies rather than restrictions, the description of ‘Yuki-tsumugi, silk fabric production technique’ also mentions something akin to role divisions between men and women, but in a different way. The description in the 2016 periodic report relays how, in the production process, some tasks are performed by mostly women and others by mostly men (Periodic report, Japan 2016). The keyword is most(ly). This is interpreted as an indication that the role division in question is a tendency rather than a rule, and that exceptions are likely to exist. As another example, the description of the element ‘Traditional Ainu dance’ mentions that “the songs are sung by mostly women while both men and women dance” (ibid, p. 66). This is also interpreted as a description of a tendency, rather than a restriction.

Moreover, the results have been divided into different levels of certainty, due to the in many cases non-explicit information on gender in the examined documents. For example, possible answers to the question regarding whether restrictions exist for women or not are: Yes, Indicated Yes, No, Indicated No, and Information missing. Regarding the question whether all practitioners are men, it may also be noted that in two cases of theatre traditions, the answer shows ‘Yes and No’, since women are not allowed as actors but are allowed in other roles, for example as musicians. A summary of the interpretation of the extracted data from all elements are presented in Table 4 below, also containing a summary of the character indexes of all elements.

Table 4. Summary of interpretation of data regarding restrictions and participation and assessment of character index (all elements as of 2017)

Basic information	Interpretation of data								Assessment
	Restrictions				Participation				
Name of element	Gender restrictions existing	Gender restrictions existing for women	Gender restrictions existing for men	Type of restriction	Practitioners		Association members		Character index
					Are all practitioners women?	Are all practitioners men?	Are all association members women?	Are all association members men?	
Kabuki theatre	Yes	Yes	No	Women barred from being actors	No	Yes and No	No	No	Male
Ningyo Johruri Bunraku puppet theatre	Information missing	Information missing	Information missing	Information missing	Indicated No	Information missing	No	Yes	Male
Nôgaku theatre	No	No	No	-	No	No	No	No	Mixed
Akiu no Taue Odori	Yes	Yes	Yes	Separate roles for women and men	No	No	No	No	Mixed
Chakkirako	Yes	No	Yes	Men barred from participating in performing the ritual	Yes	No	No	No	Female
Daimokutate	Yes	Yes	No	Women barred from participating	No	Yes	No	Yes	Male
Dainichido Bugaku	Yes	Yes	No	Women barred from participating in at least some dances	No	Indicated Yes	No	Yes	Male
Gagaku	Information missing	Information missing	Information missing	Information missing	Information missing	Information missing	Information missing	Information missing	Information missing

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Hayachine Kagura	Information missing	Information missing	Information missing	Information missing	Indicated No	Indicated Yes	No	Yes	Male
Koshikijima no Toshidon	Yes	Yes	No	Women barred from participation in performing the ritual	No	Yes	No	Yes	Male
Ojiya-chijimi, Echigo-jofu: techniques of making ramie fabric in Uonuma region, Niigata Prefecture	Indicated No	Indicated No	Indicated No	-	No	No	Information missing	Information missing	Mixed
Oku-noto no Aenokoto	Information missing	Information missing	No	Information missing	No	Indicated Yes	No	Yes	Male
Traditional Ainu dance	Indicated No	No	Indicated No	-	No	No	No	No	Mixed
Kumiodori, traditional Okinawan musical theatre	Yes	Yes	No	Women barred from being actors	No	Yes and No	No	No	Male
Yuki-tsumugi, silk fabric production technique	Indicated No	Indicated No	Indicated No	-	No	No	No	No	Mixed
Mibu no Hana Taue, ritual of transplanting rice in Mibu, Hiroshima	Yes	Yes	Yes	Separate roles for women and men	No	No	Indicated No	Indicated No	Mixed
Sada Shin Noh, sacred dancing at Sada shrine, Shimane	Information missing	Information missing	Information missing	Information missing	Information missing	Information missing	Information missing	Information missing	Information missing
Nachi no Dengaku	Indicated Yes	Indicated Yes	No	Women probably barred from participation in performing the ritual	No	Indicated Yes	No	Yes	Male
Washoku, traditional dietary cultures of the Japanese, notably for the celebration of New Year	No	No	No	-	No	No	Information missing	Information missing	Mixed
Washi, craftsmanship of traditional Japanese hand-made paper	No	No	No	-	No	No	No	No	Mixed
Yama, Hoko, Yatai, float festivals in Japan	Information missing	Information missing	Information missing	Information missing	Information missing	Information missing	Information missing	Information missing	Information missing

Results

The results of the analysis of the 21 elements show that there is a noticeable difference in visibility between women and men. Regarding the practitioners, all-male elements are more common than all-female elements. Concerning the preservation association members, all-male preservation associations were significantly more common than all-female preservation associations. In terms of restrictions on participation and roles, gender restrictions are common within the listed elements, and the restrictions are more commonly directed towards women than men. Regarding the character index, out of the 21 elements analysed, 1 element was labelled as ‘female’, 9 as ‘male’, 8 as ‘mixed’, and in 3 cases there was not enough information available to determine the character index.

Furthermore, the results indicated that gender equal representation was not a prioritized factor during the selection of elements to nominate for inscription. Had it been, it would have been reasonable to expect a greater balance in the ratio between ‘male’ and ‘female’ elements and/or more ‘mixed’ elements.

A variance in how to approach the topic of gender was also discerned in the analysis of the descriptions. In some cases, there are no mentions of gender, while gender roles and ratios are described in detail in other cases, and in some cases, a cautiousness can be discerned regarding how to approach gender. (Janse 2020 [in print])

5.2.2. Official description of the Yama Hoko Yatai float festivals

As previously mentioned, before the group element ‘Yama, Hoko, Yatai, float festivals in Japan’, consisting of 33 different festivals, was inscribed on the RL in 2016, two of the festivals had already been inscribed individually on the RL – ‘Hitachi Fuyumono’ (2009) and ‘Yamahoko, the Float Ceremony of the Kyoto Gion Festival’ (2009). When the group element was inscribed it replaced the two individual elements.

The nomination file of ‘Yama, Hoko, Yatai, float festivals in Japan’ does not contain any detailed descriptions of gender roles. Gender is mentioned only in general terms, and gender restrictions are not mentioned. The festivals are portrayed as events engaging the whole concerned community, where all members of the community take part. (Nomination file for ‘Yama, Hoko, Yatai, float festivals in Japan’ 2016)

The festivals' most significant feature is the communities' devotion to the preparation and celebration of the festivals. Community members including men, women, the young and the elders share their tasks and responsibilities all year around preparing for the float festivals, the most important event of the year for them. Float festivals therefore foster communication and teamwork between community members, and play vital roles in uniting them. [...] All members of the community look forward to and practice the float festivals. [...] The float festival lies at the heart of the lives of all members of the concerned community as the main event of each region. The members live with and for the festival all year long; they reserve funds for the float festivals, hold meetings and practice traditional music, dance and sometimes puppet theatre that are performed at festivals. The float festivals also have significance in the spiritual lives of the community members as sources of their vitality. [...] In order to successfully prepare for and celebrate the festivals, each member of the communities takes charge of his/her specific role and works together. Such cooperation creates bonds within the communities that transcend age, status and gender. The float festivals therefore fulfill the social functions of uniting all community members and allowing them to reaffirm their identities as members of the community every year. (ibid, p. 4-5)

The Takaoka Mikurumayama festival is highlighted as an example in describing the planning process and how the roles are assigned.

In each region, community members hold meetings throughout the year in order to decide how the next festivals will be managed and how specific roles will be assigned to respective inhabitants. In the Takaoka Mikurumayama Festival, for example, townspeople who live in the centre of the city assemble the floats and the people from the surrounding areas pull the floats and play the festival music. The festivals are planned in a way that reflects the diversity of ages among members of the local communities and includes all genders. (ibid, p. 4)

5.2.2.1 Descriptions of the two previously individually inscribed festivals

Since ‘Hitachi Fuyumono’ and ‘Yamahoko, the Float Ceremony of the Kyoto Gion Festival’ have been incorporated into the group element ‘Yama, Hoko, Yatai, float festivals in Japan’, the two festivals are no longer inscribed individually. Consequently, the nomination files for the individual elements have been withdrawn and are no longer available (reference to e-mail conversation between the author and the Secretariat of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in October 2017 and May 2019). However, both festivals are included in Japan’s periodic reports from 2010 and 2016. Concerning the Hitachi festival, both periodic reports – from 2010 and 2016 – contain mentions of gender. The 2010 periodic report gives the following mentions:

The skills and arts to produce and manipulate puppets, however, have been transmitted for a long time from parent to the eldest son only, in specific families within a community as a secret process. (Periodic report, Japan 2010, p. 45-46)

As a result [of the inscription on the Representative List], many young people including high school students have become members of the preservation association (most of whose members are elderly), and participate in the event. There have also been many cases of parents and children taking part together. The new younger generation actively participates, by manipulating the puppets, making and repairing tools and learning the necessary techniques from those with more experience such as their parents. (ibid, p. 46)

There are around 400 Association members, of which many are male. (ibid, p. 48)

The 2016 periodic report contains the following mention:

For the puppet theater that is performed on the floats, each puppet has three to five puppeteers who are in charge of different body parts: the face, the body, the arms, and the legs. The skills are transmitted strictly from parent to eldest son. (Periodic report, Japan 2016. p. 32)

The reports on the ‘Yamahoko, the Float Ceremony of the Kyoto Gion Festival’ are devoid of mentions of gender in both periodic reports.

5.3. Summary of results

The topic of gender has been handled differently in the three cases. In the case of Hitachi Furyūmono, gender is not avoided, and roles limited to only men are also mentioned. As such, this description differs from the description in the national safeguarding system (see previous chapter) in terms of mentions of gender. In the case of Kyōto Gion, gender is not addressed. As such, it is similar to the description in the national safeguarding system (see previous chapter) in terms of mentions of gender. In the case of the group nomination, gender is mentioned only in general terms, and the overall picture conveyed is a gender inclusive one.

In terms of the context – the Representative List – the analysis of the Japanese elements on the Representative List found that there is a gender imbalance in Japan’s inscribed elements, with a male dominance in participation, access and representation. A gender equal representation does not appear to have been a prioritized factor when choosing which elements to nominate for the RL. As such, it may be argued that in the image projected by Japan on the international arena of the 2003 convention, officially recognized ICH in Japan is displayed as a male dominated domain.

This chapter and the previous chapter have focused on how the festivals are described in terms of gender within the contexts of national and international safeguarding systems. The next two chapters are focused on the situation on-site, as experienced by the preservation associations.

6. Mapping of the current situation (survey)

This chapter describes the methodology and the results of the survey conducted among the preservation associations connected to the 36 festivals. The chapter consists of three parts. In the first part of the chapter, the methodology is described. The results are presented in the second part, and conclusions are summarized in the third part.

6.1. Methodology

A survey among the preservation associations connected to the 36 festivals was conducted during autumn-winter 2018. The survey was conducted with assistance of the National Association for the Preservation of Float Festivals. An approval for conducting the survey was obtained from the University of Tsukuba Arts Division Conflict of Interest Committee in July 2018 (File no: *Gei* 30-3). The results of the survey have been published by the author in 2019 (Janse 2019).

The author visited the National Association for the Preservation of Float Festivals in Chichibu in Saitama prefecture in May 2018. After presenting the research plan, the National Association offered their cooperation in conducting the proposed survey among the preservation associations. According to the National Association for the Preservation of Float Festivals, no similar survey had been done before, and the results of such a survey would be of interest to them as well (reference to a meeting with the National Association for the Preservation of Float Festivals on 9 May 2019 in Chichibu City, Saitama Prefecture).

A questionnaire was sent out to the 36 preservation associations in September 2018. The questionnaire was sent out in one (1) copy to each preservation association, i.e. the questionnaire was targeted to each preservation association as a group, and not to its individual members. As mentioned, the questionnaires were sent out with the support of the National Association for the Preservation of Float Festivals. First, the contents to be sent out to each preservation association was sent to the National Association for the Preservation of Float Festivals by the author. The contents for each preservation association consisted of the questionnaire, a reply envelope addressed to the University, a request letter, and practical instructions. The National Association for the Preservation of Float Festivals then posted the contents to the 36 festivals. The replies to the survey

were sent directly from the preservation associations to the University, by post. The initial deadline for replying was 12 October 2018. The response rate was 64% (23 out of 36 festivals). The last reply was received on 2 November (postmark date) 2018.

The survey was conducted in Japanese. The received replies have been translated by the author. In the translations, the author chose to prioritize keeping the wording close to that of the original language, at the cost of eloquence. See the original questionnaire in Japanese in Appendix 1.¹¹ The questionnaire inquired about the following information:

Section 1

➔ Name of the preservation association

Number of people

➔ How many members does the preservation association have approximately?

Age

➔ What is the age distribution among the members (approximately)?

29 years and younger	%
30 – 64 years	%
65 years and older	%

Sex ratio

➔ What is the sex ratio among the members (approximately)?

Men	%
Women	%

Number of neighbourhood associations¹²

➔ How many neighbourhood associations are participating?

Section 2

Concerning gender roles

Among the various roles in the festival, are there any role divisions by gender, based on tradition? If that is the case, then:

¹¹ The questionnaire was printed single-sided. The practical instructions encouraged the respondents to use the back of the paper if the provided space proved insufficient.

¹² 町内会 (*chōnaikai*)

- ➔ What kind of role divisions are there? (For example, mostly men perform the role of handling the wooden clappers, etc.)
- ➔ Are there any roles that are exclusively for only men or only women? (For example, the role of pulling the float is limited to only men, etc.)

Section 3

Concerning changes in gender roles

Has there been any changes in the gender roles, recently or in the past? (For example, earlier women could not perform as musicians but nowadays also women musicians can participate, etc.) If change has happened, then:

- ➔ What kind of change?
- ➔ When did the change occur?
- ➔ Why did the change occur? (For example, because of a lack of people caused by depopulation and population ageing, etc.)

Figure 2. *Questions posed in the survey.*

The questionnaire had three sections, the first section focusing on basic information, the second on gender roles, and the third on changes in gender roles. See questions above in Figure 2 (see original questionnaire in Japanese in Appendix I). The questions in the second section were formulated to distinguish between tendencies and rules, as a way of identifying indications of the severity of the role divisions. As such, the first question in the second section targets all kinds of role divisions by gender, while the second question in this section specifically targets roles performed exclusively by one gender group.

It can be noted that some of the questions of Sections 2 and 3 contain examples. As such, the possibility that these examples might have influenced the replies to the survey should be taken into consideration. At the same time, it may also be noted that the examples were chosen, based on existing information and prior knowledge about the festivals, to reflect frequently occurring patterns. Another point to take into consideration is that the information in the replies might to some extent be dependent on the person who answered to survey. However, it should be noted that the questions in the survey pertain only to facts, and not to opinions.

6.2. Results and observations

See the received replies compiled in the tables below. Table 5 contains the received information on basic data (part 1 of the questionnaire) and Table 6 contains the received information on gender roles and changes in gender roles (parts 2 and 3 of the questionnaire). Concerning parts 2 and 3 of the questionnaire, the replies in Japanese can be found in Appendix II. Observations follow after the two tables, and the results are summarized in section 6.3 of this chapter.

Table 5. Results of survey. Basic information. (Festivals from where no reply was received have been omitted.)

Name of festival	Name of preservation association	Number of members	Distribution of members by age group			Distribution of members by gender group		Number or neighbourhood associations
			Percentage young (29 years and younger)	Percentage middle (30 – 64 years)	Percentage senior (65 years and older)	Percentage women	Percentage men	
(text)	(text)	(no.)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(no.)
Hachinohe Sansha Daisai no Dashi Gyōji	Hachinohe Sansha Daisai Dashi Matsuri Gyōji Hozonkai							
Kakunodate Matsuri no Yama Gyōji	Kakunodate no Omatsuri Hozonkai	100	0	80	20	5	95	18
Hanawa Matsuri no Yatai Gyōji	Hanawa Bayashi Saiten Iinkai	180	0	95	5	0	100	10
Shinjō Matsuri no Yatai Gyōji	Shinjō Matsuri Yatai Gyōji Hozonkai	12 (*1)	0	17	83	17	83	37 (*2)
Hitachi Ōtsu no Ofunematsuri	Hitachi Ōtsu no Ofunematsuri Hozonkai	138	18	62	20	0	100	3
Hitachi Furyūmono	Hitachi Kyōdo Geinō Hozonkai (*3)	160	5	15	85	2	98	4 (*4)
Kawagoe Hikawa Matsuri no Dashi Gyōji	Kawagoe Hikawa Matsuri no Dashi Gyōji Hozonkai	16 (*5)	0	19	81	0	100	13
Murakami Matsuri no Yatai Gyōji	Murakami Matsuri Hozonkai	90	0	77	23	0	100	19
Takaoka Mikurumayama Matsuri no Mikurumayama Gyōji	Takaoka Mikurumayama Hozonkai	450	25	45	30	52	48	10
Uozu no Tatemon Gyōji	Uozu Tatemon Hozonkai	350 (*6)	20	50	30	10	90	7
Jōhana Shinmeigūsai no Hikiyama Gyōji	Jōhana Hikiyama Matsuri Hozonkai	70	0	10	90	0	100	9
Seihakusai no Hikiyama Gyōji	Seihakusai Dekayama Hozonkai	45 (*7)	0 (*7)	50 (*7)	50 (*7)	0 (*8)	100 (*8)	3 (*9)
Furukawa Matsuri no Okoshidaiko Yatai Gyōji	Furukawa Matsuri Hozonkai	65	0	60	40	0	100	12

Ōgaki Matsuri no Yama Gyōji	Ōgaki Matsuri Hozonkai	12	0	44	56	0	100	10
Chiryū no Dashi Bunraku to Karakuri	Chiryū Dashi Rengō Hozonkai	20	0	30	70	0	100	5
Inuyama Matsuri no Yama Gyōji	Inuyama Matsuri Hozonkai	34	0	44	56	3	97	16
Kamezaki Shiohi Matsuri no Dashi Gyōji	Kamezaki Shiohi Matsuri Hozonkai	95	0	56	43	0	100	5 teams
Sunari Matsuri no Danjiribune Gyōji to Miyoshi Nagashi	Sunari Bunkazai Hogo Iinkai	68 (*10)	0	60	40	0 (*11)	100 (*11)	1
Ōtsu Matsuri	Ōtsu Matsuri Hozonkai	(*12)	(*13)	(*13)	(*13)	(*14)	(*14)	16
Tobata Gion Ōyamagasa Gyōji	Tobata Gion Ōyamagasa Shinkōkai	48	0	90	10	2	98	4
Karatsu Kunchi no Hikiyama Gyōji	Karatsu Hikiyama Torishimarikai	60	0	62	38	0	100	14
Yatsushiro Myōkensai no Shinkō Gyōji	Yatsushiro Myōkensai Hozon Shinkōkai	67	0	57	43	6	94	28
Hita Gion no Hikiyama Gyōji	Hita Gion Yamaboko Shinkōkai	Circa 500	15	80	5	0	100	10

Additional information:

- (*1) Officers only, the number of other participants is unknown.
- (*2) 20 floats, 17 orchestras.
- (*3) The reply concerns Hitachi Furyūmono.
- (*4) 4 float branches.
- (*5) However, 13 people are neighbourhood representatives. So formally it is 13 neighbourhoods + 3 people.
- (*6) Number of households in the parish of Suwa Shrine in Uozu, Toyama pref.
- (*7) Seihakusai Dekayama hozonkai (excluding the young lads/people [association] etc.).
- (*8) Seihakusai Dekayama hozonkai.
- (*9) Uochō Dekayama hozonkai, Fuchūchō Dekayama hozonkai, and Kajichō Dekayama hozonkai.
- (*10) Composed of the Sunari ward assembly, Sunari reverence assembly, and drum and flute assembly.
- (*11) However, there are 11 people registered in the women's division in the Sunari reverence assembly dealing mainly with helping people dress.
- (*12) The Ōtsu festival preservation association is made up of only the directors of each neighbourhood, and therefore there are no preservation association members as such.
- (*13) Same as previous.
- (*14) Same as previous. There are no female members in any of the neighbourhoods.

Information on basic data (part 1 of the questionnaire) has been presented in Table 5 above. Table 6, showing the received information on gender roles and changes in gender roles (parts 2 and 3 of the questionnaire), is presented below. Results and observations are presented following the table.

Table 6. Results of survey: replies. Concerning gender roles and changes in gender roles. (Festivals from where no reply was received have been omitted.)

Name of festival	Concerning gender roles		Concerning changes in gender roles		
	Gender tendencies	Gender restrictions	What change?	When?	Why?
Hachinohe Sansha Daisai no Dashi Gyōji	<p>Apart from the festival floats, the Hachinohe Sansha Daisai festival also includes folk performing arts and various processions. Many of the participants are only involved on the actual day of the festival, so it is difficult to assess the number of participants and their age distribution. Regarding gender roles, each group deals with that in their own way and it varies between the groups. Please see the reference material enclosed.</p>				
Kakunodate Matsuri no Yama Gyōji	<p>Both men and women can participate in the festival floats (<i>hikiyama</i>), but only men can be festival officers (supervisor, deputy supervisor, traffic negotiator).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Festival officers → limited to only men. • <i>Teodori</i> [hand dance] → women shoulder [this task] (especially young women under the age of 30) (the youngest start learning from around the age of 3). • Both men and women – it is irrelevant – can participate in the festival floats (<i>hikiyama</i>). 	<p>The musicians were only men in the old days. Women did <i>teodori</i> [hand dance]. Now, women who can do both <i>teodori</i> and be musicians have increased. <i>Teodori</i> dancers and musicians have different ‘<i>kumi</i>’ [teams], with team leaders. In some cases, the <i>teodori</i> dancers and the musicians can have the same team leader and in other cases they are different.</p>	A few years ago (about 5 to 10 years ago).	<p>The local children are learning how to play the music and dance the <i>teodori</i>, but it was decided that the date of the festival is 7-9 September, meaning that in some cases the festival is held on weekdays, with a shortage of people.</p>

Mapping of the current situation (survey)

Hanawa Matsuri no Yatai Gyōji	Nothing in particular.	It's not a written rule but, • Operations (Commands, instructions) → men. • Dancing → women.	None.		
Shinjō Matsuri no Yatai Gyōji	• Shamisen is [played by] mostly women. • Steering the pulling of the festival floats is [done by] mostly men.	None.	None.		
Hitachi Ōtsu no Ofunematsuri	Only men.				
Hitachi Fuyūmono	Out of the 4 branches, 1 branch admits women to participate in <i>narimono</i> (a music instrument performance) only.	See previous. Concerning <i>hikiyama</i> (moving the festival float around by pulling the ropes), ordinary visitors coming to view the festival are admitted to participate.	Before, all 4 branches didn't admit women's participation, but now 1 branch admits participation.	Approximately 20 years ago.	Shortage of people, and a change in consciousness towards female participation
Kawagoe Hikawa Matsuri no Dashi Gyōji	In the case of Kawagoe, the circumstances of the role divisions between men and women vary completely between the different districts. The preservation association does not have a clear picture. (The same goes for the following questions.)				
Murakami Matsuri no Yatai Gyōji			Women riding the festival floats (musicians). From the forties of the Showa era, it became ok for women (elementary school students) to ride the festival floats.	From the forties of the Showa era.	Declining birth rate.

Takaoka Mikurumayama Matsuri no Mikurumayama Gyōji	Concerning the festival itself, women don't participate in the operations or the management. Women's assignment is to manufacture parts for the floats. The <i>hanagasa</i> ['flower parasols'] of the Takaoka Mikurumayama are produced by men and women together. Women only participate in the preparation stages before the festival.	Concerning the <i>buei</i> [procession], everything is limited to men. The approximately 10 people in formal dress doing the role of attendant/companion are men, and the role of bodyguard/escort sitting on the float, done by kids, is limited to men.	Presently it's limited to men but in the future, there is a possibility women might be accepted for the role children do as bodyguards/ escorts sitting on the float. This is because the number of boys has declined considerably recently. That being said, it will probably not change for at least 10 years.		
Uozu no Tatemon Gyōji	Traditionally, earlier it was a men's festival. However, because of the progression of declining birth rates and population ageing, about 20 years ago (approximately) women started participating as musicians playing flute and drums. That elementary school students, regardless of sex, learned [flute and drums] in school also had an influence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carriers and handlers of the ropes to secure the stability: men. • Flute and drums: men and women. • People pulling the ropes of the festival float: women are in majority (because of a shortage of people, since men are concerned with the roles described above). • Preparing tea etc, people behind the scenes: women. 	See previous answers.	See previous answers.	See previous answers.
Jōhana Shinmeigūtsai no Hikiyama Gyōji	100% men. Each district decides the roles.	Entirely limited to men.			
Seihakusai no Hikiyama Gyōji	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are 3 festival floats. • Preservation association (in every neighbourhood/town there is a representative, vice representative, accountant etc.) • <i>Wakai shu</i> [Young lads/people] (Head of the young lads/people, work song singers, handlers of the levers, handlers of the stop levers, handlers of rope, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pulling the floats are for both men and women and open to the public to participate. • I believe it is safe to say that the area closest to the festival float is restricted to only men. • Among the 3 floats, concerning the pulling of the ropes of the floats, there are 2 women's groups. 	See previous answer but, among the 3 floats, there are 2 neighbourhoods/ towns with women's groups.	For the 2 neighbourhoods/towns it was around 1999 and 2001, I believe.	For example, a shortage of people caused by depopulation and population ageing etc. was [also] happening, but, to liven up the festival and to let girls participate even a little was [also] a purpose.

Furukawa Matsuri no Okoshidaiko Yatai Gyōji	None.	None.	Previously, women couldn't even get close to the festival floats. Now, elementary school and junior high school girls are participating as musicians, and also women participate in pulling the ropes of the festival float.	Around 1989.	Shortage of people.
Ōgaki Matsuri no Yama Gyōji	In general, men shoulder many tasks.	It's not a rule but, it's a tacit understanding that women are not involved in religious matters.	Earlier, women were not allowed to touch the <i>sanryōyama</i> [three particular festival floats].	After the war approximately.	Unknown.
Chiryū no Dashi Bunraku to Karakuri	Nothing in particular.	Nothing in particular (However, women are not involved in handling the <i>kajibō</i> [the poles used to manoeuvre and turn the festival float]).	Nothing in particular.		
Inuyama Matsuri no Yama Gyōji	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The role pulling the festival floats (called 'teko' in Inuyama) is impossible for other than men. 20-25 people. There are 10-15 musicians. Among them, the small drum group consists of 6-8 children, about half of them girls. There are 6-8 mothers as caretakers of the children of the small drum group. The other various roles are performed by 10-15 men from the neighbourhood. 5-8 people handle the <i>karakuri</i> [mechanical dolls and devices], all men. 	In principle, there are no gender based divisions but, considerable strength is required for pulling the festival float, so presently they are all men.	For a long time, it was <i>nyonin kinsei</i> [prohibited for women], but the preservation association lifted the ban formally.	1997 (Heisei year 9).	That it got hard to secure children for the small drum group because of the declining birth rates was one factor, but it doesn't make sense to ostracize women from religious matters such as festivals in the first place, and also, as a result of many discussions in the preservation association, we concluded that the custom to abhor women is no more than a convention.
Kamezaki Shiohi Matsuri no Dashi Gyōji	<i>Nyonin kinsei</i> [prohibited for women].	<i>Nyonin kinsei</i> [prohibited for women].			

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Sunari Matsuri no Danjiribune Gyōji to Miyoshi Nagashi</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the Sunari festival about 60 people board the boats, all of them men. • The music on the boat is performed by 4 out of 6 pages/children/ boys and 3 flute players. The pages are boys from 3 years old to 6th year of elementary school. 2 boys between 4th and 6th year of elementary school play big drums and small drums, and 2 boys between 5 to 7 years old play <i>tsuzumi</i> [drums] using drumsticks. The pages are accompanied by 4 - 8 people. • Apart from the above, on the boats there are also around 6 <i>wakashu</i> [youths/lads] (20 years old men), 3 <i>matsuri sanyaku</i> [leader role] and 4 boatmen, and people in charge of the paper lanterns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since it's an old custom it's been conducted by only men. • Ever since it became possible to loan the festival costumes, women have helped with dressing, but so far no women have participated in the actual festival. (Not counting the <i>miko</i> [shrine maidens] at the shrine and the <i>miko daiko</i> [drum performance]). 	<p>For reasons connected to the declining birth rate, in case there are no boys available to consider for the role of page, discussions have developed on approving also girls, but [since] the [age range of the] children to consider for the role has been extended to elementary/ primary school, no girls have participated.</p>	<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">About 15 years ago.</p>	
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Ōtsu Matsuri</p>	<p>There is no particular division of roles based on gender. On an individual level, the woman of the family often handles costume matters.</p>	<p>In all the festival floats, the guards, musicians, and float builders are men only.</p>	<p>The recruitment of people to pull the festival floats used to be done from the neighbourhoods, but now there are volunteers. From some years ago, one division become open for the participation of women. However, pulling the floats requires strength, so we are trying to decrease the ratio of women of as much as possible. Now the ratio is about 10%.</p>	<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Tens of years ago.</p>	<p>Due to the enthusiastic requests of some people, the director in charge of the volunteers pulling the festival floats (Hikiyama federation) at the time lost, and after starting admitting [volunteers] it became not possible to refuse women.</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Tobata Gion Oyamagasa Gyōji</p>	<p>Generally, women can't participate in the festival.</p>				

Karatsu Kunchi no Hikiyama Gyōji	Since there are '0' women, there are no role divisions.	It varies between the neighbourhoods, but some neighbourhoods admit elementary school girl to participate.	In all neighbourhoods, the number of people pulling the floats have grown, so before adult women are involved in an accident or similar, their participation has been prohibited.	Latter Showa period.	In all neighbourhoods there are many people pulling the floats, so contrarily the restrictions are getting stricter.
Yatsushiro Myōkensai no Shinkō Gyōji	About 1.700 people participate in the <i>Shinkō</i> procession. The sex ratio varies between the festival floats but in general a large proportion are men. Many women participate as so called caretakers or helpers, as persons behind the scenes.	Around 40 festival floats participate in the <i>Shinkō</i> procession but, among them, regarding the 'Yakko', only men are allowed. Afraid that the transmission of techniques might leak to the outside, in the neighbourhood dedicated to <i>Yakko</i> , previously only the eldest son was allowed to participate but, due to the impact of declining birth-rates etc. it has become hard to transmit [the techniques] if only inherited by the oldest son so, it has opened up to people other than the oldest son.	There has been no particular change to gender roles.		
Hita Gion no Hikiyama Gyōji	100% men.	100% men.	None.	None.	None.

The information received in the survey has been presented in Tables 5 and 6 above. Concerning the contents of Table 6, the replies in Japanese can be found in Appendix II. Observations based on the results are described in the points below.¹³ Results are summarized in section 6.3 of this chapter.

¹³ Results, observations and conclusions of the study have been published by the author in 2019 (Janse 2019).

Concerning changes in gender roles and gender restrictions

Approximately half of the received replies reported that changes had occurred in the gender roles or gender restrictions. Regarding the direction of change, it was clear that the primary direction of change was towards increased inclusion, although exceptions exist. In other words, it is more common with festivals opening up for a more inclusive participation (women being allowed to participate in roles that were previously restricted to only male participants) than becoming more restricted.

Regarding the reason for the changes, the most common trigger of change was a shortage of people, i.e. eligible participants. The most frequently mentioned reasons for the shortages were *shōshika* (declining birth rates) and *shōshikōreika* (declining birth rates combined with an ageing population). Another reason which was mentioned was the festival having fixed dates, which was causing the festival to some years fall on weekdays.

Apart from a shortage of people, the replies from three of the festivals mentioned a change in attitude/consciousness towards female participation in some form (all three of them in combination with a shortage of people) as a trigger of change. Furthermore, it may be noted that all three festivals where a change in awareness concerning female participation in some form was mentioned as a reason for the change in gender restrictions, all changed around the same time. According to the replies, the Inuyama festival changed around 1997, Hitachi Furyūmono around 1998, and Seihakusai around 1999 and 2001.

Concerning participation and current gender roles

While the replies in many cases were lacking in detail, some patterns could be distinguished. Among the festivals from where replies were received, approximately one fourth of the festivals (slightly more if the Sunari festival is included) were restricted to only male participants. The term *nyonin kinsei* (see Chapter 2.2) was used to describe the current situation in one of the replies. The rest of the festivals were reportedly mixed to some extent. It may also be noted that none of the festivals were exclusively for female participants.

Several of the replies reported that women are active in roles ‘behind-the-scenes’ (*urakata*). The behind-the-scenes roles mentioned included caretaker and helper (see the Yatsushiro festival), caretaker of the drummer children (see the Inuyama festival),

preparing tea (see the Uozu festival), manufacturing parts for the floats and doing preparations (see the Takaoka festival), and handling costume matters (see the Ōtsu festival and the Sunari festival).

In two festivals (the Kakunodate festival in Senboku and the Hanawa festival in Kazuno), the role of dancer was described. In both cases, this role was performed by women. In terms of the most ‘gender neutral’ roles, the results show that the two roles *hikite* (pulling the ropes of the floats) and *hayashi* (musician) were the roles most commonly performed by both women and men. In contrast, the festival officer roles and roles concerning the steering of the floats were often performed by only men, as was the case in a number of festivals. The replies indicate that men are generally the ‘main’ – or arguably front-stage – participants, while women’s participation is generally conditioned and auxiliary.

Other characteristics

The survey replies show that the preservation associations are male dominated, with the preservation association of the Takaoka festival standing out as an exception. More than half of the preservation associations reported all-male membership tallies. The Takaoka festival stands out in a number of ways. The membership tally of the preservation association shows the largest diversity among its members in regard to both age and gender. It is the only preservation association with an equal gender ratio among its members, and also the preservation association with the largest number of members. At the same time, the survey reply reports that women do not participate in the operations or the management of “the festival itself” (*sairei sono mono*), as women’s participation is restricted to the preparation stages, before the festival. The roles pertaining to the float procession are entirely limited to men.

The results also showed a difference in view on religiosity and gender between the festivals. Concerning the Inuyama festival, which used to be *nyonin kinsei* but where the restrictions have formally been lifted, a change in the perception of religiosity and gender was expressed in the reply from the preservation association. According to the reply, while declining birth rates had been a contributing factor to the change, the main reason for the change was that the preservation association had discussed the matter and was of the view that forbidding women from religious matters was groundless. The reply

stated that “it doesn't make sense to ostracize women from religious matters such as festivals in the first place, and also, as a result of many discussions in the preservation association we concluded that the custom to abhor women is no more than a convention” (*Shōshikōreika ni yori kodaikoren no jidō no kakuho ga konnan ni natta koto mo arimasu ga, sono sono shinji to shite no matsuri ni josei haiseki no kangae ha nai wake de aru shi, josei wo imikirau fūshū ha inshū ni suginai to hozonkai de giron wo kasaneta kekka de aru*) (see reply in English in Table 6 above and in Japanese in Appendix II). A different view was expressed in the reply from Ōgaki. The reply from the preservation association of the Ōgaki festival said that while it is not a rule, it was “a tacit understanding that women are not involved in religious matters” (*Kimari ga aru wake de ha nai ga, anmoku no ryōkai de, josei ha shinji ni kakawatteinai.*) (see reply in English in Table 6 above and in Japanese in Appendix II).

Regional tendencies

The response rate varied between the different regions. The Chūbu region showed the highest response rate, with replies being received from eleven of the thirteen festivals. The Tōhoku region and Kyūshū showed similar response rates, with replies being received from four of the five festivals. Concerning the Kantō region, replies were received from three of the seven festivals. The Kinki region showed the lowest response rate, with replies being received from one of the six festivals. See map below.

In terms of regional tendencies, the Tōhoku festivals featured a comparatively high frequency of role divisions affecting both men and women, such as for example women handling dancing and playing the shamisen while men handle operating the floats. This was the case in three of the festivals. According to the received replies, none of these festivals were exclusively male.

Based on the survey results, the festivals in Kyūshū appeared to be largely male events. Among the four festivals from where replies were received, two festivals were reported performed by only male participants. One festival was reportedly mixed to some extent. In one of the festivals, elementary school girls were participating in some of the float neighbourhoods, while the participation of adult women had reportedly been prohibited.

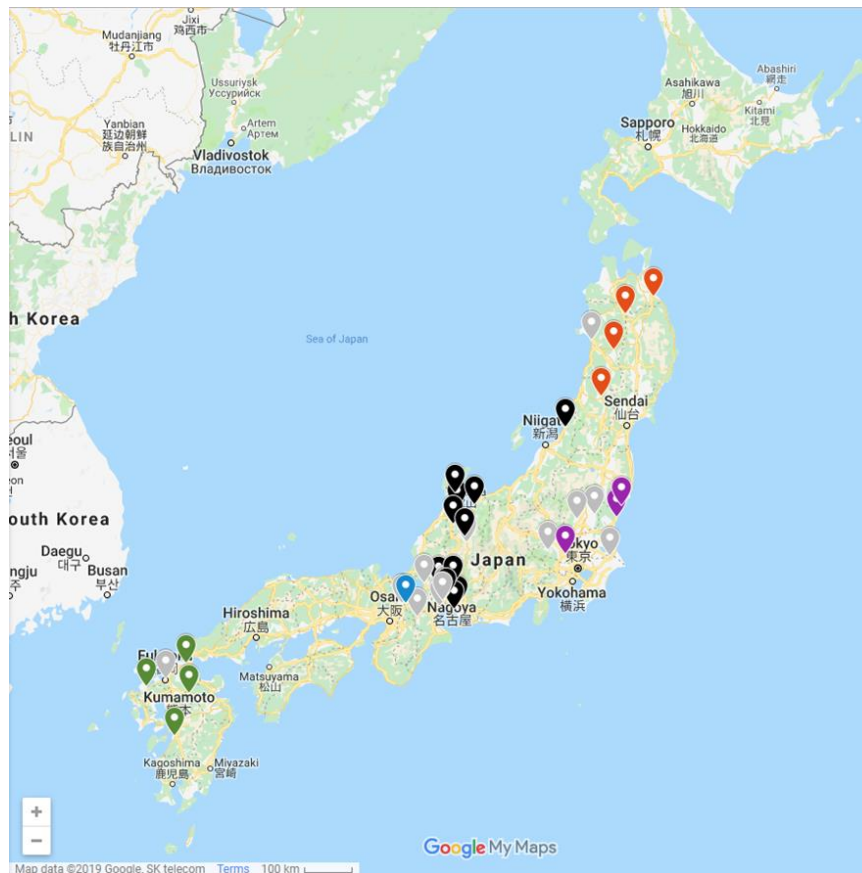


Figure 3. Location of the 36 festivals. Colour coded by region: Tōhoku – red, Kantō – purple, Chūbu – black, Kinki – blue, Kyūshū – green. Festivals where no reply was received from the preservation association have been marked with grey colour.

The greatest variation in gender rules was reported in the replies from the Chūbu region. While some festivals were reportedly performed by only men, other festivals did reportedly not have any gender roles in particular. According to the replies, more than half of the festivals have undergone changes in the gender rules, allowing for women and girls to participate in roles that had earlier been exclusively male. One of the replies mentioned discussing a change to allow for girls to participate in a particular role in the case that there are no boys available, although this has not yet happened. Another reply mentioned a possible change that might happen in the future to allow for girls to participate in a certain role. Concerning the Kantō and Kinki regions, there were too few replies to observe any possible tendencies.

6.3. Summary of results

While many of the replies are lacking in detail, the results of the survey show noticeable differences between the festivals in terms of gender roles and gender rules. While some festivals are reportedly performed exclusively by men, other festivals display a more gender inclusive approach, and some festivals feature gender-based role divisions. While changes in the direction of greater gender inclusion have occurred in a number of festivals, the festivals are still mainly male arenas. The survey replies show that men are generally the ‘main’ – or arguably front-stage – participants of the festivals while women’s participation is more conditioned and often of auxiliary character. It may also be noticed that, in terms of formal participation, the replies show that nearly all of the preservation associations are male dominated, and in half of preservation associations, all members were men.

Regarding changes that have occurred in the gender roles and gender restrictions, the results show that changes have happened in around half of the festivals (from where replies were received). The replies show that the primary direction of the change was towards increased inclusion. In other words, the festivals that have changed have mainly opened up for women and girls to participate in roles that were earlier restricted to men and boys (although some exceptions were reported). Concerning the reason for the changes, the replies showed that the most cited trigger of change was a shortage of (eligible) participants. In some festivals, a change in attitude/consciousness regarding female participation was also reported as a contributing factor. It may also be noted that while a lack of people was provided as an example in the questionnaire form (pertaining to the question in Section 3 regarding the reason for the change), gender awareness was not written as an example.

The results of the survey lead to further questions concerning the local circumstances of the individual festivals. How did the changes happen? What kind of discussions were there at the time of the change? What happened after the change – has female participation become naturalized and, in that case, how long time did it take? Did the changes affect the perceived value or meaning of the festival? These questions were addressed through an interview study conducted with a number of selected preservation associations, presented in Chapter 7.

7. Case studies (interviews)

This chapter focuses on the results of the interview studies conducted with a number of selected preservation associations. The chapter consists of three main parts. In the first part of the chapter, the methodology is described. The results are presented in the second part and summarized in the third part.

7.1. Methodology

Upon analysis of the results of the survey (see previous chapter), the author conducted interviews with a number of selected preservation associations. The selection was based on the following factors:

- *Festivals where a change in the gender roles/rules has occurred* (requirement)
Since the study is focused on changes in gender roles/restrictions, only festivals where such changes have occurred were considered for selection.
- *Festivals where substantial information was provided in the questionnaire* (priority)
The amount of information in the survey replies varied. Preservation associations providing substantial information were prioritized in the selection.
- *Wide geographical spread* (priority)
Ensuring a geographical spread was a priority in the selection. However, no interviews were conducted with preservation associations affiliated with festivals in the Kantō region (one preservation association was contacted but declined to participate in an oral interview).
- *Wide spread in attitudes* (priority)
In the interest of gaining knowledge about gender role changes under various circumstances, a diversity in attitudes towards gender roles and restrictions – as indicated through the results of the survey – was a prioritized factor.

Interviews were conducted with seven preservation associations (approval for conducting the interviews was obtained from the University of Tsukuba Arts Division Conflict of Interest Committee in July 2018, file no: *Gei* 30-3). Eight preservation associations were contacted, but one of them declined to participate in oral interviews. The preservation associations were contacted with the help of the National Association for the Preservation of Float Festivals who provided the author with contact information. The interviews were conducted between autumn 2018 – spring 2019 and a total of thirteen people from the seven different festivals were interviewed. All interviewees (informants) were male and nearly all of them seniors. Consent was obtained by a written consent form and all interviewees were also provided with forms for retracting previously given consent. The author travelled to the seven locations to conduct the interviews. Typically, the meetings with the informants also included a visit to the local festival float exhibition hall (or similar place where festival floats were on display) together with the informant(s), before or after the semi-structured interview sessions. The only exception was Nanao, where there is no festival float exhibition hall (yet).¹⁴ See list and map of locations below.

Table 7. Information concerning interviews conducted with representatives of festival hozonkai (preservation associations). Festival affiliation, location and interview date.

Festival affiliation of the preservation association	City	Prefecture	Region	Interview date
Inuyama Matsuri no Yama Gyōji	Inuyama	Aichi	Chūbu	2018-11-02
Kakunodate Matsuri no Yama Gyōji	Senboku	Akita	Tōhoku	2019-01-29
Ōtsu Matsuri	Ōtsu	Shiga	Kinki	2019-02-22
Karatsu Kunchi no Hikiyama Gyōji	Karatsu	Saga	Kyūshū	2019-02-26
Uozu no Tatemon Gyōji	Uozu	Toyama	Chūbu	2019-03-18
Seihakusai no Hikiyama Gyōji	Nanao	Ishikawa	Chūbu	2019-03-19
Furukawa Matsuri no Okoshidaiko Yatai Gyōji	Hida	Gifu	Chūbu	2019-03-20

¹⁴ There are plans to open an exhibition hall in 2020 (Nanao City Hall 2019).

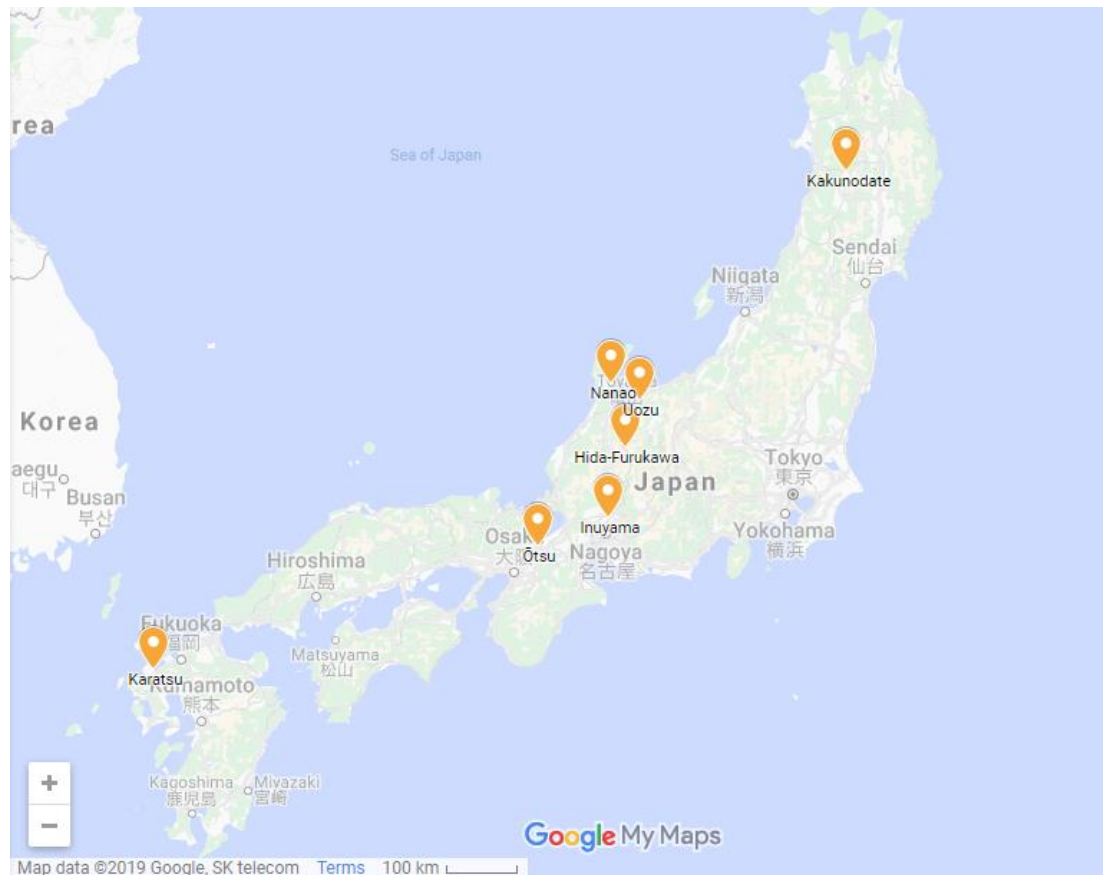


Figure 4. Interview locations.

The interview sessions were semi-structured. The author used a set of questions with open answers as a base and encouraged descriptive answers, adding follow-up questions depending on the situation. The base questions are described below.

- Regarding the change in gender roles:
 - Why did it change?
 - Were there discussions at the time? Were there people opposing the change?
 - Were there women/girls who wanted to participate?
 - When did the talks of lifting the restrictions first appear? How long did it take until it happened?

- Before the change, were there women/girls who wanted to participate?
How were they met?
 - There might be various attitudes towards female participation – is there a difference in attitude between generations? Between genders?
 - After the change, after a few years had passed, how was the situation then? What did people think about women being able to participate? Had they gotten used to the new system? Were they happy that women had become allowed/able to participate? Or did they want to go back to the previous system?
 - After how many years had they gotten used to the new system?
 - After the change, was there any change in the value and/or the meaning of the festival? For example, after women started participating, the religious meaning weakened. Or, the community bonds got stronger, making the festival better.
 - The float festivals were inscribed on UNESCO's representative list in 2016. Were there any changes before or after the inscription?
 - Thinking about the future, what changes do you think will happen and what do you think the festival will look like?

Figure 5. Base questions of the semi-structured interviews.

Concerning methodology, the author used a data management approach inspired by Halcomb and Davidson (2006). The author took field notes throughout the meetings (during both the interview sessions and the exhibition hall visits). An audio recorder was used during the interview sessions. Immediately following the meetings, the author journalized the gathered information, while reviewing the field notes. After a period of time, the author reviewed to the audio recordings from the semi-structured interview sessions and made edited (and translated) transcriptions.

The interviews were conducted in Japanese. All translations of the gathered information have been made by the author. It should be noted that the author is not a native Japanese speaker, and it is possible that some information was missed during the interviews.

As mentioned above, all informants were male. While this is a weakness of the study, it is also of interest as an observation. It should be noted that the author did not specify any conditions concerning the selection of interviewees, beyond that they were connected to the respective preservation associations. In other words, the author did not choose whom within the preservation associations to talk to. As mentioned earlier, contact information was provided through the National Association for the Preservation of Float Festivals. At the same time, it may be pointed out that survey results (see Chapter 6) showed that all the concerned preservation associations were male dominated.

While the informants were not asked about their personal opinions on the gender roles and gender restrictions, it can arguably be assumed that the informants' own positions, status and role opportunities affect their experience of the festivals. Research is needed on how the rules are experienced by those excluded or restricted by them.

It can also be noted that the informants are approached as representatives of the festivals, rather than as individuals. The questions are similarly designed to inquire about facts about current and past conditions, as well as sentiments among the overall festival community, rather than individual opinions.

Information gathered through the interview sessions, together with the author's field notes, are presented and summarized in section 7.2. As information was gathered during both the interview sessions and the visits to the local festival exhibition halls, a synthesis of the information gathered during the respective field trips is presented below.

7.2. Results and observations

The interviews were conducted during the period 2 November 2018 – 20 March 2019. The results are presented below in chronological order.

7.2.1. Inuyama

Brief introduction: Inuyama has a population of 74,175 people (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2019) and is located in Aichi prefecture, close to the border of Gifu prefecture. The Inuyama festival takes place in April. There are 16 neighbourhood associations involved in the festival. There are 13 floats and 3 *nerimono* taking part in the procession. The floats are not pulled by ropes but are pushed and pulled around town using the steering poles and the platforms underneath the floats. The musicians sit inside the floats, and there are also *karakuri* (mechanical dolls and devices) performances taking place on the floats.



Photographer: Helga Janse, 2 November 2018, Inuyama, Aichi prefecture. To the left: 3D model of the townscape during the festival. Inuyama City Cultural Assets Museum, Inuyama. To the right: Festival float. Dondenkan, Inuyama.

Date of interview: 2018-11-02

Number of informants: 1

Concerning roles

The musicians are all children, and around half of them are girls. The *wakai shu* (youths, lads) are taking care of the children and teaching them. Nowadays there are female *wakai shu* as well. The children who have performed as musicians often go on to become *wakai*

shu. The musicians are sitting on the first floor of the float. On the second floor are the puppeteers, hidden behind curtains. On the third floor are the *karakuri ningyō* puppets.

The role of manoeuvring the floats using the *teko* (levers) is performed by only men. The reason for this is reportedly that this role requires considerable physical strength. My informant stressed that this was not because women were being ostracized, it was simply for logical and physical reasons.

When asked whether foreigners can participate, my informant told me that in some neighbourhoods, foreigner friends were being allowed to participate. However, foreigners who participate only do so temporarily. My informant told me that, in truth, the preservation association would like to see that those who participate do so continuously. The neighbourhoods in Inuyama are small, so a lot of people from other areas outside of Inuyama are coming to participate in the festival. These participants are regulars, and some have reportedly been coming every year for 10, 20 or 30 years.

Concerning changes

The change – the decision to stop the *nyonin kinsei* custom – happened 21 years ago. My informant told me that at that time, the *nyonin kinsei* practice was very common in festivals all over the country, and therefore, it became big news when the preservation association in Inuyama declared that they were stopping this practice. It was reportedly written about in the newspapers. According to my informant, after the decision to stop the *nyonin kinsei* practice in Inuyama, other festivals followed.

However, there was reportedly some resistance at first, especially among elder women. According to my informant, some people believed that allowing women to do such ‘questionable and disgraceful’ things would incur divine punishment, such as accidents happening. Reportedly, there are small injuries every year. Some people would say that this happened because of the impurity brought by allowing women, my informant told me. However, that kind of talk reportedly disappeared after a few years.

My informant argued that it is to be expected that big changes are met with resistance, but that this resistance disappear after 4 to 5 years. In the case of Inuyama, the fact that the resistance disappeared so fast meant that everyone was actually thinking that the tradition was strange, according to my informant. The *nyonon kinsei* custom was seen as strange, but as it has been going on for hundreds of years, it was thought of as tradition.

My informant told me that everyone thought it was strange, but ‘doing strange things is what tradition means’, was one way of thinking. However, in Inuyama, they decided to think differently, my informant told me, saying that strange things should be revised/improved.

At the time, there were reportedly two main opinions. One opinion was that women should of course be allowed to participate. Another opinion was that tradition, even if strange, is worth protecting because it is a tradition. My informant told me that most people agreed with the first opinion. After the idea to lift the ban was first raised for discussion, it was quickly decided upon. It reportedly happened within a year.

At that time, the preservation association reportedly consulted with a famous Shintoism scholar. The scholar told them that in the Shinto world, originally, there was no ostracism of women – that way of thinking did not exist at all. My informant explained that this is because the most revered deity is Amaterasu – a goddess – and that, regarding those who act as a go-between the deities and humans, *miko* are girls and there are many female Shinto priest nowadays. As such, my informant told me, in Shintoism itself, there is no motive for ostracizing women.

So why are women being ostracized in festivals? My informant explained that from the Middle Ages through the Edo period, there was the *Sangaku Yamabushi* creed. For *Yamabushi*, mountains are considered holy and ascetic practices take place there. In this tradition, many mountains have long been closed off for women. It is believed that this *Yamabushi* creed mistakenly spilled over to the festival world, the scholar reportedly told them, and that it was simply a mistake. However, as this had continued for years, it is now seen as tradition, my informant told me. That was reportedly why the preservation association decided to revise their rules. It was not merely because of a shortage of people. My informant said that recently, there has been many cases where women have been allowed to participate because of a shortage of people, but that in Inuyama, they are not lifting the restrictions on women because they need labour. My informant emphasized that women are being welcomed to participate on a fundamental level.

At that time – 21 years ago – it was reportedly unusual to allow women, and my informant told me that after they started allowing women in Inuyama, many other festivals followed. They were reportedly the first to allow women officially.

Nevertheless, in many places with *nyonin kinsei* rules, women were/are being allowed to participate in secret, my informant told me. However, this is only in secret, since it is against the rules. By lifting the restrictions in Inuyama, women could start participating officially. However, women were actually participating occasionally even before that.

Nowadays, everyone in the preservation association thinks that female participation is natural (*atarimae*), and no one wants to return to the old system, my informant told me. He added that after all, it is cute with girls performing as *hayashi*, and that this brings out *hanayakasa* (brilliance, gorgeousness) in the festival.

When asked whether there were women or girls who wanted to participate even before it was allowed, my informant replied that there probably were, but that most neighbourhood associations probably refused to allow them to participate. However, in cases where there were just not enough *hayashi*, girls were being allowed to participate, but in secret, he told me.

It reportedly took about one year from when talk about lifting the restrictions first started, until the decision was made. It was discussed for around a year. My informant said that in fact, everyone already felt that the rules were irrational/unreasonable, and that on top of that, the famous Shintoism scholar told them that there are no grounds for ostracizing women in Shintoism. Therefore, the preservation association decided to officially allow female participation. The preservation association voted, and everyone reportedly agreed. The representatives from all the neighbourhood associations reportedly consented. However, in some neighbourhoods there was some resistance, with people saying they were not going to follow the decision of the preservation association, my informant told me. However, after 4 or 5 years, girls were participating in those ‘stubborn’ neighbourhoods too, my informant told me, adding that people were probably finding the restrictions strange there as well.

At the time of the change, older generations were reportedly the most reluctant to accept change. My informant said that they had been doing the festival in a certain way for a long time, so it was to be expected. Change requires some time for people to get used to – that is unavoidable, he told me. According to my informant, each preservation association should discuss things thoroughly, and then go ahead and change what should be changed. He told me that they should sort out which things must remain unchanged,

and which things should be changed. Everything cannot remain unchanged – in that case, the festival cannot live on, he said, adding that that things that should be changed, should be changed.

Concerning the UNESCO inscription

According to my informant, the inscription on the RL did not cause any changes in the festival or for the festival community. However, my informant told me that during the inscription process, there was some nervousness at the Agency for Cultural Affairs, internally. The reason was that many of the 33 festivals are *nyonin kinsei*, and The Agency for Cultural Affairs reportedly worried about how UNESCO would see that. My informant told me that the Agency asked the festivals that were *nyonin kinsei* to not express clearly that this was a rule. Since Inuyama had already lifted its gender restrictions, it was not a concern for them. However, regarding the festivals that had clearly expressed that *nyonin kinsei* was a rule – that became somewhat of a problem, internally, according to my informant. However, in the end, it seems that the UNESCO committee did not reflect thoroughly about *nyonin kinsei*, my informant told me, adding that if they had, they should have found it problematic.

My informant also added that the point of view was different. In UNESCO's recognition of intangible cultural heritage, the main basis for the inscription was that the festivals have been performed for hundreds of years, he said, adding that there is no direct connection between that and *nyonin kinsei*. It is the communities that have upheld the festivals, and as such, the main matter is whether the communities will continue the practice or not, he told me. If the communities do not uphold the festival, the festival will disappear, and therefore, there is a lot of focus on the communities from UNESCO, my informant said. The preservation association in Inuyama is reportedly also putting a lot of effort into this, and they discuss how to sustain the community bonds. As described in the agenda of this year's general meeting of the preservation association, the 'vision' focuses on the community and how the festival creates bonds and supports the continuation of and upholds the local community. This is the vision, my informant told me, and therefore they continually discuss such things, adding that this is the most important thing for transmission and preservation.

Concerning changes in value or meaning

When asked whether the change in gender restrictions had brought any changes such as the religious meaning weakening, my informant replied No. When asked whether the change in gender restrictions had brought changes such as the community bonds strengthening, my informant replied that he thinks that it had got stronger. Not allowing women to participate means that it is only half of the community, and therefore, by allowing women to participate, the community bonds become stronger, he told me, adding that ‘the power of women’ is considerable.

My informant also told me that they are taking some action to teach people that it is a religious ritual, but that since it is a matter of faith, they do not push anyone. The young people in Inuyama reportedly do not care much about faith. That is something that comes with age, when you have accumulated life experience, my informant told me, emphasizing that it is matter of the heart, and as such you should not force the teaching on someone.

My informant explained it in the following way: it there was a scale ranging between Religion – Faith – Customs – Habits – Unrelated, the festival and the work of the preservation association would fall within the span between Faith and Habits. He also explained that what he found healthy about Japanese religion, as Shintoism, was that it is not monotheistic. There is *yaoyorozu no kami* – a large number of gods. He also stressed the animistic thinking in Shintoism – there are tree deities, earth deities, mountain deities, river deities, thunder deities etc. This is why, my informant told me, faith is unrelated to *nyonin kinsei*. As such, the religious meaning was not weakened by allowing female participation – it is totally unrelated, he told me. Faith means community bonds, my informant told me, and that is why they try to teach especially the youths about it, without pushing too hard.

Concerning the future

My informant told me that he wished that people would reconsider how they view the festivals, and not only look at how pretty, gorgeous, or cheerful the festivals are. Looking at what lies hidden in the festivals, from time immemorial, they should be able to see the spirituality of Japanese people, my informant told me. For example, even if the festival was started around 300 or 400 years ago, the origin of the stories told by the *karakuri*, the

meaning of the patters in the drawings, or the meaning of the carvings – there is a deep meaning behind everything, he said. If you follow it long enough, you can find ideas going back to the Yayoi and Jomon periods hidden in there, he said, adding that if you look at the festival in such a way, they will become much more interesting.

Earlier, when visiting the exhibition hall, my informant mentioned that women might start participating as *teko* in the future. When asked about it during the interview, my informant said he was not sure whether it would happen or not. He told me that it is fun, albeit dangerous, to pull the floats, and that it is the most popular role. However, it requires physical strength. My informant said that this was why it used to be thought that this part was physically impossible for women, but that lately there are many strong women too. So maybe, he told me, women will also be doing this before long. However, the proximity of the people manoeuvring the floats seemed to pose a challenge, since they are reportedly crammed closely together. If women and men were to do it together, that might be bad, my informant said, adding jokingly that men might be most bothered. Therefore, if women were to participate as *teko*, it might be best to have all-female floats, my informant said.

My informant also explained that in the Kantō region, it is common with floats pulled with ropes, and that since the ropes can be pulled by both women and men, it is the case that both women and men are pulling the floats in many festivals in that region. Contrarily, around Inuyama, it is common with floats that are carried on the shoulders, meaning that women and men would be standing very close together. As such, it might reportedly be problematic to do it with women and men mixed. My informant said that in the future, there will be probably be talk about having female *teko*.



Photographer: Helga Janse, 2 November 2018, Inuyama, Aichi prefecture. Museum display of clothes traditionally worn by the musicians. Dondenkan, Inuyama.

7.2.2. Kakunodate

Brief introduction: Kakunodate is a part of Senboku City, which has a population of 26,426 people (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2019) and is located in Akita prefecture. The Kakunodate festival takes place in September. There are 18 neighbourhood associations involved in the festival, and 18 floats being paraded in the procession. The floats are pulled and manoeuvred around town using ropes and poles jutting out from the floats. The musicians sit inside the floats and dancers perform on stages on top of the floats.



Photographer: Helga Janse, 29 January 2019, Kakunodate, Akita prefecture. Museum model of festival float. Denshokan Museum, Senboku.

Date of interview: 2019-01-29

Number of informants: 1

Concerning roles

The *yama* (floats) are pulled mainly by the local residents. This includes former residents who have moved away from Kakunodate for reasons of for example work or studies but are coming back in time to participate in the festival. According to my informant, the people living nearby prefer to join the procession rather than performing as dancers or musicians, and there are many people who want to parade together with the floats from their own neighbourhoods. In the neighbourhoods without floats, people train as musicians and dancers. However, nearly all dancers and musicians come from

neighbourhoods outside of the float neighbourhoods. While there are reportedly some within the neighbourhoods too, these neighbourhoods are located outside of the old town of Kakunodate. The musicians and dancers are hired with contracts and get paid. Similarly, the people handling the puppets/figures decorating the floats get paid as well.

According to my informant, at least 50 – 60 people are required to move a float, and usually you can find this number of people in a neighbourhood. At the very least, 10 people are needed in order to move a float around, although this would reportedly be hard, since the floats are heavy. However, as there are few people living in the old neighbourhoods nowadays, people are reportedly invited from other areas to join in pulling the floats as well. A reason for this is that there is a lack of work opportunities in the local area, causing people to leave to find jobs in Tokyo and Sendai. The number of children is also decreasing.

According to my informant, the performance of *teodori* (dancing) and *hayashi* is usually done by people from outside the festival neighbourhoods. The role of dancer is performed by women while nowadays the role of musician can be and is performed by both women and men. There are trainers in the region teaching dancing and *hayashi* and there are dance troupes and music troupes. These troupes are performing at other events as well and are hired. Each float hires dancers and musicians and the teachers with contracts. They are hired for about five days. Now there are 18 float neighbourhoods and as each of the 18 floats hire dancers and *hayashi*, the number of available dancers and musicians are getting few. My informant told me that a reason for this was that young women leave to go to university and don't come back and that the situation is the same with *hayashi*. Also, the date of the festival is 7-9 September, regardless whether it is a weekday or weekend. This means that there are people who cannot participate since they cannot take the day off. My informant told me that as for *hayashi*, there are people who want to do this role and are training for it (with some people training for both *teodori* and *hayashi*) and that these people are asked to participate.

As for the troupes, *hayashi* music is being taught in schools and community centres in the float neighbourhoods. My informant told me that children who have trained usually want to participate, and that they usually want to perform on that neighbourhood's float together with their trainer. Some want to perform both music and dancing. So many forms of participation have been allowed now, my informant told me.

The musicians sit inside the floats and the music is played continuously, without break. The musicians play in shifts, taking turns. Young children perform too. But the musicians in the evening are playing until morning, so it is mostly older musicians who play in the evenings. There are about 10 musicians riding inside each float. My informant explained that this means that if even one person is missing, it will be hard to perform. That is why, nowadays, if there are women who want to play, a teacher will train them. Women have been taking part as musicians starting from around 20 years ago.

The dancers perform on top of the floats. The dancing is done in pairs, by two girls. The dance performance during the evening is usually performed by older girls while younger girls participate during daytime. My informant explained that synchronization is important – if the dancers do not synchronize their hand movements well, the dance performance will be considered poor – and that usually they synchronize their hand movements beautifully. The really talented dancers reportedly synchronize all their movements and get praised by the people watching. Coordinating the dancing with the music is also important and the good dancers and musicians get good appraisal in the competition. My informant told me that this was the main matter – it is not about whether it is boys or girls doing it – it is about how talented you are at playing and dancing.

Many girls start learning dancing from a young age. My informant told me that girls whose mother is a dancer usually start from around the age of two or three and that in Japan, it is often said that if you start learning something from the age of three, then you can learn it properly. They start by learning from observation and then make their debuts before or around the time of starting elementary school.

When asked until what age the dancers continue performing, my informant replied that the dancers continue until they get married. Women over 30 years old usually do not ride on the floats. My informant explained that if you get married and have children, you will be busy with the children. As such, most of the dancers are unmarried. However, if there is an urgent need, it happens that married women who have not yet given birth are asked to ride on the floats. At the latest, my informants told me, until around 30 years old or so, adding that, if you have children, you will be teaching them how to dance. There are no age restrictions for the musicians. They can continue performing for as long as they are able to. Consequently, the age range among the musicians is large.

Nowadays women can participate as musicians without problem. However, the operation of the floats is a different matter. My informant explained that in the festival organization, there are festival officers, and that women cannot become festival officers. Women can participate in pulling the floats without problem, and there are both children and women participating. However, the role of *sekininsha* (person in charge) and the top positions are closed for women. According to my informant, this is a rule and it has been this way since old times. The reason is reportedly that it is a very big responsibility. My informant told me that sometimes there are accidents (it has happened that people have lost their lives by getting hit by floats or getting caught in between) and that in such cases, the person in charge reports to the police and bears responsibility. Since the burden of the responsibility is very heavy, at such times, it would be difficult for a woman to have that position, my informant told me. This was also a matter of position.

My informant added that of course there are women in some neighbourhoods who love the festival and join in on several activities and are really engaged, but that since there is also the matter of the weight of the responsibility, men are doing the role of festival officer. When asked whether there are women who nevertheless want to become festival officers, my informant replied that he believed there were, but that they cannot be *sekininsha* (person in charge).

The position as *seikininsha* and similar is done by men up to the age of 42. Age 42 is the *yakudoshi* (unlucky year) for men. In neighbourhoods with lots of people, the men retire from the festival officer position after 42. They still participate in the float procession, but they step down from the festival officer roles and participate 'freely'. This is a rule, according to my informant. After stepping down from the officer roles, they focus more on management and such and many reportedly go and watch and cheer on when the floats clash at night.

Concerning changes

Women were allowed to start participating as musicians because of a shortage of people to participate. This change reportedly happened around 20 years ago. My informant told me that back in the days, there used to be a lot of men, and that women were asked to dance on top of the floats. When asked whether people nowadays are used to women participating as musicians, my informant confirmed that this was the case, and explained

that the festivals involve all members of the community – both women, children, men and elderly alike. The residents of the float neighbourhoods reportedly arrange with and manoeuvre the float together and as such, there is no sentiment that women or children should not be welcome. My informant emphasized that the festival belongs to the neighbourhoods and the residents' joint effort makes it happen, adding that this is the kind of festival it has been since old.

When asked whether there had been any discussions or opposition at the time of the change, my informant replied that there had not been any problems in particular. One reason seems to be that the *hayashi* and the dance troupes were already training with the same teacher. Also, as my informant explained, in Kakunodate, just like in other festivals in other cities, the *yama* is the place where the gods ride. However, in Kakunodate, women were already doing the dancing on top of the floats. As such, the people in Kakunodate did not think it was wrong to let women ride the floats as musicians, since they were already riding the floats as dancers. My informant also added that rather than being concerned about gender, the issue was whether the musicians and dancers were talented or not, saying that if the music or dancing is performed poorly, people will notice.

When asked how long time it took from when talk about letting women participate as musicians first started until the change happened, my informant replied that it happened rather immediately, as there were no people opposing the idea.

When asked whether there were women who wanted to participate as musician before it was allowed, my informant replied that the role of dancer was more popular, and therefore there were not many women who wanted to become musicians. My informant also said that there are many women among the local residents who love the festival and who prefer to join the procession, helping to pull the float from their neighbourhood, rather doing dancing or *hayashi*.

Regarding attitudes towards female participation, there is no difference in attitude between generations, according to my informant. There is also reportedly no one interested in making the rules stricter.

According to my informant, it has happened once that the date of the festival was changed. In the beginning of the Showa period, there was a shortage of people to participate. As a solution, the festival date was changed from 7-9 September to the second Friday-Saturday-Sunday of September. However, the new date turned out to be confusing

instead, and consequently it was changed back. My informant told me that since it is a religious (Shinto) event, it was decided it was better to hold it on the previously decided day, as shrines usually hold their regular festivals on a fixed date. Thus, it was decided to change the date back. However, this means that the festival will sometimes occur on weekdays, and consequently, some people will not be able to participate. In these last years, there has reportedly been a shortage of people, and this was why women were allowed to participate as musicians too.

The Kakunodate festival is based on the festivals of the Shinmei Shrine and the Yakushido Temple. Shinmei is a shrine (Shinto) while Yakushido is a temple (Buddhist). My informant told me that these two were however intertwined before the religions were separated. The Kakunodate festival was formed by conjoining the Shinmei Shrine festival and the Yakushido Temple festival into a three-day festival.

According to my informant, in the beginning, the neighbourhood residents came to present their floats at the temple. At the time of the Yakushido temple festival, the neighbourhoods made *kasariyama*, and presented them at the Shinmei Shrine, for good harvest. Dancing was also presented on the floats, and there was no clashing of the floats like there is today. At that time, the festivities were held in August. Instead of doing the festivals separately, it was decided to do them together, in September. And so, my informants explained to me, the festival took the form it has today. September has reportedly been the month of the festival since the Meiji period. Earlier, there used to be more neighbourhoods participating, i.e. not only the ones that are participating today, as is reportedly mentioned in the records of the feudal lord.

Concerning financing

My informant also mentioned the financing of the festival, as well as the various costs. As mentioned earlier, the musicians and dancers as well as the people handling the puppets/figures decorating the floats are hired and get paid. Money is also spent on arranging with food and drinks. According to my informant, the neighbourhoods pay for this themselves and there is no monetary support for this from the city hall. The city executive committee however arranges with traffic and security and directs the overall operations. All the other costs are reportedly borne by each neighbourhood. The

neighbourhoods receive donations from the residents, which means that the burden gets smaller for the neighbourhoods with many residents.

Concerning changes in meaning

It seems that the change in gender restrictions did not cause any direct changes in meaning. My informant instead mentioned other changes in meaning that the festival is going through. My informant told me that the way of thinking changes with the times, and with young people, and as such, transmission has its difficulties. In Kakunodate, there is reportedly a strong sense of the festival belonging to the residents. Tourists are coming to watch the procession and the clashing of floats, and while the residents cooperate with that, that is reportedly not the main point of the festival for them. My informant explained that while there are rules for clashing the floats, these rules are getting looser and that nowadays, some people care more about winning in the clashes. Some neighbourhoods are reportedly using tools and are reinforcing the floats as to not be damaged, arguing that they are doing it to protect the floats and are thinking about safety. That was not how it used to be earlier. According to my informant, the way of thinking has gradually changed from earlier times. Earlier, the clashing of the floats used to occur at the very end of the festival and getting the float home without clashing was considered the appropriate way. Earlier, the floats that managed to parade around all the designated places were considered the most skilful. Nowadays, clashing with other floats is becoming the main point. Some people are reportedly thinking about strategies for how to clash with other floats, where to wait for them, and so on. My informant told me that there are older people who point out that is not how it was originally, but that there are young people who, after drinking alcohol, are quick to look for a fight. As such, the fundamentals of the festival have changed for some people, and this has reportedly been brought up for discussion among the stakeholders.

However, just showing off the float and then heading straight home without doing any clashing might be boring, my informant added, saying that it is more fun if there is at least one clash and that when drinking afterwards, the alcohol will taste better too. My informant said that the clashing should be done neatly, without fighting, injuries or accidents, lamenting how the way of thinking has gradually changed and how nowadays focus is only on winning. However, there are reportedly also young people who wants to

do it 'properly'. My informant explained that earlier, the *sekininsha* (people in charge) used to be people in their thirties and that since the *sekininsha* are required to stay up all night, for three days, they need to be fit for the task and cannot be too old. However, nowadays there are reportedly some people in their late twenties in these positions. My informant said that this is a bit too young since some people this age tend to be too hot-headed. As such, there has reportedly been some discussions about that maybe it is best if the people in charge have more life experience. My informant told me that after the discussions, the age standards for the role of *sekininsha* had changed a bit and is now around 30 years old.

There are also generational differences in regard to the religious meaning of the festival. Young people reportedly do not care much about the religious meaning. My informant told me that in the original meaning, the festival is held by the parishioners of Yakushido and Shinmeisha, who move around the floats in order to present them at the sacred locations. Nowadays however, rather than the religious ceremony, the floats have become the main point. Some young people reportedly do not have that feeling that it is a religious festival and that they are performing it as parishioners. The floats are in focus instead. My informant told me that there is a need to teach people about these things. In Kakunodate, children in elementary and junior high schools can take a leave to participate in the festival. Teachers of the participating children reportedly also come and watch. There are assemblies at the schools, where the children study and learn about the festival. They are also taught about the plans for the current year's festival, such as the festival schedule and what decorations will be displayed on the different floats etc. According to my informant, this education system has been in place for a long time.

About the UNESCO inscription

According to my informant, the UNESCO inscription was a cause for joy for the residents of Kakunodate, and there was a sense of pride over the inscription. However, the inscription did not result in as big an increase in visitors as was expected. When the float festivals were inscribed, some preparations were reportedly made for an increase in visitor numbers, such as deciding to better follow the rules concerning the clashing of the floats and deciding on and announcing some set times for clashes. However, there was some trouble and things did not go according to plan.

The negotiations of right of way between intersecting floats took longer than planned, and other floats got held up behind, waiting for the negotiations to finish, meaning they could not stay on schedule. As a result, despite the schedule being planned and announced, and with visitors waiting, the schedule could not be followed. After this there was a meeting with the people in charge and the executive committee. At the meeting it was discussed why, despite the UNESCO inscription and visitors coming, and despite having agreed upon the schedule, the announced schedule was not followed. It then became clear that many floats had been held up because of a negotiation of right of way lasting for three hours, which couldn't be easily resolved. In general, floats heading towards the shrine are given right of way. In some narrow places it is difficult to pass however. It is also difficult to change the direction of the floats. The direction is normally adjusted by lifting the front. The rear is heavy and normally not used when adjusting the direction. Adjusting the direction requires some space between the two floats. If they are too close, the only way to adjust the direction is by lifting the rear of the float. However, normally, this is not done. It is only done if something big has happened. It also requires the cooperation of a lot of people and thus, some people are reportedly reluctant to do it because of pride.

At the meeting following this incident, there was reportedly talk about the importance of cooperating with each other and not causing trouble for the other floats. However, it is important not to overplan the festival either, said my informant, since the festival is not like a parade or similar events. According to my informant, some other festivals, like the Nebuta festival in Aomori and the Neputa festival in Hirosaki, are more like parades, with set times for departure etc. In the Kakunodate festival however, the town is closed to traffic during the festival and so the 18 floats can roam freely. There are some rules, but not regarding where to head next. The floats processions can reportedly go wherever they want. However, if a float keeps passing the same places, it is considered unskilful manoeuvring. The point is to show your float in the neighbourhoods and around town.

When asked whether there were any discussions related to gender at the time of the inscription, my informant replied that this had not been the case. There had been some talk about clothing and appearances before the inscription – the clothes (*happi* and *hanten*) the participants wear depend on the respective neighbourhoods – but not since.

Concerning future changes

According to my informant, the restrictions on women from becoming festival officers might be lifted in the future. The reason is that the number of people in Kakunodate is decreasing, which is why a solution will be required. As such, my informant argued, there may come a time when, in the case a woman wants to be festival officer, she might be allowed to. However, my informant told me, there is still the matter of accountability and responsibility, and so it might be hard for women. At the same time, my informant emphasized, the Kakunodate festival is different from other festivals such as the Hakata Gion and Yamahoko of Kyōto, where women are completely prohibited from participating. The Kakunodate festival is not a festival for only men and women are participating in pulling the floats too. The people in charge are men, but apart from that, the festival is open for everyone. My informant told me that in that regard, it was not a strict festival – even in the old days.

The number of children in Kakunodate, as well as the overall population, is decreasing. Currently there are 18 neighbourhoods that have floats. My informant told me that it is not certain that all the neighbourhoods might be able to continue independently. The financial burden for the residents is heavy, which is why it might become too hard to collect enough money in small neighbourhoods and in neighbourhoods with a decreasing population. In the Kakunodate festival, there are still 18 floats being paraded every year. However, in other festivals in other cities, such as for example the Tsuchizaki festival, some neighbourhoods reportedly participate once every second or third year. My informant told me that something similar might happen in Kakunodate. For example, it might happen that all neighbourhoods will not be able to parade their floats every year, or that two neighbourhoods join forces.

There were not 18 floats originally. In the Edo period, there were around 9 floats, according to my informant. Back in the days, there were neighbourhoods with many residents – so many that all of them could not participate properly. That is reportedly why some were divided into two, and thus, the number of floats increased. My informant told me that the number of floats today (18) is quite a lot and probably maximum.

Nowadays, as the population and the number of young people are decreasing it is getting harder to maintain all the floats. Therefore, conjoining neighbourhoods, or having

the neighbourhoods take turns in parading their floats, are changes that might happen in the future. For now, the neighbourhoods are reportedly managing somehow, but if the monetary burden becomes too heavy, some neighbourhoods might struggle to parade their floats. In that case, some neighbourhoods might have to abstain some years – deciding to 'take a rest' one year, and then return the next year. According to my informant, another solution could be to decide to reduce the number of floats, returning to the old number of floats.

An increased ratio of senior citizens also means decreased incomes and according to my informant, such households will probably increase. How to handle this will be a problem to solve, also in terms of the transmission of knowledge. My informant told me that he believed that the question of the transfer of knowledge regarding the floats and how to operate them will rise sometime soon.

My informant also pointed out that these problems would not be easily solved even if the city were to step in and give money to the neighbourhoods. My informant said that then it would not be a festival anymore, but more of an event. There is a sense of pride in the festival belonging to the residents. If the neighbourhoods received money, they might be told what to do, said my informant, adding that the Kakunodate festival is not an event – it is a festival.

7.2.3. Ōtsu

Brief introduction: Ōtsu has a population of 342,950 people (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2019) and is located in Shiga prefecture. The Ōtsu festival takes place in October. There are 16 neighbourhood associations involved in the festival. There are 13 floats being paraded in the procession. The floats are pulled around town using ropes. The musicians sit inside the floats, and there are also *karakuri* (mechanical dolls and devices) performances taking place on the floats.



Photographer: Helga Janse, 22 February 2019, Ōtsu, Shiga prefecture. Museum display of festival float. Ōtsu Matsuri Hikiyama Tenjikan, Ōtsu.

Date of interview: 2019-02-22

Number of informants: 1

Concerning roles

Some of the major roles are:

- *Hikite* (pulling the float) – This role is done by volunteers. Anyone (*ippan no kata*) can participate, including women.
- *Yamakata* – They receive a salary and are hired with contracts. This role is performed only by men. Women are not allowed.

- *Hayashi* (musician) – This role is performed by children, and it is restricted to only boys. The boys sit on the floats and play.
- *Keigo* ('guard', escort) – This role is only performed by men.

According to my informant, there are mostly seniors in the top officer roles. The local residents perform the roles of *hayashi* etc., while people from outside the city pull the floats. The volunteers pulling the floats are coming from all over the country. There are especially many volunteers coming from the Kinki region, due to the geographical proximity. Reportedly, anyone is welcome to join.

The population of the city is reportedly increasing, but that is mostly in new buildings. People living in these new buildings usually do not participate. According to my informant, they are allowed to participate, but they do not. As such, it is getting harder to find children to perform as *hayashi*.

Concerning changes in gender roles and restrictions

According to my informant, they started calling for volunteers to pull the floats since there was a shortage of people. The number of people available to pull the floats had become too few. In some neighbourhoods/floats they still managed, but more and more floats could not gather enough people. *Shōushikoureika* (declining birth rates combined with an ageing population) was also happening.

The float association has changed organizational form, and the current NPO was started in Heisei 16 (1988). That is when they first started announcing for volunteers. My informant told me that there were no restrictions against women written in the announcements for volunteers. Earlier, it had been up to each neighbourhood to decide such matters. It was generally men pulling the floats, my informant told me.

However, there are reportedly still some festival officials who try to refuse women from participating in pulling the floats. My informant told me that while the announcement for volunteers are handled by the NPO, the opponents of female participation want to exclude women in the announcements. According to my informant, there are still some senior officers who want to prevent women from participating and some are trying to decrease the number of women participating. Reportedly, some wants

to lower the ages too. Notwithstanding, as a structure, the restriction on women has been removed, my informant said. As the situation stands, there is a lack of participants.

The NPO is comprised of various stakeholders and there are several different opinions. Some members reportedly highlight the religious aspects of the festival and oppose female participation. However, according to my informant, the festival of today has the character of a festival for the general public, rather than of a religious festival.

When asked whether there had been a resistance when first inviting women to participate in pulling the floats, my informant answered that as the volunteers are invited to pull the floats, they do not ride on top of the floats. Since after the war, the general stance has been that it is fine as long as/since they do not ride the floats. However, in some neighbourhoods, some seniors reportedly opposed the idea of inviting women, saying that they would not welcome women on their floats even if they were invited.

Concerning women's attitude towards the restrictions

When asked whether there are women among the residents of Ōtsu who want to participate (more) in the festival, my informant replied that there are. However, he pointed out that there are not many complaints and no hard feelings. At the same time, as my informant told me during our visit to the festival float exhibition hall, it has happened one time that a woman participated in secret.

There are reportedly other opportunities available to women. One such opportunity is the *tameshibiki*, an event occurring before the festival, when the floats are taken for a 'test run' to assure that they can be manoeuvred properly. At that time there are no volunteers coming from 'outside', so the residents gather and help pull the floats. Women and children also help to pull the floats during the *tameshibiki*. My informant also added that he believes that the gender equality movement after the end of the war has had an influence on people's attitudes.

Concerning possible future changes

Reportedly, some people want to start allowing women to ride on the floats as well, since there are not enough people. Specifically, one change that might occur in the future is that the role of musician might become available to girls as well as boys. Concerning the roles of *yamakata* and *keigo*, these are a bit special, and might be difficult, according to my

informant. My informant pointed out that concerning *hayashi*, there is a shift happening in a lot of other festivals. Even in places where the festival is considered a ‘men’s festival’, *hayashi* is done by both boys and girls in many places, in the case it is done by children. However, while there is some talk about allowing female *hayashi* in Ōtsu, there is also a significant resistance towards the idea. Sentiments seem to be strict concerning matters of riding on the floats.

My informant also pointed out that help is needed from women now too, behind the scenes. Women participating in behind-the-scenes roles are reportedly increasing. My informant brought up an example from a neighbourhood where women are bringing refreshments etc. The women can enter the training location, but they cannot enter the actual float or the storehouse where it is being kept. When asked whether this was because the floats are considered sacred, my informant confirmed, and explained that it is similar to the situation within the sumo sport. As for the floats, women can touch them (nowadays), but cannot climb on top or go inside. My informant explained that this is the reason why women cannot be *hayashi* but added that this will probably change in the future. Reportedly, it has happened once that a female scholar was allowed to enter a float for research purposes, and that was the first time such a thing has happened.

Concerning differences in attitudes between generations and/or gender

When asked whether there were any differences in attitudes towards female participation depending on generation or gender, my informant replied that in the case of men’s attitudes, there was a difference between generations. According to my informant, things will probably change when his generation is gone. The way of thinking among the generations born before and during the war is reportedly still strict, and attitudes will likely change with the coming of younger generations.

Concerning whether the meaning or value of the festival has changed

According to my informant, there have been some changes. Rather than a religious festival, it has become even more of a local festival for the general public than before. Earlier, the festival was managed by an organization with religiously affiliated members and consequently, women were being kept away. However, the structure has changed, and now the management is handled by neighbourhood councils (*jichikai*). Since that

organizational change, things have reportedly changed for women. Women are increasingly encouraged to help as *urakata* nowadays – dealing with preparations, reparations, vending, serving tea etc. Earlier, reparations and similar could not be done by women since the items repaired belonged to the *yama*, where women were not allowed. But now, as long as the items are removed from the *yama* while repairing them, there is reportedly no problem.

When asked whether some people think the festival had become more exciting since allowing women, my informant replied that this was the case. Now there are women selling merchandise etc. It seems that the change in organizational structure has had an impact. In the earlier *honzonkai* organization, only the male household members were members and it was reportedly “a gathering for senior age men” (Interview 2019-02-22). The current organization is different, and nowadays all household members are members, and so everyone is taking part in the management. The range of people helping has become wider. Reportedly, the festival ‘belongs’ to the residents now, more than it did before. My informant also pointed out that nowadays people are gender equal since childhood.

Concerning the UNESCO inscription of Yama Hoko Yatai on the RL

(The Ōtsu festival is not inscribed on the RL. The festival was designated as an Important intangible folk cultural property in 2016, and therefore did not make it in time for the UNESCO nomination.)

My informant said that it is possible that the Ōtsu festival might be added to the inscription at some point, if an addition is made to include all Yama Hoko Yatai festivals of Japan in the nomination. The number of designated festivals is likely to increase, my informant reckoned, although it is also a matter of cost since designating all festivals would cost the Agency for Cultural Affairs a lot of money.

Being inscribed or not does not seem to be an important issue. My informant said he was not sure that being on the list would matter that much. When asked whether there might be benefits to not being inscribed on the list, my informant replied that might perhaps prove to be the case, since an inscription comes with restrictions and also brought added worry about the continuation.

7.2.4. Karatsu

Brief introduction: Karatsu has a population of 122,528 people (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2019) and is located in Saga prefecture in Kyūshū. The Karatsu Kunchi (meaning festival) takes place in November. There are 14 neighbourhood associations involved in the festival, and 14 floats being paraded in the procession. The (current) floats are of a different style that those seen in for example Ōtsu and Inuyama. The floats feature creations such as fable animals, mythical beasts and characters from folk tales.



Photographer: Helga Janse, 27 February 2019, Karatsu, Saga prefecture. Festival floats on display at the exhibition hall. Hikiyama Tenjiō, Karatsu.

Date of interview: 2019-02-26

Number of informants: 3

Concerning roles

The only role where female participation is allowed (although not in all floats) is in the role of *hikiko* (pulling the floats). There are three patterns. In the most allowing neighbourhoods, girls up to the age of junior high school students can participate in pulling the floats. Other neighbourhoods allow girls up to the age of elementary school students as *hikiko*. In some neighbourhoods, no girls are allowed to participate. There are 14 floats, and the float neighbourhoods decide whether to allow girls or not. There are

two neighbourhoods forbidding girls to participate, out of the 14 neighbourhoods. Some neighbourhoods have different age rules depending on whether you live in or outside the neighbourhood. Adult women are strictly prohibited [*zettai dame*] from participating. Some neighbourhoods reportedly place importance on menstruation and do not allow girls who have started menstruating. In the earlier days, the *hikiko* were only men. According to my informants, this is what has changed since the earlier days.

The role of *hayashi* (musician) is done by children up to the age of senior high school. It is reportedly difficult to become a musician and there is a test. There are around 50 – 80 people practicing, but only a selected 15 – 20 people get to ride the float and perform. The *hayashi* are all boys. There are reportedly cases though where girls have been allowed to the *hayashi* practice, but these are exceptions. One of my informants pointed out that, regardless, girls cannot ride the floats, and a woman will never get a top position in the float organization. My informant said that while he did not mind a woman becoming Prime Minister or President, the floats are ‘off limits’, and compared it to the sumo sport which is also a religious ritual.

Adult women are not allowed to participate as either *hikiko* or *hayashi*. My informants explained that for all people who want to pull the floats, connections are needed, such as for example family or relative ties. Permission from the *sekininsha* (person in charge) is required. He told me that the rules are protected, and so from that perspective, it is strict for women.

However, adult women are reportedly busy with other tasks, such as preparing food and taking care of the guests coming to visit during the festival. This is part of the tradition of hospitality. Relatives and friends come to visit during the festival. Women are busy with cooking for this and reportedly do not have time for the festival. One of my informants told me that his wife has barely seen the float parade, despite their many years of marriage. Women are treating guests to food and drinks from morning until night. This is, one of my informants explained, the duty/task of women. My informants also emphasized how heavy this task was, saying that women’s work during the festival is harder than the men’s work. The men leave the house in the morning and go participate in the festival and come back at night. During that time, it is up to the women to take care of the guests, and this was hard work, my informant said. The roles of men and women are reportedly entirely divided.

Concerning change

According to my informants, girls were first allowed to participate as *hikiko* from around Showa 42 (year 1967). It appears however that the change has happened gradually.

Furthermore, an earlier temporary change occurred during the war. Since a lot of the men were away to serve in the military, there were few available men left in the city. Therefore, women reportedly also participated in pulling the floats during the war years. This was an exception and allowing women to pull the floats only happened during the war, according to my informants. One of my informants emphasized the unbroken continuity of the Karatsu festival, saying that no matter the circumstances, the floats will be paraded on the festival day. This was a rule, as my informant expressed it.

However, the reason for the later change around 1967, starting to allow girls to participate as *hikiko*, was different. This change probably happened because children also wanted to participate and started asking their parents, my informant mused. Returning to the topic later though, it seems that the gender equality movement after the war also had an influence. One of the informants told me that especially after the war, words like 'equal rights for men and women' started to appear. When my informant was in elementary school and junior high school, not many girls participated, however, then came "gender equality and suffrage and such", and in the Showa 30s, girls increasingly started being able to participate. Some neighbourhoods reportedly allowed it and some not. How the people deciding at the time reasoned, my informants were not sure.

One of the informants also told me that in his float neighbourhood, when he was young, women had been participating. However, there had been some 'trouble'. Men had gotten women drunk and several incidents had happened. After that it was decided to not allow women anymore, except for girls up to junior high school.

The informants went on to tell me that in the mid 50's and 60's, only the people from the respective neighbourhoods were allowed to pull the floats (i.e. no people from outside the neighbourhoods). If your house was outside of the demarcations of the neighbourhoods, you could not participate. However, the current situation is different. Nowadays the participants can be siblings of the local residents and other 'related people' etc. who do not live there but only come for the festival, as well as people who are introduced. There are reportedly 200-350 people pulling the floats nowadays.

When asked whether there are enough people pulling the floats, my informants replied that there are more than enough. While a shortage of people to pull the floats is a problem in many other float festivals, the situation in Karatsu is different. In Karatsu they are instead reportedly stopping the influx of more *hikiko*. However, in the case of children wanting to participate, many neighbourhoods reportedly allow them to participate, as part of planning for the future.

One of my informants told me that in his neighbourhood, around 100 of the 300 people pulling the float are children. This was not the case earlier – then there were only a few children at the front. My informant told me that when these children grow up, they will protect the festival and so, for that purpose, they are letting them participate now. They are training the children. He told me that it is like social education – they are giving the children education in society, different from the education they receive in school.

There are some rules in place for the children regarding appearances. There are restrictions on piercings, dyeing your hair, wearing sunglasses etc. If they do not want to comply, then they cannot participate. In earlier days, around Showa 30-40, the situation was reportedly different, with many people wearing headdresses covering their faces and using sunglasses etc. As the numbers of *hikiko* grew, the neighbourhoods felt that this was not good, and gradually stipulated rules. One of my informants told me that it was important to have regulations, pointing out some differences in approach between schools and the festival organization. In school education nowadays, parents are complaining to the schools and there is an ‘equality way of thinking’. The festival organization on the other hand is a hierarchical society, my informant said, and what the top decides is absolute. When asked whether everyone follows the rules or if there are people opposing them, my informants explained that the rules are absolute, saying that if people oppose, they cannot participate, and that even if someone were discontent, they cannot say it.

The children are all informed about the rules. A permission from the neighbourhood *sekininsha* (person in charge) as well as from the school principal is required for children who want to participate. The rules concerning participation are pretty strict, my informant explained. There are also rules concerning adults. For example, if an adult is caught for driving under the influence, they are reportedly banned for life from participating.

Concerning neutralization

When asked whether there were any discussions or objections around the time when girls were first allowed to participate, the informants told me that since they were rather young at the time of the change, they were not sure how the discussions among the people in top positions at the time had unfolded. There is an organizational structure, like a pyramid, and every neighbourhood has its own (sub)organization. They told me that the people at the top of the organization probably had discussions and that the neighbourhoods that were strongly opposed to girls participating do not allow girls nowadays either. The neighbourhoods are largely independent.

Concerning the neighbourhoods that now allow girls as *hikiko*, when asked whether the participants had become used to it now, my informants said that there are no people opposing the rules, adding that what is decided is decided. Rules seem to be strictly followed in the Karatsu Kunchi.

One of my informants also added that, of course there are females who want to pull the floats, but that they cannot raise their voices, because the rules are decided. Even if someone would raise the voice it would not matter, my informant told me, explaining that on the contrary, they would be turned a cold shoulder when they came back home.

Concerning changes in value or meaning after the change in gender restrictions

It seems that there has been no change in value or meaning caused by the decision to start allowing girls as *hikiko* in some neighbourhoods. One of my informants told me about another type of change he had experienced in his perception of the festival. When he was a child, he had reportedly not cared about the religious meaning. He had come to realize it is a religious festival as he became an adult. Another informant also told me how the floats themselves have changed throughout the history of the festival.

Concerning the UNESCO inscription

The inscription process reportedly took around three years. It seems that getting inscribed was not a matter of particularly great concern. In Yatsushiro there were reportedly citizens' groups campaigning for inscription, while in Karatsu, the stakeholders were more dispassionate. According to my informants, it was business as usual. My informants explained that it does not really matter if they are inscribed or not, since they have to

protect their festival regardless. They have to protect the festival for eternity, they told me.

When they heard the news that the element had been inscribed, at first they did not do anything in particular, although later there was a small celebration in front of the city hall. My informants compared Karatsu to Kyōto, where they did not care much about the inscription either, as opposed to the countryside, where they reportedly care more and thought it was great to be inscribed. My informants told me that regardless, they had to protect their festival and that the floats were treasures – whether inscribed or not.

In Kyūshū, there are five festivals inscribed. The other festivals all have *tsukuriyama*, being constructed every year. Therefore, the preciousness of the objects are entirely different, my informants explained. In the case of the other festivals, it is the festivals themselves that are protected. In Karatsu, it is both the festival itself, as well as the floats. Each float is valuable, and they have to be protected for posterity, my informants explained, saying that rather than thinking about protecting the festival, they were thinking that they have to save the 14 floats.

When asked whether there was any talk about gender in the process leading up to the inscription, my informants told me that they did not remember. The biggest concern seems to have been the importance of the religious aspect of the festivals. One of my informants said that without the religious component, the festivals would be like the parades at Disneyland.

Concerning changes that might occur in the future

My informants said that they need to keep the festival going for eternity. Therefore, training children, in order to raise successors, was of vital importance. Planting trees to use as material for the stands/platforms of the floats was also a focal concern. My informants also highlighted the importance of keeping the festival unchanged.

When asked about a hypothetical scenario where there was shortage of people to participate, and how that situation could be solved, my informants replied that such a scenario probably would not occur in Karatsu for the coming 50 years. The children start learning the festival songs in kindergarten, and then start learning to play the flute, drums and bell for *hayashi*, and this was to avoid such a scenario. As long as there are children, it will be ok, my informants said.

7.2.5. Uozu

Brief introduction: Uozu has a population of 42,132 people (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2019) and is located in Toyama prefecture. The Uozu festival takes place in August. There are 7 neighbourhood associations involved in the festival, and 7 floats being paraded in the procession. The floats are not wheeled but have a sled-like construction. The shape of the floats is of a different type than those seen in for example Ōtsu and Inuyama. The floats carry tall sail-like constructions, which are kept securely upright by tugging on ropes attached to the top of the constructions, in order to secure their balance.



Photographer: Helga Janse, 18 March 2019, Uozu, Toyama prefecture. To the left: Suwa Shrine. To the right: Model of festival float. Ariso Dome, Uozu.

Date of interview: 2019-03-18

Number of informants: 2

Concerning changes

According to my informants, two changes have occurred in the gender restrictions of the festival – first allowing female *hikite* and then allowing female *hayashi* to participate. One of my informants told me that he remembers that fifty years ago, there were girls

pulling the floats too. However, at that time, both the *katsugite* (the role of shouldering the float) and *hayashikata* (musicians) were only men. My informant went on to tell me that when he was a child, the festival was off limits for his mother, but that some time after that, young wives moving in to the neighbourhoods started to participate in pulling the ropes of the floats. While not knowing the exact time, he told me that he reckons it was about fifty years ago that women started participating as *hikite* in numbers.

Regarding the reason for this change, one of my informants told me that the floats used to be smaller back in the days. They have been getting bigger and bigger and now they can barely fit in the storage houses. As they have been getting bigger, they have been getting heavier too. As such, it was probably not enough anymore with only men pulling the floats, he told me.

My informant also mentioned that women have been helping in assembling the floats since the old days. The *tatemon* (floats) are ‘produced’ despite the originally small neighbourhoods, and so women – the mothers in the district – also helped in assembling the floats, together with everyone, he told me, adding that the *tatemon* are not that easy to assemble. The main poles are 15 – 16 meters tall. Since there were no tow trucks back in the days, everything was done with human power, which meant that many hands/participants were needed. My informant explained that this was the reason the mothers participated too in assembling the floats, tugging ropes and helping in raising the poles. This has reportedly been the way it has been done since the old days. Contrarily, he told me, there are probably fewer women now. Nowadays, tow trucks are used in the assembling of the floats which means that it is enough with only men participating in this task. However, women’s involvement reportedly varies somewhat between the different neighbourhoods.

When asked whether this meant the festival was not completely *nyonin kinsei* in the old days, my informant replied that he believes that it was not, adding that at least from when he was a child, the mothers in the neighbourhood were helping in assembling the floats. He explained that rather than being strictly *nyonin kinsei*, the festival started a fishermen’s festival. It was our own festival, he said. Also, some of the fishermen were reportedly letting women on board the boats. My informant told me that he was not sure whether it was really *nyonin kinsei*, and that he had a feeling that women might have been advised not to touch the floats since it was dangerous.

The change to start allowing female musicians reportedly happened around 35 years ago. At that time the children playing flute and drums were getting few in numbers, and it was decided in the *seinendan* (young person's association) to start to train children around one or two months before the festival. They reached out to the children in each neighbourhood and many girls came to learn how to play the flute and such, my informant told me, adding that from that time on, it grew common for girls to play the flute in front of the floats. Elementary and junior high school students started training and the talented ones started performing around the floats, he told me. The children do not learn how to play as *hayashi* in school, but there are some places in the district which function as community centres. Starting from around one or two months before the festival, they gather there once or twice a week and learn to play flute and drums. Most of the flute players are reportedly girls. My informant told me that back in the days, the musicians used to be adults, adding jokingly that there are some children who are pretty bad at playing, and as such, some are not performing at the festival. My informant said that some girls too have become pretty good at playing and are performing flute and drums at the festival, on the floats.

According to one of my informants, most of the neighbourhoods have probably decreased in population by half, compared to 20 – 30 years ago. Some of the reasons are declining birth rates and an aging population. Furthermore, he explained, from the beginning, the fishermen's neighbourhoods are small/cramped and therefore many people choose to move to bigger places. There are many houses, but many of them are vacant, he explained, saying that there are no parking slots or garages, and that that is why people leave. He told me that this was also one of the reasons why the number of houses/households are decreasing.

The Tatemon festival was originally a fishermen's festival, but it has changed in recent years, since after the war. There are not many fishermen participating anymore. In the last 50 – 60 years, there have been few fishermen, my informant said. Nowadays, it is reportedly mostly office workers. The number of fishermen has decreased, and the number of office workers have increased, my informants said. When asked whether there are women fishermen too, one of my informants replied that there are *oyako* (parent and child) doing it together. There are reportedly fishing families where women ride together

with the fishermen on the boats. However, they do not often participate in the festival, he told me, as they go out fishing on the evening of the festival as well.

Concerning roles

The work of manoeuvring and moving floats involves three roles: *hikite*, *katsugite*, and the people holding the *hikaetsuna*. When the floats are moving forward, they are pulled with ropes. This is done by the *hikite*. This role is performed by both men and women. Close to the 'main body' are the *katsugite*. They grip and manoeuvre the float. This role is performed by only men. There is also the role of handling the ropes – *hikaetsuna* – used for stabilizing the floats, keeping them from falling over. There are six to eight ropes on each float, and so, there are eight people in charge of these ropes. This role is performed by only men.

Normally there are around 80 people involved when moving the floats, my informants said. There are 30 *katsugite*, 8 people for the *hikaetsuna*, and around 40 people pulling the ropes of the float, although the number of *hikite* varies between the neighbourhoods. They are usually between 30 – 50 people performing the role of *hikite*.

My informants told me that the floats are paraded to the shrine, where they are presented/dedicated in a ritual. During this ritual, the floats are rotated. During the procession, everyone is involved, but at the shrine, when rotating the floats, only the people closest to the floats are involved, meaning that the *hikite* do not take part. The *hikite* are watching the ritual from afar/the outside. When rotating the floats, the ropes used for pulling the floats forward are dismantled. The floats have a sled-like construction with poles attached to the base which the *katsugite* use. Originally, the floats were not manoeuvred on roads, but on a sandy beach. That is why the floats have sleds underneath, instead of wheels. The people handling the *hikaetsuna* keep the balance of the float, making sure it does not fall over. They are holding the ropes while circling around the float. Earlier, only men were involved in the shrine ritual. Nowadays, girls are sitting on top of the floats when they are rotated. One of my informants said that as such, he guessed the feeling is that nowadays they are participating in the main event of the festival too.

One of my informants told me that the people handling the *hikaetsuna* are the stars of the Tatemon festival and described how they are running fast and jumping. The roads did not use to be as neat as they are now. The floats were pulled forward on gravel roads

along the shoreline. It used to be narrow, he told me, describing how some people would climb on top on roofs of private buildings and storage houses, since they were worried about the balance of the floats and that they might fall over. That was/is why the *hikaetsuna* were so important, he said. This role continues to be performed by men nowadays as well, he explained.

Also, when rotating the floats during the ceremony at the shrine, they run around the float in a ring, adjusting to the rotation. When the rotation speeds up, the top becomes unstable. It has reportedly happened that floats have fallen over. If the float is assembled poorly, the top will become unstable when rotating the float, and it will risk falling over. That is why the *hikaetsuna* is such an important role, my informant said. This was also why this role must be carried out by men, he explained, as it is a matter of strength and balance, and the role requires a lot of running.

Earlier, the neighbourhoods could manage with only the local residents, but nowadays there is a shortage of manpower, my informants said. The population is declining, and nowadays they are recruiting for volunteers to pull the floats. The recruitment of volunteers reportedly started around 20 years ago. In Heisei year 9 (1997), the Tatemon festival was designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property, and the following year, the Board of Education started recruiting for volunteers together with the preservation association since there was a shortage of manpower, my informants told me. Anyone is welcome to join as a volunteer, and both men and women participate, as well as foreigners, my informants said. The volunteers wear special t-shirts, so it is easy to tell that they are participants.

In general, it seems that it is a festival conducted by mostly relatively young people. One of my informants said that when he was young, people over 40 years old were mostly watching. Nowadays, there are reportedly people in their sixties among the members in the young person's association, since there is not enough manpower. Earlier, people over 50 years old were not involved in the festival, he said. They were helping in the preparations, but during the actual festival, they were reportedly only watching.

There are paper lanterns decorating the floats, and the paper lanterns have the names of women and children written on them. One of the informants told me that when marrying, the woman moves in to the household. The name of the bride is then written on the lantern, as dedication, and the household makes a donation, he told me. There are

reportedly no adult men's names written on the lanterns, and the only adults are women or men who have had their name written there since they were children. My other informant explained that when you get a wife (*oyomesan morattara*), you have your wife's name written and make a contribution to the neighbourhood, and similarly, when a child is born, you have their name written too, and make a contribution to the neighbourhood. This is reportedly done from every household. The lanterns are destroyed and replaced as new ones are added. New lanterns are added from the bottom, as these lanterns are easier to see, and the older lanterns move toward the top. One lantern reportedly costs around 18000 to make, and each float carries around 90 lanterns.

As the lanterns are made from paper, there is a risk that they might catch fire. My informants also told me that back in the days, it was common that they caught fire. Six of the seven floats reportedly still use candles inside the lanterns, while one uses electric lights. When the floats sway, one lantern might catch fire, and it might spread to another lantern. Therefore, the young people in *seinendan* are busy rushing up and managing the lanterns, my informants told me. Since the floats are paraded on asphalt roads nowadays, they do not sway that much anymore, they told me, adding that in the old days they used to sway a lot, and so there were a lot of fires. One of my informants described how the young people in the *seinendan* would then rush in/climb up and put out the fire, and how "everyone thought they were really cool".

Concerning attitudes towards female participation

Concerning attitudes, one of my informants told me that he had never heard anyone say that women should not be allowed to perform as *hikite*. However, the festival has a feeling of a men's festival, he told me, adding that, since around 80 people is required per float, it would be difficult to do it with only the men in the neighbourhoods. If women did not participate too, they probably would not have been able to move the floats.

When asked whether there was any opposition among the participants when women first started performing as musicians, around 35 years ago, one of my informants told me that there was not. On the contrary, he said, it was fun for the girls too, he said, adding that he did not think the neighbourhoods had anything in particular to say about that. According to my informant, the change to start allowing female participation happened rather naturally. There was neither resistance nor support, he said.

When asked whether there were young girls who said they wanted to participate too, 35 years ago, one of my informants replied that he thought so. He told me that he thought that girls wanting to participate in the festival was the reason why girls are participating as musicians today. Until then, girls had only been able to participate in pulling the ropes of the floats. My informant explained that since the musicians on the floats are playing while the floats are rotated, they are able to touch the ‘main body’ and can participate together with the floats in the festival. In comparison, the rope pullers are watching from afar when the floats are rotated at the shrine during the *hōnō* (dedication, presentation, offering) ritual. Therefore, before now, women were not able participate at the main event, he said, adding that now they can play the flute, sitting on top of the floats, while it is rotated.

However, there seems to be some discontent among some people over the number of girls participating. My informant explained that the reason was not that they dislike girls participating, but that there are a lot of girls playing the flute now. Young children, around the age of four or five, are also allowed to ride on the floats. However, nowadays there is reportedly no room for them anymore. Therefore, some people think that some of the flute players could play while standing in the vicinity, in order to make some room for young children to ride on the floats, my informant told me. When asked whether that meant that there are currently no problems with a shortage of people, my informant replied that there are many children learning how to play flute and drums, but that there is a shortage of participants in the festival itself.

When asked whether there are people who would like to change the current gender rules, one of my informants replied that the only roles in the festival where women can currently participate are *hikitsuna* and playing the flute, adding that the other roles are somewhat dangerous. He also told me that he guessed that if a woman had the physical strength and the strength to run around, she might be able to participate, although he was unsure. To begin with, my informant said, the role of *hikaetsuna* can only be done by people who have been involved in the festival since they were young.

When asked whether there were people who would like to change the rules back – so that *hayashi* is only done by men – one of my informants replied that this was not the case, but mentioned again that there are some people who feel that there are too many girls playing the flute nowadays. My informants explained that some people see that while

there are not enough *hikite*, there are six or seven girls playing flute, and feel that some of the girls could help pulling the floats instead.

Concerning changes in meaning and/or value

When asked whether there were any changes in the sense of value or meaning of the festival – such as for example the religious meaning weakening or the sense of community strengthening – when women started participating as musicians, one of my informants explained that it had got easier for girls, around school age, to be part of the festival. Up until then, girls/women had only participated during the festival day. During the preparation, there is a lot of heavy carrying, and girls/women had mainly been looking on. Now they could help out, even if with small things, he told me, saying that he believed that was the feeling among young women/girls.

Until then, girls had mainly been helping during the preparations by serving tea and similar. The preparations start around one week before the festival. The preparations include attaching the main pole to the sled. When the pole is erected, a lot of manpower is required, my informant told me, saying that you need to be careful not to break the bamboo poles and be careful when handling the light decorations. Women used to help with this earlier too, he told me. After the change, girls were asked to also help in carrying the parts. My informant said that in that sense, the festival had probably got more fun for girls since they started taking part also in the preparations. Nowadays, girls can take part not only during the festival days, but also in the preparations and tidying up afterwards. My informant concluded that he thought this was a good thing.

When asked whether there were some people who considered the floats sacred and therefore thought that women should not ride on them, as in some other festivals, one of my informants replied that that might have been the case back in the days. Some older people might have thought it was unclean or impure, he said. He told me that in the old days, he did not see any women riding on the floats. Girls starting to participate as *hayashi* was a change that happened naturally, he said, describing it as a natural process. My informant explained that the festival is a festival for ordinary people, and that in that sense it is different from ‘high-class’ festivals such as the Gion. It is a festival created by ordinary people, he told me. Therefore, when there was a lack of manpower, it was natural that women joined in too, he said.

Concerning the UNESCO inscription

According to my informants, there were no changes in the festival triggered by the inscription. They told me that the municipality might have seen the label as an opportunity to draw more visitors, and that the local residents were happy about the inscription, but that the festival did not change at all.

Concerning the future

My informants told me that since the population is decreasing, it might become impossible in the future to hold the festival with only the current residents. There are currently seven floats being paraded in the procession. My informants told me that in the beginning, there were more floats, from other neighbourhoods too. Some reportedly stopped because the neighbourhoods could not manage it anymore. The opposite has also happened – the Minato-machi neighbourhood reportedly only started parading a float around 50 years ago. Before that, they reportedly had an *omikoshi* (portable shrine). One of my informants said that when he was a child, there were six *yama* (floats) and one *omikoshi*. The number of houses/households grew, he said, and they decided to stop with the *omikoshi* and get a float instead. That happened around 50 years ago.

However, the population is decreasing and nowadays there is support coming from the outside. My informant told me that 10 years ago, in one of the neighbourhoods where the number of households have decreased a lot, even if a float was assembled it could only be used as decoration, since the neighbourhood could not manage to move it around.

10 years ago, there were reportedly still neighbourhoods with many residents. In those neighbourhoods, there was no need for volunteers. However, the numbers of residents have decreased since then, so now volunteers are needed, my informant told me.

Concerning how the festival might change in the future, one of my informants said that even if the ‘shape’ of the festival is preserved, the number of the floats might change. He did not think the festival itself will disappear. Even if the number of floats decreases, it will continue, he said, adding that people from different places will be called in to support, and that people will be gathered somehow. However, the festival will probably get smaller, he said.

7.2.6. Nanao Seihaku

Brief introduction: Nanao has a population of 52,940 people (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2019) and is located in Ishikawa prefecture. The Seihaku festival takes place in May. There are 3 neighbourhood associations involved in the festival, and 3 floats being paraded in the procession. The shape of the floats is of a different type than those seen in for example Ōtsu and Inuyama. The floats are huge constructions called *dekayama* (*dekai* meaning enormous).



Photographer: Helga Janse, 19 March 2019, Nanao, Ishikawa prefecture. To the left: Manhole cover. To the right: A welcome sign at the Nanao station.

Date of interview: 2019-03-19

Number of informants: 4

Concerning roles

Anyone can participate in pulling the floats, including women. Tourists can participate too. The members of the public who want to participate can get in towards the back. The main group manoeuvring the floats are the *wakai shu* (young lads/people). This group consists of young men. Around two thirds of the *wakai shu* come from outside of the city. Some people who were born in Nanao, or whose parents were born there, but moved to Tokyo or Osaka, reportedly come back in time for the festival. There are reportedly also

many people who were born in Nanao but who currently live around Kanazawa who come back to participate in the festival.

In two of the three floats, there are women's groups. The two groups are named *Satsuki kai* and *Yamame kai*. Their main role is pulling the floats. My informants told me that, because it is dangerous, the members of the women's group get in behind, since the officers are in the front. Concerning the recruitment of members – it is reportedly most common that members are invited through acquaintances and friends – people you have a connection to. My informants reasoned that while it is also possible to join solo, it is probably difficult and a bit embarrassing to apply to join if you do not know anyone there. The same goes for the men in the *wakai shu* groups. If you have friends who are members, it is easier to join and easier to 'get into it', my informants told me.

According to my informants, there is a saying that pregnant women are allowed to step over the ropes, since this can *also* be seen as a prayer for an easy childbirth. However, the public is not supposed to step over the ropes though since it is considered taboo. My informants told me that women who are not pregnant get scolded for stepping over the ropes, but pregnant women are allowed to do it.

The women in the women's groups are reportedly also performing some *urakata* (behind-the-scenes) roles, such as preparing food when the floats are being assembled. Other *urakata* roles are reportedly done by the *fujinkai* (women's association) in the neighbourhoods. The *fujinkai* and the women's groups are different groups. One of my informants told me that the *fujinkai* consists, to a certain extent, of older women. The *fujinkai* has reportedly been preparing snacks, food and refreshments for the festival since old times.

The work of assembling the floats is done by only men. My informants told me that women cannot touch the floats when they are put together – they can only pull the ropes during the actual festival. The women in the women's groups reportedly help by sometimes preparing food and coffee. One of my informants told me that the women help by helping the *wakai shu* who are working, by preparing food.

The manoeuvring of the floats is supported by the *kiyari*, who instruct the *hikite*. Music is performed by children, sitting inside of the floats, hidden from view. They also adjust their playing to the *kiyari*. They learn how to play from their *senpai* (seniors). The rhythm of the drums follows the different phases of the manoeuvring of the floats. The

drummers are junior high school students, and they need a permit from the principal to perform in the festival. The drummers are all boys.

Concerning attitudes towards female participation

One of the three neighbourhoods is opposed to female participation. One of my informants explained that, to put it simply, it was about protecting tradition, and that in the concerned neighbourhood, that feeling was strong. One informant said that – regarding the concerned neighbourhood – they were the only ones protecting that tradition and that they were the only ones not allowing girls to ride on the float. In the other two neighbourhoods, they are reportedly letting girls ride on the floats. It is up to the neighbourhoods to decide the detailed rules. Back in the days, there reportedly used to be arguments between the three neighbourhoods, but nowadays they reportedly get along well and meet up and discuss things.

When asked whether there were girls who wanted to participate as drummers too, one of my informants answered No, while another of my informants said that there might be, but that girls do not get permission.

There are several festivals in Nanao. My informants told me that there are other festivals where girls are allowed to play drums, bells, and flute, while riding on top of the *dashi*. He added that there are festivals like that, where gender does not matter, and where the children of the neighbourhoods can participate in turns. One informant told me that it might be hard for girls to play drums and flute in that other festival. Another of my informants said that in his neighbourhood, they were celebrating that other festival too, and that earlier, the flute players were only men. Nowadays, women are reportedly also playing the flute. The reasons for this change was that there were not enough children. Another of my informants added that there is a shortage of children in all the neighbourhoods.

Concerning changes

In the *Seihaku* festival of today, anyone can participate as *hikitsuna* (the role of pulling the ropes), including women. A significant change that happened was that women's groups were created in two of the three float communities. This means that the women in

these groups can take part as official participants and have dedicated roles in the festival. Originally, my informants told me, the festival was *nyonin kinsei*.

It seems that one of the reasons for creating the women's groups was to get more men to join. One of my informants told me that in his neighbourhood, they had reasoned that if they let women join, then young men will join too, in the role of *wakai shu* (young lads/people), seeing the charm of what the women are doing. Several romantic relationships, some of them leading to marriage, have reportedly started this way. My informant told me that at least three couples have got married, having met when participating together in the festival, and that their children will participate in the festival too. It had therefore proved to be a good idea, he said.

According to my informants, there were also other reasons for creating the women's groups. The reasons reportedly included the *hanayakasa* (gorgeousness) of the festival, making the festival merry, and succession. One of my informants told me that these were the reasons why they let women join the group. One of my informants added that the women's groups are helpful, saying that when the festival floats are being assembled, and at other times too, women come and prepare food for them.

When asked whether there were any discussions or opposition at the time when the women's group were created, my informants explained that there had been no 'discomfort or bad feelings'. They explained that the creation of the women's groups meant that women who were used to 'watching from the outside' could join as members of the groups, and that as such, they were already somewhat familiar with the atmosphere of the festival, and also familiar with some of the *wakai shu* men. Since the women who joined the groups had been participating earlier, as part of the participants from the public, they and the *wakai shu* already knew each other. This was reportedly a reason why the change happened smoothly – since the women and the *wakai shu* were already familiar with each other - they could 'open their hearts'. One informant added that they seemed to be having fun and that the *wakai shu* seemed have enjoyed participating together with the women's groups.

My informants also told me about other changes that had occurred earlier, saying that when they were young, there used to be geisha riding on the floats of another festival, taking place in April, playing shamisen and drums. My informants told me that just like in Kanagawa, there used to be a geisha district in Nanao, with brothels. My informants

told me that back in the days, the *wakai shu* manoeuvring the floats during the Seihaku festival would visit these establishments, and that they could drink for free. However, he explained, it is not like that now. There are no such shops/establishments anymore and the red-light district disappeared around 60 years ago.

Another of my informants told me that “it might be inappropriate to say this but during the festival, men should not have sex with their wives”, adding that, in other words, the husband would be with other women. My informants explained that back in the days, the husband would hang his *hanten* (festival coat) in the *tokonoma* (alcove for displaying flowers and art and similar). When he left the house to go to participate in the festival, the wife would use salt for a purification rite. My informants explained that there was such a culture at the time, and that even among young people, married couples slept in separate beds. My informants added that that was then and that this is not the case now.

My informants also told me that back in the days, the three floats used to compete with each other in terms of puppets and decorations. At that time, there were reportedly puppet makers and decoration makers in each neighbourhood, but this is not the case anymore. One of my informants said that in this day and age there are no artisans like that, adding that, however, some youths are in training now. Back in the days, people reportedly used to compare the works on display on the different floats. They reportedly also used to put personal effects, such as heirlooms, on display as decorations, for boasting.

Concerning the religious meaning

The Seihakusai festival is based around a religious ritual. My informants explained that even though they call it a festival, it is actually a *shinji* (religious/Shinto ritual), and that the floats themselves are also part of the religious ritual. One of my informants said that while he guessed that everyone knew that it is dedicated to a shrine, perhaps there were some people who were unaware of that and thought that the *dekayama* floats were just a festival.

While the festival is commonly called *Seihakusai dekayama*, my informants pointed out that these were actually two separate things. The *Seihaku* festival reportedly has a history of some 1030 years while the *dekayama* floats reportedly have a history of 546 years or so. The *Seihakusai* festival – springing from the religious ritual – was the

starting point, my informants explained, and the *dekayama* floats were added later, in dedication to the festival.

My informants also told me that for the UNESCO inscription, it was necessary with a connection to a religious ritual. They told me that the 33 festivals in the group element all have a connection to religious rituals, and as such, their festival was named *Seihakusai Hikiyama Gyōji* in the inscription, reportedly to mark the connection to the religious ritual.

The festival floats are considered to be female. One of my informants explained that in the traditional way of thinking, this was one reason why women should not ride the floats. If women rode the floats it would cause jealousy, which would lead to bad things, such as accidents, occurring. As such, traditionally, it is/was taboo for women to pull the ropes or be involved. My informants told me that one of the three neighbourhood associations is protecting tradition, and they do not let girls ride the float.

When asked if the floats were sacred, and whether that was a reason for restricting women, my informants replied that this was also the case. He compared it to the custom of not letting women on board boats.

The *shinji* (religious/Shinto ritual) of the festival is a process containing many steps, including several purification rituals at different stages. My informants told me that women are not allowed to participate in (some of) these rituals. It has reportedly happened once or twice that two or three women came along, which caused some disputes. My informants told me that some people thought it was wrong and thus, women's participation was cancelled. Now it is reportedly only men participating in said ritual. According to my informants, it seems that female photographers might not be allowed there either. However, it seems that women are allowed in some rituals, but only if they have a connection to the festival. Unrelated people, such as photographers, are reportedly considered taboo.

Concerning the UNESCO inscription

According to my informants, there were no discussions concerning gender roles or gender restrictions at the time around the nomination and inscription process. The matter of getting successfully inscribed was the main focus, and there was reportedly “no margin to think about other things” (Interview 2019-03-19).

Concerning the future

My informants told me that they do not want the festival to change, but that they are facing problems with securing the succession since the population is decreasing. One of the informants said that there will probably come a time when the situation is severe enough that also women are allowed as permanent festival officers, in order to increase the number of people and protect the festival.

Earlier in the interview, when talking about the prospect of letting girls perform as musicians, one of my informants said that if there was a will to do it, it could be done, but not immediately.

There is also a monetary aspect to the depopulation problem, since the households in the neighbourhoods make donations. As such, the number of residents affects the financial burden on the individual households. One of my informants told me that he was worried about how long the operations can be continued with only money from the neighbourhoods and support from the city. The population in the city is reportedly decreasing greatly. One of my informants told me that if the population continues to decrease like this, it will not be possible to continue the operations, and that cooperation from the shrine supporters might be needed too in order to continue.

My informants told me that the population is decreasing by approximately 1000 people every year, and that in the years since the merger of Nanao city, the population has decreased with more than 10000 people, from 63000 to 53000 people currently. There are many senior citizens while there are few new people joining and this, one of my informants told me, was an important aspect for the continuation of the festival.

People from outside of the city are coming to participate in the festival, helping in pulling the floats as *wakai shu*. Currently, two thirds of the *wakai shu* are reportedly coming from other areas. One of my informants said that nowadays, it is not enough with only the concerned neighbourhoods, concluding that while the concerned neighbourhoods were at the centre of the festival, without help from the outside, the festival cannot be performed.

7.2.7. Furukawa

Brief introduction: Furukawa is a part of Hida City which has a population of 24,272 people (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2019) and is located in Gifu prefecture. The Furukawa festival takes place in April. There are several parts to the festival. One part is the procession of floats around town. Another part is a drum event taking place later in the evening. There are 12 neighbourhood associations involved in the festival. There are nine floats plus the so-called *sanbasō* (三番叟) being paraded in the procession.



Photographer: Helga Janse, 20 March 2019, Hida Furukawa, Gifu prefecture. To the left: Townscape of Hida-Furukawa. To the right: Model of drum used in the Okoshi Daiko. Outside the Okoshi Daiko Museum, Hida-Furukawa.

Date of interview: 2019-03-20

Number of informants: 1

The interview was centred on the two main events of the festival – the Okoshidaiko (‘Rousing drum’) and the Yatai Gyōji (float procession). Apart from these two main events, there is also an event taking place at the shrine.

Concerning roles in the float procession

According to my informant, the float procession used to be *nyonin kinsei* until around 30 years ago. The *hayashi* musicians are children, from the age of first year elementary school students to third year junior high school students, and nowadays girls are also allowed/being asked to participate. Regarding pulling the ropes of the floats, it seems that women have been allowed to participate starting from about 20-25 years ago. However, it seems that there are not that many women participating in pulling the floats even now. My informant explained that women have work they have to do inside the house, such as preparing festival food and taking care of relatives coming to visit and watch the festival (*yobihiki*). My informant explained that women have women's work to do, and that when the festival starts, the husbands leave the house for a couple of days. Although *yobihiki* has become increasingly rare, women still have a hard task, my informant told me, adding jokingly that the whole time women were busy with work in the house, men can just walk around drinking.

When the float passes your house, the women reportedly go outside and watch. Since that means the deities have arrived, they do *omairi*. My informant told me that the people of Furukawa have treasured the deities since the old days. According to my informant, it is not only men looking forward to the festival – women look forward to the festival too. Also, my informant told me that some women are probably thinking that “if I were I man, I would have wanted to participate in the festival too”, but they know that it is a men's festival. My informant remarked that both the Yatai procession and the Okoshidaiko are men's festivals, and especially the Okoshidaiko.

There are reportedly volunteers coming to help with for example translating and cleaning up garbage. There are reportedly also groups coming to help pull the ropes of the floats. It reportedly also happens that children from neighbourhoods without floats go to help as *hayashi* in neighbourhoods where there are not enough musicians.

Concerning roles in the Okoshidaiko

The Okoshidaiko is an all-male event and all roles are performed by men. However, women are working behind the scenes. My informant told me that there is a feast/drinking party, and as such, behind the scenes, women are of course helping with drinks and serving tea and such. My informant also told me that it happened once that a woman participated in secret, but that she was soon revealed. My informant explained that it was

dangerous and that if you are caught in the middle, you will not be able to get out, even if you are a man, and as such, a woman can of course not be allowed in such a place. My informant also emphasized the nakedness of the participants as a reason for female exclusion.

Concerning changes

According to my informant, there have been two changes in the gender restrictions in the float procession. From having been *nyonin kinsei* – with women unable to touch the floats – a change occurred around 30 years to allow for girls to become *hayashi*. A second change occurred 20-25 years ago to allow female participation in pulling the ropes of the floats. The reason for the change in both cases was a shortage of people to participate. The population is declining, and my informant explained that declining birth-rates, the ageing population, as well as young people moving away to study and/or work and not coming back were underlying factors. However, many former residents reportedly return in time for the festival. There is no university in Furukawa, so after graduating from senior high school, young people reportedly move away. After graduating from university, many of these young people will look for a job in the cities. As such, my informant explained, now there are only the parents and grandparents left in Furukawa, and when that happens, maintenance becomes difficult/impossible.

My informant told me that when he grew up, the population in the old town used to be just over 16000 people, and now the population is 14700 people. In some of the smaller neighbourhoods, there are reportedly only 20 - 30 something households. Regardless, the floats need to be pulled, my informant told me, and as such, nowadays help is needed from women too.

Concerning the change to start allowing girls as *hayashi*, my informant told me that since the number of children were getting few, there was a plea to let girls to participate as *hayashi* too. Since then, girls have been participating gradually. However, there might be neighbourhoods among the populous neighbourhoods that do not let girls participate, my informant told me. At first, there was reportedly some resistance. From the idea of starting allowing girls was first brought up, it reportedly took around a year until the change happened, and girls could start participating the following year. When asked whether there were girls at the time who said they wanted to participate, my

informant replied that naturally, there were. Girls were seeing their brothers and only boys participate and reportedly wanted to participate too. My informant told me he believed that there was of course a yearning to participate, adding that the world has become gender equal.

Similarly, there also seems to have existed a will among women to participate. My informant told me that there were probably women back in the days too who wanted to participate, but that they could not, adding that it was not a gender equal era. While there was work for women to do behind the scenes, the work in the foreground, relating to the deities, was of course men's work, my informant told me.

Concerning the present situation, my informant told me that he thinks that there is no opposition to female participation in the float procession today, and that people have gotten used to it. However, female participation is reportedly not that common even now.

Concerning changes in the meaning and/or value of the festival

When asked whether the meaning and/or value of the festival had changes since starting to allow female participation, my informant replied that he did not think it had changed very much.

About the UNESCO inscription

According to my informant, there were no discussions concerning female participating around the time of the nomination process. There were reportedly also no mentions of female participation in the talks with the Agency for Cultural Affairs either.

My informant added that the neighbourhoods are independent when it comes to the float procession, and that the neighbourhoods have their own traditions.

Concerning the future

According to my informant, the most pressing concern is the shortage of people to participate in the Okoshidaiko. Earlier, until around Showa year 40 or 41, the float was reportedly carried entirely on the shoulders, which required the manpower of around 200 *katsugite*. Nowadays, there are wheeled wagons underneath the float, which means it can be manoeuvred with 150 people. This is reportedly the number of people needed in order to keep the balance of the float.

The problem is that there are few *katsugite* nowadays. Also, my informant added, it is cold as the event is held during the night. My informant explained that people usually continue until their sixties, but that in general, the average age is getting higher. He told me that in the coming years, people will probably continue past their sixties too.

Another thing that might change is that the festival could be made shorter. My informant told me that the people of Furukawa are proud, and that even if the population grows small, you could for example make the festival shorter. Things that take four hours today could be done in just one hour. This is what my informant told me he thought would happen.

7.3. Summary of results

The informants provided valuable information offering knowledge and insights into the gender conditions of the examined festivals. Through the interviews, it was possible to get in-depth information about key areas such as existing gender roles and restrictions, the rationale behind the restrictions, the changes that had occurred, why and how they had occurred, attitudes towards female participation in the festival communities, whether the restrictions were being challenged, as well as information about whether the inscription on UNESCO's Representative List had affected the practice, predictions about changes that might occur in the future, etc. See findings in the individual case studies. Key observations are described below. Furthermore, the interviews provided various information of interest, some of which was not part of the pre-determined questions. As such, it was possible to identify a number of recurring themes. These are described under 'Other observations' below.

The interviews also provided context to and provided clarification of the survey results. For example, in the case of Karatsu, it became clear that the policy on women's participation had shifted a number of times. Before the war, women were not allowed to participate, but during the war, since the men were away, women were entrusted with pulling the floats temporarily. After the war, women's participation was restricted again. In the latter Showa period, some neighbourhoods started admitting girls up to a certain age to participate in pulling the floats.

Roles and rules

There seems to be a limit to the (front stage) roles that women are allowed to participate in. As was also showed by the results of the survey, in the festivals where women are allowed to participate, they generally participate as musicians or in pulling the floats. Among the festivals examined in the interviews, the role of pulling the floats was the role that was most commonly available to women/girls. Some of the replies from the survey lacked in detail, but what was clear from the interviews was that the role of festival officer is a male domain. Female participation, where allowed, is conditioned.

One limit seems to concern the proximity to the floats. The duties carried out on top of the floats are generally carried out by men. An exception was the role of *hayashi*,

which is also carried out on the floats as the musicians often sit on top of or inside of the floats, which was carried out by both men/boys and women/girls in some festivals. In the cases where female *hayashi* were allowed, the *hayashi* were often girls. It may be noted that the role of pulling the floats, which was the role most commonly available to girls/women in the festivals where the interviews were conducted, is carried out at some distance from the floats.

Another limit seems to concern age. The organizational structures of the *hozonkai*, as well as the various roles, are generally based on age. For example, in many festivals the role of musician is carried out by children. However, from the interviews it became clear that there were also gender-specific factors. In Karatsu for example, the age when a girl starts to menstruate was such a factor.

In the cases of Seihakusai and Karatsu, the rules concerning female participation differed between the floats/neighbourhoods. Some neighbourhoods allow women (in some roles) while others do not. (In the case of Furukawa, according to my informant, there might be floats where girls are not able to participate as *hayashi* in the neighbourhoods with a large number of children.)

The role of dancer was brought up in Kakunodate. The dancers perform on top of the floats, in pairs. This role was performed by only women, up to a certain age. My informant told me that the dancers continue dancing until they get married, and women over the age of 30 usually do not perform on the floats.

Triggers of change

Concerning what triggered the change to allow female participation, a shortage of people stands out as the most frequently cited reason. A shortage of people to participate was a common factor for the examined festivals, in some cases in combination with other factors. A commonly mentioned cause of the shortage of people was *shōshikōreika*, a term referring to declining birth-rates combined with an ageing population.

However, another trigger of change seems to have been a consciousness about gender equality. The gender equality movement after the war was brought up in both Karatsu and Ōtsu. While gender equality considerations were not brought as an immediate reason for why the changes in gender restrictions had occurred, the influence on people's attitudes of the gender equality movement after the war was brought up later

in the conversations. In Karatsu, the reason for allowing girls to start participating as *hikiko* (in some neighbourhoods) seems to have been connected to children expressing a wish to participate to their parents.

The gender equality aspect was most pronounced in Inuyama. According to my informant, gender equality considerations were an important factor for the change in gender restrictions. While *shōshikōreika* also played a part, the main reason was reportedly a will to include women and get rid of the restrictions that just existed out of tradition and which did not make sense anymore. It was seen as the right thing to do. (Interview 2018-11-02)

Naturalization

In two of the interviews (Kakunodate and Uozu), the change to open up for female participation was described as a change that happened naturally. There were reportedly no big discussions at the time of change and no real opposition to the changes.

In two of the festivals (Inuyama and Furukawa), there was reportedly discussions at the time the change was first introduced. There was some opposition at the time, but after some time (a few years in the case of Inuyama) people had gotten used to it. Nowadays, there is reportedly no opposition.

In two of the festivals (Ōtsu and Nanao Seihaku), discussions seem to still be ongoing. There are reportedly conflicting views on female participation within the preservation associations. In the case of Karatsu, it was difficult to assess whether naturalization has happened or not. To sum up, naturalization seems to have occurred in (at least) four of the seven festivals.

Changes in value and/or meaning

In the interviews, there were no accounts of that by allowing women/girls to participate, the value of the festivals had lessened. Some of the informants told me that the festival had become more ‘fun’ since starting to allow female participation. However, as described above, in two of the festivals, female participation is still being debated and therefore does not seem to have been naturalized. In Nanao Seihaku, among the three floats, there was one neighbourhood opposed to female participation. The reason was reportedly a concern about protecting tradition.

In either case, the festivals have ‘survived’ the changes. Indeed, the changes to allow for female participation was triggered by the need for more participants to ensure the continuation of the practice. For example, my informant from Hida-Furukawa explained how the help from women had become increasingly needed (Interview 2019-03-20). As such, the continuation of the festivals does not seem to be threatened by allowing female participation. Rather, in the festivals facing a shortage of participants, female participation has helped the continuation of the practice. This would suggest that the exclusion of women was not a vital factor for the continuation and transmission of the practice.

UNESCO inscription

Based on the interviews, the group inscription of the 33 festivals on the RL does not seem to have had any significant impacts on the practice of the festivals. Some of the informants emphasized how indifferent they were to the inscription, while other informants expressed joy over the inscription. It would seem that the already existing national safeguarding system (functioning on country, prefectural and municipal level) plays a central part, while the international listing is a non-essential but welcome added layer.

Other observations

Some recurring themes are listed below:

- *Yomeiri* – a woman moves into the household of her husband when they marry
- Japan traditionally uses a family register (*koseki*). Rather than the individual, the main unit in this registration is the family/household. The family is registered under one surname.¹⁵ In the conducted interviews, the idea that the normal is for a woman to leave her old household and enter into the household of her husband when she marries figured several times. This means that legacy is generally inherited through male succession. This becomes a factor when it comes to succession of knowledge and traditions, as expectations on sons and daughters will be different.
- *It is dangerous* – so women cannot do it

¹⁵ In Japan, married couples are required by law to use the same surname. This requirement has been subject to debate, criticized by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (UN 2016), and challenged in court.

This thought was voiced in several of the interviews. Several of the informants mentioned the dangers involved in participating in the procession. In some cases, it was mentioned that the task in question required a certain physical strength, and there was a risk for physical injury. There was also a mention of accidents with deadly outcomes.

- *Mixing women and men is problematic*

This thought was voiced in several interviews. In some cases (such as Inuyama and Furukawa), the reservations concerned the physical proximity of the festival participants. In other cases, the reservations were based on previous incidents that had happened. One of my informants from Karatsu told me about how men and women had participated together, drinking alcohol, which had reportedly led to ‘trouble’ (Interview 2019-02-26). As a consequence, women’s participation had been restricted. Restricting men instead of women was not mentioned.

- *Role of responsibility – so women cannot do it*

This idea was voiced several times during the interview in Kakunodate. My informant explained that the role of *sekininsha* (person in charge) and other top positions were closed to women because these roles come with a very big responsibility. My informant explained that in case there was an accident, it is the person in charge who reports to the police and bears responsibility, and that since the burden of the responsibility at such a time would be very heavy, it would be difficult for a woman to have that position (Interview 2019-01-29).

- *Urakata – women play a role in the background*

In several of the interviews it was mentioned that women were active in roles ‘behind the scenes’, such as preparing food, serving tea, producing equipment etc. In some festivals, it was also mentioned how women, having responsibilities concerning food, children, and the household, were too busy to participate in the festivals. A number of the informants stressed how heavy of a role this was (see Karatsu and Furukawa).

- *‘I would if I could’*

Based on the interviews, several of the informants acknowledged that there are women who would like to participate (more), but who are restricted from doing so. This was the case in for example Kakunodate, Furukawa, and Ōtsu. My informant in Furukawa told me that some women are probably thinking that “if I were a man, I would have wanted to

participate in the festival too”, but that they know that it is a men’s festival (Interview 2019-03-20).

- *Women participating in secret*

There were several mentions of women participating in secret or unofficially in roles only available to men, either before the role was opened up to women or in roles that are still closed to women. In connection to this, it may be noted that this was also the case in Kyōto, as mentioned in Chapter 2.

- *Girls rather than women*

A recurring pattern was that it is mainly girls, rather than adult women, who are able to participate. In Inuyama, girls can become *hayashi* (and go on to become *wakai shu*) but women do not participate in pulling the floats. In Karatsu, girls can participate in pulling the floats in some neighbourhoods, up to a certain age or until they start menstruating. Adult women are not participating (in front-stage roles). In Furukawa, it was reportedly rare to find young women over the age of 20 participating, since women were busy with “women’s work” in the house (Interview 2019-03-20).

The organization of the festivals, and the allotment of roles, is based on age. This is the case for both women and men. However, the availability of roles open to female participation tended to decrease once a girl becomes an adult.

The recurring pattern of girls, rather than adult women, being able to participate is interesting. A point in question is whether this is a trace of the *kegare* belief. In Karatsu, the age limit for girls’ participation reportedly had a direct connection to the age when girls start menstruating. It is also plausible that this pattern reflects a societal structure where the division of the private and the public sphere has a gendered dimension.

- *Religious awareness comes with age*

Several of the informants talked about how children and young people do not care about the religious meaning of the festivals. This had reportedly been the case for several of the informants themselves, when they were children/younger. They had become increasingly aware of, and started to care about, the religious meaning from adulthood and as the years passed.

8. Summary results and conclusions

Chapter 1 started with an introduction of the research topic and outlined the research design of the study. In this chapter, the author outlined the theoretical framework and methodology and briefly introduced the festivals that are the focal point of the study – the Yama Hoko Yatai festivals. The scope of the study is limited to 36 festivals and these are approached both in-depth as well as on a collective level using a multi-step methodology in order to attain a multifaceted picture of the gender situation within the festivals.

Chapter 2 introduced the Yama Hoko Yatai festivals more thoroughly and painted a background of the festivals. The origin of the festivals – stemming from the *goryō-e* (service to appease restless spirits) events held in Kyōto – as well as the basics of the festivals – the procession of large floats – and their various roles are outlined. Part 2 of Chapter 2 examined related research on gender within Japanese festivals. Especially noteworthy is Wakita's (2016) research indicating that women were probably participating in the Kyōto Gion festival – and riding on top of the floats – in the early days, and Brumann's (2012) study on Kyōto containing an interesting description of the discussions surrounding the participation of female musicians. Part 2 also examined studies relating to the social significance of festival participation and touched upon the topic of *nyonin kinsei* (customary female exclusion).

Chapter 3 outlined the wider scholarly debate on gender within the field of ICH. A particular focus was placed on the handling of and the discussions concerning gender within the framework of the 2003 convention. Part 2 of Chapter 3 outlined the gender equality legislation in Japan and touched upon the policy changes in the 1990s. Part 2 also touched upon international reports addressing the current situation concerning gender equality in Japan.

Chapter 4 presented an analysis of the festivals' official description in the context of the national ICH safeguarding system, i.e. the national heritage legislation. The author examined whether and how gender was addressed in the official descriptions of the festivals. The results of the analysis showed that gender roles were generally not a clearly described aspect. Roughly half of the descriptions contained no mentions of gender. In approximately one third of the descriptions, gender was indicated by the choice of words. In around one fourth of the descriptions, gender was clearly mentioned. Two of these

descriptions (both designated in 1997) mentioned gender restrictions – both of them mentioning that women had earlier been prohibited from participating, but that women are now participating in large numbers.

Chapter 5 examined the festivals' official description in the context of the international ICH safeguarding system, i.e. the 2003 convention. In this context, there are three relevant inscriptions – the two formerly individually inscribed elements 'Yamahoko, the Float Ceremony of the Kyoto Gion Festival' and 'Hitachi Fuyumono', as well as the currently inscribed group element 'Yama Hoko Yatai, float festivals in Japan', in which the two former are now included. The analysis found a difference in approach towards the topic of gender among these three cases. Also, in order to offer context to the inscription of the float festivals, Chapter 5 also presented an analysis of all elements inscribed by Japan on the RL. The results of this analysis showed a noticeable difference in visibility between women and men among the inscribed elements.

Chapter 6 presented a survey conducted by the author among the preservation associations connected to the 36 festivals. The survey was conducted during autumn-winter 2018 and the response rate was 64%. The results of the survey revealed gender structures existing in the festivals, and some common pattern could be identified (see 8.1 below). The results also showed that changes in the gender roles and gender restrictions have occurred in around half of the festivals (from where a reply was received), and that the most-cited trigger of change was a shortage of available participants (see 8.2 below). Gender awareness in some form was also mentioned as a contributing reason in three cases (it may also be noted all three festivals underwent the changes in gender restrictions around the same time). While there are significant differences between the different festivals in gender structure and approach, the overall results show that the festivals are mainly male arenas, and that women's participation is generally conditioned and auxiliary.

Chapter 7 presented the results of interviews the author conducted with representatives of 7 different festivals following the survey. The selection of festivals was based on the results of the survey, and only preservation associations that had reported a change in the gender roles or restrictions were considered for selection. The interviews provided in-depth information about the 'gender situation' among the preservation associations and their festivals – about existing gender roles and restrictions, the rationale behind the restrictions, the changes that had occurred, why and how they had occurred,

attitudes towards female participation in the festival communities, whether the restrictions were being challenged, whether the inscription on UNESCO's Representative List had affected the practice, predictions about changes that might occur in the future, and more. See findings in the individual case studies. Through the interviews, it was possible to get a good picture of the gender conditions of the examined festivals. As such, the interviews also served to deepen the understanding of the survey results. Aside from providing information concerning the pre-determined research questions, the interviews also offered additional information, and it was possible to identify some interesting and recurring themes (see 7.3).

Chapter 8 – this chapter – summarizes the results obtained through the various investigations presented in the previous chapters and discusses conclusions drawn from the overarching results. The chapter is divided into different sections. The first sections address the main themes of the study – the gender roles and restrictions of the festivals, the changes that have occurred in these, and the handling and description of gender within the two safeguarding systems. As outlined in the Introduction, the goals of the study are to map the current gender roles and changes that have occurred in them, identify factors/triggers of change, identify the direction of change, examine whether the occurred changes have been naturalized, and examine whether the occurred changes have affected the sense of value and/or meaning of the festival.

Based on the results of the study, the latter sections discuss some overarching questions concerning the underlying mechanisms of the changes and of the gender roles being upheld. In the festivals where the gender roles/restrictions have changed – is there a pattern to how they have changed? What do gender roles mean for the continuation of the practice? Why have some festivals changed and not others?

8.1. Gender roles and gender restrictions

Through the results of the survey, the gender roles and gender restrictions present in the respective festivals could be mapped, albeit while in some cases lacking in detail. While the gender structures among the festivals varied, a clear pattern could be identified concerning what roles were allowed for women participants. There were mainly three (front stage) roles available to women: *hikite* (the role of pulling the ropes of the float),

hayashi (musician), and dancer. In terms of gender-neutral roles, it seems that *hikite* and *hayashi* are the roles most likely to be performed by both women and men. Other roles, including festival officer and ‘person in charge’, seemed to be male domains. At the same time, the gender rules between the different festivals differed, and by comparing the gender structures of the various festivals, some common patterns could be distinguished.

- One pattern was characterized by both men and women participating in front stage roles while some of these front stage roles being gender separated. An example of this is Kakunodate, where women do the dancing while men shoulder the role of festival officer, and both men and women participate in pulling the floats.
- A common pattern was festivals where women are being allowed to participate to a certain extent, in a limited set of roles. The roles most commonly available to women were *hikite* and/or *hayashi*. This pattern was found in many of the examined festival.
- Another version of this pattern was festivals where women are being allowed to participate in some roles *in some neighbourhoods*, but not in others. This was the case in for example Nanao Seihaku and Karatsu.
- Lastly, another pattern was festivals where all (front stage) roles are performed by only men. This was the case in for example Kamezaki, Jōhana and Hita Gion.

Concerning the reason for prohibiting women/girls from participation, several factors could be identified. One factor was religion. The significance of the festival as a religious ritual was brought up in both the survey and the interviews. The sacredness of the *yama* seemed to be a reason for not allowing women to ride on (or touch) the floats. Comparisons to the sumo sport were made in the interviews in both Ōtsu and Karatsu.

Another reason for not allowing women in certain roles was because the role required a certain physical strength. This was the case in for example Inuyama. Other reasons for not allowing women in certain roles were because the roles were reportedly difficult or carried a significant amount of responsibility. This was the case in for example Kakunodate. Another reason for not allowing women was out of concern of problems that could occur, or had occurred, when mixing male and female participants.

Moreover, the results of the survey hinted at regional tendencies in the gender rules of the different festivals. The festivals of the Tōhoku region showed a comparatively high frequency of role divisions affecting both women and men, such as for example women dancing and men managing the operation of the floats. Also, none of the survey replies from the Tōhoku region reported all-male festivals. In comparison, the replies from Kyūshū reported the festivals being largely male events. The survey replies from the Chūbu region showed a variation in gender rules in the festivals. However, more data from a greater sample size is needed to test the validity of these indications.

Participants and non-participants

Who (what roles) counts as participants? As mentioned in the introduction, while the question of who should count as participants remains an open question, the focus in this study is placed on participation according to the preservation associations. The results of the survey and the interviews indicate the preservation associations' views on who are seen as participants.

On a formal level, participation could be seen as membership in the preservation associations. The survey shows that almost all of the preservation associations are male dominated (the Takaoka festival being the only exception, arguably together with the Shinjō festival). More than half of the organizations have only male members. It is interesting to notice that in the case of the Sunari festival, a women's division within the *hozonkai* organization is mentioned. The survey reply reported that the Sunari *hozonkai* is composed of the Sunari ward assembly, Sunari reverence assembly, and drum and flute assembly, and that there are 11 people registered in the women's division in the Sunari reverence assembly (who are “dealing mainly with helping people dress”) (See Table 5 in Chapter 6). However, the percentage of women in total in the preservation association is reportedly zero. This might indicate that the aforementioned women's division is not included formally in the membership tally.

On an informal level, participation can be seen as a matter of recognition. A number of the survey replies mentioned behind-the-scenes types of roles and tasks performed by women. In the interviews, the hectic schedule adult women had in preparing food and lodging for guests visiting during the festival was especially highlighted in Karatsu and Furukawa.

While the *urakata* roles were mentioned in some of the survey replies and emphasized by some of the informants in the interviews, and thereby recognized informally, it seemed clear that the *urakata* were in general not counted as part of the ‘main crew’ of the festival. One of my informants jokingly called women’s work preparing food a “second festival” (Interview 2019-02-26). One exception might be the Takaoka festival, where the membership tally of the preservation association shows an equal gender ratio while the front stage roles are restricted to men. This could indicate that back stage actors are acknowledged as part of the festival organization in a formal way.

8.2. Changes in gender roles and gender restrictions

In the results of the survey conducted among the festival preservation associations, approximately half of the received replies reported that changes had occurred in the gender roles or gender restrictions. Concerning what triggered the change to allow female participation, a shortage of people stands out as the most frequently cited reason in both the survey as well as the interviews. A shortage of people to participate was a common factor for nearly all the examined cases, and in some cases in combination with other factors. A commonly mentioned cause of the shortage of people was *shōshikōreika*, a term referring to declining birth-rates combined with an ageing population.

However, another trigger of change seems to have been a consciousness about gender equality. In the survey, the replies from three of the festivals mentioned a change in attitude/awareness regarding female participation as part of the reason for the change. In all three, this was mentioned in combination with a shortage of people. Interesting to note is that all three festivals underwent the changes in gender restrictions around the same time. The changes in the Inuyama festival took place around 1997, the changes in Hitachi Furyūmono around 1998, and the changes in Seihakusai around 1999 and 2001.

As written in Chapter 7, the gender equality movement after the war was brought up during the interviews in both Karatsu and Ōtsu. In the interviews, gender equality considerations were not brought up as an immediate reason for why the changes in gender restrictions had occurred. However, the influence on people’s attitudes of the gender equality movement after the war was brought up later in the conversations. Also, in

Karatsu, it seems that the reason for allowing girls to start participating as *hikiko* (in some neighbourhoods) was because children had expressed a wish to participate to their parents.

As mentioned in Chapter 7, the author found that the gender equality aspect was most pronounced in Inuyama. Based on the interview, it seems that gender equality considerations were an important factor for the change in gender restrictions. According to my informant, while *shōshikōreika* also played a part, the main reason was a will to include women and get rid of the restrictions that just existed out of tradition and which did not make sense anymore. As such, it was seen as the right thing to do.

Concerning the direction of change, according to the results of the survey among the preservation associations, the most common direction of change was towards increased inclusion, i.e. allowing women and girls to participate more. There were exceptions, although rare. For example, a temporary change in the gender restrictions occurred in Karatsu during the time of the second world war, with women helping in pulling the floats since many of the male residents of the city were off serving in the military. After the war, this role became an all-male domain again until the 1960's when girls were allowed to participate in pulling the floats in some of the neighbourhoods. When asked about what changes might occur in the future, all informants who mentioned a possible future change in the gender restrictions predicted changes in the direction of increased inclusion.

In the festivals where changes in gender roles and restrictions have happened, have the changes now been accepted by the stakeholders and are they now seen as natural? This is what is meant by the term *naturalization* in this study. According to the results of the interviews, naturalization has happened in more than half of the examined festivals. In some festivals the change happened naturally and without controversy. In some festivals there were discussions and opposition at the time, but people got used to it after a few years. In other festivals, discussions about female participation are still ongoing. Concerning the speed of the naturalization, according to the informants interviewed, naturalization seems to have happened rather quickly in some festivals, while it took a few years in others (and still has not happened in some).

One of the questions asked in the interviews was whether the change in gender restrictions had affected the perceived value or meaning of the festivals, such as for example the religious meaning weakening, or the sense of community strengthening.

From what could be gathered from the interviews, there were no accounts of that by allowing female participation, the value of the festivals had lessened. In one of the preservation associations however, my informant mentioned that some people were discontented about the number of female flute players, albeit not because they disliked girls participating, but because there was no longer any room available to allow young children to ride on the floats. Contrarily, positive effects were mentioned in several interviews. There were for example accounts of that by allowing female participation, the festivals had become more fun. This would suggest that male-exclusive participation was not a crucial feature of these particular festivals (See discussion in 8.5).

8.3. Gender approach within the safeguarding systems

Concerning the gender approach within the national context of the designation information, in general, gender roles are not described as part of the cultural property, at least not clearly. Roughly half on the descriptions contained no mentions of gender. It should also be pointed out that in the case of the Kyōto Gion festival, the non-mentioning of gender in the designation documents seem to have played a part in the discussions and decision whether to allow female musicians to participate (see Chapter 2.2). A number of festivals were described using gender-coded words, while approximately one fourth of the descriptions contained clear mentions of gender. A ban on female participation was only mentioned in the descriptions of two of the festivals, in both cases when said ban on female participation had been lifted. It may also be noted that these two were designated the same year.

In the handling of the festivals within the context of the 2003 convention, a variety of gender approaches can be discerned. Within the context of the RL, there are three relevant elements – the currently inscribed group element ‘Yama Hoko Yatai, float festivals in Japan’ and the two formerly individually inscribed elements ‘Yamahoko, the Float Ceremony of the Kyoto Gion Festival’ and ‘Hitachi Fuyumono’ which are now included in the group element.

The description of the group element ‘Yama Hoko Yatai, float festivals in Japan’ in the nomination file contains only general mentions of gender. There are no mentions of gender restrictions. Overall, the description conveys an inclusive image, where the

whole of the concerned community participates (Nomination file for ‘Yama, Hoko, Yatai, float festivals in Japan’ 2016). Given the different stances towards female participation displayed by the various festivals, this description does not convey the complexity of the situation. As such, the description of gender in the group nomination file for the RL conveys a picture that seems to have been adjusted to fit the values of the 2003 convention. Gender is only mentioned in general descriptions, and there are no detailed mentions of gender restrictions or any discussions about gender. Furthermore, the festivals are described in a way that indicates that the whole communities are involved in the festivals. The official descriptions in the UNESCO documents of the two individually inscribed festivals – Kyōto Gion and Hitachi Furyūmono – reflected different approaches in the handling of gender.

The description of Kyōto Gion in the periodic reports from 2010 and 2016, as inscribed on the RL in 2009, does not mention gender, and neither does the designation description of the Kyōto Gion festival in the *Gekkan bunkazai* journal from 1979. Regarding the actual situation, this study has no first-hand accounts since the survey was not answered (and the selection for interviews was based primarily on the survey results). At the same time, the gender restrictions of the Kyōto Gion festival have been famously debated and challenged by women wanting to participate.

The descriptions of Hitachi Furyūmono in the periodic reports from 2010 and 2016, as inscribed on the RL in 2009, contained mentions of both gender restrictions and of the gender distribution among the association members. The designation information from 1977 however contained no mentions of gender. Regarding the survey conducted by the author, the reply from Hitachi contained descriptions of current gender restrictions as well as changes that occurred around 20 years ago (towards increased inclusion).

Concerning the context of the festivals’ inscription on the RL, an analysis was also conducted of all the 21 elements inscribed by Japan of the RL (up until 2017). The results of the analysis showed a noticeable difference in visibility between women and men among Japan’s inscribed elements, with a male dominance in participation, access and representation. The results of the analysis of the Japanese elements inscribed on the RL indicated that gender has not been a factor given priority in the Japanese implementation of the 2003 convention. Specifically, it seems that gender equal

representation was not a factor given priority in the selection of practices to nominate for inscription.

8.4. Other observations

Gender inclusive changes and gender awareness coinciding in time with policy changes

By combining the results from the different chapters, it is possible to discern that several instances of gender awareness coincide in time. The only two festivals (Tsuchizaki and Uozu) where gender prohibitions are mentioned in their official descriptions (in *Gekkan bunkazai*) were both designated in 1997. In both cases it was described that said prohibitions had been lifted, and that nowadays women are participating in large numbers. Furthermore, according to the reply to the survey, the changes in gender roles in Uozu took place around 20 years ago, i.e. around the time of the designation decision (no survey reply was received from Tsuchizaki). The timing coincides with a period of advances in gender equality in Japanese society (the Basic Act for a Gender Equal Society was introduced in 1999).

According to the results of the survey, the timing also coincides with accounts of gender awareness from the preservation associations. In the cases of the three festivals where a change in consciousness towards female participation was mentioned as a reason for changes to open up for increased female participation, all three festivals eased the restrictions around the same time. The Inuyama festival reportedly changed around 1997, Hitachi Furyūmono around 1998, and Seihakusai around 1999 and 2001. According to my informant from Inuyama, they were early to change the gender rules and several other festivals followed after them and opened up roles to women. This seems to have been a time of accentuated gender awareness in Japan, with gender equality discussions taking place and with changes in policy and legislation aimed to increase gender equality.

8.5. Discussion and conclusions

Against the background of the acquired results, it is time to revisit the overarching questions posed in the introduction of this study. In the festivals where the gender roles/restrictions have changed – is there a pattern to how they have changed? What do

gender roles mean for the continuation of the practice? Why have some festivals changed and not others?

Why have some festivals changed and not others?

Addressing one plausible factor as to why some festivals have changed and others have not, one hypothesis is that the float festivals in larger cities and urban areas are less prone to changes in gender roles than the festivals in smaller towns in rural areas. Declining birth-rates is a nation-wide problem. However, the effects facing the festival communities are probably less severe in the larger cities. One solution for how to handle a shortage of participants is to allow people from outside of the traditional float neighbourhoods to participate (including people living nearby but in new buildings). Another solution, for example in the case of children, is to expand the age limits set for a certain role. These solutions should arguably be more effective in a big city, seeing that the number of people living nearby and who becomes eligible by such solutions is larger. Many rural towns are also facing depopulation caused by young people moving to larger cities for studies or work. In other words, it is probably easier to remedy a shortage of participants in a large city than in a small town in a rural area.

In this scenario, there is an implied order of priority to different types of changes. In this scenario, allowing men and boys from ‘outside’ to participate is implicitly more easily acceptable than allowing local women and girls to participate.

What do gender roles mean for the continuation of the practice?

As mentioned in 8.2 above, in the interviews with the preservation associations, there were no accounts of that by allowing female participation, the value of the festivals had lessened. There were mentions however of positive effects in several interviews. This would suggest that male-exclusive participation was not a crucial feature of these particular festivals.

In terms of which roles have been opened to allow for female participation, the results suggest that the changes have so far been limited to two roles – the role of musician and the role of pulling the floats. Seeing how the festivals continue to be transmitted, it would seem that the gender restrictions in these roles were not essential features. This

raises the question whether the gender restrictions in the other roles as well are equally non-essential.

Based on the information gathered in the interviews, it would seem that there are some common factors for restricting women from participating in certain roles. One such factor was religion. The *yama* is traditionally considered sacred, and women are traditionally banned from certain religious rituals. Some of my informants made comparisons to sumo. However, seeing how women and girls are allowed to ride the floats in some festivals while not in others, the unequivocal necessity of prohibiting women may be questioned. Moreover, the *kegare* belief, and rules derived from this belief, should arguably be hard to justify in today's society. Seeing also how the profession of *kannushi* ('Shinto priest') in nowadays being conducted by women as well as men, it might be increasingly difficult to refer to religious rules as a reason for excluding women.

Another factor for restricting women from participating in certain roles was because the role in question was physically demanding. However, some of my informants acknowledged that there might be women who are physically able to perform the role in question. Another mentioned reason for restricting women from participating in certain top positions was the burden of responsibility included in these roles. It was perceived to be difficult for a woman to carry out these roles (see example Kakunodate). This suggests that attitudes and social structures existing in Japanese society at large can be seen reflected in the festival organizations.

In this sense, the festivals can be seen as 'miniature societies', where attitudes, social structures and movements within the Japanese society in large can be seen reflected. In some cases, it seems that the festivals are pockets of 'the old world' – or images thereof – in a changing society. In Karatsu, the rules of the festival society seem to differ from 'everyday society'. My informants told me about how the climate in the schools had changed – that parents nowadays were complaining to the schools and that the schools operated on a basic ideology of equality. The float society on the other hand is strictly hierarchical. The people in the top positions decide the rules and the rules are reportedly strictly followed. According to my informants, there are no complaints and also no point in complaining. If you do not follow the rules you are not allowed to participate. The hierarchical structure of the festival society therefore offered the children a kind of

education in societal studies that they do not receive in school, according to my informants.

In Karatsu, it seems there is an active effort to resist change. My informants told me that it was their responsibility to not only keep the festival alive for future generations, but also to keep it unchanged. Especially telling was how one of my informants told me that he did not mind having women in top political positions, for example as prime minister, but the *yama* were off limits (Interview 2019-02-26).

On the other hand, other festival societies seemed positive to change and even eager to adapt to ‘the new world’. My informant in Inuyama told me how the decision to start allowing both girls and boys to perform as *hayashi* was a decision based on a will to strive for more gender equality. They reportedly chose to cease the old custom of *nyonin kinsei* because it could not be justified in today’s society. My informant also emphasized how he thought it did not make any sense to prohibit women from a religious viewpoint, emphasizing that there were no grounds for ostracizing women within Shintoism, having consulted with a scholar on the subject (Interview 2018-11-02).

One aspect behind the scarcity of women participants perhaps lies in the division of household chores and responsibilities. Several of the informants brought up the busy schedule of adult (married) women during the festival. One of my informants told me how women were too busy with preparing food to have time for the festivals, exemplifying this by saying that his wife, despite them being married for many years, had barely seen the float procession (Interview 2019-02-26). As such, the festivals are both affected by – and reproduces – gender roles in the wider Japanese society.

The gender restrictions in the festivals can be viewed from different perspectives. It could be seen as a matter of individual rights contra community or collective rights. There are moral aspects, ethical aspects, historical aspects, legal aspects in terms of what constitutes as discrimination – putting focus on the topics of legislative protection, support from municipal, prefectural and national government, and the legal status of the preservation associations, etc. However, putting aside all of the above – is there basis for defending and maintaining a system of gender-based restrictions for participation from a *safeguarding perspective*, or more specifically a *transmission perspective*? Are the gender restrictions relevant for the continuation of the festivals? The results of this study suggest that they are not. According to the results of this study, in the festivals where the

gender restrictions have been relaxed, these changes did not seem to have negatively affected the festivals. On the contrary, several of the interviewees gave witness to positive effects. This is apart from the aspect that female participation has aided the continuation of the festivals in places struggling with shortages of participants. In conclusion, based on the results of this study, the gender restrictions present in the Yama Hoko Yatai festivals are not deemed to be crucial features for the continuation of the practice.

In the festivals where the gender roles/restrictions have changed – is there a pattern to how they have changed?

The results of this study show that there is a pattern to which roles are opened up to women and which roles are not. In the festivals where female participation has been allowed, the specific roles that have become available to women are generally *hayashi* (musician) and *hikite* (person pulling the float). It should also be mentioned that in the examined festivals where the role of dancer was mentioned, this was usually a female role. In contrast to the *hayashi* and *hikite* roles, it seems the roles of *sekininsha* and festival officer and other top positions are generally not opened up for female participation. In other words, there appears to be a limit to the roles that are made available to women.

In some festivals, the limits seem to be related to the proximity to the floats. Specifically, it is a matter of whether women are allowed to ride on top of – or touch – the floats or not. This is the case in for example Karatsu and Ōtsu. My informants explained these restrictions by reference to religion and drew parallels to sumo. The underlying reasoning arguably pertains to the idea of the impurity of women, stemming from the *kegare* belief. It is also interesting to note how religious belief is interpreted in fundamentally different ways between different preservation associations in terms of gender. While my informant in Inuyama told me how Shintoism did not contain any grounds for excluding women, other informants explained to me how the religious component of the festivals was a reason for prohibiting women.

In some festivals, the limits seem to be related to physical abilities. Examples of this can be seen in Uozu and Inuyama, where certain roles require considerable physical strength. For this reason, they are performed by only men.

In other festivals, the limits seem to be related to the social status and social standing of women in Japanese society at large. This was the case in for example

Kakunodate. Roles involving large responsibility were not entrusted to women, since it was deemed that the burden of responsibility would be hard for a woman to carry, especially in case there was an accident or similar. It might be argued that this way of reasoning reflects certain gender stereotypes and gendered expectations prevalent in society at large.

Based on these results, it may be argued that while the changes are happening in the direction of increased inclusion, the underlying paternalistic and patriarchal structure is still intact. Women are being allowed to participate to some extent, but not (yet) in ways that threaten the positions of power currently held by men. It may be argued that women's participation is being allowed by men. Even in the most gender inclusive festivals, such as Inuyama, Uozu and Kakunodate, around 90 – 97% of the members in the preservation associations are men. In connection to this, it is possible to draw parallels to Traphagan's (2000) study, concluding that the festival rituals function to reproduce elder male power.

How to address gender within the safeguarding systems?

Within the 2003 convention, there is an emphasis on the central role of the communities in the implementation process. A central notion is that it is up to the communities to define, and in effect decide the rules regarding, the traditional practice in question. At the same time, it is evident that 'the communities' are not homogenous in terms of opinion. There are discussions and opposing opinions within the festival communities. From the interviews, it is clear that there are and have been women and girls wanting to participate in certain roles but being prohibited from doing so. It is also clear that it is not uncommon in festivals that women participate 'in secret', or unofficially. As such, it is clear that all community members are not content with the status quo in regard to the existing gender restrictions.¹⁶ A point in question is whether all voices are being heard.

Seeing that the gender restrictions of the Kyōto Gion festival have been openly debated and challenged, one point in question is whether the Kyōto Gion festival would have been inscribed if the controversies regarding the gender restrictions had been

¹⁶ Whether there are men who are similarly struggling to be entrusted with roles commonly performed by women was not mentioned by my informants (neither did the author ask them about this).

mentioned in the nomination file. In connection to this, it should be mentioned that the decision to inscribe or not is based on the nomination dossier – in other words, there are no on-site observations.¹⁷

A defining feature of the 2003 convention is the ‘goodness criteria’ included in the definition of ICH (see Chapter 3). As mentioned in Chapter 3, gender is and have been a sensitive issue to approach within the context of 2003 convention. As Blake argues, there is a nervousness among state parties about what would happen if the rules were applied too strictly, especially seeing that many already inscribed elements might be cast into doubt (2015, p. 182f). If gender equality were indeed an important factor – that might mean that a large range of traditional practices might not qualify for consideration.

In such a scenario, we can assume that there are various strategies the affected state parties can use. One strategy could be to select only ‘safe’ elements for nomination. Another strategy could be to adjust the description of the element to fit with UNESCO’s values. Yet another strategy (or another version of the previous strategy) could be to omit sensitive topics in the description. In addition, yet another strategy could be to mention also potentially sensitive topics in the description in the nomination file, and let the committee decide whether it is acceptable or not. In terms of the Representative List, it is pertinent to keep in mind that the matter at hand is whether certain elements are inscribed on a list or not. The actual consequences for the people concerned is a matter in need of more research.

It is interesting to note that Japan's nomination file for Yama Hoko Yatai for the RL is void of mentions of gender restrictions for women and on the contrary presents an inclusive image. It might be argued that the description of the group element conveys a ‘sanitized’ image of the festivals, presumably in order to align with UNESCO's and the convention's standards and values. According to my informant in Inuyama, the *nyonin kinsei* customs still present in a number of the festivals was the cause for worry internally at the Agency for Cultural Affairs at the time of the preparations for the UNESCO nomination and there were reportedly some concerns about how to describe the festivals (Interview 2018-11-02).

¹⁷ It might be interesting to note that in 2014, the Consultative Body responsible for evaluating, inter alia, nominations for the Urgent Safeguarding List expressed a degree of frustration that its evaluations must be entirely based on the dossier, i.e. without on-site observations (UNESCO 2014, paragraph 36).

As mentioned above, Blake has detected a nervousness among state parties as well as other stakeholders of the 2003 convention regarding addressing the problematic areas pertaining to gender within intangible heritage (Blake 2015, p. 182f). However, gender has received increased attention within the framework of the convention in recent years (see chapter 3). Some of the revisions of the documents and other tools of the convention will make it difficult for state parties to neglect addressing gender (in nominations and in the periodic reporting). What effect will that have on the heritage safeguarding systems in the respective countries?

Will it facilitate discussions reflecting over gender roles, stereotypes and exceptions that might lead to increased gender equality? Will it prompt a practice of ‘sanitizing’ the descriptions in new nominations? Will it promote a practice of describing new elements in terms of gender, contrarily leading to a cementation of gender roles, which might at some point be used as an argument for not allowing inclusive participation? In connection to this, it is relevant to point out that the non-mentioning of gender played a part in the discussions in Kyōto (see Chapter 2). At the same time, the availability of gender data enables the detection of gender structures. The risks and benefits of collecting gender data should be considered in order to develop a suitable methodology to ensure the intended effect.

8.6. Final notes

By using a multi-step methodology to approach the festivals both in-depth as well as on a collective level, this study has been able to produce new and important knowledge about the dynamics of gender within traditional practices. Through its collection of primary data, the study has also provided valuable information concerning the gender structures within the examined festivals, thus contributing to an under-researched field. The study provides new knowledge about how changes in the gender roles and gender restrictions of these festivals occur, which is of interest also in a wider research context. As such, the results of this study offer insights into the role of gender in the practice of intangible cultural heritage.

The study has shown that a shortage of people to participate can act as a trigger to lift gender restrictions. Furthermore, gender (equality) awareness is another factor that

can influence gender inclusive change. The study has also shown that changes can occur in the face of opposition, i.e. in some festivals, the gender restrictions were lifted/eased despite there being an opposition against it. In other words, consensus was not a prerequisite for change. It is also noted that in some of the festivals, the different float neighbourhoods employ different rules. Based on the results of the study, and from the perspective of the continuation of the practice, the author has argued that the gender restrictions were and are not crucial features of the festivals.

While change towards greater gender inclusion has happened in some festivals, the festivals continue to be largely male arenas. Also in the more gender-inclusive festivals, the ‘main’ participants are men. From the interviews it became clear that there were different expectations on women and men. One recurring sentiment was that women were too busy with chores in the household to have time to participate in the procession. Another idea given voice was that women were not suitable for certain positions within the festivals organization because the positions came with great responsibility. In this sense, there seems to be a distinction between the domestic and the public sphere. From the interviews, it became clear that women were in charge of the domestic sphere, and there was no hesitation in entrusting that responsibility to women. In that sense, the gender structures within the festivals can be argued to be symptomatic of the status and ‘place’ of women and men in Japanese society at large.

Women and men seem to be expected to live in separate worlds. Men are able to enter into the festival community when they are children and move around to different positions as they grow older and advance within the organization. Women are allowed to participate when they are young, in some festivals, and generally when there are not enough men/boys to fill the available roles, and as they become adult, they are expected to focus on household matters and service tasks.

More research is needed on how the gender roles and gender restrictions are affecting the lives of those denied participation. As Shaheed has pointed out, on the topic of heritage sites with gender-restrictive access, the structures do not stop at the heritage sites (Shaheed 2016). It is reasonable to suspect that discriminatory heritage practices uphold and validate discriminatory social structures, affecting various aspects of people’s lives and opportunities. A point in question is what effects the gender roles and gender restrictions of the festivals have in the lives of the people living in the area. Both Roemer’s

(2007) and Traphagan's (2000) studies suggest that festival participation can be linked to several positive effects for the participants. If participation in a festival is linked to social network membership, how does the gender restrictions affect the life choices and opportunities for the women and men in the community? Does exclusion/inclusion from participation affect other aspects of a person's life, beyond the festival, such as for example career opportunities? Are there similar social networks among the *urakata*, and what effects do they have?

Research is also needed on the attitudes towards gender restrictions among the people directly affected by the restrictions. The interviews, as well as previous research, suggest that it is not uncommon that some women participate despite existing restrictions, in secret. The interviews indicated that attitudes might be stricter among older generations than their younger counterparts.

The float festivals are traditionally considered to be male arenas and it is perhaps not surprising to find lingering social structures of male dominance within these festivals. However, a point of question is whether the male dominance is present in the Japanese ICH arena at large. The analysis of Japan's inscribed elements on the RL found that the selection of elements for inscription carried an imbalance in gender representation, where men are more visible than women. This poses the question whether the national registry – or in other words the system of officially recognized and designated ICH in Japan – is also male dominated. More research on this is needed.

Closing remarks

Heritage is not just about the past. Heritage is created in, and in that sense takes place in, the present. As Lowenthal (1998) has pointed out, there is an important difference between history and heritage. While history concerns the pursuit to uncover the past, heritage concerns what image to project of the past (ibid).

Traditions are bound to change. Indeed, it can be argued that traditions are kept relevant, and therefore alive, by change. Regarding the dynamic nature of traditions, my informant in Inuyama offered some interesting insights into one way to approach change. Pointing out that change is necessary for the festivals to live on, my informant said that the preservation associations should discuss and sort out which features of the festivals must remain unchanged and which should be changed, and then go ahead with those

changes, adding that “[t]hings that should be changed, should be changed” (Interview 2018-11-02). In other words, in this sense, one part of assuring the continuation of the practice concerns distinguishing the relevant features of a tradition and knowing what features to let go.

The festivals and their communities can be seen as miniature societies within the larger Japanese society, where societal norms, values and structures are reflected, reacted to, reshaped and reiterated. Societal changes have an impact on the festivals. Traditional practices can change to allow for more inclusive participation under circumstances of accentuated gender awareness. It is noted that several of the accounts of accentuated gender awareness as well as actual changes in gender restrictions coincide with a period of advances in gender equality in Japanese society.

At the same time, practical circumstances – in the case of the float festivals, a shortage of participants due to declining birth-rates – seem to have been an even more influential factor in triggering changes to allow for female participation. The results of this research show that a shortage of participants was the most frequently mentioned reason for relaxing the gender restrictions. Seeing the advance of declining birth-rates in Japan, it may be assumed that more festivals might change to allow for greater participation of women in the coming years. At the same time, it may also be assumed that the extent of roles made available to women contra those available to men will continue to reflect the social hierarchies of the present.

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Interviews

Table 8. Information concerning interviews conducted with representatives of festival hozonkai (preservation associations). Interview date, festival affiliation, location and number of informants.

Interview date	Festival affiliation of the hozonkai	City	Prefecture	Number of informants
2018-11-02	Inuyama Matsuri no Yama Gyōji	Inuyama	Aichi	1
2019-01-29	Kakunodate Matsuri no Yama Gyōji	Senboku	Akita	1
2019-02-22	Ōtsu Matsuri	Ōtsu	Shiga	1
2019-02-26	Karatsu Kunchi no Hikiyama Gyōji	Karatsu	Saga	3
2019-03-18	Uozu no Tatemon Gyōji	Uozu	Toyama	2
2019-03-19	Seihakusai no Hikiyama Gyōji	Nanao	Ishikawa	4
2019-03-20	Furukawa Matsuri no Okoshidaiko Yatai Gyōji	Hida	Gifu	1

Materials

Appendix I. Questionnaire (original version in Japanese)

Appendix II. Results of questionnaire: replies in Japanese

Appendix III. Population data for 2019

山・鉾・屋台行事に関するアンケート

保存会名・保護団体名

人数

保存会のメンバーは大体何人ですか？ 人

年齢

保存会のメンバーにおいて、年齢の割合は大体どのぐらいですか？

- 29歳以下 %
 - 30歳—64歳 %
 - 65歳以上 %
- = 100%

男女比

保存会のメンバーにおいて、男女比は大体どのぐらいですか？

男性 % + 女性 % = 100%

町内会の数

参加する町内会はいくつですか？ 町内

男女の役割について

祭事の参加者の様々な役割において、伝統により、男女が役割分担されているところ
はありますか？もし伝統により男女での役割分担がある場合は、

→ どのような分担がありますか？（例えば、拍子木は男性が多い、など）

→ 男性に、もしくは女性に限られているところありますか？
（例えば、綱引きは男性に限られている、など）

男女の役割分担の変化について

男女の役割分担に対し、最近もしくは過去に、何らかの変化や変更はありましたか？（例えば、かつては女性の離職は不可能だったが、今は女性の参加も可能になった、など。）もし変化や変更があった場合は、

→ それはどのような変化／変更ですか？

→ いつごろのことですか？

→ 変化／変更された理由は何ですか？

（例えば、過疎や高齢化のための人手不足、など）

アンケートはこれで終了です。ご協力頂き誠にありがとうございました。

Appendix II

Results of questionnaire: replies in Japanese

Table 9. Results of the survey: replies in Japanese. Concerning gender roles and changes in gender roles. (Festivals from where no reply was received have been omitted.)

Name	Gender tendencies	Gender restrictions	What change?	When?	Why?
八戸三社大祭の山車行事	八戸三社大祭は、山車組以外に、民俗芸能や多様な行列が加わるうえに、当日のみの参加者が多いこともあり、人数や年齢構成などが把握しづらい祭礼行事です。また男女による役割分担は各団体によって対応が異なります。大変申し訳ございませんが、参考資料を同封させて頂くに留めさせていただきます。				
角館祭りのやま行事	曳山には男女とも参加できるが、役員（責任者、副責任者、若者頭、交渉員など）は男性しかやられない	役員→男性だけに限られる 手踊り→女性が担う（特に30代以下の若い女性）（下は3才頃～習い始める） 曳山には男女関係なく参加できる。	囃子方は昔は男性だけだった 女性は手踊り 今は手踊りと囃子の両方をやれる女性も増えた 囃子と手踊りは、それぞれ「組」があり指導者がいて習っているが、囃子方と手踊り同じ「組」の指導者の場合と別々の場合がある	ここ数年・5年～10年位の内	地元の子供達が囃子と手踊りを習っているが祭りの開催日が9月7日～9日に決まっいて休みでない場合もあり、人手不足な事から。
花輪祭の屋台行事	特になし	条文化されている訳ないが、 ・運行（指揮・指示）→男性 ・踊り→女性	なし		
新庄まつりの山車行事	・三味線は女性がほとんど ・曳き手の舵取りは男性がほとんど	なし	なし		
常陸大津の御船祭	男性のみ				
日立風流物	4支部のうち、1支部が鳴物（楽器の演奏）に限り女性の参加を認めている。	上記回答を参照。曳山（山車を綱で引いて移動させること）については、観覧に来た一般の方の参加を認めている。	以前は、4支部すべてが女性の参加を認めていなかったが、現在は1支部が参加を認めている。	約20年前	人手不足、女性の参加に対する意識の変化

Appendix II
Results of questionnaire: replies in Japanese

川越氷川祭の山車行事	川越の場合、男女の役割分担等は町ごとに事情が全く異なります。また、どの事については保存会としては把握しておりません。（以下の設問も同様です。）				
村上祭の屋台行事	/	/	女性の乗り子（おはやし） 昭和40年代から女性の乗り子（小学生）も良しとするようになる。	昭和40年代から	少子化
高岡御車山祭の御車山行事	祭礼そのものの実施、運営に至っては女性は参加していない。女性の分担は、曳山の部分の製作、高岡御車山の花傘の製作は、男女混合で行っており女性は事前の準備段階に於いてのみの参加である。	御車山の奉曳に関しては、すべて男性に限られている。約10人程の正装によるお伴は男性、また曳山上に警護として乗座する子供達も男性に限られている。	現在は男性に限られているが、将来は乗座する警護児童も女性が認められる可能性がある。これは最近、男児数が著しく減少しているからである。といっても、今後10年間ほどでは、変わることはない考える。	x	x
魚津のタテモン行事	伝統的には、かつては男の祭りでした。しかし、少子高齢化の進展により20年程前（はっきりしていません）から女性が笛・太鼓の奏者として参加しはじめた様に思います。男女関係なく小学生に教えだした影響もあります。	かつぎ手・安定を回すための縄の持ち手：男性 笛・太鼓：男女 綱の引き手：女性が多い（男性が上記に回り人手不足のため） お茶出しなどの裏方：女性	前ページ上段（すみません。書く所をまちがったようです。）	同上	同上
城端神明宮祭の曳山行事	男性100%。町内毎に役割を決める。	すべて男性に限られている。	x	x	x
青柏祭の曳山行事	・山車は3台あります。 ・保存会（各町に総代、副総代、会計等） ・若い衆（若い衆頭、木遣り、梃子、止梃子、綱元等）	・綱引きは男女問わず一般の方も参加出来ます ・山車の周りには男性に限られて言っても良いと思います ・3台ある中で、綱の周りには女性のグループのある	前文にありましたが3台の中で2町が女性のグループがあります	2町は平成11年頃と平成13年頃とあります	例えば、過疎や高齢化のための人手不足、などが有りますが祭りの盛りあげと、少しでも女性が祭りに参加、出来る目的です

Appendix II
Results of questionnaire: replies in Japanese

		町内が2グループ 有ります。			
古川祭の 起し太 鼓・屋台 行事	無	無	かつては女性は屋 台に近づくことも できなかった 現在は囃子に小・ 中学生の女性が 綱引きに女性も参 加している。	平成元年 頃	人手不足
大垣祭の 軸行事	全般的に男性が担 うところが多い	決まりがあるわけ ではないが、暗黙 の了解で、女性は 神事に関わってい ない。	以前は3両軸に女 性は触れてはいけ なかった。	戦後のこ ろ	不明
知立の山 車文楽と からくり	特にございませ ん	特にございませ ん (但し楫棒方は女 性は携っておりま せん)	特にございませ ん	x	x
犬山祭の 車山行事	・曳き手(犬山で は”てこ”という) は男性しか無理で す。20~25名 ・お囃子方は10 ~15名。その 内、小太鼓連は児 童で6~8名の約 半数が女の子。小 太鼓連の世話役の お母さん方が6~ 8名女性。 ・その他の諸役は 町内の男性10~ 15名。 ・からくり方は5 ~8名、全員男 性。	原則、性別の区別 はありませんが、 曳き手は相当力が 必要ですので現在 は全て男性です。	長い間、女人禁制 でしたが、保存会 として正式に解禁 しました。	1997年(平 成九年)	少子化により 小太鼓連の児 童の確保が困 難になった事 もあります が、そもそも 神事としての 祭りに女性排 斥の考えは無 い訳である し、女性を忌 み嫌う風習は 因習にすぎな いと保存会で 議論を重ねた 結果である。
亀崎潮干 祭の山車 行事	女人禁制	女人禁制	x	x	x
須成祭の 車楽船行 事と神葭 流し	・須成祭で船に乗 るのは約60名で すが、全て男性で す。 ・船中での祭囃子 は稚児6人中の4 人と笛吹3名で行 っている。稚児は3 才~小学6年まで の男子で4年~6年 の2人が大太鼓、 小太鼓、5才~7才 の2人が鼓をバチ でたたく。稚児に は4人~8人の供が つきます。	・昔からの習慣で 全て男性で行って きていた。 ・衣装を貸すよう になってきてから 着付で女性に手伝 ってもらった様にな ったが祭自体の参 加者で女性はこれ までない。(但 し、神社での巫女 及び神子太鼓は除 く)	少子化との関係 で、須成地区に稚 児該当者の男子が いない場合には女 子も認めるとい う話合いを行った経 過はあるが、小学 校区に広げること になり、女子の実 績はない。	15年位前	

Appendix II
Results of questionnaire: replies in Japanese

	・船にはその他に若衆（20才男子）が6人程、祭三役が3人と船頭4人、提灯さし等の係があります。				
大津祭	とくに男女での役割分担はない 各個人レベルでいえば衣装の着付は家族の婦人が担っている場合が多い	各山 警固・囃子方・山方は男性のみ	曳き手はかつては各町内から雇用していたが 現在はボランティアとなり 数年前から一部女性が参加するようになった。ただ、曳き手は力仕事を依頼しているので 極力女性の割合は少なくするようにしており、現在全体の一割程度である。	10数年前	ある人の熱心な要望に、当時の曳き手ボランティアの担当理事（曳山連盟）が負けて、受け入れたことから女性を断ることができなくなってしまった。
戸畑祇園 大山笠行事	基本的に、祭事には女性は参加できない。				
唐津くんちの曳山行事	女性は”0”ですので役割分担はありません。	各町で異なりますが、女性の参加は小学生までは認めている町もあります。	各町とも曳き子が多くなり成人女性が事故等に巻き込まれる前に参加禁止に。	昭和後期	各町とも曳き子が多いので逆に厳しく制限しているところではあります。
八代妙見祭の神幸行事	神幸行列には約1,700人が参加します。各出し物によって参加者の男女の比率は異なりますが、概ね男性の割合が多いです。女性は世話役や手伝い役などの呼び名で裏方として参加することが多いです。	神幸行列に40の出し物が参加しますが、その中の「奴」（やっこ）については、男性のみ参加が許されています。技術の伝承が外部にもれるのをおそれ、かつては奴を奉納する町内でも「長男」にのみ参加が許されていましたが、現在では少子化などの影響で長男だけでは伝承が難しくなったため、長男以外でも参加が許されるようになりました。	男女の役割分担の変化は特にありません。		
日田祇園の曳山行事	男性 100%	男性 100%	なし	なし	なし

Appendix III
Population data

Table 10. Population data for 2019. Data source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. (http://www.soumu.go.jp/main_sosiki/jichi_gyousei/daiyo/jinkou_jinkoudoutai-setaisuu.html) Accessed: 2019-09-30.

Prefecture	City/town	2019			
		Population			Number of households
		Men	Women	Total	
Aomori	Hachinohe	110,282	119,760	230,042	108,507
Akita	Akita city	145,977	163,677	309,654	144,427
Akita	Kazuno	14,652	16,374	31,026	13,013
Akita	Senboku	12,287	14,139	26,426	10,603
Yamagata	Shinjo	17,110	18,739	35,849	13,944
Ibaraki	Hitachi	90,650	89,654	180,304	83,244
Ibaraki	Kita-Ibaraki	21,824	21,880	43,704	19,043
Tochigi	Kanuma	48,500	49,259	97,759	39,108
Tochigi	Nasukarasuyama	13,285	13,369	26,654	10,575
Saitama	Kawagoe	176,732	176,383	353,115	158,032
Saitama	Chichibu	30,751	32,144	62,895	26,384
Chiba	Katori	38,270	38,635	76,905	31,053
Niigata	Murakami	28,907	31,432	60,339	22,853
Toyama	Takaoka	83,312	88,672	171,984	68,620
Toyama	Uozu	20,483	21,649	42,132	16,938
Toyama	Nanto	24,388	26,668	51,056	17,783
Ishikawa	Nanao	25,097	27,843	52,940	22,138
Gifu	Ōgaki	78,782	82,757	161,539	65,931
Gifu	Takaoka	42,213	46,269	88,482	35,650
Gifu	Hida	11,720	12,552	24,272	8,893
Aichi	Handa	60,558	59,339	119,897	51,228
Aichi	Tsushima	30,973	31,761	62,734	26,261
Aichi	Inuyama	36,886	37,289	74,175	31,085
Aichi	Chiryu	38,424	34,035	72,459	32,364
Aichi	Owari	40,883	42,621	83,504	35,080
Aichi	Kanie	18,712	18,988	37,700	16,486

Appendix III
Population data

Mie	Yokkaichi	156,233	155,935	312,168	138,512
Mie	Kuwana	70,384	72,073	142,457	58,936
Mie	Iga	45,217	46,980	92,197	40,397
Shiga	Ōtsu	165,671	177,279	342,950	148,091
Shiga	Nagahama	58,035	60,463	118,498	45,726
Kyōto	Kyōto	669,769	742,801	1,412,570	714,026
Fukuoka	Kita-kyushu	453,368	502,567	955,935	483,555
Fukuoka	Fukuoka city	730,867	810,056	1,540,923	789,514
Saga	Karatsu	57,667	64,861	122,528	50,646
Kumamoto	Yatsushiro	59,512	68,489	128,001	56,137
Oita	Hita	31,169	34,692	65,861	27,385
Data source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications http://www.soumu.go.jp/main_sosiki/jichi_gyousei/daityo/jinkou_jinkoudoutai-setaisuu.html Accessed: 2019-09-30					