

Small-scale Fisheries in Japan

Environmental and Socio-cultural Perspectives

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The Endurance and the Transformation of the Traditional Boats Race On the Powers of Shaping the Folk Festival

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Abstract Now Japanese fishery and fishing villages are confronted with a difficult situation, for example, the erosion of fishing population, aging and etc. For this reason, Japanese fishery and fishing villages are asked for multilateral functions rather than only fishery production to survive themselves. In these social context, how fishing villagers do practice the folk festival in Japan? Firstly this article, giving a traditional event of boat race in a fishing village in south western Japan, clarifies the endurance and the transformation of it. Secondly, considering the causes and the conditions, this research sheds light on the significance of the practices between fishermen and the public, and on the problems of the powers between the fishing village and the government. Finally, it discusses the framework of research to be able to capture contemporary Japanese small scale fishery.

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Keywords Folk event. Multilateral function. Public participation. Practice. Invisibilisation of difference. Power.

1 Introduction


1.1 Identification of the Problem and the Purpose of this Paper

In the present day, cultural resources are given importance on a world-wide scale. This trend is also unexceptional in Japan, where it has become

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closely related to the culture of the sea. For example, the importance of “the multiple functions of the fishery and the fishing community” is recognized by the *Fishery Basic Act* of 2001, which led to the promotion of related businesses by various public offices. Under these conditions, there is an increased need to present and understand the cultural activities of fishing communities. Because research on this topic from a sociocultural point of view has been insufficient, problematic understandings of fishing communities and small-scale fisheries persist.

The preservation of traditional fishing cultures preceded the emergence of current policies. Many diverse policies and business activities concerned with promoting fishing communities and tourism have been implemented recently. However, these policies are enacted independently by different levels of government – national, prefectural, and local (cities and villages) – and thus they do not necessarily interact in a structured or historically consistent way (Yasumuro 2005). For this reason, in order to understand small-scale fisheries, it is necessary to untangle the concerns of different levels of government that have developed in complicated ways.

We need to attend to the fact that the relations between governments policies and everyday life in these communities and their folk cultures are not necessarily in harmony (Adachi 2010). These relations cannot be reduced to a dichotomous framework, which underlies much recent scholarship (Ôta 1993), but must be apprehended from a multidimensional perspective. Furthermore, in some conditions the relations between these sides can be in tension, sometimes damaging regional everyday forms of life (Ueta 2007; Kogure 2015; cf. Martinez 2004). Therefore, we not only have to carefully understand what occurs in these multiple relations, but also to clarify the contemporary characteristics and conditions that support them.

From this standpoint, this paper focuses on a folk festival of a fishing community. Focusing on this enlarged festival, I examine here the following three points using an anthropological approach. The first is the relationship between the fishermen involved in the folk festival and participants from outside of the community. I closely explore the interactions between them, and analyse their meaning. The second is the involvement of governments. I try to grasp the relations among the three parties. The third is the conditions that support the enlarged festival. I elucidate the historical characteristics of this festival, specifically shedding light on the relations between the folk festival, the subsistence economy of the fishing community, and their transformations.

I visited this community and conducted fieldwork in June 2015 and March 2016. This paper draws not only from this fieldwork, but also from my fieldwork experiences from 20 years earlier; I have been interested in deep sea fishing associations and their transformation, from the Meiji era, which I presented in my doctoral dissertation and multiple articles (Nakano 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2005), ever since.

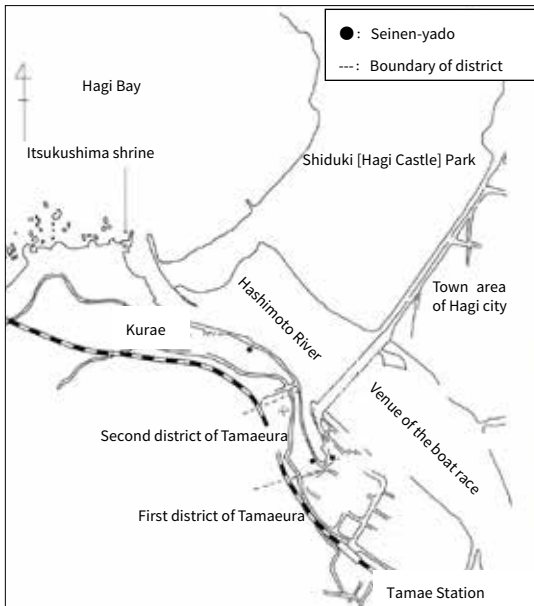


Figure 1. Map of the field: Tamaeura

1.2 An Overview of the Field

Tamaeura is located on the left bank of the Hashimoto River in Hagi city, Yamaguchi Prefecture (fig. 1). Tamaeura consisted of 608 households, or 1330 residents, excluding the Kurae area.¹

The community is made up of three districts. The people of Tamaeura use another regional spatial categorization, called *jige* 地下, which remains in use today. This old category consists of 4 *kumi* 組. Each *kumi* had a shared house called a *seinen-yado* 青年宿 (youth sleeping place) (fig. 2), where the children of fishermen used to acquire fishing knowledge and skills during the day, and where they slept at night. The *seinen-yado* functioned as the local hubs of the institution of the fishery, and socially reproduced the local fishery.

The Tamaeura fishery has been officially supported by the activities of the fishery associations since the Meiji period, although the fishery associations have changed over time. Today the Tamaeura fishery association has been incorporated with Yamaguchi Prefecture's association, which has made it more directly susceptible to top-down prefectural fishery policy. Currently, the Tamaeura association consists of 78 regular cooperative

¹ Statistical data of the Hagi city, June 2015.



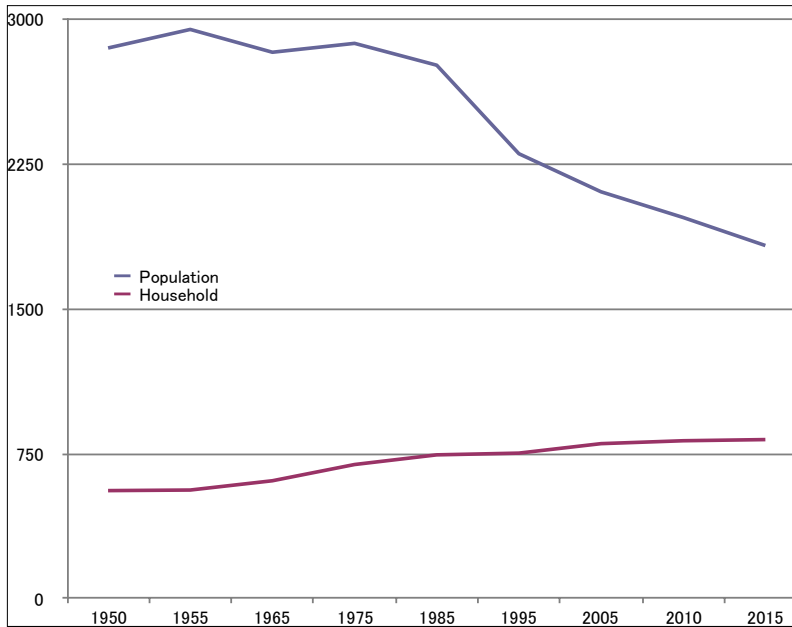
Figure 2. Seinen-yado (1996)

members, and 92 quasi-members. The total number of cooperative members is 170 (June 2015).

We can see Tamaeura is a rapidly aging fishing community. The population and the number of households have declined from 2,873 people and 694 households in 1975, to 1,827 people and 823 households in 2015 (graph. 1). The aging of the population can also be seen in the membership of the Tamaeura fishery cooperative. As of June 2015, the number of regular members was only 78, a reduction by half in 18 years. Of the regular members, none are younger than 30, and only 5 were in their 30s, compared to 18 members who are 80 or over (the largest group), 25 in their 70s, and 15 in their 60s. Thus, 74% of regular members are over 60.

The older fishermen tend to operate along the coast, while those closer to prime working age work further offshore. The main type of coastal fishery is the squid fishery around Mishima Island, which has become the most economically important fishery in Tamaeura. Eight small vessels (less than 19 tons) operated in this fishery in 2015.

Today, faced with an aged population, the Tamaeura fishery cooperative is attempting projects with local, prefectural, and national governments to improve the condition of squid and fixed net fisheries.



Graphic 1. Population and household of Tamaeura

1.3 The Oshikuragō of Today (2015)

The *Wasen Daikyōsō Hagi Osh ikuragō* 和船大競漕萩オシクラゴ (The Big Japanese Boat Race of Hagi Oshikuragō) was held on Sunday, June 7.

The festival itself is slightly complicated, but an outline can be provided. First, one part of this festival is originally ascribed to the fishing community. For example, in 2015, a ritual of Itsukushima 厳島 shrine, located on the cape of the end of the Kurae coastline was done before the race. The board members of the Tamaeura fishery cooperative offer prayers at this ritual, which was conducted by the chief priest of Sanmi-hachiman shrine in the early morning of June 7. The members of Oshikuragō オシクラゴ (originated from a dialect meaning 押し競べ ‘boat race’), who crew the Japanese-style wooden boats, offered prayers at this shrine before the ritual and then returned to the community (fig. 3). The *Wasen Daikyōsō Hagi Oshikuragō* was held after this ritual. It was a large festival with a stage set up along the flood plain of the Hashimoto River. The *Tamaeura furusato-matsuri* 玉江浦ふるさと祭り was held after the *Wasen Daikyōsō Hagi Oshikuragō* on the same stage. At this festival, the people of Tamaeura enjoy *Karaoke* カラオケ, traditional folk songs and etc (fig. 4).

The *Wasen Daikyōsō Hagi* Oshikuragō was sponsored by the executive committee of *Tamaeura furusato-matsuri*. This event was conducted in the following order: the opening ceremony, the boat race, and the prize-giving ceremony. The *Wasen Daikyōsō Hagi* Oshikuragō was held in this order: the preliminary round, the final round, and, finally, the Oshikuragō. The preliminary round and the final round consisted of two parts. One was the junior high school student league, and the other was the adult league. The league for junior high school students was divided into sub-leagues of male and female competitors. The teams of each league that won the preliminary round raced each other in the final round. In 2015, 8 male teams and 7 female teams competed in the junior high school league, while in the adult league a total of 16 teams participated. After the final rounds, the Oshikuragō was held (figs. 5, 6). There are differences in the race method between Oshikuragō and the other leagues, as I will hereinafter describe in detail.

The *Wasen Daikyōsō Hagi* Oshikuragō is administered by Hagi city and is supported by the Tamaeura fishery cooperative. For example, the fishery section also manages the proceedings of the festival, while the mayor of Hagi city gives a congratulatory speech. The person who makes the opening declaration is the Hagi branch manager of the Yamaguchi fishery cooperative.

The *Wasen Daikyōsō Hagi* Oshikuragō is a complex undertaking. In this paper, the Oshikuragō will refer to the old style race, while *Wasen Daikyōsō* will refer to the new style race, while the festival as a whole will be referred to as the *Wasen Daikyōsō Hagi* Oshikuragō.

2 The Linkages of the Oshikuragō and the Fishery

2.1 The Oshikuragō

There are three traditional explanations for the origin of Oshikuragō. First, the race is described as a way to distribute rights to fish at the net fishing grounds (Ito 1979). Second, there is an explanation that the Oshikuragō originated from the boat of the Hagi Domain head (I use the word 'Hagi Domain' as a synonym for 'Chōshū Domain' in this paper) (Tamaeura Gyogyō-kyōdō-kumiai; Hagi kotogakkou shakaibu 1961; Meijidaigaku seikeigakubu 1969). Another traditional explanation says that the winner had to serve as the Hagi Domain head (Yanagi 1934; Tamaeura gyogyō-kyōdō-kumiai). All of these explanations can still be heard, but none is accompanied by strong evidence.

The *Journal of Bochō* describes the Oshikuragō during the Meiji era. In the following era, I will outline some important features of this festival, based on an item from 1902 (Meiji 35) entitled *Braving a storm during*



Figure 3. Offering prey at Itsukushima shrine (2015)



Figure 4. Tamaeura *furusato-matsuri* (2015)



Figure 5. The race of junior high school students (2015)



Figure 6. Oshikuragō (2015)

the boat race. In a ritual of Itsukushima shrine, fishermen held practices in the afternoon, and then offered prayers at the shrine, and afterwards they held the boat race. The boat race was done with four boats, which each belonged to a *kumi*. The crew for each boat were also selected from that *kumi*. Seven younger fishermen crewed each boat, with five of them acting as oarsmen. One of the crew held a baton in each hand (like those used by commanders on the battlefield in old Japan), while another held a whip. These fishermen used to work naked, but after directions by the Prefecture and enforcement by the police, they began wearing short sleeved white shirts and undershorts. The boats only raced on the return back course from the point called *tsubase* ツバセ (a name of net fishing grounds). The ring of a bell started the race, and a special boat enforced the rules of the race. The winner received Japanese *sake* 酒 as the award, and was recognized as skilled in deep sea fishing. The news item emphasized that fishermen cared deeply about winning or losing the race, in spite of the bad weather.

2.2 The Folkloric Characteristics of the Oshikuragō

In this section, I will explore the folkloric characteristics of the Oshikuragō of Tamaeura, referencing prior research on boat races in Japan. Marshalling data about boat races in Japan, Umino emphasized the people's mentality towards the *kami* 神 (god), and described the boat races as divided into three types: one is of waiting and meeting the *kami*, the second is of sending the *kami*, and the third is of entertaining the *kami* (Umino 1980). According to this, we can infer that because the Oshikuragō in Tamaeura was held only on the return course, it was related in the distant past to waiting and meeting the *kami*. Fishermen brought whips in each hand to the head of the boat in the Oshikuragō, and waved them (fig. 7). I think that, referencing the ethnographic records, we can interpret this symbolic behaviour as an invitation for the *kami* of fishery (Umi no Hakubutsukan 2001). There is an additional important detail about the boats of the Oshikuragō. As I will discuss later, the Tamaeura people adopted *Kairyō gyosen* 改良漁船 (improved fishing boats) for the Oshikuragō at some stage. The Meiji government recommended using the *kairyō gyosen* for deep sea fishing, which originated from the boats made by the Tamaeura people during the Meiji era.

The day after the Oshikuragō is called the *ryō mōshi* 漁申し (praying big catch), or *Ajiro mawari* 網代廻り (navigating around net fishing grounds for prayers), and during this day the boat goes around the net fishing grounds, as the chief priest conducts a ritual, and fishermen offer prayers for plentiful catches to Ōdoshi shrine (fig. 8). After the ritual, they return to the community, and *mikoshi* 神輿 (a portable shrine) are paraded through the fishing community. The Oshikuragō is one event in a series of rituals of Itsukushima shrine and of Ōdoshi 大歳 shrine over two days.

We can see the meaning of the two-day ritual is related to the Tamaeura people inviting the *kami* of fishery to celebrate the community itself. From the point on the sea where the boats start the Oshikuragō, the *kami* of fishery goes through the edge of cape where the Itsukushima shrine is located, and then visits the land of Tamaeura where Ōdoshi shrine is, enshrined with the Ebisu 恵比須 shrine. The next day the *kami* gets on the *mikoshi* and the boat, and goes around the net fishing grounds, then returns to the parades for the community.

2.3 The Linkage of the Oshikuragō and the Fishery

By 1740 (Ganbun 4), Tamaeura was an average-sized fishing community where fishermen mainly used stationary nets to fish horse mackerel, Spanish mackerel, and Japanese amberjack, using fleets of small boats, and gathered other coastal marine products by hand (Yamaguchiken Monjokan 1980). During the middle of the Meiji period, Tamaeura fishermen extend-



Figure 7. Yakko 奴
and Hyoshi-tori 拍子取り
(1997)

ed the range of their fishing grounds from the immediate offshore areas to deep sea fishing grounds using a new style of boat. Two generations of the Harada family built this new style boat which became recommended by the Japanese national government under the policy of the deep-sea fishing law. Many fishing communities came to Tamaeura to learn the construction and fishing method for this type of boat. In Tamaeura, four fishermen crewed this new style boat. These boats would go around the Chōsen Peninsula to fish shark and red sea bream using longlines. In addition, Tamaeura people used these boats for racing in the Oshikuragō from the Meiji era.

The Oshikuragō is related to the fishery of Tamaeura. According to fishermen born between the Taisho period (1912-1915) and the first decade of the Showa period (1926-1935), the linkage of Oshikuragō and fishery can be summarized in the following ways. One is that the crew members are selected from the fishery association of Tamaeura. Four *kumis* make up the deep-sea fishery association; these same *kumis* make up the association for the rituals of Tamaeura. The fishermen and ships for deep sea fishing each belong to a *kumi*. A leader known as the *ōsendo* 大船頭 (a head of boat men) controls the overall association and plays the leading role in the rituals. There are seven crew members on each racing boat (fig. 9). Two of the crew man paddles on either side of the boat, and are called *kaikaki* 権力キ. Except *kaikaki*, these crew members are chosen through elections which are conducted in each *kumi* by fishermen who have retired from the *seinen-yado*. The *kaikaki* is chosen among the fishermen who have just retired from the *seinen-yado*. The standard by which the crew members are chosen by election can be divided into two dimensions, one

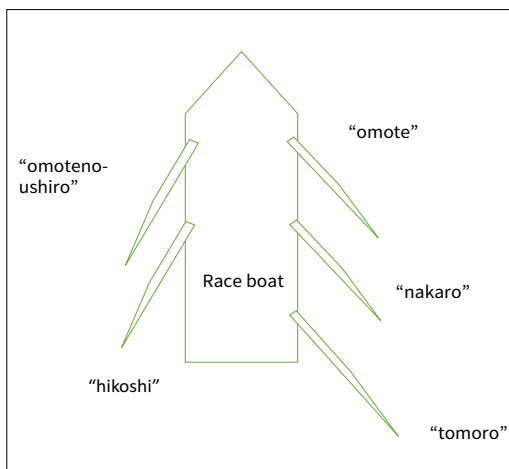


Figure 8. Ajiro mawari 網代廻り (1998)

Figure 9. The name and the position of oars of the race boat

of which is the skill and physical build of the person, and the other which is the social dimension. The former is that, for example, it would be better for the *tomoro* 櫓 (an oar positioned at the stern) to be a fisherman who can pull the oar very well. For the social dimension, it was important in Tamaeura that the crew should display good behaviour and work diligently during their days on land and on the sea. The young fishermen who coped with the expectations of the senior fishermen could receive special allowances, in addition to their standard allotment of money. When the voting was held at the *seinen-yado*, many people with kin relations to the young fishermen walked around the community soliciting votes. If their kin were elected, he and his parents were delighted and felt honoured. The second criterion is linked to the fact that the cost of the ritual was based on deep-sea fishing profits. The *ōsendo* collected money called *mon-gin* 文金 from every deep-sea fishing ship through the *kumi*. A representative of each *kumi* collected a constant rate of the money from every fishing ship assigned to his *kumi*, which was extracted from the value of landings of each ship. Apart from the *mon-gin*, the expense of the ritual were paid using the congratulatory gifts which were given to the fishery association of Tamaeura by those related to the deep-sea fishing of Tamaeura, such as the people associated with the fish market, ship chandlers, and merchants who supplied consumable goods to ships.

Third is that the Oshikuragō was deeply related to the identity of the Tamaeura fishermen. The fishermen of Tamaeura had an immediate interest in winning in the Oshikuragō. The victorious crews and the people around them were honored at various occasions in the community. For example, the young fishermen ate raw eggs in the morning of the race day to keep up their strength, and they packed their mouths with pickled *ume* 梅 (Japanese apricot, *Prunus mume*) just before the race began to avoid becoming thirsty during the competition. If they won the race, they received a bottle of *sake* and attended a banquet held at the *seinen-yado*, where they were attended to by young women.

2.4 The Transformation of the Oshikuragō

The Oshikuragō can be divided into three historical stages. The first stage is the period when the Tamaeura people were coastal fishermen, and the Oshikuragō was conducted as an event of Itsukushima shrine. The second stage was when the fishermen expanded their fishery to the deep sea, the Oshikuragō became closely related to the fishing association, and developed into an inextricable part of the fishermen's identity. In this stage, the Oshikuragō attracted large audiences. To allow these audiences to see the entire race, the venue of the Oshikuragō was changed from the sea to the river, and the race course also changed in 1916 from a one-way

course to a round-trip course. The third stage is when the Tamaeura fishermen returned their fishery to the shore. As the population of fishermen declined, the venue of the Oshikuragō changed from the sea to the river, and the Oshikuragō began to require competitors from the public with the support of the government of Hagi city.

3 The Irreversible Change and Adaptation of Oshikuragō

3.1 Becoming a Large-Scale Festival Under the Government

Today, the government of Hagi city conducts the large-scale festival which encompasses the Oshikuragō.

Hagi city sponsored the festival, Oshikuragō, the 400th anniversary of the Hagi Domain capital, because Hagi had been the administrative headquarters of the Hagi Domain during the Edo period. The year 004 was also the 400th anniversary of when Mōri Terumoto 毛利輝元 (first Head of Hagi Domain) entered Hagi castle, which was completed in 1604 (Keichō 9) as the castle of the Hagi Domain. According to the government business plan, by sponsoring this festival Hagi city aimed “to encourage interactions among regions in Hagi city”, and “to contribute to pass on the traditional culture from generation to generation and the promotion of tourism in Hagi city” (The Fishery Section of the Hagi city 2004). The program of the day consisted of, a) the opening ceremony; b) *Ofuna-uta* 御船謡 (traditional boat songs) of Sumiyoshi shrine; c) the procession of Nojima *nagareya-watashi* 能島流矢渡し, *Kobaya-bune* 小早船 (the traditional Japanese style boats); d) *Mishima oshiai* 見島押し合い (Mishima traditional boat race); e) the Koshigahama junior high school Japanese style boats race; f) the inter-regional fishery cooperative Japanese style boat race; and g) the Tamaeura Oshikuragō.

I note three characteristics of this festival. The first is the intention of the government of Hagi city to legitimize the tradition of the Oshikuragō. The second is that the way the race was conducted as a competition among multiple fishery communities in Hagi city. The third is that this festival provided an opportunity for the government to become permanently involved with the Oshikuragō.

The government business plan mentioned above states the tradition of this new festival in the following way. In this plan, the Oshikuragō was presented as the relic of the navy of Hagi Domain, and inherited more than 300 years ago. It is said that the Oshikuragō is rooted in the training practices of the Murakami *suigun* 村上水軍 (navy of Murakami in the Medieval period), which is acknowledged as the most powerful navy in Japan. The Hagi government invited traditional Japanese style boats from Miyakubo-machi, the land of the Murakami *suigun*. However, there is no

evidence showing a relation between Oshikuragō and Murakami *suigun* in my current survey of the research. Also the geographic range of Hagi city does not have a clear relationship with that of the Chōshū Domain. Hagi city not only emphasizes that the history of oshikuragō has been related to the *Murakami suigun*, but also legitimizes the tradition of the new festival as having a long history by inviting Kobaya *bune* to Hagi city.

The boat race was held on the Hashimoto River, and a race was held that pitted the fishing communities within Hagi city, Tamaeura, Koshigahama, Obata, Ōshima, Mishima, and Susa against each other. Afterwards, the Oshikuragō was held by the Tamaeura community.

A ceremony to celebrate the birth of new Hagi city created the opportunity for the Hagi city government to become permanently involved with the Oshikuragō (The Fishery Section of the Hagi city 2005). Susa-chō, Kawakami-mura, Tamagawa-chō, Mutsumi-mura, Asahi-mura, Fukuei-mura were merged to form Hagi city in March 6, 2005. Hagi city planned events to commemorate the merger of these cities, towns and villages and named this event *Shin Hagi-shi no Wasen Daikyōsō* 新萩市の和船大競漕 (big Japanese style boat race of the new Hagi city). The invitation of Susa-cho to the race and the holding of the Japanese style boat race in 2005 symbolically celebrates the integration of the government. Hagi city strongly framed how the festival could be interpreted. Since the merger of the cities, towns and villages, this festival has been supported by Hagi city under the name *Wasen Daikyōsō* until this day.

3.2 Gear Improvement and Sharing Rules

Today, the *Wasen Daikyōsō* includes the public, as well as junior high school students as participants. For these new participants to be included, it was seen as an important step for the gear of the boat to be improved. These improvements were related to the junction of the oar and the fulcrum peg. In the standard design, the fulcrum peg was detachable from the cavity in an oar. Generally, the fishermen fit the oars to the boats during navigation, and take the oars off the boats when fishing. When they fit the oars to the boats, they have to lift the oars, and fit them to the fulcrum pegs. This is not difficult for the fishermen, but it is difficult for non-fishermen for three reasons: a) the oar is heavy to lift; b) when fitting the cavity to the fulcrum, the fulcrum peg cannot be seen by the person fitting it, because the cavity is positioned on the underside of the oar; c) the task must be performed while the boat is rocking on the sea.

The Tamaeura fishermen solved this problem by copying the improved gear used in boat races in other regions. Representatives of the Tamaeura fishery association visited Miyakubo-cho in 2005, and received samples of metal versions of the oar cavity and fulcrum peg. These parts half-lock the

cavity and the fulcrum peg to each other to prevent them from detaching. The representatives then returned to Tamaeura and asked the shipyard there to adapt them to the boats used in Tamaeura. The shipyard produced several prototypes, after which it was able to produce usable parts (figs. 10, 11). As a result, even non-fishermen became able to pull the oars without accidentally detaching them from the boat.

The Fishery Section of the Hagi city government arranged for the new participants in the race from outside Tamaeura. Initially, they placed the participants into the interregional format, but because of the increased number of people showing interest, open public recruitment began in 2008.

Here, I will look at the new race - the *Wasen Daikyōsō* - through the application guidelines. The participants in this race do not pay an entry fee, and the fishery section of Hagi city handles the procedures to provide them with accident insurance. Practices are held for approximately one month, during which every team can receive coaching from the fishery cooperative of Tamaeura. The race is a speed competition on a 300-meter straight-line course. The first, second and third place teams receive prizes, which, according to the fishermen, are respectively 100,000 Japanese Yen, 50,000 Yen, and 30,000 Yen.

The number of participants is growing (table 1). Improvements to the oar cavity and fulcrum peg, and the management by the fishery section of Hagi city benefitted the public and the junior high school students, letting them participate in the race, and increasing the size of the competition.

3.3 Open Recruitment of the Public and the *Wasen Daikyōsō*

A total of 16 teams participated in the race in 2015, which are shown in table 1. Six teams were based on workplace relationships (C, H, M, N, O, P), and another six were made up of friends and acquaintances (D, E, G, I, J, L). Teams in these categories were the most numerous. Next were four teams based on other types of friendly associations (A, B, F, K). For example, some members of these teams were linked by the fact that they worked on the water or in fishery, or they belonged to associations related to water sports; for example, a team was formed by members of a yacht club, and another made up of friends and acquaintances who surf together. Some of the teams have participated in the race more than 4 or 5 times, and among them there are many strong teams that often ended up second or third. We can see that there is a stratum of teams which compete every year and are skilled with the oars. On the other side, there are the teams made up of beginners with relatively little experience that aim simply to pass the preliminary round or complete their race. The teams aiming to enter the upper ranks consist mainly of men.



Figure 10. A carpenter arranging the oar cavity in Seinen-yado (1997)

Figure 11. The oar cavity made of metal (2015)

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Table 1. Team member compositions and profiles

Name of team	Number of male players	Number of female players	Profile of team
A	5	0	Our team is taking part in this race for the first time in two years. This year, we hope to advance to the final round, to get the money and to enjoy our drinking.
B	5	0	It is the third time that our team takes part in this race. Our average age is 64. Although we are used to navigate yacht, we take part in this race for acquiring also the ability to pull the oars.
C	6	0	Our team consists of the staff from the section of water and sewerage of Hagi city. Waterworks Week business is held simultaneously nationwide from June 1 to 7. We take part in this race as a public relations tool.
D	5	0	Our team is the second-generation of the team <i>tokko yaro</i> 特攻野郎, and inherit its spirit.
E	5	0	Our team participated in the race last year with another name.
F	5	0	Our team is called B-HO, we are bike people.
G	2	3	Our team consists of 3 females and 3 males. 4 of them took part in first time. We aim to make it through the finish line.
H	5	0	It is the fourth time that our team takes part in this race. We hope to improve our record of finishing third when our team had participated in first time.
I	5	0	Today, we are the most dangerous people since earth had formed.
J	5	0	It is the fifth time for our team in this race. We hope to get through the preliminaries.
K	5	0	Our team consists of the people doing surfing, body board, SUP, based in Hagi. It is the fourth time for our team. We finished second last year. We aim to gain the victory changing the players.
L	5	0	This year too, we'll do our best.
M	1	4	Our team is based on working relationship. Each of us takes part in this race with colourful costumes. We don't feel confident about the speed but we do feel confident about costume.
N	5	0	Our team consists of the office staff aged 10s and 20s from the company of Chugoku electric power in Hagi. We aim to gain the victory changing the players.
O	3	2	Our team consists of the policemen and staff of the gas station. We formed our team, soon after meeting first time each other. We gather only for Oshikuragō.
P	5	0	Our team consist of the staff from the fishery section of Yamaguchi Prefecture which administration office are located in Hagi city. We could not complete the full distance with trouble. So we aim to make it through the finish line this year.

Team including female members tend to aim to complete the race, or enjoy themselves with colourful costumes. In brief, the new race is supported by many various personal relations and interests.

The K team is made up of members of a friendly surfing club that is mainly active along the Hagi coastline. The leader of the team, M, discovered the open recruitment in the newspaper, and gathered teammates, and applied to participate. He writes a blog titled *My Surfing Diary*. Drawing on this blog, I will give an overview of their activities.

Their practices are held on weekends, because only M and one other member live within Hagi city. In 2012 they were unable to advance beyond the preliminary round. In 2013, the team was only able to finish in third place. In 2014, they finished second. In 2015, the team won the championship (fig. 12).

M gives three reasons for taking part in the race. One is to enhance the unity of the team. The second is the attractiveness of the large cash prize. The third is that it is a way for him to contribute to the region. Aside of their ordinary surfing activities, the team holds barbecues. They also used to occasionally support the endurance swimming program of the elementary school. In a similar vein, M thought that “to participate in this race was important for him because he lives in Hagi, and he shares the same love of the sea the fishermen have, regardless of victory or defeat” (Surf Monkey 2012). Of particular interest is that when his team captured victory in 2015, the physical sense of the water and the bodily oneness he experienced when pulling the oar, and the memory of this oneness motivated him to continue racing. For example, he writes that he “felt joy when the oar catches on the water”, and that “once practice begins, my body remembers pulling the oar, increasing the pleasure I feel each year” (Surf Monkey 2015). His motivations and reasons to participate in the race have been transformed through his practice and racing experience.

The members of K team had a physical sense of the water that they derived from surfing, but it had also changed through the practices and the interactions they had with the fishermen. In the fifth practice of 2015, their fisherman coach said to them “You are surfers, aren’t you!”, and gave a demonstration, showing them how to position their legs, and emphasizing the strength they need to place on their toes when rowing, and explaining to them that they need to pull with the lower body. This demonstration was done partly because there were crew members who were participating for the first time, but the importance of the demonstration was also a challenge to them – “You are surfers, aren’t you!” – which made the surfers conscious of their bodies and the water by recalling to them their own surfing experiences. Thus, skill with the oars was not so much taught to the surfers by the fisherman, as much it was intrinsic to the surfers themselves from their own experiences with the water. In other words, this questioning encouraged the learner’s consciousness to change in a qualitative way

by making them realize that the skill is not just that of a fisherman who belongs to a different culture, but also that of their own culture, and it derives from touching the same water. Through this encouragement, the surfers see the race from the point of view of the culture of surfing. Here, we can see the meaning of the interaction between the fishermen and the other team members.

3.4 The Diversification of the Oshikuragō: Promotion from the Wasen Daikyōsō to the Oshikuragō

The Oshikuragō used to be conducted by fishermen on the sea, but from 1995 it has been held on the Hashimoto River. Below, I depict the outline of the process.

The deep-sea fishery association of Tamaeura was dissolved in 1992. Because of the decline of fish resources in the East China Sea, the president added to the dissolution declaration that they also discontinue the Oshikuragō, and it was approved. But young fishermen who could not accept the end of the Oshikuragō, formed the Tamaeura Youth Group, and collected signatures petitioning the fishery association of ship owners to continue the Oshikuragō. The fishery association of ship owners had kept just the squid fishery open, which was operated with a small fleet of boats. As a result, the youth received ad hoc economic assistance from the ship owners, and were able to hold the Oshikuragō in 1992 and 1993. In 1995, the Oshikuragō was rebuilt as one event in the *Tamaeura Furusato-matsuri*, which was sponsored by the residents' association on behalf of the fishery association of Tamaeura, and the number of boats was reduced to 3. The youth group became the competitors because of the scarcity of young fishermen. The race is conducted between three districts of Tamaeura: the first district of Tamaeura, the second district of Tamaeura, and Kurae. The Oshikuragō of the present day derives from this race style.

In the 2015 race, the Kurae team was named as the Tamaeura *seinendan* 玉江浦青年団 (Tamaeura Youth Group). The first district of Tamaeura and the second district of Tamaeura both also shared that name, but each also had another name. The former was named Yatagarasu 八咫烏, which refers to a mythological Japanese crow who guided the Emperor *Jinmu* 神武. The latter was named Tokkō Yarō 特攻野郎 B team. Tokkō Yarō means 'men of the *kamikaze* (神風, divine wind) attack'. The *Yatagarasu* team began as a junior high school team which consisted of childhood friends, and later participated as a public team. It is a strong team, that won first place as a junior high school team, and as a public team in 2011. This team challenged the Tamaeura Youth Group to a race, and has participated as a team in Tamaeura's Oshikuragō since 2012. The Tokkō Yarō B team was formed in 2011. The leader was a member of the Tamaeura



Figure 12. K team (2015)

Figure 13. The race boat just before the start (2015)

fishery cooperative from 2005, and created the team because he was attracted to the Oshikuragō. They participated in the race for the first time in 2011, but were defeated by the Yatagarasu team. Subsequently, the team grew into championship hopefuls. In 2015, the Tamaeura Youth Group heard that Tokkō Yarō B team wanted to race with *Yatagarasu*, and consequently, Tokkō Yarō B team also became one of the teams of the Oshikuragō. As a precondition for joining the Oshikuragō, *Yatagarasu* and the Tokkō Yarō B team were asked to change their names and re-form, and they did it.

Because of the scarcity of competitors, open recruitment opened to the public, but the public races and the Oshikuragō were separated. If a team became skillfully rowers, the team could be incorporated into the Oshikuragō race. Here we can see that the system reproduces successors in a sustainable way.

Another interesting point about the Oshikuragō is the way participants make sense of the races by dramatizing them. When the race is held, the profiles of the teams are introduced. In 2015, *Yatagarasu* was introduced as the defending champions, because they had finished first for the second consecutive year. They were described as a team that has joined the race to breathe new life into it. The profile also said that the *Yatagarasu* is an auspicious bird which marked the beginning of a new era to *Amaterasu Ōmikami* 天照大神 in Japanese mythology. The profile of Tokkō Yarō B team began by describing the reason for the team's formation, and said that "they can't forget their regret from being defeated by *Yatagarasu*" (The Fishery Section of the Hagi city 2015). Their introduction said that they would take first place back from *Yatagarasu* this year.

Through such profiles, the spectators can enjoy the race itself, the team's experiences, and the enthusiasm of the competitors. In sum, the Oshikuragō dramatizes the story of the public race, becoming an event with new meanings.

4 The Conditions for the Big Japanese Boat Race of Hagi Oshikuragō

4.1 The Dual Nature of the Tamaeura Youth Group

The present Oshikuragō consists of former public teams and the Tamaeura Youth Group team. The former public teams each also bear the name of the Tamaeura Youth Group. When we compare the profiles of the Tamaeura Youth Group and the former public teams, we can find the differences between them.

The profile of the Tamaeura Youth Group strongly expresses how it will meet the challenges from the former public teams, by stressing its char-

acter as a team that has inherited the character of the fishing community, and is based on its co-operation with prominent members. It brings their inheritance of the social relations and traditions of fishing community to the foreground. The profile does not make obvious a dramatized story, but it does not strongly imply the significance of meeting challenges from the public teams. The present Oshikuragō is positioned between the dramatic character of the new public participants, and the communal and traditional character of the fishery community.

4.2 The Conditions of the Oshikuragō

Teams that can advance to the Oshikuragō must meet at least the following four conditions. The first is that a team has to be skilled with the oars. Specifically, a team must be able to use oars without the improved metal cavity or fulcrum peg, because the crews have to use different boats and oars for the Oshikuragō. The second is that the team must consist partly of people from Tamaeura, so for, example, *Yatagarasu* includes a number of Tamaeura people. The third condition is that a team must include a number of Tamaeura fishery cooperative members. The Tokkō Yarō B team has two members who are part of the fishery cooperative. The fourth is that a team must have two additional crew members on board in addition to the usual five members. These two members must man the paddles during the race to propel the boat, but when the boat turns at the half-way mark, one of them is needed to take a flag from a buoy which marks the turning point. They must also wear special costumes. One of them is called the *Yakko* 奴, and he must hold a baton in each hand and wave them. The other is called the *Hyōshi-tori* 拍子取り. This person must bring wooden instruments for keeping the rhythm on the boat. The team must have room for these two members, who appear to have no competitive value. But as discussed above, the *Yakko* and *Hyōshi-tori* may be derived from customs based on the lore related to inviting the *kami* of the sea to Tamaeura. Needless to say, the fishery section of Hagi city does not explain these elements.

In actuality, the teams that takes part in the Oshikuragō are practically limited to those composed mainly by Tamaeura fishermen and people living in Tamaeura. There is an invisible barrier between the public and the Oshikuragō, and between what is expressed in the profile and what actually takes place. To understand the present Oshikuragō appropriately, we have to consider their reason for keeping up the autonomy of Oshikuragō within the community, with reference to the invisibility of the barrier in the promotion system.

4.3 The Fishery Community Supporting the Big Japanese Race of Hagi Oshikuragō Behind the Scenes

The Tamaeura fishermen teach the knowledge and oar skills to junior high school students and to the public. In the case of the 2015 races, coaching began on June 11. Practices were held almost every day, beginning around 5 p.m. on weekdays, and 1 p.m. on weekends. Each practice was an hour to an hour and a half long. There were 15 coaches, who were drawn from the staff of the executive committee of the *Tamaeura furusato-matsuri*. Their average age is 75, except for two fishermen in their 40s who started working as fishermen in the twentyfirst century. Because all of them are active fishermen, they may go out fishing after 6 p.m., and so practices did not go beyond 6 p.m.

Twenty-three fishermen support the public race working on five boats each with different roles. For example, the outboard motor boat called the *shidō-sen* 指導船 (coaching boat) leads the racing boats. The *shidō-sen* tugs the Japanese-style boats used in the races after the crew boarding to the starting point. After the start of the race, the *shidō-sen* moves to the fishing and waits for the racers to arrive, after which it will return them to the boat-slip, and put the crew back on shore. The outboard motor boat fixed at the start point, called the *kotei-sen* 固定船 (fixed boat), keeps the race boats from moving at the start point before the race begins thanks to a rope with one end fixed to the boat and the other held in a fisherman's hands. When the race boats are waiting for the race to start, they pull their oars to push their boats against the rope, stretching it tightly between their boats and the *kotei-sen*. At the ring of the bell, the race starts and the rope is released by the fisherman on the race boat (fig. 13).

There are also two fishermen aboard each race boat. One of them, positioned at the stern, grasps a detachable helm during the race (fig. 6). Another fisherman is positioned at the bow, and copes with troubles such as an oar becoming detached, or the cord fastening the oars and the boat becoming untied. After the race they detach the oars and support the crews putting the oars in order on the boat. More than half of the 15 coaches have multiple roles, on the *shidō-sen*, *kotei-sen*, *hanshō-sen* 半鐘船 (a boat that carries the bell), or *kyujyo-sen* 救助船 (rescue boat). Practically, there is only room for six fishermen on board in a race boat. Because of this difficult condition, four young fishermen try to board each race boat on race day. They are in their 30s to 50s, and are engaged in the squid fishery during the fishing season. They cannot substitute for each other, or take rests because each race involves four teams, and are on a tight schedule. They work on the boats at almost their full capability.

5 Conclusion: the Power to Shape the Interpretation of the Folk Festival

5.1 The Meaning of the Regional Folk Festival for the Government

The Oshikuragō is registered as neither a tangible nor intangible folk cultural asset by the national government, Yamaguchi Prefecture, or Hagi city. In Hagi city, the Oshikuragō is not managed under the cultural preservation system, but by the fishery section of the local government. This is one of the unique characteristics of the Oshikuragō compared to other governments' concern with regional festivals, which tend to operate from the point of view of cultural assets preservation. The Fishery Section of the Hagi city government aims "to encourage interaction among regions in Hagi city", and "to inherit the traditional culture and promote tourism in Hagi city" (The Fishery Section of the Hagi city 2004, 2005).

On the encouragement of interactions among regions in the city, as mentioned above, the Oshikuragō has been conducted with the participation of many regions within Hagi city, and from other Prefectures. These steps have made the Oshikuragō widely accepted, supporting its opening to the public. In this sense, the aim of encouraging interactions among regions in Hagi city appears to have been achieved.

On the inheritance of the traditional culture, we must begin by discussing its definition. The public teams were able to take part in the Oshikuragō and compete in a Japanese style boat because of the introduction of modified metal boat parts, which made it possible for them to join the race. These led to the development of highly skilled teams, and the production of a system for socially reproducing the crews for the Oshikuragō. However, we must take note that the public teams are not able to operate unmodified boats. In addition, the public teams cannot rely on their own skills to steer the boats. The helm must be taken by a fisherman. Finally, these boats do not include members to take the roles of *Yakko* or *Hyōshi-tori*, because the public teams have been created with five members, rather than the seven members of the Oshikuragō crews. Together, these points show that the public teams are participating in a simplified version of the race. In actuality, there exists no common standard for determining "traditional culture" between the fishing community and the city. In other words, how the use of modified boats and teams in the races relates to the inheritance of traditional culture is a question that has been left unresolved.

As mentioned above, to pass on the big Japanese boat race of Hagi Oshikuragō, there must be a system for public teams to become Oshikuragō teams, and support the fishermen's coaching for the public team practices, in both financial and labour terms. However, the government cannot be expected to deal with these issues, because Hagi city is not concerned with the Oshikuragō as a cultural asset. Moreover, the 'big Japanese boat

race' is positioned only as an 'opening act' to the Oshikuragō. Unless the government defines 'traditional culture', and takes concrete measures to inherit it with Tamaeura, the people of Tamaeura will be forced to continue their struggles without being able to see a future resolution.

5.2 Conclusions

This research asserted the following points, ethnographically depicting the new festival from the point of view of the fishing community.

The first is the interrelation between the competitors from the public and the fishermen. The public competitors can take part in the big Japanese race of Hagi Oshikuragō, and if the four conditions mentioned above are met, they are able to race as a team in the Oshikuragō. When the team from the public acquire skill as oarsmen, the ability to connect the fishermen's skills on the sea and, for example, their experiences on the sea as surfers produced an important effect. The interactive communication between fishermen and the public teams sustainably creates a motivation for people to participate, as it did for the team who were able to learn the bodily experience and the pleasure of rowing a Japanese-style boat.

The second is that the involvement of the government with the Oshikuragō is arbitrary. On the one hand, the government utilizes the festival as a means for integrating the Hagi region, while on the other hand, the government distances itself from the communal festival. The attitude of the government is especially evident in the fact that it left the definition of 'traditional culture' unresolved. The government does not recognize the difference between the fishermen and the public, nor is it able to deal and solve the problems to relate them. In spite of these issues, the government utilizes the Oshikuragō to legitimize its own integration, and to address emergent political requests.

The third is historical context. The practices of fishermen and the members of the public around the Oshikuragō are unique in the context of contemporary fishery communities. The fishing community has been unable to secure successors for the fishery. The community has also been exposed to aging and population decline to the extent that they have begun to lose their autonomy. The contemporaneous wide area merger of cities, towns and villages, and of fishery cooperatives also contributed to this situation. By understanding the concerns of the government in relation to this historical context, we can assert on the one hand, that we can identify which powers interact with each other, and how they direct the change of the folk festival. On the other hand, we can also realize the profound diversity of the interactions between the fishermen and the public teams, without reducing them to a dichotomous frame.

The change in the Oshikuragō has already become irreversible. Under

these conditions, how will this festival be passed on from generation to generation? I think that one of the answers depends on how the Tamaeura fishermen can work with the government to reduce the burden they bear. Another depends on whether they can find a new meaning for the Oshikuragō outside fishery, as fishermen continue to hope in these difficult days. Because it is together with these new participants that the fishermen are being forced to think about the meaning of their race.

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