

Traditional Performing Arts as a Regional Resource: Examining Japan's Kagura Dance Form

Kenta Yamamoto^{1*}

^{1*} Kokugakuin University, Japan

Abstract

This article focuses on Kagura, a traditional Japanese dance form mainly practiced in rural Japan. This article throws light on how each community in the peripheral regions of Japan views this dance form. By doing so, we also focus on how regional cultural resources contribute to regional sustainability in these areas. Regional cultural resources are often viewed as tourism resources—that is, they are used to boost tourism. However, some of the cases considered in this paper show that regional cultural resources can be used in other manners. In other words, these cases show that tourism is not the only way to sustain regional cultures.

The findings presented in this article pertain to the broader question of how to properly implement a culture-based sustainable regional development plan. The findings and suggestions presented in this article can be applied to other contexts also.

Keywords: *tradition, the tourists' gaze, Japan, rural areas, cultural resources, community*

JEL Classification: P25, R11

1. Introduction

This article throws light on the ways in which Japan's declining birth rate and growing elderly population impact the cultural resources of its peripheral regions. This article also focuses on the broader question of how to properly implement a culture-based sustainable regional development plan to develop regional resources and revitalize and preserve traditional communities.

Following the Second World War, Japan experienced a steady wave of urbanization. Although urbanization was a consequence of Japan's economic development, it resulted in the depopulation of the country's peripheral regions, which in turn adversely affected those communities that were central to the stability of regional culture and economy. In fact, Japan's peripheral regions still continue to suffer as a result—in particular, these regions find it difficult to preserve and pass down knowledge of the folk and traditional performing arts, mainly due to the population decline in these regions: young, productive people tend to migrate to urban areas in search of employment. Recently, studies have focused on the aging of community members as well as the lack of inheritors of folk cultures in both peripheral and metropolitan regions in Japan; notably, these studies focus especially on the question of preserving and passing down traditional local cultures (Ando, 2001; Nagasawa, 2008; Kawano, 2010; etc).

Some researchers argue that traditional cultures can be preserved by building ties and facilitating exchanges between external actors and those who live in Japan's peripheral regions (Shimizu, 2012; Onjo, 1998; etc); in particular, they argue that traditional festivals can be used as cultural resources to build ties with external actors. Hoshino (2009) suggests that traditional festivals can be used to encourage not just those who

had migrated from these communities to return but prospective residents and tourists as well. On the other hand, some argue that doing so may result in conflicts of value and interest between external actors and those who reside in these communities (Nakazato, 2010; Hashimoto, 2014); in other words, these scholars anticipate cultural conflicts.

Following the Second World War, Japan mainly sought to revitalize its regional cultures, including the traditional performing arts, for economic reasons: revitalization was expected to boost tourism. To a certain extent, the current efforts to revitalize Japan's regional cultures are also based on the need to boost tourism. Therefore, the term "external actors" refers not only to prospective residents but also to tourists. Moreover, to regard traditional cultures as regional resources is to inevitably focus on the ways in which community members who inherit traditional cultures impact the relationship between (i) internal and external actors and (ii) tourism, especially tourists' pursuit of authentic experiences of traditional cultures.

In addition, communities tend to adopt different strategies to present their traditional practices as cultural resources. This mainly depends on the specific cultural practices of a region, as well as the status of those actors responsible for preserving traditional practices. Therefore, it is necessary to collect and compare different case studies to identify the empirical aspects commonly associated with the preservation of traditional cultures. Moreover, doing so also allows us to generalize the findings.

This article is structured as follows. First, it focuses on the various national land policies adopted by the Japanese government, as well as the changes in Japan's population since the Second World War. Following this, the article provides background information about Kagura, a traditional Japanese dance form. Next, this article throws light on the practices of communities; all the four communities chosen for this study are different in terms of the role of Kagura and the local governments' direction for cultural features. Finally, this article aims to identify the methods through which traditional cultures can most effectively be preserved in the form of regional resources. This research is also based on interviews conducted with members of the traditional communities and representatives of local governments. The interviews were conducted from December 2014 to October 2017.

2. Background

First, this section throws light on the national land policies adopted by the Japanese government following the Second World War. By doing so, this article seeks to understand how Japan's economic development led to its population crises. Following this, the article focuses on the general trends in Japan's population in order to better examine the declining birthrate and rapid aging in the country's peripheral regions. Finally, this section focuses on Kagura, a traditional dance form most commonly practiced in the Far East Island.

2.1 Changes in Japan's national land policy since the Second World War

This section focuses on the national land policies adopted by Japan following the Second World War. In the immediate aftermath of the war, Japan's policies and funds were mainly directed toward the reconstruction of those urban areas that were heavily damaged by aerial and naval attacks conducted by the USA. Consequently, a large number of laborers from the countryside had conglomerated in these urban areas. Japan's economy improved significantly during the mid-1950s. As a result, Japan actively began to pursue economic growth; in fact, Japan experienced high economic growth from the latter half of 1950s to the early half of 1970s. In 1962, the government enforced "the comprehensive national development plan" to facilitate the balanced development of national land. Under this plan, the three major metropolitan areas (and industrialized areas) were Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya, as well as the Pacific Belt Zone, which extended until Fukuoka, the northern part of Kyushu Island, and the Seto Inland Sea. Consequently, laborers for these industrial zones arrived mainly from the southern parts of Kyushu Island and the Tohoku region.

In 1968, the Japanese government implemented "the new comprehensive national development plan" to address the heavy concentration of population and industries in urban areas. In other words, this plan sought to distribute the fruits of high economic growth in a more even and just manner. Under this plan, national land was classified into seven areas: Hokkaido area, Tohoku area, the Capital area, Chubu area, Kinki area, Chugoku and Shikoku area, and Kyushu area. Industrial zones in these areas were mainly developed using resources that were readily available on the central belt, as was the case with the Pacific Belt Zone. Areas

beyond the industrial zones were transformed into large food supply bases and factory sites. Some of the areas were also developed into tourist spots.

However, this plan had to be shelved on account of a high inflation rate, which also put a brief end to Japan's pursuit of high economic growth. The inflation was mainly caused by rising land prices in 1972 and the increased cost of oil, which in turn gave rise to "the first oil shock" in 1973. In 1977, the Japanese government implemented "the third comprehensive national development plan." This plan was unique in that it was also designed to facilitate citizens' well-being. That is, the plan aimed to achieve all-round development, not just growth- or hardware-centric development. Notably, the plan sought to encourage citizens to lead a healthy lifestyle as part of its local development initiative. This period was believed to mark the beginning of the "age of localism," as the onus to implement development projects was transferred from the national government to local governments. At the same time, local development plans mainly aimed to create more employment opportunities. To this end, local governments sought to improve local infrastructure and attract factories from the central zone; their drive for industrialization was also supported by funds sanctioned by the national government.

During the 1980s, however, manufacturing factories were mainly set up overseas, and Japan's working population and its central administrative functions were concentrated in Tokyo. This was mainly due to (i) the rise in the value of the yen and (ii) trade conflicts with mainly the U.S. To address this issue, the government launched the fourth development plan, which aimed to transform national land into multipolar units. To this end, the government promoted the development of Osaka, Nagoya, and regional central cities such as Sapporo, Sendai, Hiroshima, and Fukuoka. The development of these regions was mainly based on the effective utilization of the infrastructure already present in these regions, especially in the Pacific Belt. The government also introduced the Integrated Services Digital Networks and a high-speed transportation network. During the same period, the government also built a number of "technopolises" throughout the country. Notably, as a result of the approval of largescale projects such as the construction of software parks and resorts, Japan also experienced an economic boom called the "bubble" economy during this period. However, the economic boom ended in the early-1990s.

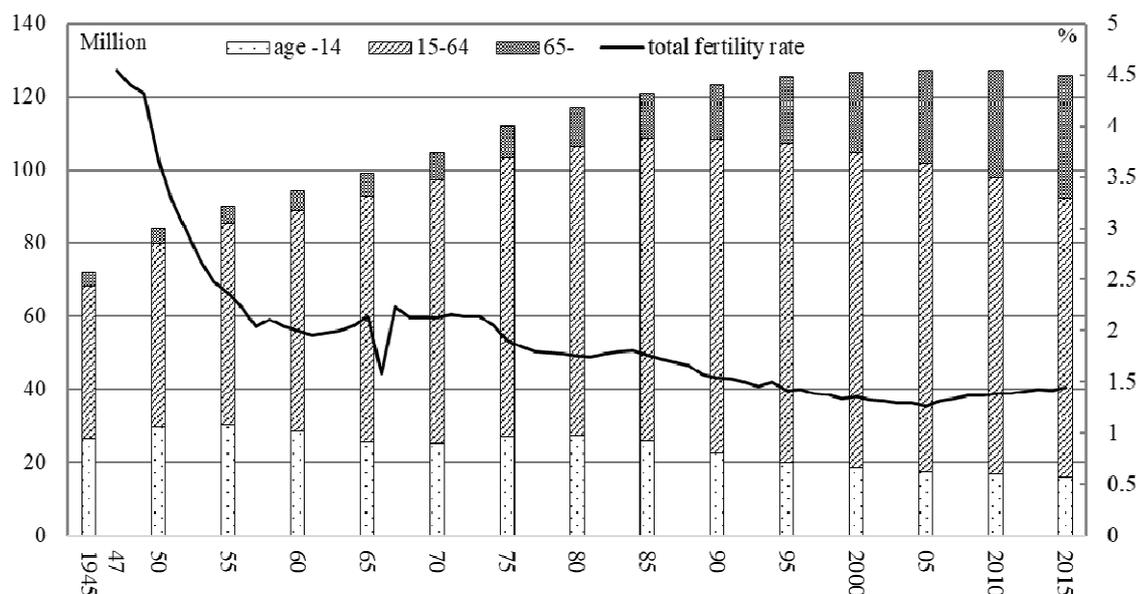
Although Japan implemented four distinct national land policies, it could not alleviate the population- and economy-related problems. In other words, a significant portion of Japan's population and economic activities were concentrated in metropolitan areas, especially in Tokyo, and this had several adverse impacts on Japan's peripheral regions. In addition, the collapse of the bubble economy necessitated greater internationalization in the field of business services, especially in the financial sector. It was in this context that Japan implemented its fifth national development plan. Implemented in 1998, the plan aimed to facilitate balanced, all-round development. This plan was also regarded as the main design for national land development in the 21st century. The plan was based on a long-term framework in order to ensure the multipolar structure of national land; notably, the plan also sought to promote inter-regional cooperation.

In 2005, the government announced its intention to overhaul the land use policies that were first implemented in 1962, and in 2014, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism launched the grand design for national land development 2050. It must be remembered that since 1962, the Japanese government has sought to make national land development a more balanced process. The 2014 report highlighted the need to stem the population decline in rural Japan, attract more investment, and maintain infrastructures efficiently. To this end, the report called for the establishment of nearly 5000 new and closely knit districts. Each district was expected to house nearly 1000 people. In addition, the districts were also expected to be within one hour's drive from each other.

2.2 Changes in Japan's population

Figure 1 shows the changes in Japan's population and total fertility rate since the Second World War. Japan's population exceeded 100 million in 1967; notably, its population was only 72 million in 1945. Japan's population peaked at 128.1 million in 2008. However, Japan's population has only declined since. For instance, as of 2016, its population was estimated to be around 126.9 million, of which 15.8 million were young (12.4%), 76.6 million were in their productive years (60.3%), and 34.6 million were aged 60 and above (27.3%).

Figure 1. Changes in Japan's population and total fertility rate (1945 to 2015)



Source: Jinko Dotai Tokei (Vital Statistics), Shoshika Shakai Taisaku Hakusho Heisei 29nen Ban (White paper of Declining Birthrate Society Countermeasures 2017)

Japan's total fertility rate during the first phase of the baby boom (1947–1949) was 4.5 (1947). By 1966, however, the total fertility rate had dropped to 1.58¹. Nonetheless, throughout the rest of the 1960s and 1970s, the rate hovered around 2 (from 1.96 in 1961 to 2.23 in 1967). The total fertility rate continued to hover around 2 until the second phase of the baby boom (1971-74). Following this, the total fertility rate dropped once again: in 1989, the total fertility rate dropped to 1.57. The lowest recorded rate in the postwar period was 1.26. Nonetheless, the total fertility rate recovered considerably; recently, the rate stood at 1.45 in 2015. As of 2016, however, Japan's total fertility rate stood at 1.44, and the number of births also dropped below the 1 million mark (the number of births as of 2016 was 970,000).

Table 1 shows the total fertility rate of each prefecture in Japan. It can be seen that the Tokyo metropolitan area has the lowest rate. Further, the Table also shows that the fertility rate tends to be rather low in Northeast Japan, whereas the fertility rate in Southwest Japan tends to be high. In 2017, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications reported that an increase in population was observed in 2015 in the seven prefectures from which the Tokyo metropolitan area was carved out—Tokyo, Saitama, Chiba, and Kanagawa—as well as Aichi, Fukuoka, and Okinawa prefectures². However, the population in the remaining 40 prefectures had decreased in the same year. This is most likely due to the fact that a significant number of young, productive people migrate to the metropolitan areas in search of employment.

Table 1. Total fertility rate by prefecture (as of 2016)

Region	Prefecture	Total fertility rate (%)	Region	Prefecture	Total fertility rate (%)
	National	1.44		24 Mie	1.51
Hokkaido	1 Hokkaido	1.29	Kinki	25 Shiga	1.56
Tohoku	2 Aomori	1.48		26 Kyoto	1.34
	3 Iwate	1.45		27 Osaka	1.37
	4 Miyagi	1.34		28 Hyogo	1.49

	5	Akita	1.39		29	Nara	1.36
	6	Yamagata	1.47		30	Wakayama	1.50
	7	Fukushima	1.59		31	Tottori	1.60
Kanto	8	Ibaraki	1.47	Chugoku	32	Shimane	1.75
	9	Tochigi	1.46		33	Okayama	1.56
	10	Gunma	1.48		34	Hiroshima	1.57
	11	Saitama	1.37		35	Yamaguchi	1.58
	12	Chiba	1.35	Shikoku	36	Tokushima	1.51
	13	Tokyo	1.24		37	Kagawa	1.64
	14	Kanagawa	1.36		38	Ehime	1.54
Chubu	15	Niigata	1.43		39	Kochi	1.47
	16	Toyama	1.50	Kyushu	40	Fukuoka	1.50
	17	Ishikawa	1.53		41	Saga	1.63
	18	Fukui	1.65		42	Nagasaki	1.71
	19	Yamanashi	1.51		43	Kumamoto	1.66
	20	Nagano	1.59		44	Oita	1.65
	21	Gifu	1.54		45	Miyazaki	1.71
	22	Shizuoka	1.55	46	Kagoshima	1.68	
	23	Aichi	1.56	Okinawa	47	Okinawa	1.95

Source: Jinko Dotai Tokei (Vital Statistics)

2.3 What is Kagura?

Kagura is a traditional dance form most commonly performed by practitioners of Shintoism, a unique religion of Japan. Performers are believed to be capable of summoning gods onto the stage named “Kamukura.” The performers also communicate with the gods and typically receive messages about a season’s harvests as well as tell people’s hopes and wishes. This dance form is classified into two types. The “Mi-Kagura” or “Miya-Kagura” form is typically performed as a ritual in the emperor’s palace. The “Sato-Kagura” form embodies various folk beliefs valued by members of the community, including the Shinto priests. In this article, “Kagura” is used to refer to the “Sato-Kagura” form. Kagura performances also typically involve allusions to, or direct enactments of, stories pertaining to Japanese gods. In fact, according to mythological accounts, the Kagura form was first performed by a deity. Nonetheless, there are several other accounts of the origin of this dance form, and one of these accounts is summarized below.

Until the Edo era (up to 1868), there were no clear distinctions between the private practices of Shintoism and Buddhism. During this period, Kagura was mainly performed for religious leaders: for holy men and monks affiliated with Shintoism and Buddhism, teachers of Yin Yan, and men who supplied medicine to the villages. Kagura was mainly performed for these figures in an attempt to enhance their authority (Nishitsunoi, 1934; Takagi, 1986, Ishizuka, 2005). Interestingly, during this period, the performance of Kagura involved a number of magical elements.

In the Meiji Era (1868–1912), Shintoism and other religions, particularly Buddhism was clearly distinguished in accordance with government policy. This was mainly due to the government's attempt to build a state centered on Tenno, the emperor of Japan, who was believed to be a descendant of the gods. Until the Edo era, Japan was mainly a samurai-centered nation³. In effect, the Meiji government banned the folk religious practices of Shinto priests in order to distinguish Shintoism from other religions and increase the authority of Shintoism. As a result, followers were prohibited from practicing their religious rituals. This ban was mainly imposed to enhance the authority of priests. In response to this ban, members of the community, including shrine parishioners, were trained in Kagura by their religious leaders (Ishizuka, 1979). In other words, the dance form was being preserved and actively handed down. When Shinto priests performed this dance form in the Edo era, it spread to other regions as well by the priests. It spread more after the Meiji era, resulting in a connection with and import of other traditional cultures and dances in the village. The main performers of Kagura after this era were villagers. The villagers mixed Kagura and other dance forms, leading to the popularization of the Kagura dance form. Consequently, the dance form adopted certain stylistic and aesthetic principles and practices characteristic of other traditional dance forms. During this period, the performance of Kagura involved a lot of festivities; it was typically performed for communal entertainment.

When the Second World War ended in 1945, Japan was occupied by the General Headquarters and the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP). The SCAP directed the Japanese government to ban all religious practices and events. Kagura was also banned as a result, even though it was mainly performed for communal entertainment. In certain communities, Kagura was performed covertly. Other communities showed the SCAP that Kagura was mainly performed for entertainment. Therefore, some of these communities were allowed to host Kagura performances. Some communities also attempted to override the religious elements of Kagura by assimilating principles and practices characteristic of other performing arts (Goto and Takeda, 2008; Mimura, 2010).

Figure 2. (photograph) An old-styled costumed for the Kagura performance in Hinokage



Source: Shot by the author on 20th December, 2014

Thus, Kagura assumed different forms and purposes in different villages. For example, in some villages, performers tend to wear plain white clothes and perform on modestly decorated stages (Figure 2). In another village, performers wore flashy clothes, and the performance also included fireworks on stage (Figure 3). Today, Kagura is understood as an aspect of regional traditional culture; its religious significance does not receive much attention. Nonetheless, Kagura is still regarded as a religious ceremony in some villages. In these villages, Kagura tends to be performed annually from autumn to winter and is typically dedicated to the local shrines.

However, in communities faced with serious depopulation, the significance of Kagura seems to have been forgotten already. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to preserve the dance form in these communities. Moreover, it is equally important to preserve other local cultural practices related to this dance form.

Figure 3. (photograph) A Kagura performer in Gotsu wearing a flashy costume; and a dragon



Source: Shot by the author on 6th August, 2016

3. Case studies

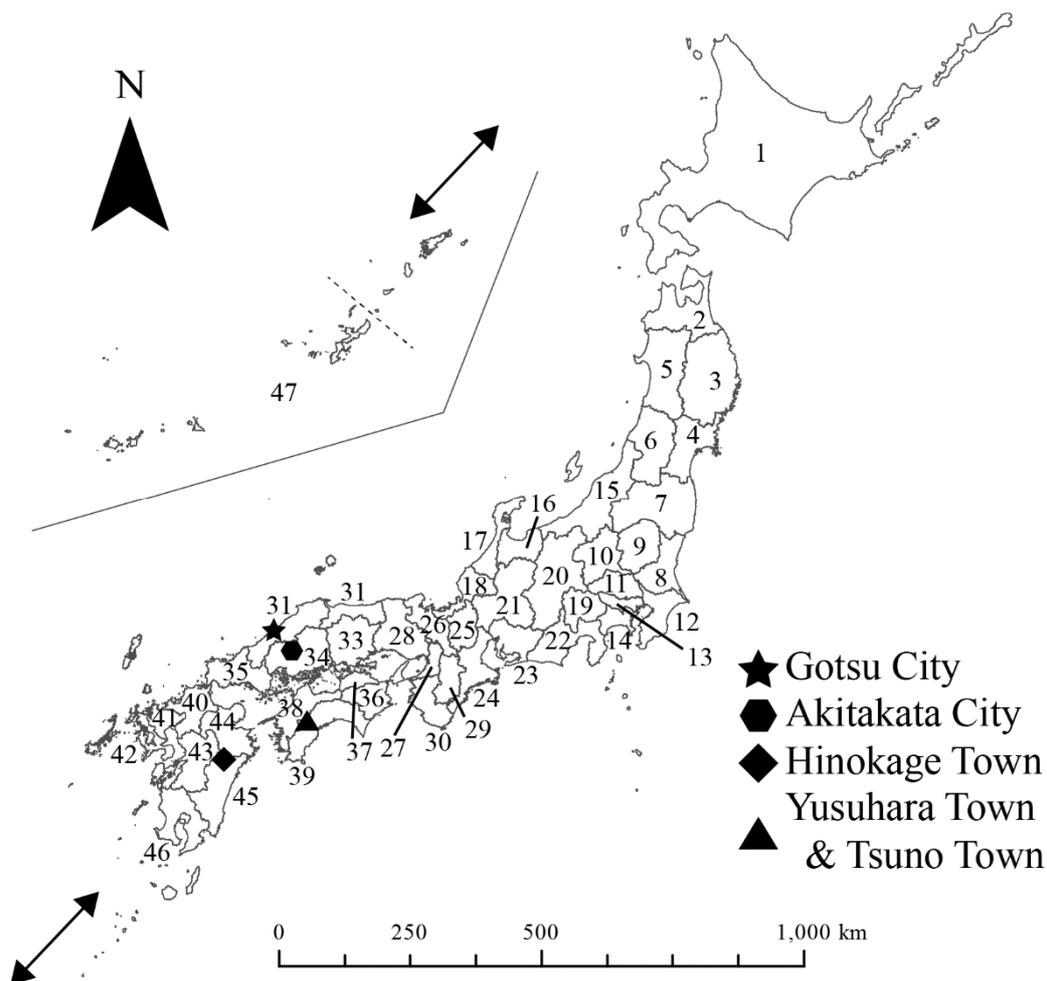
This section focuses on four case studies conducted in western Japan (Figure 4). These case studies throw light on the various factors that influence the preservation of Kagura in these regions.

3.1 “Iwami Kagura” in Shimane Prefecture

3.1.1 Basic Information about Kagura in Shimane Prefecture

Some researchers argue that Kagura is practiced in three distinct forms in Shimane Prefecture (Ishizuka, 1979). The “Izumo Kagura” form is most commonly practiced in the Izumo region, which lies in the eastern part of the prefecture. The “Oki Kagura” form is typically practiced in Oki Islands. The “Iwami Kagura” form is mainly practiced in the Iwami region, which is located in the western part of the prefecture. This article focuses exclusively on this third form. Nonetheless, these three forms of Kagura can be broken down into smaller segments.

Figure 4. (photograph) Prefectures and case study areas



Note: The number of prefectures is the same as in Table 1.

As many as 120 inheritance groups are located around the Iwami region, and all these groups are rightful inheritors of the Iwami Kagura form⁴. The Iwami Kagura form is typically very easy to understand; its expressions are highly relatable with other folk dance forms, and it is mainly performed for the purpose of entertainment owing to its propensity to provide recreation. It is also characterized by its assimilation of theatrical themes, especially themes related to traditional dance drama forms, such as Kabuki, Noh, and Kyogen. Performers typically wear flashy costumes decorated with spun gold and other spangles. Called “Jado,” the performers’ costumes, developed in the Meiji era, are typically large and tubular; notably, “Jado” means the body of a dragon. The performance also includes on-stage smog and fireworks. Many of these elements were introduced after the Meiji Era.

The Izumo Oyashiro Shrine in this prefecture figures prominently in Japanese mythology. The prefecture regards the myths surrounding this shrine as important regional tourism resources. The myths associated with this dance form have been popularized to boost tourism. In general, cultural properties and traditional performing arts are managed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology and local boards of education. However, the Publication Relations Division of this prefecture oversees the public presentation of Iwami Kagura and the local board of education manages other cultural aspects and properties of this prefecture, including historical buildings.

The 120 inheritance groups operating in this prefecture have the autonomy to collaborate with other groups. A large number of these groups, however, are currently involved in a negotiating with the local government. These groups negotiate with the government mainly through an association and by exchanging

information. The association is independent from, and beneficial to, the local government as it enables the local government to share information about events and makes consensus among different groups possible. The association also enables the local government to plan and implement appropriate integrated policies throughout the region.

3.1.2 Arifuku onsen hot spring spa and a dance group

Arifuku onsen hot spring spa is located in Gotsu City, in the center of Shimane Prefecture. There are about 11.5 thousand families in this region, whereas the city is home to about 24000 people; the aging rate for this population is 36.4% (2017). The city is located the farthest from Tokyo in terms of time and distance⁵. As of 2015, 5.1% of the city's inhabitants were employed in the primary industry, 25.7% in the secondary industry, and 68.3% in the tertiary industry⁶. The Iwami ginzan silver mine, a popular world heritage site, is located in Oda City, which is very accessible from Gotsu.

The Arifuku onsen area is home to 150 families; as many as 415 people reside in this area⁷. The official website of the Tourists' Association of Gotsu⁸ lists four hotels containing spa areas, including public spas and other shops. Three of these hotels span an area of about 80 square meters and can be regarded as small hot spring towns⁹.

The city also houses a Kagura theater, with a seating capacity of 30. The theater is located in the central part of the town. The town also has an inheritance group; the group was established in 1967. The group consists of 18 members aged between 20 and 58; the group is represented by people living within and outside the town. The group accepts requests for Kagura from the association of Arifuku onsen hot spring spa. The performances are staged at this theater and are mainly meant for the tourists. Performances are usually scheduled on Saturday nights on a monthly basis (as of 2017); typically, each performance lasts two hours (Figure 3)¹⁰. According to the head of this group, members tend to enjoy introducing the dance to the audience. Doing so, the head reveals, motivates them to organize more Kagura performances.

3.2 "Geihoku Kagura" in Hiroshima Prefecture

3.2.1 Basic Information about Kagura in Hiroshima Prefecture

Hiroshima Prefecture is located to the south of Shimane Prefecture. There are as many as 300 inheritance groups in the prefecture, and their dance forms are roughly classified into five types. Interestingly, these groups also regularly compete against each other¹¹. One of the important goals of Kagura is to ask for peace and happiness from the gods. However, acting to compete against other groups deviates from this goal. Nonetheless, the Geihoku Kagura form has religious, artistic, and entertainment value.

Over 100 groups in the prefecture have inherited the right to perform Geihoku Kagura (Wada, 2017). This form is characterized by a relatively new style called "Shin-mai," which was created in the period following the Second World War. Communities in this region created new dance forms by borrowing several artistic and stylistic elements from other traditional performance arts. Nonetheless, the borrowed themes and expressions were emptied of their religious significance to ensure compliance with the SCAP's directive. In this context, "Shin-mai" emerged as a new style of Kagura. "Shin-mai" was mainly performed to entertain members of the community, and its themes were typically simple and easy to understand. As a result, "Shin-mai" became a very popular art form. Today, the Kagura forms most commonly performed in the prefecture, including Geihoku Kagura, are collectively called "Hiroshima Kagura" by the local government. The term "Hiroshima Kagura" represents the government's efforts to forge a unique identity for the prefecture to boost tourism.

3.2.2 Kagura Dome in Akitakada City

Akitakada City is located on the border between Hiroshima Prefecture and Shimane Prefecture. As many as 13,500 families live in this city. In total, the city is home to about 29,300 people. The population ages at a rate of 38.4% (2017). As of 2015, 16.0% of the city's residents were employed in the primary industry, 27.3% in the secondary industry, and 56.3% in the tertiary industry. The city also houses a total of 22 inheritance groups. The city regards Kagura and the holy place of Shin-mai as an important tourism resource because the founder of the Shin-mai style had also lived in Akitakada¹².

A small Kagura-based recuperation facility called "Kagura monzen toji mura" (this roughly translates to "the hot spring care village in front of the Kagura gate") was established in the city in 2004. The facility is a joint endeavor—that is, it was established and is operated by a joint public-private corporation. The facility includes a covered stage called the "Kagura Dome," which has a seating capacity of 2,000, and a 150-seat theater called "Kamukura-za." In addition, the facility also has restaurants, hot springs, and accommodation

facilities. The “Kagura Dome” is presently the largest of its kind in Japan. The city’s inheritance groups perform at the dome on a rotation basis almost every Sunday afternoon. The groups also perform in the theater almost every Saturday night.

Every year, an event called “Kagura Koshien” is organized for high school students all over Japan¹³. In Akitakata, “Kagura Koshien” is typically held at the dome as a two-day event. The event is typically scheduled by a committee constituted by the Akitakata government, the local education board, the company that operates the facility, and high schools participating in the festival. The event is organized especially for and high school students. A total of 15 schools, including schools located outside the prefecture, participated in the event held in 2017¹⁴. The event took place for the seventh time in 2017. Students attending the event from faraway locations were hosted by some of the city’s residents, as lodging and accommodation facilities were at full capacity. According to a representative of the city’s administrative unit—this respondent was also a Kagura performer—a lot of families that hosted the visiting high school students also attended the event. The families, the respondent revealed, also cheered the high school students. Therefore, it can be said that the event also facilitated inter-regional exchange.

3.3 “Takachiho Kagura” in Miyazaki Prefecture

3.3.1 Basic Information about Kagura in Miyazaki Prefecture

According to Yamaguchi (2000), there may be as many as 350 villages in this prefecture with the right to perform Kagura. Moreover, there are eight systems or variants of Kagura in this prefecture. These variants are classified into three types based on the primary occupation of the performers: the type called “adjacent fishery Kagura” is practiced in the coastal area, “burned field and hunting Kagura” in the mountain area, and “rice field Kagura” in the plain between these two areas (Yamaguchi, 2000).

The town of Takachiho is located on the mountainous side of Miyazaki Prefecture; the town also shares its border with Oita Prefecture and Kumamoto Prefecture. In and around the town are a number of holy sites and places of mythological importance (See Section 2.3). Given this, Miyazaki Prefecture has branded itself as the “home of the myth.” Kagura, an important aspect of Shintoism, is central to this branding, which aims to boost tourism (Yamamoto et al., 2016).

3.3.2 Kagura and the community in the Town of Hinokage

The town of Hinokage is located in the northern region of the prefecture. As of 2017, its population was around 3,800, and there were as many as 1,500 households in the town (2017). As much as 90% of its area is covered by forest. In and around the town are a number of deep, V-shaped valleys formed by a river. Terraced paddy fields are a common sight in the town; one can also see human settlements on the slope of the valley. As of 2015, 35.8% of the town’s residents were employed in the primary industry, 17.8% in the secondary industry, and 46.3% in the tertiary industry. Until 1963, tin ore mining was the main industry in this region. However, the town’s population has continued to decline since the mine’s closure. For instance, in 1970, the town’s population was 10,000; in 2005, it had dropped to around 5,000, and currently the population is estimated to be 3,800. Until 2005, a railroad, which ran through the town’s center, was the main mode of transportation for the residents.

Interestingly, the railroad bridge in this town was once the highest in Japan. The bridge connected Hinokage to the town of Takachiho and the city of Nobeoka, which is located in the northern region of the prefecture; the current population of this city is estimated to be 120,000. However, in 2005, the railroad was severely damaged by a typhoon, and major bridges were washed away. The railroad company was forced to suspend train services for the line in the immediate aftermath of the typhoon; the line was abolished altogether in 2008.

The form of Kagura inherited by groups in this town is called “Hinokage Kagura,” which is considered a kind of Takachiho Kagura. The latter is the form inherited by most villages in the town of Takachiho. Notably, Takachiho Kagura was declared an important and intangible national cultural property in 1978. The town regards the dance form as a highly important aspect of its tourism industry¹⁵. On the other hand, Hinokage has not actively made use of Kagura as a tourism resource.

In 1985, the inheritance groups in Hinokage came together and formed an association. Although there were originally 27 groups, the number of the groups has now decreased to 19. This is mainly due to the lack of inheritors. Nonetheless, the city has recognized the various forms of Kaguras practiced in the town as an intangible folklore cultural asset. The city has also guaranteed financial support to the groups¹⁶.

Interestingly, neighboring residents teach Kagura to students in the elementary school. The dance has been taught since 2000 in an attempt to cultivate local patriotism. The school also established a cultural treasures protection club that year. Outside their school hours, students affiliated with this club aim to promote awareness about the inheritance of Kagura among the community.

In addition, a Kagura festival is conducted in the town every year at the end of April (Yamamoto et al. 2016)¹⁷. Until 2015, in an attempt to attract more tourists, the town conducted a walking event and a festival for the terrace fields along with the Kagura festival. However, the festivals did not attract enough tourists, and most of the visitors were residents of the town. At the Kagura festival, inheritance groups and the protection club organized Kagura performances for one day of the festival period.

According to a person in charge of the town's administration, very few tourists visited the festival. In addition, the respondent also revealed that the town does very little to advertise Kagura as a tourism resource, which in turn adversely affects its tourism prospects. Nonetheless, based on the above discussion, it can be said that the town actively seeks to promote awareness about the importance of inheriting and preserving Kagura.

3.4 "Tosa no Kagura" in Kochi Prefecture

In the three cases discussed above, Kagura is regarded as an important regional resource. Both the private sector and the government are involved in preserving Kagura and presenting it as a regional resource to boost tourism. The following case, however, is quite different. The following case focuses on the ways in which internal actors build consensus.

3.4.1 Basic Information about Kagura in the Western region of Kochi

"Tosa no Kagura," the Kagura form most commonly practiced in Kochi Prefecture, was declared an important folklore, as well as a national and cultural asset in 1980. This form of Kagura draws from nine other Kagura forms and other traditional performing arts practiced in the prefecture (Tosa was the former name of this prefecture; the name was changed during the Meiji era). The Agency of Cultural Affairs describes this Kagura as follows:

Kagura inherited in this region can be classified as a kind of Izumo Kagura in the point of a dance style with hand tools such as Suzu (Shinto bells), Wands of Sakaki (*Cleyera japonica*), and theatrical dances based on Japanese myths "Kojiki" and "Nihon Shoki" and so on. These dances show aspects unique to this region and keep elements that are regarded as being pre-era before today's common Kagura¹⁸.

There are only nine inheritance groups in the prefecture, and all of them are located on the mountainous side of the prefecture. Some of the inheritance groups, including the groups this section focuses on, are mainly administrative units that were formed following the big merger of municipalities, and the distribution of residences was the same as before the big merger, which was a result of the municipal boom of the 1990s and 2000s; this boom came to be called "Heisei no Daigappei." It must be remembered at this juncture that in the other cases, the community was the prime unit¹⁹.

3.4.2 Yusuhara and Tsunoyama Kagura

The town of Yusuhara is a mountain village located in the northwest of Kochi Prefecture; it shares its border with Ehime Prefecture, and the city of Kochi, the prefectural capital, is not easily accessible from this town, it takes a 90-minute car journey to reach Kochi from here. As of 2017, the population of Yusuhara was estimated to be 3,600; the aging rate was 42.3%. As of 2015, 27.7% of the town's residents were employed in the primary industry, 24.0% in the secondary industry, and 48.3% in the tertiary industry. As much as 91% of this region is covered by forest.

This case study focuses on Yusuhara, which was constituted by six communities until the Edo era, and the next section focuses on Higashi-tsuno, which comprised two communities; notably, these two communities functioned as one associated community until the Edo era and were associated with the six communities of Yusuhara. These eight communities had been home to a religious shrine. During the early Meiji Era, this block of communities was separated into old Nishi-Tsuno Village (presently the town of Yusuhara) and old Higashi-Tsuno Village. This separation came into effect in 1889, and it represented the new government's attempt to rebuild communal autonomy.

A form of Kagura called “Tsunoyama Kagura” was inherited by a family of Shinto priests after the Second World War. This family inherited this form despite the Meiji government’s stance against priests performing folk ceremonies—in other words, priests were banned from performing folk ceremonies²⁰. In 1948, after the Second World War, the Shinto priest sought to recruit inheritors from the village of Yusuhara (former Nishi-Tsuno Village), as the priest’s family did not have enough inheritors. Some residents participated in the priest’s recruitment drive and acquired basic skills and knowledge about the dance form in this process (Takagi, 1986). Currently, the inheritance group is constituted by 26 members and is spread across six communities in Yusuhara. This group is also diverse in terms of the members’ age: the group consists of a wide range of members, from those in their late-teens to those in their 80s.

The group performs at the local shrine every October and November, and the performance is typically dedicated to the deities of the shrine. In addition, the group also performs in parties and festivals. In total, the group performs more than 20 times a year. As per convention, the Mayor is the chairperson of the group. However, that position is honorary and the group does not accept funds from the town so as to keep their activities independent from the local government.

People living in the town regard Kagura as an important aspect of their culture. Recently, the town conducted an environment improvement project. As part of this project, the town placed small statues of well-known characters of Kagura (such as the god of fertility) on pathways. This initiative was based on the consensus of the residents living in all six areas of the town (Figure 5).

The high school in the town also teaches Kagura to its students; in fact, the school has done so, officially, since 1973. The school has a total of 130 high school students, and every year, 30 students learn Kagura. Learners of Kagura are part of what the school calls “Discover Club.” Members of the inheritance group teach Kagura to these high school students. Kagura is taught on a fortnightly basis, and each session lasts for two hours. By the end of the sessions, students typically acquire four repertoires. Students also have the opportunity to perform as many as five times during this course. Some of their performances are also staged outside the town²¹.

Figure 5. (photograph) A statue next to a pathway in central Yusuhara Town



Source: Shot by the author on 30th October, 2017

3.4.3 Tsunoyama koshiki Kagura in Tsuno

The town of Tsuno is located to the east of Yusuhara. Until 1956, the region was divided into three villages; and until 2005, the region was divided into a town and a village (See also endnote 20). Interestingly, one of these villages was Higashi-Tsuno, which we focused on in section 3.4.2. The town's population is estimated to be 6,023, and in total, the town has an estimated 2,699 households. As of 2015, 20.9% of the town's residents were employed in the primary industry, 27.1% in the secondary industry, and 52.1% in the tertiary industry. As much as 90% of this area is also covered by forests.

Surprisingly, there is only one inheritance group in this town. Members of the group divide their roles and responsibilities with the residents. For instance, members of this group are only required to perform the dance, whereas in the other groups we had focused on, members danced and played music. Residents living near each shrine play music during the performances. The residents and members of the group practice at the town office on a weekly basis. Occasionally in autumn, junior high school students also participate in the practice sessions.

As mentioned above, old Higashi-Tsuno was a part of what is presently the town of Tsuno. Nonetheless, Tsuno is also constituted by the same large community comprising eight communities, six of which became part of Yusuhara and two became part of Higashi-Tsuno; its villages are administered by the Yusuhara town administration. Shrines located in the village of Higashi-Tsuno hosted Kagura performances by Shinto priests

from a shrine located in Yusuhara. However, after the war, when the right to perform Kagura was handed down to communities, two communities of Higashi-Tsuno were not called by the priest. As a result, these two communities established their own inheritance group by. Some members of the inheritance group located in the town claim that they perform the more authentic form of Kagura, and they call this form “Tsunoyama old style Kagura,” which is distinguished from the form of Kagura practiced in Tsuno.

Kagura is also used as an educational tool for kindergarteners, elementary, and junior high school students. The local educational board believes that teaching Kagura to children at a young age enables the cultivation of local patriotism, but it must be remembered that there are no high schools in this town. Therefore, if a student wishes to continue his or her education in Kagura, he or she must do so in Yusuhara, the neighboring town²². This situation may worsen the population crisis in this region. As more students leave the region to pursue higher education and better employment in urban areas, the population crisis is bound to worsen²³.

3. Discussion

4.1 Preserving Kagura

Kagura has a different status and a different set of roles in different communities. Some communities regard Kagura as a tourism resource; they market Kagura aggressively to attract more tourists. On the other hand, some communities view Kagura as a tool for the preservation of cultural tradition—as something that can, and must, be handed down to the next generation. These communities tend to be skeptical of handing down knowledge of this dance form to outsiders. Inheritors of Kagura who view the dance form as a regional resource also aim to preserve its "authenticity." In addition, the very act of inheriting knowledge and the right to perform Kagura itself has a great impact on communal culture and identity.

In the case of Iwami and Geihoku, Kagura is regarded as a tourism resource because the forms of Kagura performed here are easy to understand and appreciate. When performed as a religious ceremony, Kagura involves a number of complicated stylistic and ritualistic elements, which may be hard to understand. Shin-mai is a typical Kagura form of Geihoku Kagura. Iwami Kagura is characterized by not only Jado but also spanning wears and staging that entails the use of smokes and fireworks. In addition, these two forms of Kaguras have succeeded in popularizing the dance form. Their success can be attributed to the adaptability of these traditions. For instance, people in Iwami developed new costumes and tools following the Meiji Era, whereas people in Geihoku developed new theme and styles after the Second World War.

On the other hand, we have also noted that the use of the Kagura in each region is determined as path-dependent by the relationships between the various actors and stakeholders. For instance, let us look at the case of Akitakata, the hometown of the founder of “Shin-mai.” Given this historical fact, the town positioned itself as an important center of Kagura. It also constructed performance facilities to reflect its prominence as a cultural center. On the other hand, the town of Hinokage had to change its key industry—its main mode of income—ore mining. Faced with rapid population decline and migration, the town was forced to stop services on one of its most important railway lines. Today, very few tourists visit Hinokage. Therefore, it may not be feasible to market Kagura as a tourism resource. Yusuhara and Higashi-Tsuno had practiced the same form of Kagura until an administrative border was introduced to divide the two regions. This also led to the creation of two distinct forms of Kagura.

4.2 Tourism and local resources

In this section, the findings of this study are placed in the context of tourism. Generally, to attract more tourists, it is important to identify the marketable characteristics of a place. Furthermore, tourists tend to prefer experiencing new and unknown locations—in philosophical terms, tourists tend to prefer experiencing the condition called "there." In other words, tourism can be regarded as the "consumption of space." Tourists also tend to actively seek authentic experiences. Urry (1990) explains tourists' expectations by relying on Foucault's concept of “Gaze.” At this point, it is important to note that a tourist's gaze may be the gaze of an outsider, and this gaze can influence the traditional culture of a region. Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) point out that the very idea of tradition presupposes the existence of outsiders. The idea of outsiders in turn emphasizes difference—the difference between “us” and “them.” It is not possible to review seminal sociological and cultural anthropological works on the concepts of “tradition” and “outsiders” in detail in this

section. Nonetheless, we can infer from these studies that the tourist's gaze and his or her evaluations are highly likely to be different compared to the insider's gaze. In other words, the objects—both tangible and intangible—communities prefer to sell in the name of tourism may not be the objects preferred by tourists.

Some communities accepted change; they actively sought to contribute to the evolution of their tradition. This practice also enables communities to provide and market goods as per the consumers' needs—in this case, tourists²⁴. Nonetheless, this practice is not without problems. Members of the community may find that ceaseless adaption results in the loss of sanctity or authenticity. In the case of Kagura, some communities noted that the dance form had lost its religious tenor. To address this problem, they try to answer by setting two stories—one of a religious ceremony or resources to maintain their community and the other of a tourist-oriented resource for maintaining their culture. In other words, they dance their Kagura for the local shrine as a religious ceremony once a year and at other times; they dance their Kagura for tourists. There is also the element of showing their dance to tourists as a way of conveying that it is part of the culture they have inherited.

On the other hand, in some regions, it is difficult to present or market Kagura as a tourism resource. This is because Kagura is not merely a tourism resource; it enables people to maintain ties with their community; it is educative; it is used to cultivate local patriotism; and it provides communal entertainment. Therefore, Kagura should not be viewed solely as a tourism resource. It has several other important functions. Moreover, this also shows that cultural resources cannot be preserved by boosting tourism alone.

At the same time, it is important to define regional resources accurately. It is equally important to understand that commercializing communal cultures without paying attention to their specific regional contexts may be harmful. Marketing, tourism, and development alone cannot guarantee the happiness or well-being of traditional communities. In the final analysis, residents must have the autonomy to decide how to use or present local culture. At the same time, it is equally important for these communities to understand the needs of all stakeholders, including external actors.

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Endnotes

1. This year is called "Hinoeuma" in folklore. Some people do not like to give birth to a baby in this year because the babies born in this year have bad personalities and bring harm to their future husband. If used, write here endnotes.
2. <http://www.stat.go.jp/data/jinsui/2016np/index.htm>
3. In modern times, Buddhism was largely tied to the culture of feudal society.
4. Ishizuka described around 200 groups in his book published in 1979. The person in charge of the inheritance group association in the local government pointed out around 120 existing groups in recent years.
5. It takes about six and a half hours to go from Tokyo Station to Gotsu City government at the least.
6. The ratio of employment by industry (three sectors) in Japan is 4.2% in the primary industry, 25.2% in the secondary industry, and 70.6% in the tertiary industry.
7. It is said that the spa was discovered in 650 A.D. with mildly alkaline spring water.
8. <http://gotsu-kanko.jp/gotsuonsen/arifuku/>
9. According to an interview, there were 10 hotels at the time of the inheritance of the group, which was described later, and these were established in 1967.
10. When the author surveyed the group in 2016, they used to present dance every Saturday night.
11. According to Mimura (2013), 23 concerts were held in 2011 in the prefecture.
12. For example, as of October 2017, an image linked to advertisement banner recruitment is displayed on the city homepage on the web; Characters drawn on the banner are wearing a Kagura costume. As the "recommended tourist points in the city" on the tourist association's homepage, "Kagura" is introduced alongside "accommodation/hot springs," "gourmet," "historical sites," "outdoor," and "flower sights."
13. "Koshien" is the baseball stadium located in Hyogo Prefecture. The stadium is famous as the venue for the Japanese High School Baseball Championship.
14. Some high schools in Japan conduct Kagura related class as part of curriculum and/or an extracurricular activity. A case will be shown in Section 3.4.
15. For example, according to the myth, "Amano-Iwato" cave located in the city is the place at which god danced first in Kagura on the front of there.
16. Hinokage Kagura was designated as an important intangible prefectural cultural property in 2017.
17. The festival is decided to be held at the end of November every year since the 30th festival in 2016.

18.<http://kunishitei.bunka.go.jp/bsys/maindetails.asp>

19.Heisei is the name of the era starting 1991 in Japan. Two government-led merger booms have taken place after the Second World War to the present. One is “Showa no Daigappei (the great merger of municipals of the Showa era),” which started in the 1950s. One of the purposes of the merger was to effectively rebuild the government structure after the war. The other merger is that of Heisei, which peaked from 2005 to 2006. One of the purposes of this merger was to strengthen the fiscal foundation and promote decentralization by broadening the area of the municipality.

20. See in section 2.3.

21. The class learning the Kagura form participated in the “Kagura Koshien” event introduced in Section 3.2.

22. It is important to explain the Japanese education system. Compulsory education entails being in elementary school for 6–12 years of age and in junior high school for 13–15 years of age. A new grade starts every April. Generally, students graduate from junior high school and enter high school. According to the School Basic Survey 2017 conducted by Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, the high school enrollment rate in 2017 was 98.8% in Japan. Of course, a student who has no school within a commutable range of distance from his/her house leaves his/her hometown and enters a school that has a dormitory or lodges near a school he/she wants to enter. Furthermore, the entrance rate to higher education institutes, including people who failed to enter institutes and are preparing for the next entrance, was 80.6% in 2017. Many of these high education institutes are located in urban areas. It may be noted that these entrance behaviors are one of the factors of population outflow of young people from rural areas.

23. According to a report by the Yusuhara high school, the one located in the town, 26 students graduated in March 2017. Under 10 students can commute to schools or work places outside the town.

24. Consumers mentioned here were expanding from only members of the community to tourists from urban areas and to foreign travelers who had a greatly different cultural backbone compared with the economy and society of the community that was expanding from only the village to the domestic to the international space.