

2023 FALL



EPOK Research Project

ESSAY COLLECTION



About EPOK Research Project

EPOK リサーチプロジェクトは、岡山大学の交換留学 EPOK 生の個別研究です。日本の社会や文化を探求する視野から自由に個々の課題を設定し、秋学期の約4か月を通じて、実践的なフィールドワークを含むリサーチを行い、その成果を小論文にまとめました。多忙な留学生活の1学期に、日本語学習と格闘し、異文化を実感しながら取り組んだものです。2023年度秋期は、5つのリサーチプロジェクトが行われ、学期末には研究発表会を行いました。

In the course of EPOK Research Project EPOK five students worked on the individual research theme in relation to their interest in Japanese culture and society throughout the fall semester of 2023. The compilation of the research essay shows the final product of their exploration and discovery. The EPOK research essay collection displays a variety of the student's interest, including Japan's social issues, culture and life of the Japanese people.

The students endeavored to get connected with Japan, the local communities and Okadai students through meetings, questionnaires and interviews. This collection demonstrates their spontaneous interest and sincere contribution in pursuing the topics. At the end of the semester the students presented the research paper and finalized the course with good applause.

2024年2月

OBAYASHI Junko 大林純子

EPOK coordinator
Institute of Global Human Resource Development
Okayama University

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Tattoos in Japan 日本における刺青

Jayy Ward ジェイ ウォード

California State University East Bay (America)

Summary: Abstract

The current study investigates the perceptions of tattoos among both Japanese residents and foreign residents in Japan. To establish a contextual framework, a comprehensive literature review will delve into the historical and cultural significance of tattoos worldwide. 20 Japanese and foreign students will participate in a self-administered survey designed to capture their experiences and sentiments regarding tattoos. The collected data will undergo analysis to identify potential correlations between attitudes towards tattoos and participants' country of origin. It was hypothesized that foreign students will have more positive attitudes towards tattoos than Japanese residents. Results ultimately supported the hypothesis, as only foreign students reported having tattoos.

要旨:

本研究では、日本人学生と在日外国人留学生のタトゥーに対する認識を調査した。分析の枠組みを確立するために、包括的な文献レビューを行い、世界におけるタトゥーの歴史的・文化的意義をまとめた。アンケート調査では、20名の日本人学生と外国人留学生が、タトゥーに関する経験と意識について回答した。収集されたデータによりタトゥーに対する調査協力者の態度と出身国との潜在的な関係を中心に分析した。調査前に、外国人留学生は日本人よりもタトゥーに対して肯定的な態度を示すという仮説を立てたが、調査の結果、留学生のみがタトゥーを入れていると回答したことから、この仮説は支持された。

Introduction

Tattoos have many cultural meanings across the world. In the Western world often tattoos are used for fashion and individuality and in the East, they can have more serious and deeper implications. This study explores the feelings and perceptions of tattoos through a review of history and the survey of a small population. It is hypothesized that compared to foreign views of permanent body modification, Japanese people will have fewer tattoos and more negative views about them.

Although the modern idea of tattoos today is fairly new historically the process of tattooing is ancient. Researchers are still stumped on when the common practice of tattooing started, but an article from the Smithsonian states “Written records date the art of tattooing back to fifth-century B.C. in Greece—and maybe centuries earlier in China,” (Scallan, 2015). The same article highlights the findings of the preserved remains of a European Tyrolean iceman who had 61 tattoos dated back to 3250 B.C. They believe these are the oldest tattoos on the skin to date, but older tattooed skin is likely to be recovered as the tattoos are indicative of social and/or therapeutic practices that predate the specimen.

In the United States tattooing can be observed in the native population as early as the mid-18th century. An article in the Times mentions, “Native American women tattooed themselves to alleviate toothaches and arthritis, similar to acupuncture,” (Waxman, 2017). These tattoos were a hand-applied method using sharpened bone, rock, soot, and natural dyes. Evidence of these native-style tattooing can be observed with many tribes across America including the Hawaiian islands and

Samoa. The native people of Alaska, the Inuit, have a long written and physical history of the use of tattoos. Kakiniit the native Alaskan practice of tattooing is done almost exclusively among women, with women exclusively tattooing other women with the tattoos for various purposes. Facial tattoos, tunniit, would mark an individual's transition to womanhood.

The same article by Waxman claims that modern tattooing as we see it now in American culture could be observed in the 19th century during the American Civil War as soldiers were tattooed for identification purposes. Even British royalty was recorded flirting with the taboo body modification as inspired by the prince of whales who also adorned a novelty tattoo. The juxtaposition between war and tattoos is also notable when regarding the history of tattoos in the United States. In an article from the National Air and Space Museum sponsored by the Smithsonian Carolyn Russo speaks with a curator who describes the relationship between tattoos and military men in World War I and II,

“As early as World War I, servicemen were getting their military ID numbers, and later social security numbers, tattooed on their bodies as a means of identification in case they were injured or killed in service. Between WWI and WWII, tattooing began to take off... They were very proud, with so much patriotism certainly in the United States, as we started to enter the war. ... These are tattoos that really bolstered their morale and gave them a sense of comradery, a permanent mark that they could take with them,” (Russo, 2020).

Although tattoos have a patriotic origin, they have started to become quite popular in the United States expanding from their original use and generalizing to the common public. In a study done to find out the statistics of actual Americans who have tattoos Pew Research Center, found that 32% of adults have a tattoo and this includes 22% who have more than one (Schaeffer & Dinesh, 2023). They also highlighted that “Americans overall – including those with and without tattoos – believe society has become more accepting of people with tattoos over the past 20 years or so. Eight in ten U.S. adults say this, while far fewer (7%) say society has become less accepting of tattooed people,” (Schaeffer & Dinesh, 2023).

Tattoo tolerance and acceptability in Japan are less widespread compared to their Western counterpart. Historically tattoos in Japan have been dated back to 1000 BC. In an article illustrating the history of tattoos in Japan the author shares a piece from a Japanese text, “The Kojiki (712 A.D.) mentions that there are two types of tattoos. One is a mark of distinction on a man of very high status, and the other is to identify criminals,” (Samel, 2004). Similar to the Inuit people of Alaska in the United States it is believed that the native Ainu people of Hokkaido used tattoos for decorative and social purposes, with both women and men being tattooed. This is often disputed as there is evidence that supports and does not support this claim. In an article studying the materiality of belonging in modern Ainu identity, Ainu tattoos were described as “deep-indigo tattoos etched into the flesh around the mouth and cross-hatched on forearms were rites-of-passage markers that ushered girls into adulthood, protected individuals and villages against disease, and served an aesthetic purpose as permanent makeup,” (Lewallen, 2016). Although the supplies used differ this practice was similar to the Inuit method previously mentioned. Lewallen goes on to note that “these bodily engravings were also critical for consolidating women’s kin networks. When a woman died, it was necessary that she be buried with the proper tattoos and ensconced in her upsorkut to reunite her with kin in the after world.” (Lewallen, 2016). Similar to the inuit people of Alaska women were very heavily involved in this native tattooing practice.

During the Edo period, we saw changes in punishment, “The most crucial shift was the practice of tattooing as a form of punishment in 1720, which replaced the amputation ... According to Yoshimune's code, robbers as well as murderers were sentenced to the death. Crimes such as extortion, swindling, and fraud were punished by tattooing,” (Samel, 2004). Often violent crimes like murder earned the person a tattoo on the forehead branding that person forever as a hardened

criminal. Less serious crimes like theft were punishable by an armband also permanently branding the person as such. During the edo period, the connection between tattoos and criminals only solidified as the rise of criminal organizations and groups like the yakuza started to make an appearance. Getting tattooed became a ritual of initiation to prove oneself to these organizations as often these tattoos were more painful and took longer than the modern tattoo counterpart of the 21st century. Irezumi is the Japanese word for tattoo and is used as a blanket statement to describe most tattoo styles originating in Japan, including tattooing traditions from both the Ainu people and the Ryukyuan Kingdom. It is a hand-applied to tattooing using wooden handles and metal needles attached by silk thread. Often yakuza adorned full-body irezumi pieces in allegiance to the yakuza, which solidified tattoos of any kind to be taboo socially in fear of being connected to these organizations.

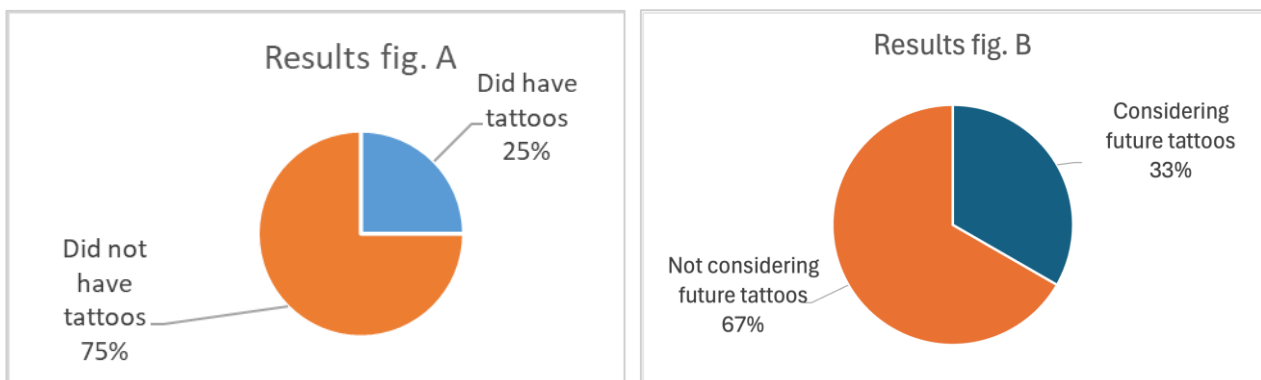
Tattoos in Japan are still shrouded in the idea of taboo and socially linked to criminal activity. Visible tattoos are often banned in public spaces like Onsen and gyms, even if you are of foreign descent to keep the peace and atmosphere of safety. Companies often might discriminate and not hire people who have visible tattoos, while members of the military are banned from having tattoos altogether. The acceptance of tattoos is likely to change over time with influences of the United States and Western culture. This study aims to explore the internal views of tattoos of college students and compare views between foreign residents and Japanese nationals. It is hypothesized that foreign residents will have more positive views and more tattoos than Japanese nationals.

Method

This study aims to gather information on the attitudes toward tattoos between foreign and Japanese residents. An open-ended survey consisting of 15 questions was created to gather the opinions of students around the Okayama University Campus. The questions were structured to gather information about the participant and their attitudes toward tattoos, for example, “Do you have tattoos?” and “If no, would you consider getting tattoos?”. 20 students, 14 (70%) foreign and 6 (30%) Japanese, responded to the survey. The participant's nationalities were as follows: 9 (45%) American, 6 (30%) Japanese, 1(5%) British,1(5%) Zimbabwe,1(5%)Indonesian,1(5%) Chinese,1(5%) French. The minimum age of the respondents was 18 and the maximum was 41 (M= 23.40; SD= 5.95). This survey was not compensated and was completely anonymous.

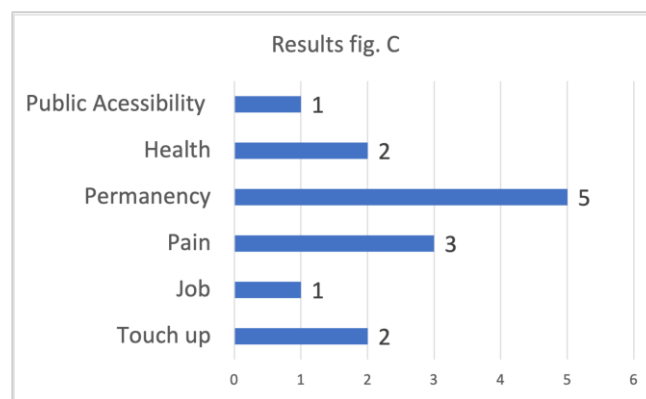
Results

Out of the 20 participants, 15 (75%) responded that they did not have tattoos, while 5 (25%) responded that they did. Out of the 15 participants who responded no, 10 (67%) responded they were not considering getting one while 5 (33%) said they were.



Out of the 15 participants who responded they were not considering tattoos in the future, 16 common responses fell into 7 categories (money, health, design, religion, job, social status, and Permanency). When asked about concerns they had about tattoos, 14 concerns were recorded that fell into 6 categories (touch-up frequency, job acquisition, pain, permanency, health, and accessibility to public spaces). 5 (36%) were concerned about the permanency of tattoos.

Out of the participants who responded they did have tattoos the minimum size of their tattoos was 4 by 3 inches while the maximum was approximately 13 inches. The minimum amount of tattoos one person had was 2 while the maximum was 14. Most tattoos described were for fashion while only 2 had personal meaning. All 5 participants reported having visible tattoos that were placed either on the arms or legs. All participants with tattoos reported that they did not regret their decision and would get more. When asked about what tattoos mean to the participants, 8 common responses fell into 4 categories (phases in one's life, expression and personal style, connecting oneself to family and friends, and a representation of one's spirit).



Conclusion

In conclusion, most of the participants did not have tattoos, and a majority of the population was not considering them either. The overarching concern was related to the permanency of tattoos, while other concerns of social image and status were a close follow-up. Most tattoos that the participants did have were fashion-based and self-expression-oriented but had close meaning to familial and friendly ties. None of the participants who had tattoos reported regretting their decision and all were reportedly visible.

Discussion

Contrary to the hypothesis, the present study found that most of the participants did not have tattoos, this includes the foreign participants as well. This can be due to the small sample of participants and therefore future research should be done to be able to generalize these findings. Although there was a lack of participants who had tattoos, the majority of people who did were of foreign descent the majority being American. This complements the hypothesis's original statement that foreign residents would have and positively view tattoos.

It is important to note that a larger sample and more research are necessary to provide a causal claim. One limitation presented in this study is the lack of gender data recorded from the survey provided. Gender may have an impact on the positive perception of tattoos, and is worth studying in future research. Another limitation may be the small number of Japanese respondents. Given the sample included only university students and not the general public, this limits the results

to the lens of college students and therefore cannot be generalized. Future research should explore the views and opinions of populations outside of university students to get a wider perspective.

The survey created for this study is subject to self-reporting and therefore lower validity. Participants can withhold information due to privacy and disinterest in disclosing personal information. It is worth looking into different research methods (i.e. observational or experimental) research to determine the true consensus of opinions on tattoos between foreign and Japanese participants.

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Japanese Shinto shrines guardians of today Japanese behavior

AMARA Ilyana

Strasbourg University (France)

このプロジェクトは、行事中の神社における日本人の宗教的態度に焦点を当てる。神道と同様に日本の神社は日本人の日常生活に影響を与えているが、神社における宗教的行為は本当に宗教心をもって行われているのだろうか？ この疑問をもとに、フランスの教会とフランス人の宗教に対する行動を比較し、神社と日本人の宗教的態度の関係について明らかにする。

Japan, a country venerated for its rich cultural heritage and deep sense of tradition, is adorned with historic shrines that serve as guardians of its identity. These sacred sites, deeply rooted in Japanese history, play an essential role in shaping the collective behavior and developing a strong sense of national identity among the population. Through centuries of veneration and ritual, these shrines have become emblematic of Japan's spiritual, cultural, and architectural heritage. Ever since I have been in high school in France, I've been fascinated by Japanese shrines, which are very different from French religious architecture. In my final year of high school, I studied the maintenance of historical monuments on a material scale in Nara. I had spent a lot of time working on the Tōdai-ji Buddhist temple. It led me to realize a speech in front of judges and promised to go there one day, which came true when I came to Japan in September 2023.

Now that I'm in Japan, I would like to use this opportunity to analyze how Japanese Shinto shrines conducted Japanese people to adopt a specific behavior towards them. Although Japan has become a modern country with a diverse culture, the practice of Shintoism and visits to the shrine remain an integral part of the social and cultural fabric. Shinto spirituality has adapted to changes in society while preserving its essence and profound influence on the daily lives of the Japanese. Shinto shrines serve as repositories of traditional Japanese culture and heritage. Through their architecture, rituals, and festivals, these shrines reinforce cultural values such as respect for nature, ancestor veneration, and communal harmony. By maintaining these traditions, Shinto shrines contribute to the continuity of cultural norms and practices across generations. During this research project, I conducted out a face-to-face survey with 25 people in order to better carry out my project. This project will also enable me to compare this particular behavior of Japanese people with French people towards Christians religious sites, the cathedrals and churches.

So, this project will answer my question on how Japanese Shintoism shrines have shaped cultural values and societal norms in contemporary Japan. How do the Japanese differ from the French in terms of their behavior within society towards religion sites? To what limits are faced by religious practices and traditions in Japan?

Data regarding the people and places of my survey:

Ages	-25years old	+25years old	+50years old
Women	8	2	2

Men	4	5	4
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Places	Tokyo	Miyajima	Okayama	Kyoto	Osaka
Number of persons	10	1	4	7	3

Percentage	believers and practitioners	Believers but don't practice	Non-believers
Woman	1	5	6
Men	3	6	4

As a reminder, approximately in the 10th-11th century, the Japanese emperor established State Shinto as the official religion of Japan, promoting the worship of the emperor as a descendant of the gods and the construction of large Shinto shrines across the country. According to "Origins of the Universe in Shintoism: An Ancient Religion of Japan" (*the Journal of Japanese studies*), an essay wrote by Md. Abu Taher, he quoted: "Belief in Shinto came progressively, as the religion was formed through readings, storytelling, and myths. Society started to adopt these characteristics, features, and qualities." The culture of Japan has been really impacted by Shinto and the belief in Kami leaving an important cultural mark even today.

Although Shinto is Japan's indigenous religion, it has often coexisted with Buddhism, another important religion in the country. Over the centuries, Buddhism and Shintoism have been integrated influencing each other's beliefs, practices and institutions. This religion has contributed to the richness and diversity of Japan's religious landscape, culture, reinforcing the continuing importance of Shintoism for many Japanese.

Today, Shinto continues to be practiced in Japan, with millions of devotees regularly visiting Shinto shrines for rituals, prayers and festivals. It remains an important part of Japan's cultural and spiritual identity, although Japanese society has become increasingly secularized and religiously diverse.

Shintoism and shrines are more than just a religious dimension, they are fully integrated into the daily lives of the Japanese. In this way, they become much more than a series of rituals or beliefs, but rather a cultural force that informs every gesture, manners, every tradition, and every interaction in daily life. According to National Geographic magazine, there are about 80 000 shrines in Japan which have accompanied the Japanese from birth to the end of their lives. Birth ceremonies, coming-of-age rituals, weddings, and funerals are all marked by Shinto practices. My Japanese best friend explained to me how ceremonies take place and the way the veneration of Kami, Shinto deities, plays a crucial role in these key moments, creating a spiritual link with each stage of life.

According to the Japan News, Japanese identity is also built all along seasonal Shinto festivals. From New Year celebrations of summer and autumn festivals, each event is an opportunity to connect with the Kami and celebrate the beauty of nature. These festivals become moments of collective joy, strengthening the social fabric through rituals rooted in the Shinto tradition. An example of an event where Japanese people traditionally visit Shinto temples is hatsumōde (初詣), which literally means "first visit of the year". Hatsumōde is a deeply rooted tradition in Japan where people visit Shinto shrines at the end of the year or the beginning of the new year to pray for health, prosperity, and good fortune for the coming year. I had the

opportunity to participate in a hatsumōde in Tokyo with a friend. I was surprised at the number of people. Japanese people find the event very popular and consider it part of the New Year tradition. In my survey, during my visit in Asakusa shrine, out of 10 people, 7 asserted they went to these sorts of events every year: "we get together with our friends, family, it's always amusing and it's like a ritual for us". In comparison, French Christians do not really have festivals dedicated to Christianity where the whole community celebrates together. French Christians people are used to celebrate separately at home or with relatives. However, there are some notable similarities, such as going to church for weddings or baptizing a child at birth in the church. Moreover, on days like Easter for instance, we have a tradition of sitting down with the family for a meal and a chat. Some people go to church, but this is becoming increasingly rare.

According to mister Moriyama, an employee at Kyomizu-dera, Shinto shrines, whether they are, occupy a special place in the daily lives of the Japanese. These sacred spaces offer spiritual refuges where people can meditate, find inner peace, or simply escape the hustle and bustle of modern life. Even in everyday gestures, Shintoism has its place. The shrines allow the Japanese to adopt a behavior that has been handed down from generation to generation for decades. Purification rituals, such as Temizu (hand and mouth washing) before entering a shrine, symbolize the quest for purity and inner peace. These simple, meaningful gestures add a spiritual dimension to daily routine. Another custom I learnt on my travels was the practice of omairi. Omairi consists of regular visits to shrines, which is a daily habit for many Japanese. Mr Kanransai, a painter I met in Kyoto, told me that he goes to the shrine 3/4 times a week to find inspiration for his drawings and find a way to relax. In fact, this practice enables him to maintain a close and constant connection with the Kami, to seek spiritual advice, or simply to find comfort in the tranquility of the sanctuaries.

However, even though many Japanese consider themselves to be non-believers and non-practicing, many persist in repeating these behaviors and practices. For which reason?

The Japan Today magazine asserts that going to shrines and pray is considered more as a spiritual tradition than a religious one. Regarding my survey, I asked to 12 students under 25 years old: why are you still attending religious events if you don't truly believe in it? Out of 12 students, 8 answered "by tradition and habit"; "it is what we do since childhood". Even if this question concerns young people, NHK magazine asserts that only 3% of Japanese people believe in gods. During my investigation I was able to understand that young people, compared to older people, are increasingly abandoning religion for other occupations and other beliefs. Nevertheless, I noticed many of Japanese people buy amulets or any other kind of objects considered to be religious. Why? Probably because for them, it is more a question of tradition than religion. My friend explained to me before she started university, she bought an amulet to bring her luck with her studies, even though she's not a Shinto believer. Ever since she was a little girl, it's been a habit for her to have a small religious object in which she places her trust. Which just goes to show that even when some young people don't think about it, certain religious rituals have become innate behavior. So, I observed that even if the Japanese aren't really religious, going to shrines is linked to preserving traditions, appreciating their culture and national identity.

I would now like to compare the differences between Japanese and French behavior towards their religious sites and spiritual daily life. First of all, from a community relations perspective, visits to shrines in Japan may be more related to social and family activities, where people gather to celebrate events such as New Year or local festivals. Religious practices may be more communal and ritualistic, with an emphasis on participation in traditional religious activities and maintaining ancestral customs. Worshipers may have a more sense of respectful towards nature and conformist attitude toward religious teachings and rituals, placing particular emphasis on preserving social and family harmony. Unlike in France, the church can also

be used as a social gathering place, but the emphasis is often on the religious dimension of interactions, such as communion in faith and Christian fellowship. Christians are mainly guided by moral principles such as love for the others, compassion, charity, and respect for the Ten Commandments. Shintoists value concepts such as harmony with nature, ritual purity, gratitude to ancestors, and respect for traditions.

On the institutional aspect, for many centuries, Christianity was a state religion in France, which meant that it was closely linked to government and political institutions. Religious influence in public affairs decreased as church and state were separated with the introduction of secularism in the late 19th century. Shintoism has been linked to government in various ways in Japan, but it has never been officially recognized as a state religion. Despite this, the state has consistently supported Shinto shrines and played a significant role in promoting Japanese national culture and identity. The image of Japanese practicing and sharing Shinto values is widely shared worldwide. However, when I inquired with 3 individuals about their perception of the French as practicing and devoted to religion. The three replied: 'No, we don't see the French that way.'

On the other hand, in Japan, religion is often perceived in a more flexible way, and people can integrate religious practices into their daily lives without necessarily adhering to a dogmatic belief. In France, Christian practices can be more closely linked to faith and doctrine, with an emphasis on personal conviction and conformity to the teachings of the Church. Nevertheless, some data from the French website Centre d'observation de la Société (Society Observation Center) highlight that between 1981 and 2018, the share of French people who say they "believe in God" fell from 62% to 50%, according to the European survey on values (Arval). The article underlines a significant decline in religious values and practices in France. To illustrate the decline in religious practices in France, the regular decline in attendance at churches and other Christian places of worship is noticeable. The French magazine *Le Figaro*, shows that 64% of French people identify as Catholic, but only 4.5% of them go to mass every Sunday. This trend has been observed for several decades and reflects a decline in religious commitment in French society. More and more people identify as "non-religious" or "no religion." Surveys also show a significant decrease in the number of baptisms, religious weddings and religious funerals. To add, we can note a reduction in the number of religious vocations.

On the contrary, in Japan, Shintoism does not see itself as threatened by the arrival of religions. In France, Christianity faced the arrival of a panoply of different religions and dogmas. The main factor is obviously globalization and the fact that France is shared by a multitude of diverse communities, which is also its strength. But from a religious point of view, this diversity of population has overshadowed certain Christian traditions and religious rites of the past. But who knows, according to the *Asahi Shinbun*, the Muslim community is growing in Japan. It is written: "Japan is not only a land of temples and shrines ... but also mosques", we count over 230 000 Muslims in Japan today and the community continues to grow with the immigration of populations from neighboring countries. Christianity has played an important role in the French history, its impact on daily life has gradually diminished due to the increasing religious diversity and the adoption of secular values in society. In France, attitudes towards religion can vary considerably, from fervent devotion to total indifference, due to the legacy of secularism and modern social and cultural changes.

In conclusion, while Shinto shrines in Japan have historically played a significant role in the lives of the Japanese people, serving as centers of spiritual practice, cultural heritage, and community cohesion, they face certain challenges and limitations in the contemporary context. The arrival of new religions and the increasing secularization of society have led to shifts in religious attitudes and practices among the Japanese population. Despite these challenges, Shinto shrines continue to hold a special place in Japanese society, preserving traditional beliefs and rituals while adapting to changing social dynamics. As Japan navigates the complexities of modernity and globalization, the role of Shinto shrines in shaping cultural identity and

providing spiritual guidance remains both enduring and evolving. Although the majority of Japanese people may not necessarily identify themselves as adherents of Shintoism, they continue to engage with Shinto traditions, teachings, and temple visits out of a deep-rooted sense of cultural pride and tradition. Despite the increasing secularization and diversification of religious beliefs in Japan, Shinto practices remain ingrained in the fabric of Japanese society, influencing various aspects of daily life, from family rituals to community festivals. The enduring reverence for Shinto customs reflects a profound attachment to Japanese heritage and a collective appreciation for the spiritual and cultural legacy passed down through generations which I find stronger than in France for example. However, Japan has not experienced the same religious background as France did. Shintoism continues to play a significant role in shaping the identity and values of the Japanese people, serving as a cornerstone of their cultural heritage and national identity.

My intention is to open up this research and ask my readers to share their thoughts on Japanese Shinto's attitudes towards shrines and their daily lives in the upcoming years. Do you believe that these behaviors and manners will be passed down from one generation to another? Is it possible for them to be lost or modified due to globalization and the variety of communities?

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The Preservation of Indigenous Cultural Heritage in Japan's Hokkaido Region

Caitrin Sturdahl

Appalachian State University (United States of America)

2019年、北海道の先住民アイヌ民族が法的に認められました。2020年、アイヌ文化に関する日本の教育を促進するためにウポポイミュージアムが開館しました。アイヌの人々は今でも自分たちの権利を求めて戦っています。私の研究では、ウポポイ博物館やアイヌ文化を保存するために行われている、その他の取り組みを調査し、さらに何を必要があるかを判断しています。アイヌ民族は長い間差別を受けてきました。差別や虐待により、アイヌ文化は今、消滅の危機に瀕しています。私の調査を通じて、私はウポポイ博物館はアイヌ文化を救う良いスタートではあるが、それだけでは十分ではないと結論付けています。日本は学校におけるアイヌ文化に関する一般教育を改善し、アイヌ政策をさらに改善する必要があります。

There are countless cultures around the world and, every day, any number of them could go extinct. Whether due to forced or voluntary assimilation, the deaths of the cultural practitioners, or the emergence of a new culture that dominates the old one, cultures die just the same as people. While it is unfortunate to see them go, it can not always be helped. However, there are some cultures that we need to make a conscious effort to save. Among those is Ainu culture, indigenous to the Hokkaido region of Japan. The diminishing Ainu population can owe their culture's obscurity and endangerment to a history of oppression following the Japanese settlement of Hokkaido and the subsequent cultural push. The recognition and treatment of indigenous groups is a global issue, and in the aftermath of the UN's efforts to call attention to it, Japan began to make moves towards reparations to the Ainu population. The most prominent of these is the development of a cultural museum, publicly voted to be named Upopoy. With this research, I endeavored to analyze the past treatment of the Ainu, their present circumstances, and whether or not the Upopoy Museum is effective when it comes to the education about and preservation of Ainu culture.

Most of the information for this study was gathered from online sources, gathered through various internet resources and analyzed to ensure reliability. Additional information was gathered through a brief survey distributed to a small population of Japanese students at Okayama University to gain insight into the general awareness that young non-Ainu Japanese have regarding the Ainu people. The survey consisted of simple questions regarding Ainu education and culture, as well as a question about Ainu land rights. While the survey only received 9 respondents, it provided some valuable information on the state of Ainu education among non-Ainu Japanese students. Alongside these methodologies, I would like to acknowledge the obstacles I personally faced in approaching this research. First and foremost are my own biases regarding indigenous representation and treatment due to the limited knowledge I have regarding Native American issues in the United States. Additionally, this field of research is relatively new to me, as, before now, most of my research has been regarding pop culture and media. Finally, and this will be mentioned in more detail later on, was my inability to physically visit the Upopoy Museum. It was because of this that I was required to rely heavily on pre-existing records about the site, including the museum's official website.

In 2007, the United Nations published a twenty-nine page, forty-six article Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Japan, along with 147 other countries, support this declaration. A year later, in 2008, a joint resolution from Japan's parliament recognized the Ainu people of Hokkaido as a distinct indigenous group, though it was not until 2019 that this recognition was put into law. It was only twenty-two years earlier that public funds began supporting the preservation of Ainu culture after nearly one hundred years of active, legal discrimination and oppression. Then, in 2020, the National Ainu Museum, called the Upopoy Museum, was opened.

The Upopoy Museum boasts a theater and two exhibition rooms, devoted solely to Ainu representation and education, with additional space outside the main building to provide room for a village and a memorial site. They offer various "cultural experience programs" to highlight a number of different aspects of traditional Ainu life, from foods to rituals and everything in between (Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park).

The history of the museum starts back with the adoption of UNDRIP in 2007 and the subsequent recognition of the Ainu people. From there, Japan began preparations for “a ‘symbolic space for ethnic harmony’”, as proposed by the Council for Future Ainu Policy Promotion. This council was established to work towards a future that is inclusive of Ainu policy and rights. The symbolic space was proposed in 2009 as part of a Final Report submitted to the Japanese cabinet. Five years later, in mid-2014, the Japanese cabinet put into place the Basic Policy for Development, Management, and Operation of a Symbolic Space for Ethnic Harmony, which decided the location of the not-yet-named museum. Land was allotted in Shiraoi, ninety kilometers south of Sapporo in Hokkaido. The Ainu Culture Promotion and Research Foundation was established as the management body of the museum project in 2017, and a year later the foundation merged with the Ainu Museum Foundation to become the Foundation for Ainu Culture. In December of 2018, a national poll chose the name of the future museum: Upopoy, an Ainu word meaning “to sing in a large group”. Then, on July 12, 2020, the Upopoy Museum opened its doors to the public (Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park).

The museum’s website claims “Upopoy is not only a space and facility for promoting Ainu culture, but also a base for larger initiatives to revitalize and expand the Ainu culture...” (Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park). As of 2017, a little more than 13,000 people in the Hokkaido region identified as Ainu, though there are likely more that hide their identity due to the history of discrimination against them (Efforts Underway to Save Ainu Language and Culture 2022). That is just 13,000 of 126.5 million people in Japan, .0001 percent of the total population (Statistics Bureau of Japan 2017). And, of those 13,000 people, it is estimated that five or fewer of them speak the Ainu language (Efforts Underway to Save Ainu Language and Culture 2022). Knowledge about Ainu culture is low among non-Ainu Japanese populations, and that contributes to the still-existing levels of discrimination against them. The museum claims to be making efforts to fix this, saying, “As a national center for learning about and promoting Ainu history and culture, Upopoy enables people of all nationalities and ages to learn about the Ainu’s worldview and respect for nature.” Increasing people’s understanding of Ainu culture may help lead to an end to discrimination against them. The museum also lists six main intended functions of the site which are to facilitate research and maintain exhibitions, preserve Ainu traditions, allow for cultural experiences, spread knowledge, provide public land for park use, and increase national respect for the spiritual aspects of Ainu life (Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park). To be able to sustainably maintain all of these functions, as well as bring about the end of Ainu discrimination, would be quite the feat considering the way that indigenous populations have been treated, historically, in Japan.

A memoir titled *Our Land Was a Forest: An Ainu Memoir*, by Kayano Shigeru, discusses what it is like to grow up and live in Hokkaido as an Ainu. One chapter recounts the story of his grandfather, who was forced to work as a laborer in Hokkaido. Kayano states that, during the Edo period of Japan, the “provincial shamo government of the Matsumae clan” took young Ainu people from their homes and relocated them to dedicated plots of land where they were required to work as fishers or in other sea-related professions. Ainu laborers, Kayano says, were paid just a fraction of what Japanese laborers made. So little that it was considered slavery. Those forced into labor were treated cruelly and often beaten, and many died because of the conditions they were living in (Kayano 2019). Kayano Shigeru’s account of the enslavement of Ainu people exemplifies one of many ways that they were mistreated by the Japanese government.

Today, Ainu people are making moves to try to reclaim their identities and traditions. One of these efforts involves fishing rights in Hokkaido’s Tokachi River. A national ban passed in the late nineteenth century made it unlawful to fish salmon out of the river to ensure large numbers of spawn survived and made it to the sea, where commercial fishers would catch them. The law is still in place, and there are two primary reasons for the current pushback against it. First is the ritual use of salmon by Ainu populations. Ainu are allowed 100-200 fish for ritual purposes, and the group leading the lawsuit against the fishing ban says they have no intentions of taking more than they are already allotted, but the legally mandated enforcement of the limit blocks free use of traditional lands. Secondly, the law’s origins come out of Japan’s history of Ainu oppression. Originally, the preference for commercial fishers off the coast was part of an effort during the Meiji period to limit Ainu traditions and rituals that contributed to the assimilation process (Rich & Hida 2023). To some, the repeal of the law may provide a symbolic contribution to Japan’s reparations for the long-time mistreatment of Ainu populations.

Movements like this, in direct opposition to Meiji era restrictions placed on Ainu practices, show great promise for the future of Ainu rights. While many people may no longer identify as Ainu, being able to

preserve cultural heritage for the few that remain is a huge accomplishment. The group leading this lawsuit is not the only place where public steps like this are being taken. One of the most significant things to a culture is its language. Like with many endangered cultures, the Ainu language is close to extinction. As mentioned before, there may be less than five native speakers, but there are people making conscious efforts to try to prevent it from dying out completely. There are people who, through YouTube, are working to educate more people on the Ainu language and help those who desire to learn it. Plus, in Hokkaido, some public transportation will include announcements in Ainu (Efforts Underway to Save Ainu Language and Culture 2022). While these may not be perfect solutions, they are certainly evidence that people care about the preservation of the language and culture, but there are a lot of barriers that make them seem all too little.

From the results of the survey I conducted, it can be concluded that general Japanese education does not consistently include information on Ainu culture, and the Upopoy Museum makes little impact when it comes to resolving this issue. Four of the respondents report that they have never learned about Ainu in school and two report limited exposure. 66.7% of those who answered had never heard of the Upopoy Museum. Two of the three who knew of the museum have been to it, both on school trips. Despite having little knowledge about Ainu culture and a lack of consistent schooling on the topic, eight of the nine respondents say they have interest in learning more about Ainu life. While general education is the best way to spread this kind of information, it seems efforts are not being made to include Ainu culture and history in these settings. Additionally, the Upopoy Museum's goal of spreading knowledge of Ainu culture is made much harder to achieve by the fact that it seems awareness of the facility's existence is so limited.

When it comes to receiving education through museum exposure, there were a few concerns brought up in the responses. First of all, there is the issue of accessibility. This is one of the difficulties I have faced myself, as well. Four respondents expressed that going to a museum is an obstacle in itself, as it may be difficult for some to get there. This is especially true for the Upopoy Museum. While it makes sense for the museum to be located on Ainu land, Hokkaido is quite difficult to access from the rest of Japan due to it being an island. Secondly, some responses say that museums do not present information in a way that is appealing to the public, so the desire to visit is limited. An individual response showed concern surrounding bias in museum exhibits, and another believed museums are not the ideal way to display culture, stating desire to directly interact with the culture of interest instead of being limited to the contents of the displays.

The final two questions of the survey were regarding Ainu land possession and other general thoughts on Ainu culture. In terms of land possession, most respondents believe that Ainu people should have priority when it comes to using their traditional land. They cite the cultural significance and long-term inhabitation of the areas as the main reasons. However, some disagree. Two respondents stated that they don't think Ainu should have priority in land possession, one saying that it would be an inconvenience to non-Ainu residents who have settled on Ainu land. When it comes to additional comments regarding the Ainu people, three respondents reiterated their desire to learn more about the culture, one saying that the "Japanese government should take it seriously in Japanese education." One person said that Ainu culture is an important part of the larger spectrum of Japanese culture. The comments also show associations between the Ainu and bear hunting. A single response mentions the territorial dispute about Hokkaido between Japan and Russia. Of all the responses, the one that stands out the most is the individual who replied stating that the Ainu "existed in the past," showing a belief that Ainu culture is already extinct.

While Ainu culture is not extinct, there is no doubt that it may be headed down that path if significant attempts are not made to preserve it. After the adoption of the UNDRIP in 2007, Japan began to make such motions, but there is still much progress to be made. The first step would be to spread the word of the "space of harmony" that was so proudly developed, making non-Ainu aware that the Upopoy Museum is there to provide information about Hokkaido's indigenous group. Alongside the museum, efforts need to be made to generalize education about Ainu history in culture in school so that future Japanese generations do not grow up ignorant about the topic. To ensure proper education, however, Japan's education system must be willing to acknowledge the mistreatment of the Ainu by the government in the past, which may provide a barrier in a nation so historically entrenched in nationalistic ideals. This is an issue not exclusive to Japan, as most nations are guilty of presenting historical information in a biased manner. As it is in most cases, the preservation of Ainu culture in non-Ainu spaces is to ensure that education is ensured to be high quality and thorough.

Additional issues get in the way of the preservation of Ainu heritage and culture, including long-term discrimination and repatriation. Government suppression, as well as the acknowledgement of a group as different from the mainstream, is the breeding ground for discrimination. Many people with Ainu heritage may no longer identify as such due to mistreatment connected to their ethnicity. Hand-in-hand with discrimination and othering is the possession and study of Ainu remains and artifacts in institutions worldwide. At this time, many of the remains that had been held in Japan have been interred at the Upopoy Museum after being returned to Ainu possession, however, many still remain in academic settings. Just last year, in 2023, an agreement was reached between a Japanese organization and Australia to return Ainu skeletons to Japan from research centers across Oceania (Remains of Sakhalin Ainu 2023).

As can be seen in the cases of skeleton repatriation and Tokachi River fishing rights, great progress has been made in the last decade to preserve Ainu culture. While indeed fortunate to see, there is still much to do. With Japan's late acknowledgement of the Ainu as an indigenous group and the widespread cultural ignorance among non-Ainu Japanese, there is a long way to go before Ainu culture is properly respected and represented. Knowing that there is interest in the culture provides a sense of relief in terms of cultural longevity, but the desire to know more has to be acted upon. The Upopoy Museum is an excellent first step, but it is far from enough, and Japan needs to continue to make strides towards reparations in order to ensure a future where the Ainu can safely and securely practice their culture.

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Japan's Agricultural Labour Shortage – Awareness Among Okadaï Students

DE SCHRIJVER Alexandra

University of Ghent (Belgium)

現在、日本の農村地域は、特に発展途上国や先進国の多くの農村地域と同様の問題に直面しています。農業労働力の大規模な都市への移動による農村人口の減少と、低い出生率による高齢化した地元の労働力によって、国は現在、農業において最も大きな課題の1つ、つまりフィールドでの労働者の慢性的な不足に直面しています。このエッセイでは、主に日本人、特に若い岡大の学生が、この問題とその影響にどれだけ気づいているか、そして個人的にどれだけ影響を受けているか、またはこのピックに関連する活動にどれだけ関与しているかに焦点を当てています。このような研究は重要であり、不足に対抗するための有益な情報を提供できる可能性があるからです。

1. Background

In the decades ahead, the populations of many Asia Pacific region countries will undergo the fastest and most extensive aging on the planet. Japan is the global frontrunner amongst countries with aging populations (Roy 2022). Besides the increasing longevity on the one hand, there is also the declining birth rates on the other. The consequences of population ageing and birth decline are so ubiquitous that virtually no social domain, no institution and no individual will remain unaffected (Coulmas 2007).

One of the sectors that is largely affected by this population ageing and birth decline is the agricultural sector. Rural Japan is currently facing a problem similar to that of many rural areas around the globe, particularly those in developing and developed countries (Wider 2018). Due to its shrinking rural population, caused by to a large-scale transfer of agricultural labour force towards the cities, and an aging local workforce caused by low birth-rates, the country is currently facing one of the biggest challenges in terms of agriculture, being a chronic shortage of workers on the field (Kato 2023). The country's weakening agricultural production base due to a rapid decrease in farmland and the number of self-employed farmers. Still, questions remain around how Japan's agricultural labour shortage is playing out on the ground and what policy solutions might be pursued. In the latest 2020 Basic Plan for Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas, Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) expressed concern about the country's weakening agricultural production base due to a rapid decrease in farmland and the number of self-employed farmers. The number of Japanese farmers has been decreasing sharply. The 2020 Census of Agriculture and Forestry in Japan reported that Japan had 1.52 million agricultural workers. In 2015, the number of agricultural workers was 1.97 million, representing a 20 per cent decline in five years. In 2020, agricultural workers consisted of 1.36 million self-employed farmers, and 160,000 employed farmers — defined as those who work for other farmers for more than seven months of the year. This number is less than one third of what it was in 1980 and continues to decline by 50,000 people per year (Yoshikawa 2022). Japan's food self-sufficiency rate on a caloric intake basis stood at 38% in the fiscal year from April 2022, unchanged from the previous year and still near a record low, the farm ministry said Monday, adding pressure on the country to enhance food security (The Japan Times 2022). The decline in farmland, combined with a shortage of agricultural labour, changes in consumer diets, and the opening of the Japanese market, have boosted imports of many agricultural products. Import rates, defined as the percentage of imports among total domestic supply (volume basis), continues to increase for products such as potatoes, fruit, beef, vegetable oils, dairy, and dairy products, as demand outstrips domestic production capacity (Satake 2022).

The MAFF basic plan to tackle the issue, which aims to 'improve the nation's capacity for food self-sufficiency and establish its food security', typifies this argument. To fulfil these objectives, it aims for a food self-sufficiency rate of 45 per cent on a caloric basis and 75 per cent on a production value basis by 2030. To achieve this goal, MAFF promised to commit to several measures, including smart agriculture. For example, the use of technologies like drones, robots and a public platform for agricultural data collection have been promoted to save labour and cut production costs. Some also argue that Japan needs more young self-employed farmers to secure the agriculture industry's long-term sustainability. Japan's food production is extremely dependent on elderly workers. The average age of the country's self-employed farmers is over 65. To promote

the active participation of young people in the industry the Japanese government should create a supportive environment for prospective farmers, as becoming a self-employed farmer requires big investments, especially in terms of funds, farmland and skills (Yoshikawa 2022). Amidst the ongoing population decline in the nation, another increasingly proposed solution involves addressing the labour shortage by relying on foreign workers (The Japan Agricultural News 2017).

2. Research objective

With this research I hope to learn more about the problem of the declining and aging population in Japan, with a focus on the consequences it has for rural Japan. Specifically, after having read parts of the book of Coulmas, *Population Decline and Ageing in Japan – The Social Consequence*, (2007) I became curious about the awareness of Japanese people on the problem. In the book it is stated that should the low statistical birth rate of 1.25 children born to a woman in her lifetime calculated in 2006 continue unchanged, the last Japanese will be born 953 years from now. According to the same book, many people in Japan find such a prediction disquieting.

From the same book, I quote “Seventy-six per cent of the respondents to a Mainichi Shimbun poll 'feel uneasy' about the fact that social ageing continues, and the population is beginning to decrease, and a Nihon Keizai Shimbun poll found that seventy-seven per cent consider population decline a 'dark prospect'. Thus, the general awareness of population ageing and its many consequences is very high. The Japanese take an active interest in these issues because everyone is involved, in one way or another, or knows someone who is: someone who has seen an elementary school turned into a community centre for the elderly; someone who is overstretched trying to do justice to a care-dependent parent and a job, someone who is troubled by mounting medical costs and a stagnant retirement allowance; a couple who hesitate to have another child because they find tuition fees prohibitively expensive, even for one child” (Coulmas 2007).

Having read this passage on how the general awareness on the topic is very high, I got interested in doing my own questionnaire concerning the awareness. With the questionnaire I hoped to learn more about the awareness on the topic specifically of young Japanese students, and whether or not they feel affected or involved as the quote states and if there is anything they do to help with this problem.

3. Research method

This essay contains a literary review, which was conducted by consulting and comparing previously published scientific studies and articles. On top of this, a small questionnaire using the Likert scale method was done to collect more data on the opinions and thoughts of young Japanese people. In other words, this paper contains a qualitative method of research, as well as a quantitative method.

Fieldwork and personalized questionnaires are crucial in research, providing firsthand insights and tailored data collection. Direct engagement in the field offers nuanced observations, while customized questionnaires ensure relevance to specific research objectives. These approaches boost research credibility, fostering a deeper connection to the subject matter and delivering stronger, more reliable results.

4. Results

For my questionnaire I decided to interview 7 Okayama University students from my own circle. The first part of my questionnaire focused on the demographic information of the participants. All 7 of them had the Japanese nationality, which was important for this research project. The students that filled out the major in a variety of things. 1 student majors in Computer Engineering, 1 student studies Economics and Management, 2 students major in Education, 2 students major in Agriculture and then there was also 1 Psychology student. Just like their major, their ages also differed quite a bit. Only 1 of the students was still 18 years old, 2 students were 19, 3 students were 20 and 1 student was 23. 57,1% of the students that filled in the questionnaire identified as female, leaving the remaining 42,0% to identify as men. When it comes to the students' hometowns, all of them come from a rural area, meaning there were no students from an urban area taking part in this interview. What I thought was interesting is that, even though all students come from a rural area, to the question “Do

your parents engage in the agricultural sector” only one student selected “Yes, part-time”, all the others selected “No”, and no one selected “Yes, full-time”.

The second part of my questionnaire followed the Likert scale method. Likert scale is a rating scale used to measure opinions, attitudes, or behaviours. All questions use the options “Strongly agree” – “Agree” – “Neutral” – “Disagree” and “Strongly disagree”. The 1st question was about whether or not the students come in contact with the topic of agriculture on a daily basis (for example because of my studies/ family/ job...). Out of the 7 students 33,3% selected strongly agree. 16,7% selected agree, another 16,7% selected neutral and then another 33,3% of them selected disagree. None of the students selected strongly disagree. Question nr. 2 asked if the students feel like they have a certain amount of knowledge on the topic of agricultural issues (because for example they learned about it in school/ heard about it on the news...). To this question 14,3% of students selected strongly agree, 28,6% of them selected disagree and 57,1% of them selected neutral. The 3rd question asked the students about whether or not they come in contact with the topic of aging population on a daily basis, to which 28,6% of them chose strongly agree, 42,9% of them chose agree and 28,6% of them chose disagree. The 4th question was about whether or not the students feel like they have a certain amount of knowledge on the topic of aging population. To this question 71,4% of the students selected agree, 14,3% chose neutral and another 14,3% chose disagree. To the 5th statement, “I was aware of the fact that because of the aging population and a large-scale transfer of agricultural labour force towards the big cities, there is a rising shortage of agricultural labour” the majority of the respondents (42,9%) answered strongly agree, while 28,6% selected agree and another 28,6% selected neutral. Question 6, concerning the COVID-19 pandemic, 42,9% (28,6% disagree and 14,3% strongly disagree) of the students seem to think that the pandemic did not significantly impacted the availability of workers for the agricultural sector, while the same amount of students (28,6% strongly agree and 14,3% agree) seem to think that the pandemic did in fact have a significant impact. 14,3% of the participants reacted neutral to this question. For statement 7, “I think that universities and educational institutions help raise enough awareness about the agricultural labour shortage issue” the opinions were divided almost evenly between agree (42,9%) and disagree (57,1%). When it comes to the awareness on the consequences the agricultural labour shortage has/ will have on society or the overall well-being of this country (statement nr. 8), the answers were very divided. 14,3% of the participants chose strongly agree, 42,9% chose agree, 14,3% chose neutral and 28,6% chose disagree. Question nr. 16 asked about whether or not the students are concerned about the impact/ consequences the agricultural labour shortage, to which most students replied strongly agree (57,1%), 28,6% replied agree and 14,3% replied with disagree. To statement nr. 17 “I don’t think the agricultural labour shortage has/ will have a very large impact on society or the overall well-being of this country” 14,3% of students felt neutral, 57,1% of them choose disagree and 28,6% of them selected strongly disagree. From questions 18 it appears that students do not feel personally impacted by the agricultural labour shortage issue, as 28,6% of them selected neutral and 71,4% of them selected disagree to the question of feeling personally impacted. The next question asked if the students actively seek information or engage in discussions related to the challenges faced by the agricultural sector in Japan, to which most students (57,7%) selected disagree. 14,3% selected strongly disagree, another 14,3% selected agree and the last 14,3% selected strongly agree. Statement nr. 20 questions whether students often think about the importance of rural communities to the Japanese society and the country’s well-being. Again, most of the students (42,9%) selected disagree. 14,3% selected agree, 28,6% selected agree and 14,3% felt neutral about the statement. When asked if the students actively support or participate in community-based initiatives aimed at revitalizing rural areas affected by labour shortage the majority of the students selected disagree (57,1%), 28,6% selected neutral and 14,3% agreed meaning they do actively support or participate. To statement nr. 22 “I believe that increasing awareness and concern among young people is essential for finding sustainable solutions to the agricultural labour shortage in Japan” all students either agreed (42,9%) or strongly agreed (57,1%).

The third part of my questionnaire asked students about their ideas/ suggestions to make young people more familiar with the topic. Two of the students’ answers focused on raising awareness and including the topic in education at a younger age (kindergarten, elementary school). Two other students focused more on just sharing more detailed information about what agricultural labour actually is and what kind of work it entails. Another two students focused on the topic of ‘experience’. They suggest that if more people actually physically experience working in the field, it would help make young people more familiar with the topic. The last students’ suggestion focused on clearly conveying the problems and consequences as way of raising awareness.

5. Findings and discussion

A few things can be noted from the questionnaire. The first thing that I thought was remarkable is that all of students who took part in the questionnaire come from a rural area, yet none of their parents working in agricultural sector. This confirms what was written earlier in this essay namely that people nowadays prefer not to work in the agricultural sector, leading to the labour shortage. Another conclusion I can draw from my questionnaire is that generally, the students seem to come more in contact with and seem to know more about the topic of aging population, than the agricultural aspect of this topic. However, it is still so that most people are indeed aware of the fact that because of the aging population and a large-scale transfer of agricultural labour force towards the big cities, there is a rising shortage of agricultural labour. When it comes to the consequences of this issue however, not everybody aware, but still most of the students that took part in the questionnaire seem concerned as they all agreed it will certainly have an impact on their life in some way or another. Lastly, from my questions it is clear that even though there is a certain degree of awareness of the issue, most students don't actively seek information, engage in discussions or participate in initiatives related to agriculture and don't seem to think about the topic often. Regardless of this, all students seem to agree with the fact that there more information on the topic should be spread, so that people can become more aware.

6. Conclusion

This research sheds light on the challenges confronting rural Japan due to an aging population and declining birth rates, leading to a chronic shortage of agricultural workers and the awareness among the public on the topic. Generally, one can conclude that just like it was stated in the book of Coulmas, there is definitely a certain awareness about the topic. However, from the questionnaire it seems that the awareness among the students that took part in this research is a little lower than Coulmas makes it seem in his book. The study also reveals a gap between awareness and active involvement among young students. Bridging this gap is vital for the sustainability of Japan's agricultural sector, emphasizing the need for concerted efforts to encourage proactive engagement and deeper understanding of the challenges faced. However, in order to ascertain the results of this essay and comprehend the underlying causative factors, additional research involving a more expansive and diverse cohort would be necessary.

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**Japan's Rehabilitation System and Its Response to Prostitution
Following the 2022 "Law on Assistance to Women with Difficulties"**

How legislation responds to a situation that evolved without waiting for the law

日本の更生保護制度と 2022 年の「困難な問題を抱える女性への支援に関する法律」以降の

売春への対応について

法律を待たずに進展した状況に、法律はどう対応するか

WEILL Théo ヴェイ・テオ

University of Strasbourg (France)

要旨: 本稿では、日本社会では、1956 年の「売春防止法」、1990 年代の「割り切り」論争、そして 2022 年の「困難な問題を抱える女性への支援に関する法律」までの間に、国民、行政、政治権力による売春婦に対する認識には、実に明確な変遷があったことを明らかにした。最後の婦人補導院が、長年ほとんど新しい収容者を受け入れなかったまま、来年閉鎖されることになったのを見て、私はこの話題に興味を持った。調べてみると、売春、特に日本の事例は、現代の日本では更生保護との関連でほとんど研究されていないことに気づいた。これからの研究では、売春に関する法律が、日本社会にどのような変化をもたらしたかを明らかにしたい。

Introduction

Japanese prostitution prohibition movements' history goes back to before the Second World War, with religious movements similar to the United States fighting for a shift from 19th-century regulationism to a complete ban and criminalization of prostitution. However, today's status of prostitution in Japan is a consequence of the military occupation by the Occupation Forces, and the wish to protect military personnel from sexually transmitted diseases, more than a consequence of those movements. The 1956 Prostitution Prevention Law took a neo-regulationist stance on prostitution by preventing street prostitution while leaving an open field for organized prostitution. Allied and local governments conducted arbitrary arrests on women suspected of bearing STDs. This method promoted by the Occupation Forces was used for the sole well-being of military personnel, without taking into account the infringement of rights of this practice. At the same time, prohibitionist organizations, mostly Women's Groups, presented the 1956 Law as a win for their movement (Fujime 2006). While claiming it had instated prohibition on prostitution, the Japanese law adopted a very narrow definition of what is prohibited, namely sexual intercourse with an 'unspecified person' in exchange for monetary compensation. Thus, the prostitution business since then, and especially since the end of the Occupation of Japan, has focused mainly on alternative sexual services, such as anal, oral, and other sexual acts that escape the definition of Japanese Law. The monetary compensation and 'unspecified person' parts are circumvented by using tricks, such as adding an intermediary to the transaction or claiming that the two

parties to the transaction got to know each other before the sexual act. Businesses were regulated even before the ban on prostitution by the 1948 “Act on Control and Improvement of Amusement Business”. This text stated, for example, that sex-related businesses cannot operate or advertise within 200 meters of schools and libraries or that solicitation to customers is prohibited. The 2022 “Law on Assistance to Women with Difficulties” was enacted as a response to the exacerbating effect COVID-19 had on domestic violence and precarious situations. While it amends the 1956 law by abolishing the article on punitive response towards street prostitutes, it is also a paradigm shift because it goes against the flow of the Women’s Movement’s thinking at the time the last law related to prostitution, the 1956 Prostitution Prevention Law, was promulgated. Does it mean that the abolitionist approach, namely abolition of state control over prostitution, gains ground on neo-regulationism, the system that succeeded to post-war regulationism, and was mostly characterized by the restriction of prostitution to certain geographical zones and businesses? This question arises thanks to a very recent event, the 2022 law mentioned above, itself made possible by the dire situation COVID-19 revealed to the public eye. Therefore, as of today, not much research, in Japanese or English language, can be found on such questions.

Exploring Social Attitudes and Changes

I first came across the topic of Japan’s rehabilitation system in my first year of master’s degree research. The research was made from a more general point of view. I then took an interest in the topic of women’s guidance homes, especially after learning that the last one was meant to close down in 2024. This finally led me to my current interest in the 2022 Law on Assistance to Women with Difficulties, which enacted this closure.

The research on themes such as women’s rehabilitation from prostitution does not start before the 1956 Prostitution Prevention Law. Scientific papers soon began to be published after the 1958 Law on Women’s Guidance Homes was promulgated. Early researchers gaze upon how this new abolition of street prostitution functions after ten years of a red district system in place since around the beginning of the Occupation of Japan. Most of those early articles are published by the specialized periodical named *Keisei*. New scientific publications dedicated to the same issues were then published in 1976 and 1978, a year marking the 20 years of the 1958 law. These are articles focusing mostly on the Women’s Guidance Homes, their evolution, and dysfunctional sides. They look like reports on the two first decades of the existence of the homes. In the same way, ten years later, in 1988, *Keisei* published an article looking back on the activities of the Tokyo Women’s Guidance Home. The next step starts in the second half of the 2000s. New publications begin to analyze the link between what the 1956 law put in place and how the system turned out. For example, those institutions created by the law were not sufficient in terms of assistance, and the idea that new legislation had to break with this now-old law needed to be discussed further. It is also the time for more specific and case-focused research, for example on the situation in particular regions such as Okinawa, specific populations, or certain types of prostitution. Those papers also focus on prostitution before the 1956 law, especially the case of state-organized prostitution benefiting the Occupation Forces and the more clandestine street prostitution

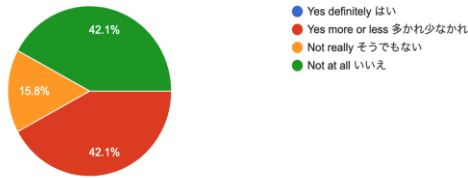
that followed it. The focus also starts to shift from purely law-based to one that includes the prostitutes themselves and their experience, for example, papers on their opinion of the 1956 Prostitution Prevention Law when it was announced. It also includes an analysis of Japanese feminist movements, Japanese women's associations, and their position concerning the abolition or decriminalization of prostitution in Japan. Recent scientific literature has covered a great span of more specific interests, working with older research and new primary sources from new points of view to get new perspectives on the subject. In this idea, it is logical to study the effect of the new 2022 Law on Assistance to Women with Difficulties and what kind of path it follows. This most recent part of the field has not yet been pursued in research and mainly stays confined to political and official communication. Indeed, themes such as prostitution, or more especially rehabilitation concerning prostitution are not overwhelmingly studied fields, and this is the case not only in Japan. Having new events such as the 2022 law allows me to take a look at those issues and the way they evolved, and speculate on how they might turn out in the future. This is the primary reason why I decided to pursue this topic at Okayama University.

As a part of my research, I conducted two interviews, the first with an Okayama City Council member and the second with two probation officers. These interviews have become a valuable source of information, and have a special worth in the fact that they give a raw appreciation from the inside of a system, and on two different levels. The former being from within the system, but outside of a direct contact with rehabilitation and prostitution, and the latter having a profession directly connected to those issues, and so a clearer understanding of the reality "in the field". In addition to the interviews, I surveyed nineteen Faculty of Law students of Okayama University. About the methodology of this survey, it was conducted online through 29 multiple choice questions and 2 written questions questionnaire. I found it interesting to survey law students, especially for the fact that they may have a higher rate of interest in social, political, and of course legal issues. By interviewing such a group, I was expecting more conclusive results, which was the case in the end. It is also an interesting set to analyze for many of them might work later in the penal and legal system, giving a sort of glimpse of what might be the future of Law in Japan. The data gathered was completely anonymous and was presented as such to the respondents. I gained much information on the perception those students have of social issues, the historical and legal knowledge they have, and the way they think things should be. I'm planning to use all those pieces of information in the future, but as the space here is limited, I will only mention the most relevant part. Looking at the two interviews I conducted, I can say that the point of view, level of knowledge on the subject, and interest in the subject the interviewees had seem to vary greatly between people directly involved in rehabilitation, and people only remotely involved in rehabilitation. For example, the City Council member I interviewed expressed a certain discomfort while talking about themes such as prostitution and tried to change the subject multiple times. When I attempted to approach the local situation, he stopped me directly, saying he would not answer questions that were too precise. On the other side, I could see two reactions when I started talking about prostitution-related problems in my interview with the two probation officers. Firstly, it was quite surprising that they were open to talk about it. Secondly, both of them clearly stated that in their career, and to their knowledge, they did not hear about a prostitution-related case resulting

in a probation measure. And clearly, the numbers correlate with their statement. In 1959, 18,629 cases were reported to the public prosecutors for violation of the 1956 Prostitution Prevention Law; in 1984, it went down to 3,731 (Johnson 1993, 37). This number must then be diminished to the cases that end up in a prison sentence or a probation measure. But as we can see by looking at the Ministry of Justice's "Women's Guidance Statistical Survey," in 2022, the only remaining Women's Guidance Home, the rehabilitation center dedicated to prostitution, was empty, with the last release as of today in 2017. Today's rehabilitation for street prostitution or solicitation goes through the Women's Consulting Offices. Such offices were instituted by the 1956 law to be a prevention measure against prostitution, in parallel to the law's punitive side. Still, since the 2000s, they mostly welcome female victims of domestic violence and human trafficking (Kuniharu 2014). One of the main reasons for the 2022 law, was according to the associations who pushed for it, to put this reality into law and to amend the punitive part of the 1956 law. Historically, this change is important, as when the 1956 draft was put into law, voices rose to oppose the punitive vision the text conveyed. Two ideals were then opposed; on one side, the Women's Groups worked together with the Occupation Forces to suppress STDs and give Japan the image of a "modern country" by altogether banning prostitution and punishing prostitutes, in the idea that they were "fallen women." On this, Yuki Fujime (2006, 42) cites a female Diet Member at the time of the debates around the Prostitution Prevention Law who said: "[...] there was a greater need for the person herself to reflect [on her behavior]. That is why it is necessary that there be punishments", and a report from the Central Coordination Committee for Women's Welfare saying that: "people whose occupations make them likely sources of STDs should be subject to forced examinations and treatment." (Fujime 2006, 41). In another speech, the same Diet member, Kamichika Ichiko said: "The spread of evil throughout society is the result of so many practicing prostitution openly today... We must punish the estimated five hundred thousand prostitutes to protect the lifestyles of forty million housewives". After the institutionalization of the control and suppression of street prostitution, and with the help of a growing economy, Japan's approximately 500,000 prostitutes before 1956 disappeared, for many of them in former brothels converted into bars or other night industry businesses (Shiga-Fujime & Findlay-Kaneko 1993). In a more recent example, the 1990s were marked by Japanese media's strong publicization of *Warikiri* and *Enjo-Kōsai*, starting with the *Asahi Shinbun* in 1994 (Kuniharu 2014). *Warikiri* can be defined as a disguised way to say prostitution, and *Enjo-Kōsai* defines a relationship that puts an accent on financial support in exchange for sexual and emotional service. At the time, a supposed "erosion of sexual morality" was put forth as the reason for the popularity of those new forms of prostitution. Still, Tokiyasu Kuniharu's research (2014) shows how the financial reason that can motivate the choice of prostitution was ignored by the media and in debates, leaving room for the sole moral argument. When the economic bubble burst in 1992, and the country's situation worsened, the media's attention changed, just at the time when the share of *Warikiri* women working for survival reasons was greater and greater. Today, according to my interview of the two probation officers, there seems to have been a change in vision in at least a part of Japanese society. The interview led to them talking about their vision of their work and its role in society, and more importantly, for my work, in the probationers' lives. But their words mostly consisted of

The 1956 Prostitution Prevention Law states that "No person shall engage in prostitution, or be a partner in it". Yet, this same law does not provide judicial penalty for prostitution in itself. Do you think that this law or the actual steps taken by the state prevent prostitution from being practiced? 1956年に制定された売春防止法は、「何人も、売春をし、又はその相手方となつてはならない。」と定めています。しかし、この法律は売春そのものに対する刑罰を定めていません。この法律や国の実際の措置が売春を防止していると思いますか。

19件の回答

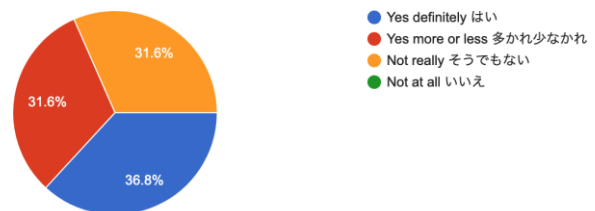


remarks on probationers and the situation of prostitutes, and I would not be able to say whether or not they would still personally categorize prostitutes as criminals.

In the responses I gathered from the Law students, I tried to get information on what they know, what their opinions are, and how they would describe today's situation. For example to the question "Nowadays, do you think the topic of prostitution is considered taboo in a social context?" two-thirds of the respondents answered positively.

Nowadays, do you think the topic of prostitution is considered taboo in a social context? 現代、売春の話題は社会的にタブー視されていると思いますか。

19件の回答

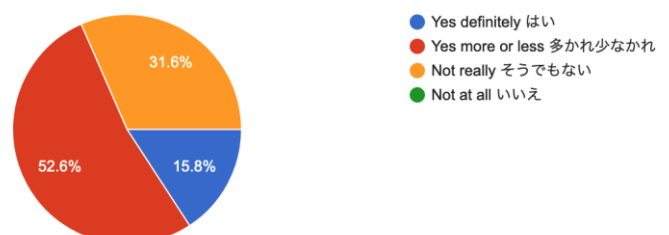


The survey is an interesting source of information because it was answered by young people, more representative of the new generation's thinking and ideas, and so of what we could expect to influence today's system, if there is a link between people's opinions, and how it is organized. Regarding historical knowledge, half of the respondents knew nothing of how prostitution was organized before Meiji, and around the same number never heard of the 1956 Prostitution Prevention Law, and no one knew of the Women's Guidance Homes. For the 2022 law, 84% never heard of it at all. After a short explanation on what the 1956 law aimed for, around 58% of the respondents said that they see this law as not preventing prostitution from being practiced today. 68% say that in their

view, prostitution is widespread in Japan. About the images they might have, to the question "What image do you have of prostitution?" seventeen respondents said they have a bad one, one answered neutral, and one person positive. But

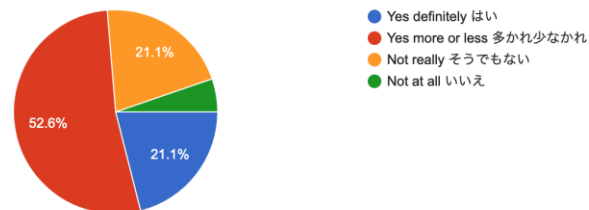
Do you think that nowadays, prostitution is a widespread phenomenon in Japan? 現代、日本では売春が広範な現象だと思いませんか。

19件の回答



on sex workers in general, the question being "What image do you have of sex workers?", about half of the respondents changed their opinion to a more mixed one, with eight having a negative opinion of prostitutes, ten a neutral one, and still one having a positive one. Those numbers show that today's respondents separate the people working in sex-related business, and the business itself. This differs from the ways of thinking around 1956, at a time when prostitutes were seen as responsible for their situation, and as dangerous people for society. For most of the respondents to the question "Do you think prostitution is an unavoidable phenomenon in all human societies?" prostitution is indeed perceived as unavoidable (84.2%), and to the question "Do you think that prostitution in itself is a type of sexual exploitation?", it is seen as definitely or more or less a form of sexual exploitation by two-thirds of the respondents. Finally, when asked, "How do you

Do you think that prostitution in itself is a type of sexual exploitation? 売春自体が性的搾取の一種だと思いますか。
19件の回答



think prostitution-related problems should be dealt with?" regulation of prostitution by the law (73.7%) and decriminalization (15.8%) are seen as the two best options for solving prostitution-related problems. On the other hand, the 2022 "Law on Assistance to Women with Difficulties" can be in itself proof of a change in mentality and in the idea of a prostitute's responsibility in the act of prostitution as a crime. Indeed, all the explanatory material around the law states that this project emerged as a response to many women's dire situations being reported, which happened during the COVID-19 crisis. Formulating the law this way, around women's problems and not around what behaviors might stem from those problems, shows that mentality has changed. Now can we say that it was a militant move to change who is responsible for prostitution in front of the law? What we can say is that amending the article about the punitive response to the 1956 Prostitution Prevention Law would have been quasi-impossible when street prostitution was still important in Japan, until around the 1970s. But today, this change shows that a modernization of law was necessary, but only so that it is in phase with the reality on the field. Indeed, the arrests related to the 1956 law are few in number, why keep empty centers open when the money for their management could be used by the NPOs actually working with the public absent from the same centers? But to answer those questions, interviews with actual members of the commission that developed the 2022 Law, such as associations, NPOs, and organizations, would be useful. Those results give us a glimpse of what certain demographics think and how far their knowledge of today's situation extends. I would theorize that the invisibility of prostitution in today's Japan, and its limitation to some areas, in a similar way to when it was state-organized, had a preponderant role in lowering awareness from the general public, erasing strong opinions on the subject, but still leaving some pre-made images of prostitution and prostitutes.

Conclusion

In this research project, I gathered and included multiple scientific sources, each of them focusing on one or multiple aspects of my subject, having different points of view from various standing points in history, and with quite varied opinions. My results in this project show that there was indeed a clear evolution in the perception of prostitutes in Japanese society between 1956 and the enactment of the “Prostitution Prevention Law,” the 1990s and the Warikiri women debates, and finally today the 2022 “Law on Assistance to Women with Difficulties.” This perception was first taking the shape of rejection, and punishment of the women practicing prostitution themselves, for they were seen as vectors of STDs, a danger to Occupation Forces, and a sign of an old Japan. Then, in a second time in the 1990s, public debates focused on how morals were the reason for women falling into prostitution, when in fact other important factors, such as poverty and social exclusion, were ignored. Today, the legal answer to street prostitution knows a shift with the end of the punitive response, after the abrogation of the related article in the 1956 law. But in reality, this shift has been continuously happening for many years, with the progressive disappearance of street prostitution in Japan, and the diminishing amount of arrests in relation to the Prostitution Prevention Law. We could say that more than the official answer changing thanks to the law, it is the need for an official answer that is slowly dying down, giving this law more of a symbolic look, than a real shift in the system.

By gathering more interviews and surveys similar to those I conducted in this research project, I will be able to refine the analysis I make of the public opinions, and will try to get as close as possible to what I would call Japanese society’s true feelings. Regarding what will come out next from this research project, I will visit this month one or two rehabilitation facilities in the Okayama prefecture, and possibly a Women’s Consulting Office. I expect those visits to significantly impact what my master’s degree research will convey, to give me a fresher look on the way those facilities function, and to grasp better how the questions I formulate in them will take form. I also plan on meeting new people who have or have had a connection to my subject, whether it is officials and employees of the rehabilitation/support system or, if possible, people on the other side of the system, such as prostitutes or former prostitutes. The second part of my year in Okayama will mainly consist of that, and starting next September for one year, I will be writing my final master’s degree thesis back at the University of Strasbourg.

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The 5 research projects were presented on January 31, 2024.

The End



Published:

岡山大学グローバル人材育成院

Institute of Global Human Resource Development

Okayama University

Okayama, Japan

February, 2023