

Intangible Cultural Heritage in Japan:
Bingata a traditional dyed textile from Okinawa

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I, Sumiko SARASHIMA confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

To
Poni
and
Otosan & Okasan

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Abstract

My thesis is an ethnographic investigation of the social impact of Japan's Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) policy, a government scheme that supports practitioners of traditional crafts and performing arts and defines their skills accordingly. This concept of heritage was developed in Japan immediately following the Second World War, when the country, then under the USA's control, was attempting to establish a social value of 'tradition' while also pursuing the economic and social development that has facilitated the nation's Americanisation. People in contemporary Japan continue to engage in many traditional practices despite drastic social and cultural changes over the last century. Highly skilled artists and craftsmen, recognised as custodians of traditional cultural expressions, are known as 'Living National Treasures' and enjoy widespread respect.

The Japanese concept of heritage differs significantly from that found in Euro-North American academic discussion, which has been developed chiefly through the orientation to seek the 'sense of origin' by preserving tangible heritage such as historic sites and monuments. Since the United Nations Educational, Science, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) established the Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2004, the idea of ICH has been incorporated into Western heritage studies. In this context, however, ICH has focused mainly socio-political impacts *on* post-colonial countries. Little attempt has been made to understand how people experience ICH in their daily lives and why 'tradition' is needed in contemporary society. Japanese ICH comprises established social institutions in the context of a large, highly developed society where Western influence has led to homogenised ways of living. This thesis aims to question the generally held assumptions about ICH being a social norm through which people respect 'tradition' and expect it to be safeguarded for its own sake as a counter value of modernity, westernisation and globalisation. To challenge this monolithic assumption towards ICH, an anthropological analysis is essential to considering ICH as a cultural form of living human activity in an ever-changing society, which has come to be shared by people as a result of modernity.

To observe a cultural form inventoried as 'tradition', the focus is placed on several entities such as the practitioner, the work, the production techniques, the consumer,

and the space where the form originates, including the people who inhabit this space and their relationship with others. A key question is ‘what has happened to the relationship between these entities since the inception of the ICH policy in 1950’? To demonstrate the complexity and sophistication of a cultural form identified as ‘tradition’, I provide an example of a traditional textile-dyeing technique, known as Bingata, practised in Okinawa Prefecture.

This study explores the transformative social meaning of Bingata through the process of its ‘traditionalisation’ and its impact to contemporary society. My ethnographic research provides examples of the practitioners’ and local people’s past and present relationship with Bingata, and the culture of consumption surrounding the use of Bingata material. Based on the personal narratives, my observations of people’s bodily actions through the Bingata material acquired during my field research, conducted at Bingata workshops, museums and tourist sites in Okinawa, and a kimono market in Tokyo, I will reveal the metamorphic character of Bingata ‘tradition’, realised through the transformation and innovation of technique, materials and form as a result of craftspeople’s experience of social dynamics and feedback from consumers. Through people’s physical and emotional engagement on the material in several different locations, I analysis the social capacity of production and consumption of Bingata as ‘tradition’.

From the anthropological analysis of Bingata practice, I present a constructive approach to ICH, viewing it is a social milieu in which people and their actions and emotions are actively related, by establishing the value of ‘tradition’ in a cultural form. I emphasise how the conservation activities implied by the concept of ICH are better understood as an effort to establish a social institution of ‘tradition’, in which people recognise the value of a cultural form by producing and consuming it.

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Glossaries

ACA: Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan

CPPL: Cultural Property Protection Law

GHQ/SCAP: The General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers

ICH: Intangible Cultural Heritage

IICP: Important Intangible Cultural Property (Properties)

ICOMS: International Council on Monuments and Sites

IPR: Intellectual Property Rights

LNT(s): Living National Treasure(s)

MEXT: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

METI: Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

Introduction

My interest in Japanese Intangible Cultural Heritage has been substantially influenced by my family background and my career. My family runs a business retailing Japanese green tea so I first started experiencing the Japanese tea ceremony during my childhood and often dressed up in kimono to attend the gatherings. After finishing my M.Phil at the University of Cambridge, I started to work for the Japanese foreign office. My personal experience of traditional Japanese culture turned out to be very useful when I was posted to the Japanese embassy in the U.K. in 2002. As a Public Relations Attaché, my job was mainly to promote a positive image of Japan to British primary and secondary school students by encouraging them to study Japanese culture. I conducted regular cultural workshops for British students and teachers at the embassy, covering themes such as tea ceremonies, calligraphy, kimono-wearing, traditional crafts, Japanese food, Manga, and other aspects of popular culture. Like other diplomats, I was a ‘sales person’ for Japanese culture, both modern and traditional. In this job I had my first experience of objectifying Japanese culture as ‘tradition’ and of showcasing it to represent a sense of ‘Japaneseness’ to non-Japanese people.

Meanwhile, in 2003 the United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organization (UNESCO) announced the establishment of the Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage and introduced the concept of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) for the first time; previously, UNESCO’s concept of cultural heritage covered only tangible objects such as historic monuments and sights. Most Japanese diplomats were aware of the fact that this convention was driven by UNESCO’s then Director General, Koichiro Matsuura, a former Japanese diplomat, and also that the Japanese government had been substantially involved in the drafting of the convention and had made a major financial contribution to the World Heritage Centre of UNESCO. I observed that the Japanese foreign office had started to expand their diplomatic scope to the cultural field whereas previously they had mostly focused on financial aid and investments in under-developed countries. In addition, at that time, most Japanese diplomats (including myself) could not have imagined that some Western European nations, such as the UK, had difficulty understanding

the concept of ICH or that the conceptualisation of cultural heritage would vary so greatly between Asia and Europe.

When I returned to Tokyo in 2005, I took a post promoting Asian regional networking for safeguarding ICH in an organisation called Asia/Pacific Culture Centre for UNESCO (ACCU). Until this time, I had not been aware that Japan and South Korea were the only nations to have developed a concept of ICH, having run their own ICH policies since the 1950s. By organising regional meetings and practical workshops such as ICH inventory making, I learnt that in some Asian nations outside Japan and South Korea, people still retain ‘traditions’ of which they are proud and which they try to sustain as tourism resources or as part of their school education programmes, with the support of their governments. Consequently, I started to believe that once UNESCO established the ICH convention, a similar degree of enthusiasm for the safeguarding of ICH as observed in these Asian nations could be shared with Western European nations. I thought that I could somehow contribute my own cultural and work experience to this end. In this way, I started my PhD at UCL to focus on ICH studies.

During the early stages of my PhD, whenever I attended lectures and seminars on cultural heritage studies at UCL or in other academic settings, I always felt somewhat isolated from the European academics in this field. This sense of estrangement was due chiefly to discrepancies in the concept of heritage between Europe and my own country of Japan, but also to the divergence between the reality of European heritage and my expectations of it. In Europe, people are surrounded by stone and brick buildings that are frequently more than a century old. Even in London, a city in a constant state of transformation, such structures are commonplace and somehow retain their old appearance. During my stay in Pembroke College in Cambridge, I attended many events, including religious ones that have been held for several centuries in libraries and chapels dating from the 14th and 15th century, reminiscent of scenes from the film, Harry Potter. For these reasons, before starting my postgraduate research, I had assumed that people in Europe must have a keen appreciation for craftspeople and their techniques to invest so much in maintaining these old buildings. This assumption was not held only by me; many of my Japanese friends, both younger and older than myself (I am 37), my parents and people in their

age-group (early 70s), reacted with surprise when I told them that there is no equivalent to the Living National Treasure system in Europe. A typical response would be ‘well, I heard that they have the maistā-system in Europe, so that they can maintain old sites and houses, right?’. This reflected a confusion between the idea of *handwerksmeister*, a qualification of craftsmanship practiced in Germany and the Japanese system of maistā.¹ However, my and these Japanese people’s assumption proved erroneous. European people, I realised, including academics, are primarily concerned with the ‘age value’ of an object (Rowlands and Tilley 2006) rather than the human techniques involved in its production. In Japan, however, the situation is quite different. Here, stone is considered unsuitable for construction work due to the frequent occurrence of earthquakes. A few old buildings made of wood are preserved by the government and their maintenance depends on the specific skills of craftspeople. In contemporary Tokyo, most people live in tall buildings made of ferroconcrete. However, while the landscape of Tokyo appears very modern compared to that of London or Cambridge, people here retain a powerful collective idea of ‘tradition’, which is considered inseparable from modern society. I gradually realised that Japanese people’s or my appreciation of ‘tradition’, including ancient craft techniques and performing arts, which I had previously thought to be a universal attitude, was something fairly unique to the country. This is the backdrop of my monolithic attitude toward Japanese ICH is an example of heritage development in the context of a large-scale society in a developed country, yet one that has developed in a different way from that of Europe.

Since its establishment in 1951, the concept of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) has been widely recognised in Japanese society. The government supports practitioners of traditional performing arts, craft techniques and folk customs, with highly skilled individuals regarded as ‘*Ningen-Kokuho*’ (Living National Treasures). People often engage in traditional practices despite drastic social and cultural changes over the course of the previous century. In this thesis, I will focus on the notion of ‘tradition’ certified as ICH and on the ways people of Japan appreciate

¹ The sign ‘maistā’, as applied to names of some products such as a beer *Kirin Brau Meister*, is very popular in Japan. Some groups and organisations have a system for giving titles to those who obtain a certain level of knowledge and expertise in a particular area, for example, Vegetable and Fruits Meister (organised by *Nihon Yasai Somurie Kyokai*: Japan Association for Vegetable Sommelier) and Community Business Meister (organised by Community Business Support Centre).

‘tradition’. By reflecting on my past attitude towards Japanese ICH, which I proudly introduced to British students at the embassy as ‘tradition’, as well as my original expectations of European people’s attitudes towards ICH, I established the following questions:

- How does a cultural form come to be recognised as ICH or ‘tradition’ in Japan?
- How is the Japanese concept of heritage different from that of Western Europe?
- How have people been able to continue practising ‘tradition’ through their experience of modernity?
- Why do Japanese people need the concept of ICH and the social recognition inherent within it?
- How have people benefited from ICH and the safeguarding activity?

In order to explore these questions, I focus on the dynamic character of Japanese ICH as a sphere of human activity. In contrast to the European concept of heritage, which encompasses chiefly objects from the past, the concept of ICH is centred on techniques conducted by living people. The government recognises traditional craft techniques and performing arts and designates their practitioners as ‘Holders of Important Intangible Cultural Properties’ (known as ‘Ningen-Kokuho’ or Living National Treasures: LNTs). This policy of recognising a cultural form as ICH or ‘tradition’ and designating the practitioner as a Living National Treasure (LNT) provides people, in particular Europeans, with an established framework, in this case, a state controlled cultural system for continuing ‘tradition’ in contemporary society. In exploring the questions outlined above, I bring a holistic perspective to this state-authorized system of ‘tradition’, based on the premise that without human physical actions, experience, willingness and emotions, a cultural form would never have been established or continued over a period of time. Japanese ICH serves to illustrate the notion of cultural heritage as an outcome of modernity and that the concept of ‘tradition’ and the contemporary way of life do not contradict each other. In fact, the practitioner of a cultural form tagged as ‘tradition’ has been practicing it as his or her lifetime career out of personal choice and the cultural form is in demand from others who wish to consume or to enjoy it. In addition, activities certified as ICH are not merely maintained as livelihood practices, but also offer various socio-cultural or

political contexts to people, such as leisure, entertainment, religion, education, fashion, local administrations and diplomacy. The Japanese government's contribution to UNESCO's ICH convention establishment demonstrates the latter. An anthropological approach might be helpful for observing ICH as a human activity, involving production and consumption, driven by the number of social roles in contemporary society.

Alfred Gell's art theory, *Art and Agency* (1998), is helpful for examining ICH as living cultural forms that are not static or conceptual and the safeguarding policy of cultural heritage. In addition to the practitioners themselves, ICH requires various other agents to popularise its social recognition, namely, the work that is the outcome of the practice of a cultural form and the recipient who recognises or appreciates the work. According to Gell, there are four entities or agents (i.e. the practitioner, the technique, the work and the recipient) who populate the social meaning of the cultural form by interacting with each other. This circulation system of these four entities is certainly central to considering ICH as a cultural form that is embodied through the human actions of production and consumption. In this respect, several criticisms against Gell's *Art and Agency* theory provide further constructive and realistic scope to investigate the Japanese ICH and its social impact.

Leach points out that Gell's observation of skills tends to ignore the influences of other people's knowledge that has been brought in from beyond the artwork's place of origin. By observing a collaboration project between scientists and artists, Leach highlights the fact that both artists and scientists want to be socially recognised as individual practitioners while their creativity, techniques and knowledge are gained through collaborations with other domains of expertise. From observing the interdisciplinary collaborations and the impact on individual subjectivity that resulted in the differentiation of one practitioner's work from others, Leach underlines the fact that practitioners' creative minds influence the process of making things and the form in which they appear (Leach 2007a). Indeed, it is an absolute fact that these cultural forms, currently codified as ICH or 'traditional performing arts' and 'traditional craft', have transformed in their forms as well as purposes due to social changes and people's demands. These performers and craftspeople have adapted and improved their skills and forms according to the changing times. As a

result, these highly skilled practitioners are renowned and admired as ‘Living National Treasures’. Their performances and works appear in mass media and their works are offered to the market. Leach’s observation of the collaboration and differentiation in production activity provides further important scope for the continuation of ICH. Though neither Gell nor Leach mentions it, it is clear that the social recognition of a practitioner certainly has a motivational influence on his or her students and encourages younger generations with an interest in working in this field. In most Japanese ICH practices, the apprenticeship and the practice space are the essential settings not just for transmitting the existing skills inherent in a cultural form, but also for promoting interdisciplinary training to motivate the individual in his or her willingness to learn further difficult skills and to cultivate the creativity that will lead to social recognition, such as in the form of the title of LNT.

Morphy’s criticism is that although Gell underlines the mediating role of each agency, his analysis tends to focus on the particular symbolic significance of an art object but lacks any observation of its aesthetic impact: how people react against it and how people conceive the meaning of the object. In response to Gell’s observation of ritual art, for instance, which focuses on the moment that it is seen, Morphy comments:

It is wrong to imagine that the cultural significance of design forms can be understood by relating them to a single context of viewing. The significance of the detailed composition of images requires that it be connected to the producer of the work, to the process of learning about it, to the chants and stories and places that relate to it, to the work as it is performed, not simply as it is ‘looked at’. Iconographic analysis cannot be reduced to, or seen be coincident with, particular context of action, or agentive events, but is broadly relevant to understanding how the object is believed to have power and its contribution to a wider system of meaning linked to social process. (2009: 17)

He argues that the design of art objects should be analysed in the contexts of their production and use, and in relation to their distributions in time and space. His point certainly casts light upon the influence of the visual, artistic, and historic impact of ICH not just on practitioners’ production activity but also on consumers’ actions, such as purchasing the work, experiencing and enjoying it, and sharing it with others.

This approach is beneficial in challenging the current dominant Euro-North American heritage argument that tends to fix the objective view of cultural heritage as a cultural form to be safeguarded under the heritage policy. The consumers of

cultural heritage are often perceived as a negative resource that might distort the original character of the cultural form due to its commercialisation. Morphy's focus underlines the power of mediation between the aesthetic, historical and artistic impact of ICH and people's motivations and actions to produce and to consume it. The significance of the cultural form is embodied through human actions and therefore invites further social interaction; in this way cultural forms recognised as 'tradition' or ICH have evolved and survived in contemporary Japanese society.

Apart from the individual practitioner's creativity and the human interaction with the cultural form, there is a key element involved in establishing the significance of the form and the social meaning of ICH – 'locality'. Although Morphy mentions the time-space relationship of people to the object, neither Gell nor Morphy considers the importance of such a relationship to a cultural form that has been developed through the experience of people in the space where the form originates. The difference between art object and these cultural forms of ICH is that the latter is predicated on the geographical locale where the cultural form is practised. This sense of spatiality creates a border between local people and the other and thus contributes to the development of the cognitive image of a cultural form as a local product. Like 'tradition', 'locality' is an essential aspect of the ICH concept and is evident in the people's experience of social change and its impact on practitioners' lives and on their habitual space, as discussed previously. On the subject of the relationship between the traditional practice, the knowledge, and the space in which it originates, and the ownership of knowledge, the exposure of these information inventoried as ICH by UNESCO invites controversy, especially in the field of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), broadly argued as 'cultural appropriation' by the authorities. Strathern points out the incompatible aspect between IPR and cultural property (as indigenous traditional culture) when it is considered to be 'defended' from the market exploitation and states:

[T]he market thus disembods what is usable, whereas the thrust of the indigenous IPR movement is to re-embed, re-contextualise, indigenous ownership in indigenous traditional culture. Tradition, we [Euro-North Americans] may remark, is an embedding concept.... The difficulty of identifying cultural ownership must include the fact that cultures are not discrete bodies; it is 'societies' that set up boundaries. (Strathern 1996:22-23)

To counter the argument, recent activity of UNESCO to involve local communities as ‘gate keepers’ for safeguarding ICH is supported by some heritage scholars (Kurin 2004, Arizpe 2007, Brake 2009). Other scholars underline the spatial tie between the ICH practice, the space where it occurs and the people involved, in line with the following example:

Darrell Posey and Graham Dutfield in the mid-1990s, insist that indigenous culture must be seen as total social systems in which land, the natural environment, social practices, and traditional knowledge form a seamless whole. Expressing sentiments similar to Posey and Dutfield, Russel L. Barsh declares that for indigenous peoples ‘knowledge is indistinguishable from land and culture’, an observation that Barsh uses to argue against piecemeal, reductionist legal strategies of cultural protection. (Brown 2005:46)

To examine the relationship between the traditional knowledge of certain communities and their space more closely, it is practical to analyse ICH and its time-space relationships from a phenomenological perspective in terms of how people socially construct the notion of place and their identities through their physical experiences. Tilley describes phenomenology as involving ‘the understanding and description of things as they are experienced by a subject. It is about the relationship between Being and Being in the world (1994:12)’. Taking Merleau-Ponty’s perspective of body as the fundamental mediation point between a subject and the world, Tilley focuses on the landscape in which people identify themselves as being, through their physical and emotional interactions, against the wider geographical context. By recognising self and other, people try to identify the gap between the two through perception, bodily actions, movements, emotions and awareness in order to structure their life and beliefs. Therefore ‘personal and cultural identity is bound up with place; a topo-analysis is one exploring the creation of self-identity through place’ (ibid: 15).

In this respect, I stress that ‘locality’ of ICH is the outcome of people’s relational experience to a landscape where a cultural form originates. Local people recognise themselves as being in their habitual place through their interaction with others; they then become aware of the significance of local cultural forms from the impacts of that interaction on these cultural forms. ICH is a time-space practice that contains segmented memories of local people in their space and it only appears as a result of a practitioner’s action. Therefore, a bodily movement of a practitioner in one moment contains layers of time-space entities, such as his or her bodily experience of the

practice, the local people's lives that have nurtured the cultural form, the skills that have been transmitted from past practitioners, local people's experience of social change and termination of some other cultural forms, and the practitioner's emotional drive to continue the form. Local people's segmented spatio-temporal experiences attached to a cultural form supports the previous arguments of the importance of community and the local space for safeguarding ICH. Then, it is in the power of general public to identify the spatio-temporal value of ICH, the practitioner's creativity, as Leach points out, and the aesthetic value, as highlighted by Morphy. Driven by the information society, education, economic development and politics, people gain the capacity to imagine or identify these values. As a result, the cultural form is socially recognised as a 'tradition' of a local place, practiced by a specific skilled practitioner and one that invites social actions such as purchasing, enjoying and studying. ICH is not merely a reproduction activity of a cultural form labelled as 'tradition'. It is also a collective practice in which values of 'tradition' are perceived by relating one's body to a cultural form to be experienced. Modernity provides myriad opportunities for experiencing 'tradition', such as through economic, moral, cultural or political means.

To illustrate an example of Japanese ICH, I focus on a textile-dyeing technique known as Bingata, which is practised in Okinawa Prefecture in the south west of the Japanese archipelago. Bingata is widely known as a traditional Okinawan textile produced using complicated techniques that have been passed down over the centuries. One Bingata craftsman, Yuko Tamanaha, is designated as a LNT in his field. I chose Bingata as the focus of my field research because Bingata was the kimono textile with which I was least familiar and because I had never visited Okinawa. As a kimono fan, I thought it was important that I should have 'fresh eyes' for analysing the material, without a biased opinion of kimono associated with my own kimono wearing experiences and tastes. Within one month of arriving in Naha, I discovered the uniqueness of Bingata compared with other local textiles, and the ways in which the material form of the product and its social meaning have been transformed according to craftspeople's experience of social change as well as the demands of the market. From the 15th century until its fall in 1868, Okinawa was an independent throne known as The Ryukyu Kingdom. During this period, Bingata was produced exclusively for the garments of the ruling classes; when the Kingdom

fell in the 19th century, the craft was soon forgotten amidst the social chaos brought about by modernisation and the two World Wars, only being revived after the Second World War. In the second half of the 20th century, Bingata acquired a new social meaning as a local craft material, leading to its adoption by the Japanese kimono industry in the 1970s. Today, Bingata designs are applied to myriad different products, proliferating its social meaning in the field of art, craft and industry and contributing to establishing the visual image of Okinawa and its 'tradition' for non-Okinawan people.

This study highlights the transformative character of Bingata material in the process of 'traditionalising' it according to the past-present relationship of the landscape of Okinawa and the local people, craftspeople and consumers. In order to examine the reality of the production and consumption of Bingata, I conducted a one-year study (from October 2008 to November 2009) of Bingata craftspeople in Okinawa, including Yuko Tamanaha, the LNT. My research also extended to several sites of Bingata consumption, among them a museum, a kimono retailer and various local tourist spots. Based upon my observations of production and consumption of Bingata and interviews with practitioners and consumers, I will introduce each group's (i.e. local people, craftspeople, urban consumers and tourists) image of Okinawa and Bingata and explore social meaning emerging through individuals' bodily engagement with the material in the process of producing, purchasing or wearing it. I will analyse the intertwining of the manifold impacts of contextualisation of a cultural form as ICH through practitioners' and consumers' bodily engagement with the form.

In Chapter 1, I will examine the differences in heritage development between Europe and Japan. To commence, I will review Euro-North American heritage development, which has been largely influenced by nostalgic attitudes to the past, in order to learn what has been lost to modernity. The psychological analysis for the archiving movement of ancient materials is described by Derrida as 'an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement' (1995: 91). Cultural heritage is expected to bestow a sense of origin by inviting observers to imagine the past through old objects. Heritage movements have been promoted by many authorities and have culminated

in the World Heritage Convention established by UNESCO. I will begin by observing the European concept of heritage and then turn my attention to Japanese heritage development since the Second World War. The significance of Japanese ideas of heritage has developed in different ways from that of Europeans. The Japanese heritage concept evolved with the aim of forgetting a particular past that brought the nation defeat in the Second World War, by evoking other spheres of the past such as the feudalistic era. By comparing the heritage development that occurred in these two different societies, I will show how the major differences between the two are born of their divergent views of the relationship between past and present and between origin and 'tradition'. The role of 'tradition' in modern Japanese society will be discussed with reference to several angles such as material culture, economy, education and religious practice. In the case of the latter, I present the example of Ise Shrine and the practice of Shikinen-sengu, the reconstruction of the site's inner sanctuaries that occurs every twenty years. By describing people's bodily experience of Ise Shrine, I will show how the social recognition of the origin of Japan exists outside the institution of 'tradition' or ICH.

As I have already underlined, the concept of 'tradition' is given meaning through people's actions in relating local culture to outsiders, and more often than not, this relation is driven by economic activities. I will also introduce the Japanese government's trademark system for authorising local craft associations in merchandising their products. It was initially introduced in the 1960s to promote rural economy by industrialising local craft products at a time when people faced serious rural underpopulation. This highlights the fact that the place in which a cultural form originates comprises local people and their lives, not just the practitioners, as mentioned previously. Industrialisation of 'locality' suggests the openness of the 'tradition' to the public. This scheme is undertaken by the Ministry of Trade and Industry (METI), whereas the ICH policy is carried out by the Agency for Cultural Affairs (ACA); this administrative demarcation system for promoting economic value in local craft products (by METI) and for safeguarding the cultural form (by ACA) illustrates the fact that Japanese traditional craft is to be safeguarded as well as to be accessible to the public.

The second chapter will look more closely at the development of ‘tradition’ in relation to people’s recognition of spatial significance and cultural forms driven by social change and modernisation. To illustrate this point, I focus on Bingata production in Okinawa, as introduced above. The social meaning of Bingata has been transformed substantially over the past century. What was once the preserve of the ruling class was completely forgotten following the fall of the Kingdom. Meanwhile, in some remote regions, people continue to feel antagonism towards the erstwhile ruling class, who exploited them by imposing heavy taxes on their woven textiles. I will present the example of a festival in Kohama Island, whose inhabitants still recall the pain of past subordination. Two materials used during this festival – local woven textiles and Bingata costumes – signify the social hierarchy of earlier years and illuminate the isolation of Bingata, imbued with the past, from the rest of Okinawan society. Although the people retain this antagonism towards Bingata, the development of ‘tradition’ in local textiles mitigates their past aversion. When it was revived after the Second World War, Bingata became one of the local textiles used to promote Okinawan industry, which also served to unite Okinawans recovering from the social chaos brought about by the conflict and subsequent US administration. After Okinawa was returned to Japan in 1972 by the USA, Bingata craftspeople started to enter the Japanese kimono market by innovating techniques such as colour fixation. By studying the biographies of some of the Bingata craftspeople, gained through my interviews with them, I will address the metamorphic character of Bingata, which developed through the craftspeople’s and local Okinawan’s experiences of social dynamics, their memories and their adoption of counter values brought to them by non-Okinawans. This chapter will illustrate the phenomenological character of ICH – a cultural form that has lost or regained its social significance as a result of people’s time-space experience, memory of the past, present demand, and desire for social recognition.

Chapter 3 will examine the techniques and social structure of Bingata production based upon my observations at the workshop of Yuko Tamanaha, a LNT in the field. As mentioned, the transmission activities in traditional crafts and performing arts in Japan take place in specific material environments. At the Tamanaha workshop, each piece of textile is produced through craftspeople’s physical activities through a number of different processes involving countless utensils. Each one’s bodily

engagement in a given process is based strictly on their level of experience at the workshop. Every movement of their hands and bodies requires precise control within a continuous smoothly running process. In the account of bodily practice, sense and the subject, Warnier studies bodily control technology through an in-depth praxeological approach. He observes sports activities, pilot-training, and several other activities that involve skillful control of bodily movement as ‘sensory-motricity’, that is, the dynamic and synthetic bodily engagement that mediates a subject’s emotional state, physical movement, material contact, material setting, and verbal and physical communication with other subjects. He also underlines the effects of apprenticeship in developing a practitioner’s specific perception, emotion and motricity (Warnier 2001). In this section, I will focus on a praxeological analysis of the practice of Bingata through observing the interrelationship between the workshop space, the bodily engagements of individual craftspeople with their utensils and Bingata products, the craftspeople’s prior experience and their daily routines, the hierarchical structure of the apprenticeship practice, and the individual practitioner’s drive to improve his or her own skill. As well as making these observations and carrying out interviews with craftspeople in the Tamanaha workshop, in order to gain a direct sensory experience of the craft practice, I attended a Bingata class held once a week at Shuri Community Centre. My analysis is therefore also sourced from my own bodily and sensory experience of Bingata production. In addition, by examining the duplex-dyeing technique used by Yuko Tamanaha, I underline the importance of the creativity and the artistic sense of the craftspeople.

In the final chapter, I shift my focus to the consumers of Bingata products in order to explore the social meaning of ‘tradition’ or ICH. In this chapter, my research methodology is mainly based on the ethnographic evidence gained from interviews conducted among three different groups of consumers in three different locations:

- 1) visitors at Okinawa Prefectural Museum who tried on the work of Yuko Tamanaha;
- 2) customers who purchased Bingata kimono items at a kimono retailer in Tokyo and;

- 3) local people who used small Bingata items in their daily lives, and tourists who purchased mass-produced, machine-printed Bingata souvenirs in Naha City, the capital of Okinawa.

Through their narratives, I will underline the power of consumers' experience of Bingata in establishing the image of Bingata and Okinawa, as well as in giving social meanings to the 'tradition' of Bingata practice. The consumers (interviewees) in these three different groups provide a variety of reactions towards Bingata materials influenced by such factors as the amount of time they have spent physically engaged with the product; the quantity of money they have to spend; their personal use of the product; the visual and sensory feelings the product instills in them; and their social background (e.g. age, gender, living and economic situation). This chapter highlights the social dynamics of the concept of 'tradition' that is influenced by the actions and attitudes of broad range of people. As Morphy points out, a cultural form identified as 'tradition' gains the its power when it attracts people aesthetically or economically, and that power creates further social interactions and proliferates social meanings around the cultural form; in turn, the cultural form can then be viewed not just as 'tradition' but as an aspect of leisure, economy, education and politics.

My research on Bingata and Japanese ICH strives to present a concrete example of a non-European heritage practice that exists in contemporary society. In Japan, ICH is a social institution in which people certify the cultural form as 'tradition' through production and consumption. These reciprocal activities are undergone to benefit contemporary Japanese people's lives in multiple ways, by intertwining several social aspects retained by the cultural form, such as craft, art, industry and 'tradition'. Therefore, in this thesis, I will argue that ICH is not a 'thing in the inventory' to be 'conserved' but a continuously developing phenomenon driven by people's time-space engagement with it, and one that gives meaning to their present lives.

Chapter 1

Intangible Cultural Heritage

In contemporary Japanese society, signs of the continuing practice of ‘tradition’ are ubiquitous. ‘Tradition’ has become an institutionalized social norm in the context of which the practice of ICH is undertaken. At the same time, however, Japanese people also maintain other, hidden values of Japanese identity, embodied through their religious practices. In the following, I probe beneath the more immediately apparent social layer of ‘tradition’ and analyse it in the context of the interrelationship between two contrasting sides of Japanese life: the secular and the divine. This chapter is mainly concerned with examining the following three points:

- 1) The development of the Western concept of heritage and the impact of the establishment of Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO);
- 2) The development of the Japanese concept of heritage, and the ways in which it differs from that of the West;
- 3) The role of the Japanese heritage system in contemporary society.

1.1 Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO in Western heritage discourse

1.1-1 Heritage development and the European heritage concept

The concept of heritage and conservation activities was mainly developed and elaborated in Western (Euro-North American) society. Defined as ‘a modern use of the past’ (Graham et al. 2000), the idea of heritage has been processed through social dynamics empowered by modernity. In recent years, the concept of heritage has been expanded to encompass not only tangible objects and natural features, but also oral and practical cultural expressions, known as Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). The origins of heritage lie in the heredity system of family and monarchy, which prescribes the preservation of ancient objects inherited from one’s predecessors as a ‘civic’ and ‘stewardship duty’ (Lowenthal 1996). The movement to conserve historic objects was popularised through people’s experiences of industrialisation and social change in the 19th century. As exemplified by the foundation of the National Trust in

the U.K. in 1895, people started to view old sites and buildings, archaic objects and coastlines as worth preserving at a time of ‘uncontrolled development and industrialisation’ (National Trust 2012). After World War II, the heritage movement became internationalised when the Abu Simbel temples in Egypt were nearly destroyed during the construction of Aswan-hi-Dam in 1954, attracting worldwide calls for their safeguarding. As this protection campaign was extended to incorporate other historic sites around the world, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) established an initiative to protect historic sites and monuments, later expanding their focus to include natural sites. In 1972, UNESCO held a ‘Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage’, in which cultural heritage was defined as ‘a monument, group of buildings or site of historical, aesthetic, archaeological, scientific, ethnographical or anthropological value’, and natural heritage as ‘outstanding physical, biological, and geological features; habitat of threatened plants or animal species and areas of value on scientific or aesthetic grounds or from the point of view of conservation’ (Article 1-3, UNESCO 1972). Following this convention, heritage conservation was universalised through UNESCO’s ‘World Heritage List’. Since World War II, heritage has been practised in parallel with ongoing modernisation, such as the proliferation of nuclear weapons during the Cold War and the expansion of the rise of the rise of capital economy facilitated by the globalised communication of people, information, and goods. Rowlands explains the heritage movement as follows:

[H]eritage meets the need to salvage an essential, authentic sense of ‘self’ from the debris of modern estrangement....Heritage is infused by a sense of melancholia and grief for lost objects and lost sense of identity. As a western phenomenon it is part and parcel of the rise of capitalism and fears of the erosive powers of market economies (Rowlands 2002: 106).

The experiences of drastic industrialisation and the Great War, articulated as ‘modern estrangement’, created a new role for culture as a means of redeeming people’s ‘sense of loss’ and displacement (Butler 2006, 2007). Blake studies UNESCO’s extension of the context of heritage from culture (buildings and monuments) to nature, concluding that the established pre-World War II ‘nationalist’ or ‘statist’ attitude gave way to a desire to reduce potential international conflict, shifting to a more environmentalist viewpoint dedicated to the ‘common heritage of mankind’ (Blake 2000:62).

As a whole, heritage development is considered to have been born within modern history, in which the ‘West was synonymous with modernity’ (Butler 2006: 465); the West therefore played a subjective role in the creation and broadening of the heritage concept, in the conservation movement and in the evaluation of ‘universal value’ in UNESCO’s World Heritage List. I believe that during the late 1960s and the early 1990s, the ongoing Cold War and proliferation of nuclear weapons, the newly-won independence of African colonial states, and waves of diasporas, all indicated a decline in post-war Western European power. These socio-political and economic conditions reinforced a nostalgic attitude on the part of Western Europeans toward their past. By monumentalising ancient objects and buildings, they marked sections of history to remember, sections which conceptualised Western European identity (Rowlands and Tilley 2006).

1.1-2 Intangible Cultural Heritage as a sideline of tangible, European heritage

Although the World Heritage List invoked criticism for its perceived ‘Eurocentricity’ due to the fact that the majority of listed monuments and sites were connected with the European regime, UNESCO tried to extend the list to include traditions such as festivals, performing arts, and craftsmanship. Beginning with the ‘Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore’ in 1989, UNESCO set about delineating the concept of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). From 1997 to 2001, as a complement to UNESCO’s World Heritage List, nineteen cultural expressions - predominantly from Latin American, African and Eastern European countries - were designated in the ‘Proclamation of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity’. International juries selected these expressions and the criteria which the juries used in their selection processes were:

outstanding value, roots in cultural tradition, affirmation of cultural identity, source of inspiration and intercultural exchange, contemporary cultural and social roles, excellence in the application of skills, unique testimony of living cultural tradition, and risk of disappearing. (UNESCO 2001).

However, this proclamation and its selection criteria invited further criticism. First, detractors noted that UNESCO’s universal approach might misrepresent localised

and diverse cultural forms. Nas has stated that UNESCO ‘singled out’ some local activities expressing cultural diversity and complexity as ‘masterpieces’ threatened by globalisation, and standardised them as ‘heritage’ with ‘universal value’ (see Nas et al. 2002, de Jong 2007). The topology of ‘masterpieces’ provoked accusations of ‘ethnocentrism’, due to the fact that most were located in places that were ‘politically and economically peripheral in the global arena’ (Olwig 2002:146). In contrast, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, who supports equal opportunity - specifically, equal financial support - in safeguarding activities, has expressed her objection to the award given to the Japanese *No-gaku*, a traditional court dance. She explains that while the Russian Bolshoi Ballet and the Metropolitan Opera in the U.S. were not selected, *No-gaku*, which had been sponsored by the Japanese government since 1957, appeared on the list. She further declaims:

[A]s long as they are not European, the Intangible Heritage list preserves the division between the West and the rest and produces a phantom list of intangible heritage, a list of that which is not indigenous, not minority, and not non-Western, though less intangible (with reference to the *No-gaku* theatre; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004:56).

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s argument demonstrates the established context of heritage in Euro-North American discourse: classical tangible cultural heritage fosters Western (Euro-North American) values, while intangible cultural heritage is something local, indigenous and affiliated with the minority, articulated as ‘ethno-’ value in underdeveloped countries. In fact, the concept of ‘ethnic’ or ‘indigenous’ has been evaluated world-widely exemplified as the United Nations proclaimed an International Year of the World Indigenous People in 1992. Kuper’s points out the emotionally driven world trend to support the rhetoric of the indigenous-people movement:

[i]t is conceded (even angrily insisted) that the authentic culture may survive only in rural enclaves, since (again in good romantic style) native cultures are represented as being everywhere under threat from an intrusive material civili[z]ation associated with cities, with stock markets, and with foreigners. (Kuper 2003: 390)

Taking into account of this social trend, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s observation also incorporates the European ‘redemptive’ attitude of self-criticism regarding ‘Eurocentric’ heritage development, as implied by UNESCO’s World Heritage List as well as Euro-North American lead capital economy. Within Euro-North American academic contexts, ICH first appeared as something ‘alternative’ and ‘parallel’

(Butler 2006: 461) to the existing mainstream of classical, tangible heritage largely devoted to European historic buildings, sites and monuments, and essentially represented ‘Non-Western expression’ (ibid: 472).

Eventually, UNESCO held the ‘Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage’ in 2004. At this meeting, ICH was defined as:

- (a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of intangible cultural heritage;
- (b) performing arts;
- (c) social practices, rituals and festive events;
- (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
- (e) traditional craftsmanship (Article 2, UNESCO 2003).

By reflecting on previous ICH schemes and taking their subsequent criticisms into account, UNESCO showed some improvement. First of all, the terms ‘universal value’ or ‘outstanding value’, as well as notions of ‘technical excellence’ or ‘uniqueness’, were eliminated from the selection criteria (Aikawa in Akagawa et al. 2009). Additionally, individual states were given autonomy in the selection of cultural expressions instead of applying the evaluations made by international juries. This process was based on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity² submitted by each member-state, in which one or two cultural expressions were selected to represent the state’s ICH inventory. Joy explains that UNESCO’s shift in attitude regarding evaluation methods resulted from a stalemate in the definition of ‘living culture’:

‘[T]he ICH that lends meaning to people’s lives is rarely ‘outstanding’ or ‘universal’ and most often is commonplace, such as language or regular cultural performances... A concrete measurement of ‘value’ could therefore not be achieved by UNESCO in relation to ICH because the value that UNESCO was trying to protect was embodied by the human actors themselves and therefore highly personal’ (Joy 2007: 148).

Some nations, such as the U.K., have not ratified the ICH Convention, potentially because people in the U.K. and other Western European nations find the concept of preservation of living culture confusing or difficult to grasp. Questions concerning this concept have been raised; for example, ‘Should cultural performances, folklores,

² For instance in 2009, seventy-six cultural forms are inscribed on the Representative List by the intergovernmental committee (UNESCO 2012).

be preserved?’ (Nas 2002), and ‘Will preservation not result in fossilisation and alienation from the living sociocultural source, or will it revitalise culture and foster the invention of tradition?’ (de Jong 2007).

Western views of ICH, and subsequent confusion surrounding the concept, are associated with a static view of tangible heritage. For Westerners, heritage is an artifact, something ancient and un-renewable that therefore must be ‘stored’ as heritage. The two canonical works of Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985) and *Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (1996), describe how current heritage designation (in the Western context) is motivated by a desire to reconstruct the ‘past’ through objects. Past is considered that it has been *ruptured* by ongoing modernity therefore should be remembered by collecting past objects. (Lowenthal 1985:10; Butler 2006:467). As a result, Westerners seek and claim their ancestral remains, then preserve past materials and monumentalise them as the objectified lost past (Lowenthal 1985). Western architectural and conservation practice is reflected in Lowenthal’s observation that objects have been considered to exemplify ‘a supposedly unchanging and “objective” past’ ‘manifested in the permanence of the fabric of the object’ (Pye 2006:4). According to the Western concept of heritage, therefore, the relationship between heritage and contemporary society is a linear one that parallels the dichotomous relationship between tradition and modernity. In this sense, the concept of ICH can be taken to imply a disjuncture of spatio-temporality in the linear relationship of past-present: people perform a ‘past’ activity in the ‘present’ world, which should be ‘conserved’ or ‘stored’ as ‘living’ tradition. It may well be expected that Western academia highlights the ‘ethnocentric’ value in ICH, since such disjuncture between ‘past’ and ‘present’ seems only to be possible in the isolated, small-scale societies found in underdeveloped countries. As a result, ICH is demarcated as something ‘minor’ and as ‘trivial, harmless, and personally enriching yet socially retrograde - primitive, in fact’ (Lowenthal, 1996:84) - in contrast to ‘major’ European heritage sites.

1.1-3 Universal value of heritage and the limit

Ever since the establishment of the World Heritage Convention by UNESCO, concepts and definitions of heritage, along with subsequent activities intended to

conserve and promote it, have proliferated, leading to a condition in which 'heritage is everywhere' (Lowenthal 1996). The process of globalisation and mobility of people and values facilitates identity-making and identity-marking. The phenomenon of 'production of locality' (Appadurai 1996), arising from social uncertainty in the emergence of globalisation, is characterized by the creation of a border between self and other to fulfill a 'sense of belongingness' (Friedman 1992; Rowlands 2000). In these social conditions, heritage plays many roles that interact with socio-economics and politics. Heritage signifies cultural difference through the practice of collecting archaic objects, illustrated as 'archive fever' (Derrida 1996). It is often utilised for purposes of entertainment, which 'commodify the past and turn it into a tourist kitsch or a Disney-fied theme park version of history in place of the real thing' (Samuel 1996; Rowlands 2000:106).

Sometimes, ideas of heritage are challenged by means of ethnic conflict and world issues; one instance of this is the 1991 military siege by the former Yugoslav army of the ancient fortified port of Croatia. Federico Mayor Zaragoza, the acting Director-General of UNESCO at the time, accused Yugoslavia of violating what had been decreed at the 1954 Hague Convention: protection of important cultural property in the event of armed conflict, whether of an international or civil nature. Furthermore, the 2001 demolition of a Buddhist statue in Bamyán, Afghanistan by the Taliban caused great international outrage. Koichiro Matsuura, the former Director-General of UNESCO, called these actions 'crimes against culture' and denounced the 'destruction of cultural properties which were the heritage of the Afghan people, and indeed, of the whole of humanity' (World Heritage Newsletter, UNESCO 2001:2). In this view, heritage is portrayed as representing a worldwide norm of morality: that of respecting and preserving the property of the 'whole of humanity'. Meanwhile, identifying as 'volatility of negative heritage', Meskell indicates that certain religious and political conditions that non-Western people share do not conform to the UNESCO's universalised heritage concept. She reveals the fact that the demolition of Buddhist statues in Bamyán, Afghanistan by the Taliban was not only undertaken as a reaction to the perceived idolatry of Buddhism, but was also an expression of rage after an American museum offered to buy the statues in order to rescue them, while a million Afghan people faced starvation (Meskell 2002) due to the economic sanctions of the international community. The concept of a 'common' heritage of

humanity is difficult to apply in this case. Moreover, she develops a criticism of the politically opportunistic dimensions of the international community (specifically the more developed nations) when determining what constitutes *worth saving*, mentioning that some countries, such as the US, U.K., Afghanistan and Japan, have not yet signed the Hague Convention for the protection of heritage. She explains that '[T]he Cold War destabilized the US and Britain's commitment to preserving heritage in the context of war, and certain countries were unwilling to place limitations on the means of warfare' (Ibid, 565) and points out examples of heritage demolition activities during wartime which attracted little interest from these international community members due to their allied diplomatic relations with the aggressor nations. The political dimensions of heritage also can be seen in the ongoing Japanese decision not to ratify the Hague Convention due to issues of national security. Since the end of WWII, Japan has been prohibited an act of war beyond holding Self Defense Forces, abiding by the Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution. Having signed the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan in 1960, the nation's international security has been entirely dependent on US military forces. The signing of Hague Treaty by Japan, therefore, might cause diplomatic and political conflict with the US and so compromise Japanese national security. This example emphasises the intertwining of culture with other operations of globalization, such as economy and politics: in our present globalised society, heritage does not act solely within the cultural realm. Heritage value must be investigated and understood in interrelation with socio-economic, power-related political activities. As exemplified by the US government's recent reduction in funding to UNESCO following the latter's admission of Palestine as a member, both culture and economy are means of diplomatic strategy for a nation. Of course, UNESCO doesn't focus solely on heritage, but one can easily imagine that the World Heritage Centre, too, might be influenced by this sanction.

Heritage is widely seen as the Western product as Butler examines:

[T]he standard means of reviewing the 'rise of heritage' is to begin by chartering this 'rise' in terms of the emergence of 'heritage' as a 'new' discipline establishing itself within academia. This is achieved by tracing the 'historical approach' in terms of formative intellectual links made by historiansin their critical studies of the 'past' and by mapping the increased interest in the related studies of 'tradition', 'landscape', 'identity', and 'nation' to the dynamics of 'nostalgia', 'authenticity', 'origins' 'time', 'place'... The initial focus of these authors' critical attention has typically been upon the 'Euro-North American academic context and upon an historical understanding of

the 'construction' or 'invention' of heritage in the 'Western' imagination (Butler 2006:464)

Therefore heritage is the 'ethos of a singular and totalised modernity where European values were to be at the pinnacle of cultural achievement and social evolution' (Tumbridge et al. 2000). In this sense, the statement that European value is 'at the pinnacle of cultural achievement and social evolution' (Tumbridge et al. 2000) seems to stem from European nostalgia toward past centuries. It seems reasonable to suppose that current European economic turmoil and the world economic crisis will have a negative impact on cultural activities, including heritage conservation. In such a reality, it is doubtful whether present Western heritage, - understood as the attempt to establish and maintain an ongoing cultural narrative deriving from Greco-European origin- can keep its 'mainstream' status in a globalised heritage context. Regardless, it is certain that 'Eurocentricity' does not fit within the greater scheme of globalisation. As Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the French former head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), has stated:

[T]he 2008 [economic] crisis shows that the dominant economies (such as American and European) were not as dominant as they thought... If Europe fails, it will suffer from low growth, economic domination and cultural domination [by non-European nations]. ("Staring into the abyss: The euro crisis might wake Europe up. But more likely, argues Edward Carr, it will lead to compromise and decline", *The Economist*, 12th November 2011.)

Strauss-Kahn's words suggest that the world is no longer 'Eurocentric', at least in terms of economy. Having witnessed a series of postmodern issues, such as expanding diasporas, increased cultural diversity, terrorism resulting from ideological conflict, and globalisation, heritage studies must step away from the European scope of cultural heritage. In reality, while the study of heritage has generally been placed within the classic discussion raised in the Western domain: 'is heritage past or present?', new approaches have advocated that past is 'generative to present' (Ingold 1996:203). Kuechler, for example, stresses that the past is 'an active engagement in the present, but as a constituent of the real world' (Kuechler 1996:226-7). Bender also suggests that 'historic sites represent local people's segmented experience of it' (1989). The concept of ICH surely aligns with these perspectives. However, the anthropological perspective is biased by its own history of interest in the small-scale societies of former European colonial nations. In the

domain of anthropology, research into the traditions of small-scale societies have focused on (i) how they were destroyed by Western colonisation and (ii) how they regenerated and displayed themselves in modern society after their independence. These nations' 'primitive performances complete [the] postmodern fantasy of "authentic alterity"' (MacCannell 1992:19); Tilley suggests that their cultural displays are the '*representations* of a vanished way of life' as the "'museum" of frozen time-lapse image of self' by local people (1997:82). Sahlins offers the practical and constructive observation towards the authenticity in cultural forms. He predicates the hybridity in any cultural forms and states:

[C]ulturalism is the differencing of growing similarity by contrastive structures. This dialectic of similarity and difference, of convergence of contents and divergence of schemes, is a normal mode of cultural production... No culture is *sui generis*, no people the sole or even the principal author of their own existence. The *a priori* conceit that authenticity means self-fashioning and is lost by reliance on others seems only a legacy of bourgeois self-consciousness (1999: 411).

As ICH is the outcome of modernisation, civilisation, and globalization, it is beneficial to consider a cultural form raised through the interactive social conditions. The 'Eurocentric' attitude elides a fact: 'European value' has not been shared in the same way in non-European nations as in Europe. Due to the broad impact of Westernisation upon the rest of the world, European value is fixed as a counter-value to these non-European societies. Since the 19th century, European value has been introduced and widely shared among non-European nations, such that it is now viewed as the 'universal standard'. In other words, outside Europe, Westernisation has *necessarily* been experienced in tandem with modernisation. In many non-European developed nations, Westernisation is a 'naturalised' social condition; their societies have developed through encounters with the heteronomous values of the West and adapted themselves to it in the course of their civilisation and modernisation. As a result, they seek their own identity and tradition (Friedman 1999 cited in Rowlands 2002). In the heritage discussion, this social backdrop often blurred and bound up with the wider perspective of modernity, lumped together with terms such as 'globalisation', and 'cultural homogenisation'.

Some studies show the promotion of non-Western value in the establishment of cultural heritage undertaken in some post Western colonial states. In order to forget

the colonial past and to establish a new national identity, some African states involve pre-colonial culture and tradition in their heritage development. Butler examines the Egyptian government's project of the construction of the New Library of Alexandria, jointly undertaken with UNESCO. She considers that the project to have accomplished a concretisation and materialisation of the myths of homecoming of Alexandria while tracing the fact that other more urgent needs of the local people such as clean water, sanitation, and hospital care have been taken as secondary elements in the development (Butler 2007). Charlotte Joy studies the traditional mosque and houses made of mud in the town of Djenné, Mali. In 2005, the construction of mud buildings was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Joy examines some confrontations among the residents of Djenné, the technocratic organization of the Cultural Mission, who controls the conservation of the site, the Islamic community, and the local tourist board. Another challenge is outlined in the reality of life of the residents, such as the scarcity of materials necessary to repair and maintain the original construction of their houses due to environmental change, the cost of building maintenance, and strict regulations regarding house planning, which interfere with and cause inconvenience to those living there. (Joy 2007). Rowlands extends the scope further, suggesting that Djenné's heritage project is the creation of collective memory, evoked through the socio-political confrontations. He considers that the UNESCO project keeps the site apart from the nation's overall modernisation programme and its associated practical benefits, and then maintains the material environment of Djenné as 'an exemplar of the modern memory project' that people in Mali share. As his ethnographic resources suggest, people dwelling in the mud houses accumulate their own memories of the space, rather than collective ones, through their daily experience of the material environment, which includes the inconvenience they experience in the regulation of their living space by the Cultural Mission, as reported by Joy. In addition, the iconic status of the mud mosque as a heritage site exposes layers of tensions among individual stakeholders such as the city administration, Cultural Mission, and religious groups. Joy also points out the incompatibility between the material status as a heritage site and the Islamic religion. He underlines the fact that the Islamic tradition of adopting a reformist position, embracing an ongoing process of renewal and maintenance, is completely at odds with the Western, static idea of conservation of heritage. Also, he implies a further possible source of tension in that the 'purified status' of the mosque –reclaimed as it

was from its previous significance and relationship to indigenous African belief systems – might invoke religious conflict with other Islamic nations who share the idea that idolatry or polytheism are sins (Rowlands 2007).

In these societies, cultural heritage therefore draws upon the reality of the life in the process of modernisation. The western heritage concepts should not be contemplated to the same degree when we discuss non-European heritage, which has a socio-cultural cornerstone - the West - as a *counter*-value, as Rowlands argued in the description of the differences between Western and Islamic notions of heritage. I will return to the discussion of differences in cultural notions of heritage by examining a specifically Japanese example in the final part of this chapter.

In this global context, it is important that studies of non-Western concepts of heritage are given more attention in the future, in addition to that of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Heritage cannot be understood clearly if it is simply lumped into a single broad category as a ‘product of modernity’. However, as the product of Western influence experienced in the non-Western world since the Second World War, non-Western heritage expressions have evolved through the experiences of capital economy, social development, attainment of post-colonial status, and globalization as they have occurred in the non-Western world. In addition, studies of non-Western heritage expressions shouldn’t concentrate solely upon small-scale societies in post-colonial states presented as examples of ‘primitive culture’ to Western tourists (McCanel 1992, Lowenthal 1996, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004, Rowlands 2009). Hitherto, in global heritage institutions, the study of ICH has focused mainly on its institutional functions, associated ideologies, and the impacts of globalization and imported Western social ideals. Little attempt has been made to understand what ICH actually means to members of non-Western cultures in their daily lives, or how ‘safeguarding’ activities influence their realities. In Japan, where the ICH system was introduced in 1951, ICH is a social norm by which people share the values of ‘traditional performing arts and crafts’ in their own right. Like tangible cultural heritage in Europe, ICH has been a socio-cultural and moral standard in Japanese society for more than half a century. As such, it is problematic to include Western heritage development as a cornerstone of the study of ICH, essentially because the postmodern heritage movement of Japan doesn’t involve a past-present linear

relationship. The Japanese concept of heritage does not aim to claim a cultural ‘past’ or ‘origin’, as it does in the West; instead, it seeks a ‘new modernity’ to divert attention away from Japan’s ‘past’ and its fateful experiences of Westernisation and modernisation, which ended with defeat in World War II. Meanwhile, as in other non-Western developed nations, elements of Japanese lifestyle such as clothing, diet, and housing have become increasingly similar to those found in Europe and the US; the Western lifestyle has now become so deeply interwoven into daily life in Japan that it is difficult for many Japanese people to remain conscious that it is, indeed, Western. The ICH of Japan is a great example of ‘tradition’ fitting into a postmodern society as an established social institution.

1.2 Intangible Cultural Heritage of Japan

In this section, I argue that the Japanese ICH system developed under specific socio-political conditions that were processed through the nation's radical Westernisation and modernisation and ended with defeat in the Second World War. The postmodern heritage development of Japan illustrates a grand scenario of the impact of European value in the following ways:

- 1) When Japan encountered Europe in the 19th century, a nationalistic ideology against the West was generated, culminating in Japan's losses in World War II.
- 2) Japan's post-war effort to overcome societal chaos resulted in a shift towards a new idea of modernity, one that involved and invoked 'tradition' yet did not counter Western values.
- 3) By adjusting to Western social development, Japan successfully recovered from the war's chaos and joined in the world's capital economy.
- 4) Under their current globalised social conditions, Japanese people are now able to enjoy 'tradition' as a cultural choice in their Westernised daily lives.

The ICH system contrasts with the retrospective Western attitude to heritage, which is oriented towards seeking 'origins' through objects from the past that are perceived to have some ancestral Greco-European value (Lowenthal 1985/1996, Butler 2006/2009). Conversely, the development of Japanese heritage has been progressive and active, and aims to create a 'new' social value in the institution of 'tradition'. This study will provide an example of ICH in the context of the large-scale society in a developed country to challenge to the existing study of ICH that non-Western heritage is framed by such concepts as 'primitive', 'underdeveloped' of the post-European colonial states. Employing this approach, I examine the historical transformation of heritage development in Japan, focusing specifically on traditional crafts produced since the late 19th century.

1.2-1 Foundation of Japanese traditional culture in the feudal period

I will first examine the transformation of Japanese cultural forms between the early 20th century and the period immediately following World War II, when they began to be viewed as ‘traditional’ according to the prevailing social dynamics. Currently, the Japanese ICH system is operated under the Intangible Cultural Property Protection Law (ICPPL). Under this law, the Japanese ICH system is divided into four categories: traditional performing arts, crafts, folk performing arts, and the skills necessary to maintain these cultural practices.

During the feudal period (1192-1867), there was no general term for ‘art’ or ‘culture’ (Honda 1976:19), although many varieties of cultural expression were being cultivated, which would go on to become the foundations of later Japanese culture. At this time, ‘art’ referred to specific *gei* (skills) and *no* (talents) in various cultural expressions (Honda 1976:19). People developed numerous forms of local dance, music, and customs, which became the basic types of current performing arts, *Geino* (ibid. 16-18), through local religious practices.

There were two main types *Geino*. The first were the so-called *elite* forms performed by professionals: *No-gaku*, ceremonial court performances and musical styles; *Joruri*, puppet plays with narrator and music; and *Kabuki*, dramatic theatre performances. They were derived from Chinese and Korean tributes to Japanese emperors in ancient times and were supported by the Imperial Court (ibid). In the process of transmission, movements and expressions created a prototype or pattern of forms and became popularised among ordinary people. All these forms became successful public entertainment in the Edo period (1600-1867) (Ienaga 1984, Bergman 1998).

The second category of *Geino* was folk performing arts, developed in parallel with local beliefs and agriculture and practised by ordinary people. These included customs and festivals such as *Kagura*, a type of music and dancing associated with Shinto beliefs, and *Taodori*, a dance conducted in rice paddies to ensure a good harvest. In Japanese Shinto beliefs, there are many types of *kami*, or gods, which exist everywhere, dwelling in plants, mountains, houses and many daily objects. In

ritual ceremonies, people invited *kami*, such as a god from a local sacred mountain, to attend, guiding them to descend to objects or spaces in order to meet and date with other *kami*, such as the rice field goddess. These sacred points were usually: (1) natural objects, such as mountains, trees, rocks and animals; (2) man-made objects, such as flags, pillars, sticks with paper strips used in purification, *dashi* floats (ornamental displays on a moveable platform) or *mikoshi* (portable shrines, masks and dolls); or (3) humans, including shamans (especially in Okinawa) (Honda: 1976, Fukuhara: 2004) - usually given an offering by a local lord, a shrine or temple - and the town's congregation. Fukuhara describes the traditional Japanese festival, *Matsuri*, as follows:

It originates from an ancient verb *maturou*, "serve and obey to a god". This word refers to the invitation of a god or supernatural phenomenon, attending to it and entertaining it with food and drinks as if it were human, and satisfying its demand by dedicating performing arts, and serving it the best seasonal crops (2004:79).

People gathered to carry or pull *mikoshi* or *dashi* around the town, with musical accompaniment, to a shrine attended by their lord. As well as being a leisure activity, the festival was meant to be a symbol of the local lord's power over people, giving them a sense of belonging to the lord's domain. The development of Japanese folk performing arts underlines people's adherence to local beliefs, the daily life of farming communities, the power of feudal lords, and the sacredness of the landscape.

Craftspeople (mostly craftsmen at this time) and merchants in the feudal class system were called *cho-nin*, and were townspeople living close to the local lord. These craftsmen usually worked in hereditary family businesses or were apprenticed to lineage schools. Junior craftsmen and carpenters started their apprenticeships at workshops in their early teenage years with a customary pattern of training, in which manual skills were mastered as part of a disciplined way of life governed by a strict sense of hierarchy (Coaldrake 1990:7). Their patrons, who were usually powerful temples, shrines, and lords, made appointments to successful schools where craftsmen were thus able to establish their art forms. However, most craftsmen worked primarily for ordinary people for their livelihoods, with their works sold in local markets depending on the demands of people's lifestyles.

Such rituals, festivals, and objects were the basis of traditional cultural forms signified through daily material practice and local religion in the framework of a feudal system. In the process of transmission, movements and expressions created prototypes or patterns in forms (Ienaga 1984, Bergman 1998), which were tacitly practised and popularised and sometimes vanished as time went by. However, drastic social change created new concepts of ‘art’ and the ‘domain of culture’, which would eventually become known as ‘heritage’.

1.2-2 Modernisation and the role of culture in the early 20th century

The Japanese heritage concept emerged during the Meiji era (1868-1912), at the same time that Japan, empowered by imperialism and the quest for Western modernity, was in the process of establishing the idea of the ‘Japanese nation’. The Meiji Restoration (1868) was a drastic political and social change that ended the feudalistic *Shogunate* era and opened Japan to the international world after over two centuries of isolation. To recover and centralise national power, feudal provinces were abolished and became prefectures, and the Emperor was brought into politics for the first time since the 11th century. The Meiji government started to collect artefacts from the Imperial Family, temples, shrines, and former lords in order to exhibit them to the public. By objectifying these exhibition artefacts as *on-butsu* (Emperor’s treasure) and *kokuhō* (national treasure), the government tried to enhance the perception of the Emperor’s power in the eyes of the general public (Suzuki 2002:3). Thus, Japan’s cultural heritage was born. In 1971, the first exhibition of these treasures was held in Kyoto, at *Nishi-Honganji* Temple, successfully attracting 11,000 visitors in a month (ibid).

In order to catch up with the West, the government introduced a Western-style social system in the early 20th century. Driven by intense industrialisation and Westernisation, Western terms and concepts entered the language. The word ‘kunst’ (German for ‘art’) was introduced at this time (Honda, 1976: 15-16), followed shortly by *bunka* (‘culture’); terms for the concepts of ‘civilisation’ and ‘education’ were also created (Bunkazai-Hogo-linkai 1971: 1)³. The government established a

³ One of the slogans of the period was *Bunmei-kaika* (‘civilisation and enlightenment’).

National Museum in 1872 to archive and control the nation's artefacts with a view to better displaying them alongside those of other 'developed' nations, a step that had in fact first been taken one year earlier in Vienna with Japan's first participation in an international exhibition (Minami 1993:4). When Japan participated in the Great Exhibition of 1873, western aesthetic concepts of 'fine art' and 'applied art' were introduced to the nation and the secretariat for Great Exhibitions at the National Museum has since worked as the locus of cross-cultural exchange between Japanese and Western art. The Meiji Government promoted art by establishing art institutions and inviting foreign art teachers e.g. Ernest Fenelosa (Ueno 1958). As Moeran observes, such movements contributed to the consolidation of artistic value in craft production and created 'a sense of *history*' and a sense of Japanese tradition and aesthetic values. He describes that

[T]hose concerned with the development of Japan's crafts reali[z]ed that not everything they had borrowed from western culture was necessary better than that which they themselves could produce. It was this attitude that facilitated the construction of museums, the formation of associations promoting Japanese arts, and the publication of the country's first art magazine, *Kokka*. (Moeran 1997:14)

In fact, it was in the Meiji Period that Japanese antiquities and handicrafts became popular in the foreign art market, and the nation promoted the export of craft materials (Ueno 1958). In 1880, as an extension of this art promotion, the government created '*Teishitsu-Gigei-In*', a group of appointed artists and craftspeople to be funded by the Imperial Family (Minami 1993, Otaki 1993, Kikuchi 2009). When Japan entered the Pacific War in 1937 and the resultant war economy caused societal tensions, grassroots activity was stepped up in order to support craftspeople. In 1942 a policy to protect such workers, the '*Geijyutu-Hozon-Maru-Gei-Shikaku-sakka*' or 'designation of craftspeople to safeguard artistic skill', was established to help those struggling with the production controls introduced by the sumptuary law (Minami 1993; Kikuchi 2009; National Diet Library). The effect of artistic stimulation wasn't limited to practitioners. Indeed, aristocrats and elite members of the public began to revive the old cultural traditions, such as tea ceremony, with all their attendant artistic features. . As Moeran notes, the activities of these people encouraged the production of craft materials involved in such occasions, for example, pottery (Moeran 1997: 14).

In stark contrast to the treatment afforded to these art objects and craft products, Buddhist and other local religious practices were abolished or repressed because they were not seen as representative of modernity.⁴ After a substantial number of religious objects had been sold to Europeans, the government eventually introduced laws protecting ancient properties: e.g. Laws for Protecting Old Shrines and Temples (1897), Laws for Protecting National Treasures (1929) and Laws for Protecting Important Objects of Art (1933). However even then this move was aimed at developing national prestige in the eyes of foreign countries and demonstrating the Emperor's power over his people. As a whole, the concepts of art and cultural heritage that emerged during the Meiji era were geared towards producing 'a general populace that would not be embarrassing when seen by the West' (Tomooka et al. 2002:52).

By collecting old materials to augment the idea of the Emperor, and by introducing western artistic values in craft production to create competitive export goods, the Japanese heritage movement strived to promote a sense of nation and modernity. However, at the same time, materials were lost in this quest for modernity. Such losses, illustrate the shifting value of material in Japan at this time e.g. traditions were revived; hybrid material emerged as a result of the introduction of new value; artefacts fell into disuse or were demolished — all these changes were influenced by social dynamics. Aesthetic values, new skills and the concept of 'safeguarding skills' also developed through people's experience of this dynamism. However, the most substantial shift in material value and the social repercussions of this, occurred when the Japanese nation lost the Second World War.

1.2-3 From 'defeated nation' to 'cultural state': 'tradition' as a new modernity in postwar Japan

Japanese ICH was defined for the first time when the Cultural Property Protection Law (CPPL) was established in 1950. Originally called Important Intangible Cultural Property (IICP), it is believed that the notion of protecting this property by law was

⁴ In a movement known as *Haibutsu-kishaku*, people were aggressively encouraged to demolish local Buddhist statues and buildings and to denounce Buddhist teachings as dogma in order to eliminate evidence of underdevelopment (Yasumaru 1995, Matsuura 1998).

first mooted following a 1948 fire in Horyuji, the oldest temple in Japan, built in 607 AD. An ancient wall painting – a national treasure that had barely survived wartime fires – was severely damaged, which led the government to start taking serious action to protect Japan’s heritage and improve conservation skills (Ishizawa 1976, Saito 2004, Shinano 2005). The prevailing social and political conditions were instrumental in determining how influential this incident became in the development of IICP. First of all, the new cabinet approved a measure entitled ‘*Shin-Nippon-Kensetsu-Kokumin-Undo*’ (‘public movement to establish a new Japan’) on 20th June 1947. This initiative aimed to mitigate the social, economic, and moral disorder caused by the war defeat.⁵ The following year, the government formed the ‘*Monbu-Iinkai*’ (Cultural Commission) to establish guidelines for cultural and educational policy. During this time, use of the term ‘*Bunka-Kokka*’ (‘cultural state’) was frequently advocated by National Diet (Japanese parliament) members, who sought to underline the importance of culture in empowering the new national identity. For instance, Shinkichi Uketa, a House of Representatives (Lower House) member of Monbu-Iinkai, stated that:

...The development of cultural and recreational activities might cultivate the areas of film, drama, arts, crafts and performing arts... Through these cultural activity opportunities, [young people and other groups] might be able to overcome their post-war ‘empty feelings’ and look to their futures with hope. In addition, I believe that our nation should reward those *who have contributed to cultural activities*. So far, we have rewarded only military officers; however, we should also do the same for these contributors to culture (extracts from *Monbu-Iinkai* session, House of Representatives, 26th August 1947; author’s translation).

Uketa’s statements provide the reader with some understanding of the post-war social environment. People often found themselves in chaotic situations, without sufficient food, housing or social security. Having said this, at the same time they had been released from the severe tension of wartime into a relatively carefree post-war atmosphere within which to re-establish their nation. Against the backdrop of these particular social circumstances, the fire in Horyuji received considerable public attention. As noted by Uketa, ‘people were not previously interested in cultural property at all. But after a magazine article on the fire, they became very keen supporters of the government’s conservation of Horyuji. They now realised the value

⁵ In order to develop the cultural capacity of citizens and nourish their physical and spiritual health, the government encouraged cultural activities among young people, women, artists, cultural and religious groups and industrial associations (Monbu-Iinkai, Lower House, 26 August 1947).

of cultural heritage' (extract from *Monbu-Inkai* session, House of Representatives, 8th April 1949; author's translation). In fact, one of the major newspapers of Japan, *Asahi Shinbun*, reported the fire on the front page as "massive loss of National Treasure by a fire in Horyu-ji" (1949, *Asahi Shinbun*, 27 January, p.1a). They subsequently began to follow the government's reactions and accusations relating to the temple fire and started to advocate the importance of 'cultural property' in their editorial articles:

"the silliest and most expensive bonfire in the world" (28 January, 1949, p.1.n);
"since the fire on Horyu-ji, people have started to become more concerned about cultural properties." (7 February, 1949, p.1.n);
"our ancestors' culture and way of living have been our concerns through the generations. Therefore, these old buildings and artefacts should have been preserved carefully and been open to public view. These cultural properties of ours, were highly valued even by foreigners; however, the reverse seems to be the case: their value may have been forgotten by the Japanese people" (20 April, 1950, p.1.a). (all author's translations)

In order to provide a comprehensive account of Japan's post-war political condition, mention must be made of US control over the country. After Japan officially surrendered on 15th August 1945, the General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (GHQ/SCAP) was established in Tokyo, and the nation's reconstruction was begun. Although it was officially an Allied occupation, command was in fact assumed by the US alone; social policy, security and many other activities were all controlled from GHQ. During wartime, the Emperor, as absolute monarch, had been proclaimed an '*arahito-gami*' (god in human form), but after the war and under GHQ control he was no longer a divinity but a mere human (Takimono 2011), a 'symbol of the State and the Union of the people' (Imperial Household Agency). In the so-called Shinto Directive, GHQ banned the practice of State Shinto, the virulently nationalistic form of state- and emperor-worshipping Shinto that had led the nation into war and that lay behind such extreme activities as '*kamikaze*' suicide bombing:

In order to prevent a recurrence of the pervasion of Shinto theory and beliefs into militaristic and ultra-nationalistic propaganda designed to delude the Japanese people and lead them into wars of aggression... it is hereby directed that: Sponsorship, support, perpetuation, control, and dissemination of Shinto by the Japanese national, prefectural, and local governments, or by public official, subordinates, and employees acting in their official capacity are prohibited and will cease immediately (documents concerning the Allied Occupation and Control of Japan, Volume II, 'Political, Military and Cultural', Article 92. Subject: On the Abolition of Governmental Sponsorship, Support, Perpetuation, Control and Dissemination of State Shinto, 12th December 1945, SCAP).

The official announcement of the nation's surrender came by way of a speech given by the Emperor and broadcast on radio throughout Japan on 15th August 1945. Figure 1.1 illustrates how people received this news as it was aired, with most getting down on their knees or standing upright with their heads bent in the direction of the sound, and some wiping away tears. These actions reflected citizens' ultra-nationalistic attitudes and the power of the Emperor during wartime.⁶ Immediately after Japan's surrender, Emperor Hirohito officially visited the GHQ administration office, built in front of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, to speak with MacArthur, GHQ's highest general. Figure 1.2 is a photograph taken at this official meeting, which appeared in newspapers in both Japan and the US. It shows the Emperor, once believed to be a *kami* (god) by Japanese people, standing next to a tall American officer, the former enemy. For Japanese people at the time, this picture signified the surrender of Japan to the US (Toyoshita 2008), as well as signalling the dawn of a new, post-war era.



Figure 1.1: Japanese people listen to the Emperor's announcement of their state's surrender on 15th August 1945 (Image: cited from Asahi Shinbun, 16th August, 1945).



Figure 1.2: Japanese Emperor Hirohito (right) and Douglas MacArthur, the highest general of GHQ (left), meet at the GHQ office on 14th September 1945 (Image: cited from Asahi Shinbun, 29th September, 1945).

Under US socio-political control, Japan needed to seek new social values without confronting its occupying power. Kotaro Tanaka reiterated the role of culture in the National Diet:

⁶ Interestingly, before Japan's surrender, American anthropologist Ruth Benedict was appointed by the US government to study the mentality and behaviour of Japanese citizens. This was in preparation for US occupation of Japan, whose citizens demonstrated a radical nationalistic attitude during wartime (Benedict 1946).

As we are establishing a cultural state, culture is the first element in the nation's reconstruction methodology. However, we shouldn't believe that because we have been defeated, culture is the only thing that remains (extract from Upper House session, 22nd May 1949; author's translation).

The primary purpose of the CPPL (Cultural Property Protection Law) was to safeguard tangible objects and buildings, such as Horyuji, along with the conservation skills needed to preserve them. The urgent repair of such objects required skilled carpenters, craftspeople and artists, all of whom were in short supply because of the war (Saito 2004). Reflecting the socio-cultural conditions discussed above, the *Monbu-Inkai* expanded the idea of 'heritage' to include skills needed to repair tangible heritage objects, as well as performing arts such as *Gagaku* (traditional court music) and *Ningyo-Joruri* (traditional puppet play) (Otaki 1993). Echoing the Diet members' advocacy of the 'cultural state', the commission's attitude communicated to the public the idea that 'government should create the capacity in our citizens to appreciate our heritage' (ibid). As a result, at the 5th *Monbu-Inkai* session, held in September 1949, the concept of IICP was raised in the National Diet.⁷ Members discussed the terms 'property' and 'intangible' and their compatibility by examining intellectual property rights (IPR) and industrial possessive rights.⁸ By incorporating the word 'culture', the term 'Intangible Cultural Property' came into being for the first time anywhere in the world. Eventually, on 25th April 1950, the term Important Intangible Cultural Property (IICP) was introduced under the Cultural Properties Protection Law (CPPL). IICP denotes either 'traditional performing arts' or 'traditional crafts' that represent 'high artistic or historic Japanese values' (Agency for Cultural Affairs: ACA, 2012). In bestowing this status, an ACA committee selects experienced individual practitioners or groups who have attained specific skills⁹ and designates them 'holders of IICP', known as

⁷ In Japanese law there are two different legislative processes: one drafted by bureaucrats for policy administration, and the other by National Diet members to reflect civilian opinion.

⁸ Yuzo Yamamoto and Kotaro Tanaka, both Upper House members, played major roles in the establishment of the concept of IICP (from Diet minutes 1947 to 1951 and Otaki 1993).

⁹ The committees set up to designate IICP status were composed of scholars, artists, government officers, and other experts in each area of traditional crafts and performing arts. Most of the nominated craftspeople were award winners at the *Nihon Kogei Kai* (Japan Craft Association) art exhibition, believed to be the largest and most prominent craft exhibition in Japan (interview with the Chief Officer of Traditional Crafts, Unit for Traditional Cultural Property, Agency for Cultural Affairs, 23rd August 2009).

Ningen-Kokuho (Living National Treasure).¹⁰ ACA provides annual funding to support these artistic activities and help practitioners transmit their skills to younger generations.

At the time when IICP was first established, since Japan was still under the control of the US, Shinto practices were prohibited, and therefore most of those practices, such as local festivals and customs, were not designated as IICP.¹¹ Meanwhile, some performing arts, such as *Ningyo-Joruri* (a puppet play) and the aforementioned *Kabuki*, which were once considered ‘anti-modern’ by the Meiji government when Japan started to become Westernised in the late 19th century, were designated as IICP.

By studying the development of CPPL, Japan’s entire heritage scenario can be more fully understood. The public has been encouraged, partly through the heritage movement, to share the ‘sense of loss’ brought about by modernity (Lowenthal 1996) and, in particular, defeat in WWII and subsequent foreign control. Regarding the changes that have taken place in Japan and in its people’s attitudes, Aoki draws a parallel between two different eras:

After the Meiji Restoration, Japanese culture changed drastically under the influence of another culture - that of the West - and ‘modern Japanese culture’ was created. When it lost the war, Japan needed to organise its modern cultural structure differently from that of the past (Aoki 1999:22; author’s translation)... Losing the war was an unprecedented event in Japanese history and a source of profound humiliation. However, at the same time, it signalled a diversion from the old values, which had resulted in the misery of the defeated nation, towards something new and different (ibid: 62; author’s translation).

I would argue that the ‘sense of loss’ felt after losing the war may have diverted wartime social values to a new pattern. People needed to switch from the old values, symbolised by radical state Shintoism and the status of the defeated nation, to a new set of values by which to coordinate the reconstruction of the nation. The

¹⁰ When the government announced the establishment of CPPL and IICP at a press conference, a press officer asked whether the holders of IICP status could be referred to as ‘*Ningen-Kokuho*’ (Living National Treasures); this phrase has since entered common usage (Saito 2006).

¹¹ GHQ personnel conducted inspections of Shinto ritual practices throughout the nation. However, their attitudes softened over time from their immediate post-surrender severity (from an interview with Shigeyuki Miyata, a Chief of the Intangible Cultural Property Division in the Tokyo Cultural Property Institute, 11th October 2007). US attention was probably shifting to the forthcoming wars in Korea and Vietnam, as Japan was seen to be on the frontline in the defence against communism.

establishment of the Cultural Property Protection Law in 1950 was part of this phenomenon of establishing a ‘new self’ to replace the ‘old self’. On this point, it is important to highlight that post-war heritage development in Japan did not occur in the same way as in the West’s ex-colonial states, where the primary values applied for heritage establishment were ‘non-Western’, as noted by Edward Said in *Orientalism* (see also Rowlands and de Jong on the post-colonial West African heritage movement). After the nation’s surrender to the US, Japanese people came to recognise their own past as ‘lost’; they then began to adjust themselves to ‘Western values’, combining them with a Western-style capital economy to reconstruct their country socially. By avoiding resistance to these changes, Japan steadily expanded economically to become ‘the most successfully Americanised nation in Asia’ (Aoki 1999). At the same time, by ‘othering’ (Lowenthal 1996; Butler 2006) a specific version of their own past, the Japanese people created *a new value* of ‘tradition’ as ‘heritage’. This was an exercise in ‘remembering to forget’ (Rowlands 1999), whereby a new social institution, in the form of heritage, was installed both to ‘forget’ the painful loss of the war and simultaneously to recognise the country in its newborn modernity as a ‘cultural state’. The significant difference between this and Western heritage development, as I have argued in the introduction, was that the Japanese sought to establish *new values* while the West sought to establish *origins*.

1.2-4 Production of locality and economic development since the 1970s

Once ‘tradition’ was established as a social institution, the country’s social recovery and economic stabilisation empowered its popularisation. Known as the ‘*Kodo-Keizai-Seicho*’, or ‘post-war economic miracle’, Japan experienced a dramatic economic and social recovery in the years between 1950 and 1990. Keynesian economic measures, such as large-scale land development, were imposed throughout the nation in order to promote logistics and local autonomy, but this resulted in substantial local landscape destruction. The radical development of the 1960s and 1970s led to a serious risk of the disappearance of traditional cultural practices due to

rural depopulation, agricultural mechanisation¹² and emerging alternative leisure activities, such as TV and travel (Honda 1976:29).

In 1974, the Japanese government finally started to take measures to protect folk culture. Stabilised international relations¹³ enabled Shinto practices to recover,¹⁴ and the government began to support local cultural activities (Tomooka et al. 2002).¹⁵ However, as these activities were originally forms of entertainment for local people, which had been processed and understood through their agricultural practices, they became difficult to safeguard when many agricultural workers had left the countryside for the city to work in its factories (Oshima 2006b:21-22).

In contrast to the government's attempts at protection, the *Mingei* Movement (Folk Cultural Movement), which was founded in the 1930s, was a significant grassroots-level project for the promotion of traditional craft. Under the Meiji government, the production of industrialised, machine-made craft products had been promoted with the aim of increasing revenue from the export of Japanese art objects. *Mingei* contested this mass production of art objects, supported by artists such as Muneyoshi Yanagi and Shoji Hamada. The movement's members opposed the concept of the 'art object' whose purpose was limited by the need to be exportable and decorative; rather, they emphasised such items' simplicity and functionality to ordinary people (Yanagi 1954, Otaki 1993). *Mingei* established the idea of 'Yo-no-Bi' (functional aesthetics) to demonstrate the beauty of figurative simplicity when applied to objects with a 'handmade character' created by skilful craftspeople for practical use (Yanagi 1967). Supported by craftspeople as well as the public, *Mingei* demonstrated both the elite technocratic essence of IICP and its 'high artistic and historic value' supported by the Agency for Cultural Affairs.

¹² Such mechanisation enabled year-round farming, reducing the time available for observing customs.

¹³ Economic development, along with trade liberalisation and the stabilisation of the currency, enabled Japan to reopen economically to the international world from 1971 onwards (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, 2012, *Japan's Economy in the Era of Globalisation*).

¹⁴ According to Miyata, Director of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Tokyo Institute of Cultural Heritage, the *Jinja Honcho* (Shinto Shrine Headquarters) played a substantial role in the establishment of the 1974 Protection of Folk Cultural Property Law within the CPPL (29th August 2007).

¹⁵ The government included these practices in the CPPL as Intangible Folk Cultural Properties, arguing that they were to be considered as "indispensable for understanding the transition in the daily lives of the Japanese people created and passed down in the course of daily life" (ACA).

Just as these folklore activities were facing problems, so too were local craft industries. Due to depopulation in rural areas, there was an insufficient number of young people to whom skills could be transmitted; due to land development, there was a shortage of natural materials; and due to the development of capitalism, the economy was shifting to mass production and mass consumption (*Mingei-sangyo-taisaku-shinko-iinkai* 1972). However, at the same time, economic development, specifically, domestic tourism development and the ‘*Mingei* boom’ of the late 1950s, had a positive influence on local industry in rural areas. Moeran provides the example of a thriving pottery industry in Onta, Oita Prefecture, to illustrate this trend of success in local industry in the context of the *Mingei* movement. In urban areas, people increasingly experienced the breakdown of community life and individualism as outcomes of mass industrialisation, urbanisation and capital economy. In this climate, any sense of rural communalism, as demonstrated in large organic family structures and close relationships with neighbours, became romanticised as a ‘repository of such “true” values as frugality, harmony, and cooperation’ (Moeran 1984: 12). As a result, the *Mingei* movement were supported by urban people. As part of the Japanese tourism authority’s promotion of tourism, and due to the development of railways and communication, people were encouraged to make ‘pilgrimages’ to remote, rural parts of Japan in order to seek ‘traditional’ aspects of their culture. Onta in Oita was not the only destination to fulfil these urban demands. Onta, like many other rural areas, has a custom of male primogeniture, which has enabled established pottery families to maintain original production methods; close kinship, residential and other formal ties have contributed to transmitting the value of community. Therefore, the craft production process, close community and the geographical feature of being remote from urban areas sufficiently accord with the aesthetic of *Mingei* and the demand of urban people. Like other craft products, the pottery products known as *onta-yaki* became popular in urban luxury department stores and pottery retailers (Moeran 1997).

Meanwhile, the *Mingei* boom and the increase in domestic tourism also led to the counter effects of *Mingei* aims – the machine production of craft products. Some local craft societies were severely affected by the popularisation of mass-produced craft products offered at cheap prices at touristic sites and at the urban *Mingei* market. In order to safeguard craft techniques, in 1972 a *Mingei-sangyo* (folk craft

industry) policy was introduced by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (now the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry, or METI). They started to promote local craft industries and associations to bestow authorship to their products so as to help popularise these products in the modern era of mechanisation and mass production. To underline the contrast to machine production processes, the Ministry defined the character of *Mingei* industry according to the following five key characteristics:

- 1) Tradition: the product's technology and its material have been locally nurtured while continuing to be innovative alongside social change;
- 2) Handmade character: highly dependent on labour-intensiveness and the length of experience of craftspeople;
- 3) Locality: based upon a location where the technique was cultivated, a landscape from which the materials were gathered and a history of promotion of production under local clans during the Edo era (1600-1867);
- 4) Popularity: based upon the product's orientation for daily use and accessible price for ordinary people;
- 5) Prototype: the product's shape and pattern were cultivated and established through centuries of history, so that unlike art objects for decorative purposes, *Mingei* products are designed for practical use (ibid).

Following these guidelines, METI established a law in 1979 for the industrial promotion of '*Dento-Kogei-Sangyo*' (traditional craft industry), popularly known as the Den-San Law. This was initially aimed at promoting local industry in rural areas, which faced severe depopulation. The significance of this measure was that industrial means were required for the promotion of 'tradition'; specifically, it officially signalled the 'commodification of tradition', codifying a holistic approach to local places, people, and industry. While the Den-San Law reinforced the conceptual boundary between 'art' and 'craft', it simultaneously enlarged the social context of tradition to include not only art objects, but also 'daily objects' that are accessible to the public. This law also demonstrates the phenomenon of 'production of locality' (Appadurai 1996) in contemporary Japanese society through four nexus elements: the 'traditional craft' itself; the local space where the tradition is practised; the people who practise it; and the commodification of 'tradition' in such a way that others recognise its locality. The Den-San Law's aim of promoting locality seems to differ little from the aims of the *Mingei* movement, discussed above. However, as

Den San Law aims primarily to promote the local economy through practical means, it reveals the limits of the highly romanticised and ideological movement of *Mingei*. Apart from the aesthetic values of hand-made character, rural area, close community and the nature of the local space, all of which are essential components of *Mingei*, the craft remains an economic activity involving competitiveness in a mass-market economy resulting in tensions that arise from resisting mechanisation. Of course, the *Mingei* movement contributed to the establishment of a brand image of local craft products such as *Onta-yaki*, and of the production location. However in fact, Den-San-Law was firstly drafted as ‘Mingei-Law’ in 1968 according to a document that I gained at METI and then it was finally codified by using the word *Dento-teki* ‘traditional’ rather than *Mingei*. The aesthetical concept of *Mingei* and the ephemeral support in urban areas weren’t practical enough to consider the sustainability of craft industry and people’s life in rural area.

Another important element in the Den-San Law was the establishment of intellectual property rights (IPR) in the heritage system. Aimed at promoting local industry, IPR provided authorship to local individuals so that the economic and moral value of their products could be officially recognised. First, local governments encouraged the establishment of craft associations or groups for each product to certify the holders of the skills in question, then delegated to them the production and quality control of the products, as well as the transmission of relevant skills. Each prefectural government channelled funding from METI to the relevant craft association to support their activities (Articles 2, 6, and 16, Den-San Law).

When establishing the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention, UNESCO faced a dilemma in choosing between adopting the global cultural approach or the IPR approach (Aikawa 2009:21). Ultimately, however, UNESCO’s ICH mission went beyond the IPR approach, since the latter aims merely to safeguard the economic utilisation of the end product of a cultural process. Referring to Francioni’s statement, Aikawa described the inherent conflict between IPR and ICH thus:

[The] IPR approach focuses on the end products of a specific artistic or cultural tradition, rather than on the social structures and processes from which the cultural product is derived... The collective character of most forms of ICH may represent a further obstacle to use the IPR as an instrument for international protection... With ICH it is difficult to identify the titleholder as custodian by whom IPR are to be exercised or

legal process is preceded to license the commercial use of the relevant heritage (ibid.:29).

As this statement implies, it is essential to identify the titleholder in order to protect authorship during the process of industrialisation. METI therefore created a trademarking system for traditional craft products, known as the 'Den-Mark' system. The 'Den-Mark' itself is a logo sticker (see Figure 1.3) attached to each item to show that it is a traditional craft product - that is to say, that its quality is certified by the Minister of Economy, Trade, and Industry. This logo sticker is provided to each craft association or group via their prefectural government to show that their products have passed a quality inspection. Just as Brown advocates IPR as a means of enabling craftspeople to claim ownership/ authorship of their work (2005), this trademark system provides representation for craft communities to the public and secures craftspeople's authorship of their product. It also serves to promote the product's authenticity in a market filled with mass-produced, machine-made products being sold as 'traditional craft products. Rowlands has examined heritage as a property right, whereby 'authorship designates both a legal status of ownership, a mode of aesthetic production and a form of moral subjectivity' (Rowlands, 2002:107). His definition clearly applies to the Den-Mark system, which serves to protect copyright and signify quality approval, both of which are overseen by a craft association given local autonomy. Following evaluation by others, particularly consumers of the craft products, the craft associations' subjectivity is acknowledged through recognition of the 'locality' of their products (Sarashima 2011); it is further enforced by tourism and the promotion of craft markets. The introduction of the Den-San Law signifies that 'heritage' is not simply an isolated cultural activity and cannot function by itself: it is part of the socio-economic and cultural operation of people living in local spaces and encountering 'others' who recognise the value of 'traditional craft products' in an urbanised material environment of 'homogenized, mass-produced commodities driven by the capital economy' (Kopytoff 1988: 72).



Figure 1.3: Certificate stamp with 'Den-Mark' logo. The right side of the logo states that it is a 'traditional craft product appointed by Minister of Economy, Trade, and Industry' (taken from Japan Traditional Craft Centre website)

While the establishment of IICP was the outcome of the creation of the new social values of 'tradition', the Den-San Law contributed to tradition's popularisation as an 'industry' empowered by the *Mingei* concept of objects for 'ordinary people'. More often than not, the term Intangible Cultural Heritage, as used in the Japanese context, implies the conservation system operated by the Agency for Cultural Affairs (ACA). By contrast, neither the Den-San Law as introduced by METI nor the industrialisation of Japanese ICH policy is mentioned in most heritage discussions. This is because the various ICH functions have been strictly demarcated, with the ACA being responsible for 'conservation' and 'transmission' of skills and METI controlling 'industrialisation' and 'IPR protection'. All of these functions objectify local craft products and 'enfranchise' them in the social milieu of 'tradition' (see Gell 1998 for an example of such an art object) by circulating them through cycles of production and consumption.

1.3 Intangible Cultural Heritage as a phenomenology of 'tradition'

Hitherto in Western heritage discourse, 'heritage activity' has been construed as the 'authentification' and authorisation of a cultural form by the state authority (Rowlands and de Jong 2007). As a result, UNESCO's ICH convention and awarding system for individual local cultural forms is a mere 'standardisation of heritage' (Skounti 2009, de Jong 2007); ICH is seen as a meta-culture that contextualises living cultural form in a 'list'. These observations might be driven by

ICH's fixed function as a state-controlled 'safeguarding activity' of living culture. Such an interpretation emphasises how ICH subjectifies cultural authorities such as UNESCO, the Ministry of Culture and NGOs, thereby objectifying the cultural forms and people who are involved in the practice of safeguarding. Such a unilateral subject-object relationship is the least effective lens through which to study ICH as a cultural form, as it stands to reason that no cultural form has ever been 'born' with the status of a 'tradition' or 'heritage' to be 'safeguarded'.

In contrast, as I have explained with reference to traditional crafts and performing arts in Japan, the purpose and social meaning of these cultural expressions have been transformed in various ways, such as feudal clans' tributary gifts and performances; art objects intended to be exported, and thus created with the understanding that they may be taken to represent the Japanese nation; 'traditional craft products' from a particular locality; and the use of 'traditional performing arts' to advocate a 'cultural state' in the unsettled post-war period. In order to study how ICH works and what it means in contemporary society, I propose employing a phenomenological focus (cf. Merleau-Ponty) on 'tradition' as something that is constantly processed and kept alive in society through people's physical experiences of local space and the interaction with others' values. Thus, ICH is a 'social milieu of tradition' whereby tradition is produced and consumed.

1.3-1 'Community' as a Landscape of ICH: Space, Time, and People

The 2003 ICH convention was noteworthy for its promotion of community involvement in its safeguarding activities.

Within the framework of its safeguarding activities of the intangible cultural heritage, each State Party shall endeavour to ensure the widest possible participation of communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals that create, maintain and transmit such heritage, and to involve them actively in its management. (Article 15).

Kurin evaluates that the advocacy of the involvement of community in this capacity constituted a 'large step forward' made by this convention (2004, 14) compared to its previous practice, in which inclusion in the list of *Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage* was decided by international juries according to their own exclusive criteria (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004, Joy 2009). In response to this

implication, regional conferences have been held to discuss a methodology for inventory-making of ICH that includes grass-roots commitment from practitioners, community members, prefectural government and NGOs, in order to '[E]xclude the exclusive top-down approaches' (UNESCO and ACCU 2006). In the meantime, at both the administrative and the intellectual level, it has proved difficult to interpret the term 'community' used by UNESCO when they considered the participatory approach. The major problems that arise are related to three questions:

- 1) Who, exactly, represents the community?
- 2) How does UNESCO's convention help to configure the limits of the extent of heritage participation?
- 3) In whose interests? (Blake 2009:62)

Blake, who was involved in the draft-making of the ICH convention, offers further explanation: at the expert meeting of UNESCO, a glossary of relevant terms was produced, in which 'community' was identified as 'People who share a self-ascribed sense of connectedness. This may be manifested, for example, in a feeling of identity or common behaviour, as well as in activities and territory.' (ibid, 51) Additional wording has since been suggested for and added to this definition, such as 'who are the holders and transmitters of the elements that are to be safeguarded' (Yoshida, 2005), and 'cultural gate-keepers' (Arizpe 2004).

While the definition of 'community' remains to some extent unclear, UNESCO advocates the external approach to community involvement by highlighting the importance of 'acknowledging others' concerns.

The Intergovernmental Committee for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage has emphasized time and time again the fundamental importance of international cooperation in promoting awareness of ICH. External visibility and recognition, whether local, national, or international, can help communities to identify with their own heritage and recognize its importance not only for themselves, but for others as well, in turn encouraging greater pride in their heritage and motivating them to transmit it to younger generations. Respect for the heritage of others is fundamental to the Convention, and so our awareness-raising activities aim to ensure such mutual respect. (Yoshida 2010, p.3)

Yoshida, administrative officer of UNESCO, employs external evaluation and underlines the interaction between the 'community' and various other actors, while the majority of interpretations and concerns of 'community' have focused instead on the subjective acts of 'practice' and 'transmission' of the ICH. Yoshida's approach

provides some marginal space to explore the concept of ‘community’, in that it allows us to consider the interrelationships between people and practice, rather than being fixed in a linear relationship between subject (those who practise and safeguard the ICH) and object (ICH). Though Blake mentioned that ‘(community) can also be denied in terms of the spaces in which the ICH occurs and the community exists’ (Blake 2009:61), so far, major discussions of ‘community’ have dealt with people who practise a cultural form (as ICH) and the space where the practice occurs separately. I would point out that a practice of cultural form is embodied in a certain spatio-temporality by the practitioners of the cultural form as well as other people that share their lives with practitioners and they recognise it as their ‘tradition’ or their ‘culture’ through their experience of daily life in their habitual space. With a purely phenomenological focus - without reference to the spatial interrelationships of people, practice, and life, the recognition of ICH isn’t possible. In fact, in the ICH List, all cultural forms are represented in specified places. Of course a topological view of cultural forms in the world is an essential administrative practice in order to list and to represent the geographic features of ICH location. My viewpoint on the discussion of ‘community’ is not as static and mathematical as that offered by ‘cultural mapping’ (a methodology applied in UNESCO’s ICH operation). I would argue that in order to identify ‘community’ to safeguard ICH, it is essential to consider the entire life of people who are the practitioners of a cultural form as well as other people that share their lives with practitioners and the place where a cultural form occurs. Christopher Tilley’s work *Phenomenology of Landscape* (1994) is instrumental to this focus. He argues that place is not a mere container of people’s action, but a medium of people’s bodily experience of action and of the meaning of being in the place according to their intention, social condition, class and politics. Landscape is a humanized place, existing through the linear time-space relationships of people who are Being there and their memories of the past.

The experience of space is always shot through with temporalities, as spaces are always created, reproduced and transformed in relation to previously constructed spaces provided and established from the past. (Tilley 1994:11)

Tilley also describes the effect of lived consciousness of the place that brings people to establish an identity. He points out that the relation between body and the place is

vital to create a sense of self through contact with others:

[P]ersonal and cultural identity is bound up with place; a topoanalysis is one exploring the creation of self-identity through place. Geographical experience begins in places, reaches out to others through spaces, and creates landscape or regions for human existence. (Ibid.1994: 15)

Bender also notes that landscape is a people's segmented experience of the place. People create their own landscape by narrating it according to their own experience of life (Bender 1989). In the context of these phenomenological statements, a cultural form of ICH must be considered as a part of human life by which people live, experience, feel and communicate their being in the place that the cultural form exists.

1.3-2 Agent-Patient in ICH and the four entities

In order to discuss ICH and the interrelationship of self and other from a phenomenological point of view, the composition of the cultural activity itself also must be examined. It is useful to consider the anthropological theory of art found in Alfred Gell's *Art and Agency* (1998). Gell considers art objects to be social agents, and art itself as a kind of 'mechanism'. From this perspective, an art object is set as the index that relates three nexus elements: artist, prototype, and recipient. As art is a social agent, all four elements (index, artist, prototype, and recipient) interact with each other as 'agent' as well as 'patient' in social conditions. He stresses:

The anthropological theory of art is to explore a domain in which 'objects' merge with 'people' by virtue of the existence of social relations between persons and things, and persons and persons via things. ...An object which has been enfranchised as an art object, becomes an art object exclusively from the standpoint of theory, and can only be discussed in terms of the parameters of art-theory, which is what being "enfranchised" in this way is all about (ibid.:12).

This theory can also be effectively applied when attempting to understand a cultural activity that is 'enfranchised' as 'tradition' or ICH. Figure 1.4 illustrates the four elements that work together in a cultural activity to operate its social meaning, adapted from Gell's Art Nexus and Index Chart (ibid.:29), and shows how 'agent' and 'patient' elements activate one another. To produced a more generally applicable

version of Gell's concept, I have replaced the original terms: for *Artist* I have substituted *Practitioner* (of cultural activity), in the place of *Prototype* I have substituted *Skill* (implicit in cultural activity) and instead of *Art Object*, I have used the term *Work*. The four elements act in the following way:

- (i) the *work* is a cultural form and activity (such as a festival, performing art, custom, religion or craft) as well as an index that involves the three other elements;
- (ii) in the case of ICH, work is informed by *skill*, in a manner analogous to that with which, in Gell's formulation, the prototype informs the art object;
- (iii) the *practitioner* (for example, a performer, craftsman, or festival or religious practitioner) obtains and retains *skill*;
- (iv) finally, the recipient consumes or is acted upon by the work (for example, patrons, spectators and participants).

All these nexus elements can be considered independently due to that fact that each has been established in a different temporality. For instance, 'traditional' theatre performances, such as Indonesian *wayang* puppet play, Chinese *kunqu* opera or Japanese *kabuki*, have been popular for centuries, and so people recognise pieces from these genres as an index. However, each work has involved and been informed by countless generations of individual practitioners who have been replaced as time has gone by. In each generation, practitioners obtain a skill transmitted from the previous generation, but adapt and evolve the skill according to their physical capabilities, as well as to the demand of recipients, the tastes of the audience, and to contemporaneous social issues and trends. The distinction between such ancient cultural indices and the individual persons involved in perpetuating them highlights the essential involvement of the temporality of living humans, who continue to embody the work (as practitioner) and to consume (as recipient). Skill functions as the glue holding work and practitioner together. The recipient is necessary to justify the work of the practitioner, embodying the work by being in it or by sharing the spatio-temporality created by the practitioner's actions. For instance, at a festival, practitioners may act as the main participants to bring the festival into being, but simultaneously, spectators, including foreign tourists, stand in the road shouting, encouraging and applauding the practitioners' performance. These spectators, 'recipients' in Gell's conceptual scheme, are as important as the practitioners: by

appreciating and enjoying the spatio-temporality of the festival, they not only share but help to create its value, through their appreciation and understanding of the social meaning of the festival or performance as a work.

In the case of crafts, consumers and patrons value daily objects or art objects in exhibitions or craft markets. However, in contrast to performing arts, production and consumption of the work do not occur in the same spatio-temporality. Here, the work is recognised in an objectified form as a 'craft product'. People appreciate and enjoy the craft product's value by purchasing it, using it in their daily or special occasions, by giving it as a gift, or by collecting it along with other, similar products and decorating them. In either scenario - performing arts or crafts - recipients produce and reify the collective value of the work through their physical experience of the skilled actions of the practitioners. It is through the production of the work by practitioners with specific skills, and the consumption of this work by recipients, that a work's collective value is indexed as 'festival' or 'craft product' in each society. All four of these elements are driven and developed through interaction with one another in the role of both agent and patient.

Figure 1.4: Agent-Patient relations of the four nexus elements

		AGENT			
		Practitioner (Artist)	Work /Index	Skill (Prototype)	Recipient /Consumer
P A T I E N T	Practitioner (Artist)	Practitioner as source of creative act Practitioner as witness to act of creation	Materiality or sense of bodily movement, inherently dictates to practitioner the form it assumes	Skill controls practitioner's action, appearance of skill imitated by practitioner	Recipient cause of practitioner's action
	Work /Index	Material or in-material (bodily, spatial) form shaped by practitioners agency and intention	Index as cause of itself Index as a production	Skill dictates the form taken by index	Recipient the cause of the origination and form taken by the index
	Skill (Prototype)	Appearance of skill dictated by practitioner	Image or action of skill controlled by means of index, locus of power over skill	Skill as cause of index Skill affected by index	Recipient has power over the skill. Volt society
	Recipient /Consumer	Recipient's response dictated by practitioner's skill, wit, magical powers, etc.	Index source of power over recipient. Recipient as spectator submits to index	Skill has power over the recipient. Image of skill used to control actions of recipient	Recipient as patron Recipient as spectator

Figure 1.4 is instrumental in identifying the phenomenological character of Intangible Cultural Heritage as determined by these four independent entities with interactive agent-patient relationships. By referring to Gell's theory, 'tradition' can be identified as a cultural activity that has been embodied through the continuous work of practitioners over generations in order to be served to the recipients in accordance with the latter's social needs and fashions. Due to the Japanese experience of modernisation as attained by adjusting to Western values, these cultural activities have acquired social meaning as 'traditional performing arts', 'traditional customs', and 'traditional craft products'.

However, although these cultural activities are considered to be 'traditions', it does not necessarily follow that their four nexus elements have grounded them firmly in

the domain of the past. Instead, they are being kept alive and are continually reserved in ‘fresh’ conditions. Therefore, I contend that ICH is a phenomenon of people and society; it is not intended to contextualise or objectify a cultural activity as ‘heritage’ or ‘tradition’ by authorities. It should be stressed that what the ICH means by ‘to safeguard’ is, if Bourdieu’s theory of habitus is applied (Bourdieu 1977), to establish the idea of ICH or ‘tradition’ in an existing cultural form, creating a *social mechanism* of ‘tradition’ in a given society, and to facilitate and empower the circulation of these four entities to process the phenomenon as ‘tradition’. Within this social institution, people -often not limited to the initial recipients of the work - judge the work of the practitioner and justify the practitioner’s knowledge and attainment of skill; in this way, the practitioner gains a particular reputation.

Examples in the Japanese ICH system testify to this phenomenological view. Consider the following definition:

Intangible Cultural Properties consist of human ‘technical artistry’ which is embodied by individuals or groups that have achieved advanced mastery of the pertinent technique as the holder or holders of that Important Intangible Cultural Property so as to ensure the transmission of traditional artistry (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan 2009).

For instance, in Japan, if a practitioner possessed a skill and was designated as the Holder of Important Intangible Cultural Heritage (widely known as ‘Living National Treasure’, or LNT) in a performing art, and if this person passed away without having transferred their skill to a new practitioner, the government might remove the performing art from their ICH list (Saito 2004). This example illustrates the essential engagement of living humans in the process of tradition, as well as the vital interaction of each entity (index, skill, practitioner and recipient) with all the others. Furthermore, it suggests that if the engagement of any of these four entities terminates, the agent-patient relationship ceases to function; consequently, the index/work may be eliminated from the ICH list. In fact, historical examples show that some practitioners were too poor to look after pupils at their workshops or schools; furthermore, when they finally attained LNT status, many were too old to transmit the necessary skills to the next generation, and the indexes of their work were deleted upon their deaths. To combat this problem and ensure transmission of skills, the government started to encourage younger generations to take up traditional

performing arts and crafts. In addition, the government began to designate practitioners as LNT only if they possessed a certain amount of pupils who would subsequently take over their skill. Arisawa presented an example of Takehara Han (1903-1998), a practitioner of *Jiuta-mai* (a traditional Japanese dance for Geisha to entertain guests).¹⁶ She was well known throughout Japan, admired as “a dancer appearing as if from a scene in an old painting” and was believed that her technique brought the *jiuta-mai*, essentially a form of entertainment for guests while dining, to the realm of fine art (NHK 2004). It was widely believed that she would be designated as Living National Treasure in *Jiuta-mai*. However, as she never accepted any pupils, the government decided not to bestow this title (Arisawa 2011). At the time of writing, *Jiuta-mai* does not appear on the list of ICH of Japan, as nobody currently holds this skill.

1.4 Consumer as an agent of ‘tradition’: example of Japanese material culture

To consider the Recipient/Consumer as an agent of ICH is a challenging approach in the present discussion. In contrast to the ‘community’ which, as discussed above, has been the focus of considerable attention in relation to the safeguarding of ICH, consumers and the market economy have hitherto often been reviled as negative forces that exploit peoples and their cultures, manipulating them and eventually distorting the original forms of ‘tradition’ (Urry,1990). Despite the fact that consumers and recipients of a cultural form are by no means always identical to the economic actor, (as illustrated in the images of spectators of a local festival and participants in a ritual practice), to discuss heritage as mediated by economic (and political) actors is often still perceived as an ‘ivory-towered outrage’ (Bendix 2009:254). In order to confront this situation, I present an example of Japanese ICH.

In Japan, in the fiscal year 2010, the official annual budget for the transmission activity of ICH reached as little as about GBP 5.9 million¹⁷ (Agency for Cultural Affairs 2011). Presently about 120 individuals and groups in Japan are designated as

¹⁶ Presented at *Sharing Culture 2011: 2nd International Intangible Heritage Conference* (3rd-6th July 2011: Tomar, Portugal).

¹⁷ JPY 729 million. Agency for Cultural Affairs, 2010, *Administration of Cultural Affairs in Japan: Fiscal 2010*, Tokyo, Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan. One pound has a value of approximately 122 JPY as of February 2012.

holders of techniques of Important Intangible Cultural Properties (IICP), popularly known as *Ningen-Kokuhō* (Living National Treasures). Each individual or group designated as *Ningen-Kokuhō* receives only approximately £16,400¹⁸ each year from the government for their activities relating to the transmission of the skill. Mr. Masanao Sasaki, Chief Senior Specialist for Cultural Properties Traditional Culture Division in the Agency for Cultural Affairs explains the realistic situation that Japanese administration of ICH faces:

‘The number of people we designate¹⁹ (as Ningen-Kokuhō) is initially fixed by the budget that we can allocate to that purpose. Due to the present economic turmoil, our budget for the promotion and protection of traditional cultural activities gets tighter year by year, therefore the number of designations has become fewer in more recent years. During the booming economy from the 1980s to 1990s, the budget was abundant so we could support various activities (of ICH). I heard that many big-name companies at that time could also afford the prize-winning products produced by these Living National Treasures, which they acquired from prominent art exhibitions and then displayed in the receptions and halls of their company buildings. However, we cannot do the same any more in this economic situation. There is a limit to the extent to which the authority can fund the safeguarding activities of traditional practises. In a sense, this underlines the importance of grass-root support from the public. In the case of both performing arts and crafts, after all, the practice is a livelihood. They need to be accepted and appreciated by the present people in the society. (Interviewed on 23rd September, 2009)

In support of Sasaki’s argument, in the case of Japan’s traditional crafts, an industry worth £1.34 billion in the fiscal year 2011 (Ministry of Economy, Trade and

¹⁸ JPY two million (GBP 16,315) Agency for Cultural Affairs, 2010, *Administration of Cultural Affairs in Japan: Fiscal 2010*, Tokyo, Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan.

¹⁹ In the designation of the practitioners of traditional performing arts and crafts, each year Bunka-Shingi-Kai (the Cultural Committee for the designation of LNT composed by specialists such as artists and curators, bureaucrats and academics) decides very carefully to the holder of the techniques of Important Intangible Cultural Properties. (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan 2010)

Industry, Japan, February 2011)²⁰, it is evident that there is great interest in traditional craft from the public. The consumption of traditional craft products might identify the ‘reciprocal interaction between the process in production and consumption’ (Miller, 1995) as well as the fact there is a certain amount of social demand for ‘tradition’. Appadurai denotes that ‘demand is a socially regulated and generated impulse, not an artifact of individual whims or needs’ and may be engineered by the media and sometimes by politics (Appadurai 1986: 32-33). Therefore the consumer culture of ‘tradition’ in contemporary Japan offers a broad and informative view of the policy of Intangible Cultural Heritage in that it establishes and modifies the way in which ‘tradition’ is received and understood in Japanese society.

1.4-1 Consumption of Japanese and Western styles

As Japan has experienced rapid Westernisation since the 19th century, life style there is now much similar to other developed nations. However, people still retain some essence of ‘Japaneseness’ or ‘tradition’ in their contemporary lifestyles. Evidence of this can be found in the fact that, in Japan, material culture can be roughly divided into two social categories: *Wa* and *Yo*. *Wa* refers to the Japanese style, while *Yo* connotes Western style (Ohnuki-Tierney 1995, Daniels 1999, Goldstein-Gidoni 2000:2001). Countless examples of these two opposing styles are found in Japanese settings, including in food, housing and clothing. In addition, the social categorisation of Japanese and Western and some other such as Chinese is also suggested in the lettering system in Japanese language. In Japan, three different kinds of characters are used:

- 1) *Hiragana*, the syllabary of 50 letters, forms the basic component of the Japanese writing system;
- 2) *Kanji* (Chinese characters), more than 1,000 of which are also used in Japanese script;
- 3) *Katakana*, which evolved from the original syllabary of *hiragana* and similarly comprises 50 characters, but in general has less strokes compare to

²⁰ The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) identifies 211 items as ‘traditional craft products’, including woven and dyed textiles, pottery, lacquer wares and woodcrafts produced in Japan.

Hiragana. *katakana* is mostly used for the transcription of foreign words and goods.

The consumer culture of contemporary Japan is observed from the perspective that the social categorisation of the Japanese *Wa* style and the Western *Yo* style reflects a dicotomous relationship between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’. Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni (2001) examines the proliferation of representations of *Wa* vs. *Yo* styles in the contemporary Japanese market. She observes the distinctive characterisations of these two contrasting styles in the Japanese wedding ceremony and costumes. The Western, chapel style wedding generally involves the wearing of Western style wedding dress; the Japanese style, on the other hand, involves the wearing of *kimono*, a practice which has never been incorporated into the chapel style (Figure 1.5 and 1.6). In the wedding banquet menus, too, a clear separation of *wa* and *yo* is evident; the *Wa* style menu explicitly bears the ideogram 和 (*wa*), and presents traditional Japanese cuisine served in formal courses, while the *Yo* style is written in *katakana*, with a menu consisting of French food.



Figure 1.5 (left): a Western style wedding ceremony in western dress. A newly married couple is cutting a wedding cake



Figure 1.6: the couple changed into Japanese style costume with kimonos
(Both were photographed in Tokyo)

Works of Daniels such as “The ‘Untidy’ Japanese House” (2001) and “Japanese House” (2010) focused upon Japanese housing and on the objects in Japanese homes. Her work, based on ethnographic observation in several households, presents the daily practice of consumer culture of contemporary Japan as subjectively organised

by individuals according to their social and family relationships. She crystallises the disjuncture between the classic image of idealised Japanese homes, with their minimalist aesthetic influenced by Zen Buddhism, and ordinary houses that are stuffed with objects. Against the established image of ‘the elegant Japanese house void of decorations’ (Daniels 1995 203)²¹, she examines some Japanese houses and how objects are arranged in *tokonoma*, alcoves in Japanese style rooms (called *wasshitu*): hand-made decorations from the wife’s hobby activity, souvenirs from friends, printed paintings of Western artists that the husband collects, and religious objects. Some of these objects are merely placed (not arranged) since the occupants feel unable to throw them away because of their association with memories of the past or their symbolic value as representations of the occupants’ relationships with the donors. All these objects correspond in some way to aspects of the family’s history or social relationships, and therefore in the Japanese room and the decoration of *tokonoma* ‘can be seen as the showcase of the (Mori) family’s identity’ (Daniels 2001). This is a totally different approach to *tokonoma* than that influenced by the aesthetic of emptiness emphasised within Zen Buddhism, as exemplified in the decoration of *tokonoma* in the traditional tea ceremony (Tanko-Kai 2007).

²¹ These images of traditional houses in Japan have been widely known in the Western world since the Meiji era (1868-). Some Westerners travelled to Japan and learned about the arts, crafts, architecture and religion (such as William Morris 1834-1896, Bruno Taut 1880-1938, Bernard Leach 1887-1979). Bernard Leach learned pottery making in Japan and became a close friend of Shoji Mamada, a craftsman and the one of the leaders of Mingei (art-craft) movement. ‘*Yo-no-Bi*’ (functional aesthetics) of Mingei influences his idea of simplicity and functional in the daily object. In “Everyday Things in Premodern Japan” Hanley examines the resource efficiency of diet, sanitation, housing and transportation in pre-modern Japanese society that developed the social capacity to adjust to the modernisation and Westernisation and subsequent economic development after the World Wars (Hanley 1997).

Since the Meiji era (1868-) when Japan became open to the international world, *Katakana* began to become more regularly encountered in daily life due to the influx of goods and ideas from the West (Europe and North America). Japanese people combine *wa* and *yo* styles according to their practical needs. In daily domestic occasions, as Daniels observed, it seems that materials exceed these two categorisations and objectified by the owner according to one's social relationship and the memory attached with them. A key point is that the *yo* style now widely dominates daily life style to the extent that most people no longer consciously consider the term *yo* as referring specifically to *Western*. The *Western*, or *yo*, style is probably no longer considered other in contemporary Japan, as it may no longer be perceived as such in some other developed non-Western nations. Then this social categorisation became stands out in religious or festivity occasions when people strictly follow the *wa* or *yo* categorisation as Goldstein-Gidoni studies.

1.4-2 Mass media as the communication of production and consumption of 'tradition'

While witnessing the prevailing *yo*-style objects and practices in daily life, there is a particular social recognition of *wa*-style whenever people refer it in the focus on its *production process* as 'tradition'. In fact, the examples above focus solely on the temporal actions of people's interaction with and consumption of *wa* objects, independently from their socio-cultural background such as the history and the production process. 'Tradition' is some *wa*-style objects and practices communicates the appropriate means for its consumption. To provide a broad and realistic picture of the social interest in the production process of 'tradition' in contemporary Japan, I introduce some leading female magazines that extensively involve traditional practices in their contents. *Fujin-gahō* and *Katei-gahō* are both high-end lifestyle magazines; the former in particular has been in publication for more than a century. Aiming to express "Spiritual Beauty and Traditional Welfare", (*Katei-gahō* 2011) these magazines cover subjects such as fashion, gourmet, hobby and leisure activities and tourism, with an additional emphasis on 'traditional' features. In each volume, they focus on some traditional practitioners of performing arts, crafts, local customs or folklore and landscape (see Figures 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 1.10 and for some typical

examples), presenting interviews with them alongside beautiful photos and accompanied by rhetorical and predicative explanations. A significant aspect of these articles and captions in each issue is the heavy use of words such as ‘tradition’, ‘transmission’, ‘locality’, ‘*Ningen-Kokuhō* (Living National Treasure)’ and ‘spirit of Japanese’ or ‘spirit of *wa*’ intended to articulate the temporal lineal relation ‘from the past to the present’. However, these somewhat ethnographic and folkloric contents are presented in a way that does not conflict with the essence of the magazine as a ‘stylish’, ‘contemporary’, ‘avant-garde’ and ‘fashionable’ publication that also covers some European luxury items (as shown in Figure 1.10).



Figure 1.7: *Kotto-Hana-Matsuri*, a folk festival involving a demon costume performance, captioned as a ‘celebration of demon with an axe made of sacred *sakaki* wood. The custom has been transmitted for many generations by local people [in the Oku-Mikawa area in Aichi Prefecture]’. It explains that the ‘demon is a nymph from the sacred mountain ... it boosts the power of the fertility of the land and also protect people and the land from the devil’ (*Katei-gahō* January 2012, p.132-133)



Figure 1.8: *Zoni* with oyster and eel from Hiroshima Prefecture. *Zoni* is a soup and one of the essential dishes prepared for New Year celebrations in Japanese households. This article focused on regional differences in the contents of *zoni*; this example is from Hiroshima, prepared with a piece of oyster and a slice of eel from the nearby harbour, Seto-nai-kai (*Fujin-gahō* January 2012, p. 128)



Figure 1.9: A scene from *kyogen* (a traditional drama) performed by Mansaku Nomura (aged 80), the LNT in *kyogen*. The Nomuras are one of the leading *kyogen* families in Japan. A long interview with Mansaku Nomura follows, describing his 60 years' experience of *kyogen*, his memory of his father and his will to the next stage (*Fujin-gahō* January 2012, p. 140, 146-147)

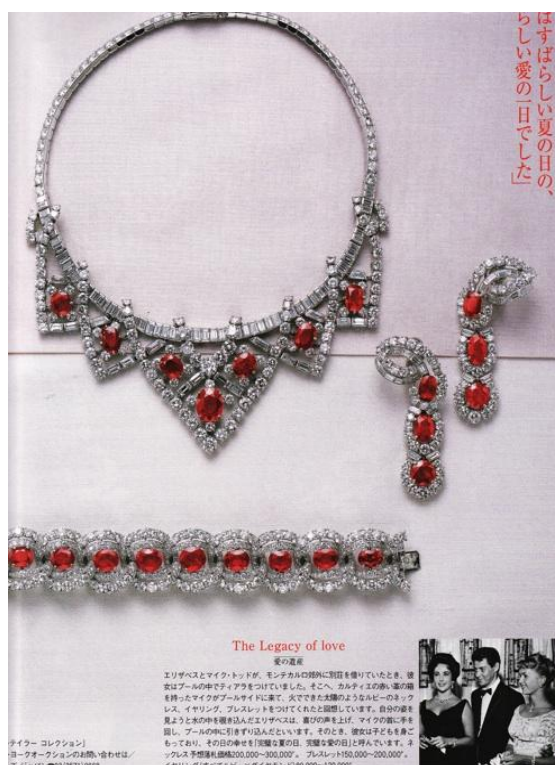


Figure 1.10: Collections of jewelry owned by the Hollywood actress Elizabeth Taylor and the story behind them. This is an example of the Western and luxury content in this magazine (*Katei-gahō* January 2012, p.194)



Figure 1.11: Captioned as “Taihei-no-bi, Nihonjin-no-kokoro” (“The art of Taihei, a spirit of Japanese people”), a popular actress is modeling kimonos in landscape of the ancient capital of Nara. The design and motifs of the kimonos are inspired from the collections of Shōsōin, a treasure house belonging to Tōdai-Ji temple, which is the oldest wooden building in the world, in Nara Prefecture. The article explains the collections of Shōsōin brought by the Chinese envoys during Nara Era (710-784) that cultivated the foundation of Japanese culture known as “Taihei-culture”. A story of Kitagawa Hyōji, a LNT in textile weaving investigates how he involves Shōsōin ideas in his kimono design. The objects on the right are from Shōsōin collections involved in the design of the kimono on the left, with details of their history and manufacturing techniques: a stencil-dyed textile, a musical instrument with mother-of-peal inlay, and an example of traditional silverware. (*Katei-Gahō* January 2012, p.174-175)

Morean (1995) notes the exclusiveness of *Katei-gaho* magazine in its main target readership: rich, intelligent women in their forties from upper class²². At the same time, he points out that the magazine is very popular among a much wider range of ‘ordinary’ women from 20s to over 60s, since it is considered instructive to study an ideal Japanese woman who is a good wife and a good mother. Aside from the substantial amount of footage of western luxury brand items and cosmetics, he notes that seasonal food, local landscape and traditional cultural practices are covered in which the magazine. Morean identifies the magazine set a dream that concerns ‘Japaneseness’ (*wa*), and is imagined through such themes as nostalgia, nature and tradition (1995: 120-121). By incorporating the high-end lifestyle, presented in *Katei-Gahō* as a combination of luxury Western commodities with the essence of ‘Japaneseness’ (*wa*), into their actual lives, Morean suggests that ordinary women try to become ‘perfect wives, mothers, cooks, hostess and practitioners of Japan’s tradition’ (Ibid. 137).

Extending Morean’s portrayal of *Katei-Gaho* as a response to the social demand for ‘tradition’ by Japanese people whose daily lives are dominated by *yo* style materials, the idea of such ‘tradition’ becomes associated with goods that are exclusive, unusual luxuries, which ordinary people aspire to own. Appadurai explains luxury as:

[more] a special “register” of consumption (by analogy to the linguistic model) than [...] a special class of thing. The signs of this register, in relation to commodities, are some or all of the following attitudes: (1) restriction, either by price or by law, to elites; (2) complexity of acquisition, which may or may not be a function of real “scarcity”; (3) semiotic virtuosity, that is, the capacity to signal fairly complex social messages (as do pepper in cuisine, silk in dress, jewels in adornment, and relics in worship); (4) specialized knowledge as a prerequisite for their “appropriate” consumption, that is, regulation by fashion; and (5) a high degree of linkage of their consumption to body, person, and personality. (Appadurai 1988: 38)

²² The class system doesn’t, strictly speaking, exist in contemporary Japan, with the notable exception of members of Imperial Family. Before the Great War, some leading families who were the powerful clans in feudal time flourished as a financial oligarchy known as *Zaibatsu*, and supported the high pitch of industrialisation and Imperialism (Benedict 1976:93). After WWII, the *Zaibatsu* was demolished by the US, and the families that previously comprised it became private companies. Because of this history, the small numbers of people who are from former *Zaibatsu* families are treated as ‘upper class’. Strictly, then, ‘Upper class’ in this context means people who earn a significantly higher than average income. In fact in Japan, people believe that everybody is effectively middle class (Nakane 1967, Daniels 1999) with the exception of those from former *Zaibatsu* or feudal clans, due to the equalized private company system introduced after the WWII. Postmodern collectivism is developed through the industrial structure of Japan and the Japanese company convention of seniority, and the lifelong welfare system that looks after each entire ‘household’ of employees.

From reading the article appearing in Figure 1.9 above, about Mansaku Nomura, a performer of *kyogen*, readers of the magazine come to learn the subtle and complicated techniques he uses, and to appreciate the lifelong experience required to attain these skills, as well as the importance of retaining the blood-line of the Nomura family. Such appreciation might be taken to correspond to (1) and (2) in Appadurai's articulation of what defines 'luxury' and therefore people come to regard Mansaku Nomura as Living National Treasure, and perhaps even consider witnessing his performances firsthand, as detailed in the pages of the theatre guide following the article. The demon mask and the axe made of sacred wood in the local festival, *Kotto-Hana-Matsuri* in Oku-Mikawa (Figure 1.7) might impart 'semiotic impact' ((3) in Appadurai) to the reader, as well as highlight the exclusiveness of both locality and transmission within which the people of Oku-Mikawa have been practicing for many generations ((1)). Readers come to understand the spatio-temporality of the cultural practice of 'tradition' from the articles of a magazine through their attempts to cultivate 'good taste' for their desired lifestyle. The example of Figure 1.11, captioned as "*Taihei-no-Bi, Nihonjin-no-kokoro* (Art of Taihei, spirit of Japanese)", is demonstrative in its integration of several different elements pertaining to the idea of luxury. The landscape of Nara is designated as a World Heritage site by UNESCO, under the title "Historic monuments of Ancient Nara" (UNESCO 1998) including Tōdai-Ji and Shōsōin; and the ancient objects of Shōsōin are also a National Treasure of Japan. The article highlights the description of these ancient objects presented by Hyōji Kitagawa, a Living National Treasure in the production of *Yūshoku-Orimono* (a woven textile). He recounts his experience of participating in the conservation project of Shōsōin treasures delegated by the government, and underlines the technical and artistic excellence of ancient craftspeople and the exotic feature of the *taiei-buka* (the aristocratic culture of Nara Era) by referring to the motif of a camel appearing on an ancient guitar, and images of tropical trees and lions adorning textiles brought by Chinese envoys and Buddhist missionaries travelling the Silk Road. Kitagawa's statement ensures the semiotic virtuosity of past craftspeople: a historic feature of Taihei Culture nurtured through the ancient aristocracy and Emperor system currently only retained by the Imperial Family. The entire historic and cultural background is embodied by the present craftsman, Kitagawa (the broad sash, or *obi*, worn by the actress on the left hand page in figure 1.11, is his work). Modelled by the actress with an appropriate

combination of other kimono items, retail information regarding which is provided at the bottom of the page, the article featuring the *obi* guarantees the linkage of tradition, lifestyle, and consumption by pointing out that the featured kimonos are available in the contemporary market. Such articulations also imply the magazine writers' knowledge of the cultural, historical and moral value of the kimono for consumers. The magazine even caters to the tourist market: this article imbues the landscape of Nara with historical and religious weight. It presents the details of the belfry, a wooden building of the background where the actress in kimono is modeling:

‘on the East side of the main building of Tōdaiji, accessed through the stone stairs, there is an empyreal wooden building, a belfry of National Treasure reconstructed in the 12th century. The bell hanging was casted in 752 of 2.7 diameter and 26.3 tons. It rings at 8 am every morning in addition to the occasion of *Daihōkai* (annual assembly of Buddhism monks of all Japan) producing splendid and courtly sounds that echo throughout the ancient town’. (*Katei-Gahō* January 2012, p.174-175)

Therefore in this article, *Katei-Gahō* presents luxury items (kimono), and leisure activities (visiting a the exhibition of Shōsōin collections and the tourism of a historic town Nara), not merely as the promotion of consumption in capital economy, but as a nexus of history, art, heritage, the ancient social system of aristocracy, the landscape, and the experience of LNT. It is clear that the mass media, as exemplified by *Katei-Gahō*, engineers social demand for and recognition of ‘tradition’ in such a way that production and consumption communicate with each other in a representation of moral, historical and cultural value.

1.4-3 School education as a means of generating collective value of ‘tradition’

One of the most large-scale and persuasive means of both communicating ‘tradition’ and promoting its consumption (or conservation) in contemporary Japanese society can be found in the state education system. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Japan has promoted the inclusion of traditional and cultural elements into the compulsory school curriculum since 2003 (Bunka Shingikai 2003). Following this national policy, the local authorities in each prefecture develop their own initiatives in education. Table 1 is an example of the traditional elements taught in the primary school education system developed by the Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education in 2006. They established an initiative for

incorporating traditional elements into certain subjects in primary school (aged 6-12), junior high school (aged 12-15) and high school (aged 15-18) in 2005. Drawing on my own experience of school education in Japan, I personally contend that the inclusion of traditional elements in primary or secondary education is not a new phenomenon. For instance, calligraphy (see Figure 1.12, student from Isonaga Primary School in Osaka Prefecture visits Uenomiya-Taishi High School to take calligraphy class on July 2010) has been practiced in schools since my parents' generation (both in their seventies at the time of writing) and the music textbook used in my primary school thirty years ago included many folk songs. However, workshops such as a *Kyogen* as found in the Figure 1.13 is a new attempt that creates an additional educational settings of 'tradition' in the ethics class of Miyamae Primary School in Tokyo on 26th November 2010 (as reported in the website of Meguro City). In addition to the compulsory subjects, traditions have been substantially involved in schools' extracurricular activities, especially in junior and senior high schools. According to the report of the Cabinet Office, in the year 2006 87% of students belonged to one or more extracurricular activity clubs: 67% to sports clubs, and 19.1% to those involving cultural activities (Cabinet Office 2006). Although Western sports such as football, baseball and tennis have been very popular ever since they were introduced in the 20th century, traditional sports such as Judo, Kendo and Aikido are still widely practised as extracurricular activities. For instance, approximately 400,000 school students (from primary to senior high school level) are believed to be members of a Kendo club (All Japan Kendo Association, 2006) since the All-Japan High School Kendo championship is annually held and covered by the mass media (see Figure 1.14 held at January this year). Cultural activities such as tea ceremony, calligraphy and *ikebana* classes are not as impressively popular but nevertheless do comprise some of the alternative choices available for extracurricular activities. Urasenke, one of the leading tea ceremony schools in Japan, has been promoting a programme called *Gakko-Sado* ('tea ceremony for school students') since 1973, and they say that currently 5,000 schools hold tea ceremony classes for their extracurricular activities (Tanko-Kai 2010). These are held at public schools which are may be run by the state or by individual prefectural or city authorities, therefore the budget is varied according to the revenue of the regional government. Aside from daily school life, the majority of junior and senior high schools hold school trips in each academic year in each grade. More

often than not, students in the senior grade (Year 3 at junior high school, aged 14-15 and Year 3 at high school, aged 17-18) travel to historic cities such as Kyoto, Nara, Hiroshima, Nikko, Tokyo and Okinawa to study their history, culture and traditions (Shigaku-Ryokō-Johō-Centre 2008).

Table 1: The contents of the tutorial manual for promoting the understanding of Japanese tradition and culture in primary level undergone by Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education

Subject	Year*	Contents
Japanese language	3-6	<i>Shodō</i> (calligraphy)
Social Science	3-4	Study the transformation of lifestyle in local society by focusing on: 1) old utensils and the lifestyle of past people who used them; 2) extant cultural properties and traditional practices; 3) people in the past who contributed to the development of local society.
Arithmetic	3	Abacus
Music	All	Songs for singing: involving folk songs transmitted in the local region and traditional Japanese songs
	5-6	Viewing of audio-visual materials of traditional musical instruments such as <i>koto</i> (Japanese harp) and <i>shakuhachi</i> (bamboo vertical flute)
Gymnastics	1-2	Involving folk culture such as dance and local plays
	5-6	Folk dance of local or other regions
Ethics	1-2	Becoming familiar with regional culture and life
	3-4	Becoming familiar with regional and national culture and tradition and nurturing affection for them
	5-6	1) Promoting appreciation for regional and national culture by understanding the efforts of past generations who contributed to the transmission of these cultures and traditions 2) Nurturing the understanding of foreign culture by realizing the distinctive identity of Japanese people in order to establish a goodwill to the global community

* In the Japanese education system, people start the primary school education at the age 6 until 12. The each grade of age group consists: Year 1 (age 6-7), Year 2 (age 7-8), Year 3 (age 8-9), Year 4 (age 9-10), Year 5 (age 10-11), Year 6 (11-12) (Ministry of Education Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Japan, 2012)



Figure 1.12: Year 6 students are working on their piece at a calligraphy class (Image: cited from Uenomiya Taishi Junior and Senior High School Website 2010)



Figure 1.13: *Kyogen* workshop at a primary school in Tokyo undergone by practitioners from Izumi School (Image: cited from the Meguro City Website 2011)



Figure 1.14: The Regional preliminary round of Fukushima for All Japan High School Kendo championship, held on 24th January 2012 in Fukushima. (Image: cited from Fukushima Minpo Online 2012)

Moreover, Goya (2011) offers a unique case of a school curriculum that is specifically intended for the transmission and safeguarding of tradition. *Taneodori* of Taketomi Island is one of the Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties of Okinawa Prefecture. *Taneodori* refers to the ritual of planting rice or millet, and used to be practised elsewhere in Okinawa; however, due to modernisation and social change, it is now practised only in the small, remote island of Taketomi, which occupies 5.42 square kilometers, located some 440 kilometers from the Main

Okinawa Island. *Taneodori* is a nine-day long festival to pray for the prosperity of the community with rituals and dances. However, it faces challenges to its continuation due to a lack of practitioners and the generally declining and ageing local population. In fact, the island accommodates only 314 people in 173 households, one third of whom are over the age of sixty. The population of young males who might take the main role at the festival is steadily declining, reflecting the fact that many of the young people leave the island for work (Taketomi Island 2010). Therefore even though almost all the islanders take part in the festival, for its administration and preparation, many outsiders, such as ex-islanders and members of traditional dance institutions from the neighbouring island of Ishigaki travel to Taketomi Island to lend their support. As one of the guardians of the festival for the past few decades, the school principal on Taketomi began negotiations with the local government to incorporate education about Taneodori into the official curriculum of primary and junior high school students. In the year 2010, thirty-eight students from local primary and junior high school were enrolled (high school students travel to Ishigaki Island to attend their classes). Teachers (most of them live on Ishigaki Island and commute to the Taketomi Island by ferry every day) started to learn the performance, such as dancing and beating drums, in order to be able to teach their students (Figure: 1.15). Students practice these skills at the school gymnasium during school hours. Some other students, even those who do not take part in the performances themselves, are also expected to view the festival, according to a set timetable, during its nine day duration. In the spectator seats, special rows are set up for students so that they can ‘attend the festival’ as a class, whereas before, everyone including students used to watch the festival together with their families, accompanied with dishes, sweets, and drinks. As Table 1 shows, (in this case regarding the specific example of the Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education), all of these activities are considered as part of the activity of understanding local tradition, diverse aspects of which are covered in various subjects such as music, gymnastics, social science and ethics. In this article, Goya highlights the educational role of schools in safeguarding intangible heritage: the activity of the festival as a whole communicates to and between the various generations of Taketomi island; as it has become increasingly depopulated, the benefits of the festival have become ever more important to the transmission of the local knowledge to successive generations. In addition, Goya notes the importance of maintaining the festival as a tourism resource

that financially supports not only the continuation of the festival itself, but also the life of Taketomi Island. She underlines the fact that and the involvement of school education as well as entire operation of the festival might be realized only through the recognition of the importance of festival by younger generations. (Goya 2011: 93)



Figure 1.15: Junior High School students, teachers and volunteers practicing drum beating for the festival (Image: cited from the website of Taketomi-jima Ward, 2011)



Figure 1.16: Primary school students performing at the festival (Image: cited from the website of Taketomi-jima Ward, 2011)

Contrasting with the exclusive, elite consumers that the high-end magazine *Katei-Gahō* targets, as examined previously, these school students experience ‘tradition’ collectively as a mandatory part of school life. Perhaps they could be considered the largest consumers of ‘tradition’ in Japan through their daily academic practices, extracurricular activities, and school trips. All such ‘traditional’ lessons and experiences are timetabled more or less equally for all students to encourage their understanding and promote their appreciation of the moral and cultural value of

tradition, regardless of their personal preferences. This social capacity for the appreciation of ‘tradition’ is certainly realised through the Japan’s social recovery and economic success after the Second World War, and the initiative for promoting the cultural state as examined in 1.2-3, which extended to the establishment of the Cultural Property Protection Law in 1950. At the same time, as Taneodori festival on Taketomi Island, Okinawa, implies, the education system offers a practical means by which to make younger generations aware of social transformation and its impact on their tradition by confronting them with the facts that Japan as a whole is now facing; an aging society, depopulation, and a decline of local community. People come to understand the complex interrelationship of ‘modernity’ and ‘tradition’. It seems that all adult Japanese citizens have a hidden layer of ‘tradition’, and an accompanying understanding of its moral value, established through their school experiences. In general discussions about heritage, Polynesia Cultural Centre in Hawaii is sometimes offered as the example of an integrated approach to the representation of tradition with educational and industrial purposes (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004, Oakley 2007). Students of Brigham Young University-Hawaii practice and perform Polynesian regional traditional dance and folklore at Polynesia Cultural Centre – one of the popular tourist sites – as part of their curriculum. In comparison to this example of a national perpetuation of a single traditional skill as a tourism resource, the Japanese example is clearly enormous, in terms of both the size of the population involved and the amount of emphasis on promoting and developing ‘traditional’ understanding and skills during school activities. Those students who experience tradition in their schools, go on to spend their adult lives in a homogenised cultural environment in which both *wa* and *yo* objects are ubiquitous, and they may seem to arbitrarily choose between them without any apparent awareness of the origins of these two styles, as discussed in 1.4-1. However, it is important not to ignore the presence of their hidden layer of ‘tradition’. Viewed with the understanding that ‘tradition’ is embedded in the school life of ordinary Japanese people, the contents of ‘tradition’, the established image of a ‘desirable Japanese lifestyle’ and the ways in which ‘tradition’ is represented in *Katei-Gahō* magazine all make more sense. ‘Tradition’ is a collective demand that is ‘politically generated’ through the national education system (Appadurai 1986). Broadly inline with what Foucault says in his theory of discipline (1975) people have been conditioned to learn about ‘tradition’ and to appreciate both its moral value and its transmission

activities through their physical practices at school, and this exercise has been operated over generations ever since after the Second World War.

Hitherto, in the study of material culture Japanese objects categorised as *wa*-style are understood as the making and marking of ‘Japaneseness’ served in ‘a fixed hierarchy between the traditional [refers *wa* style] and the modern [refers *yo* style]’ (Garcia Canclini 2001, Goldstain-Gidoni 1995, 2001). In such a milieu, traditional practices in the contemporary society, such as tea ceremony and wearing kimonos are described as ‘self-exotification’ – attempts made by their practitioners to dramatise themselves in the context of the surrounding modernity (Goldstain-Gidoni, 2001). To an extent I agree with this analysis; however as observed in the school students’ activities, ‘tradition’ is not so much an ‘exotic’ element of life, as something that they ‘ought’ to practise. Neither school students or office workers are generally conscious of Western influence as something ‘other’ and therefore they reflect their own traditions as ‘exotic’ in the context of a predominantly *yo*-style social environment. I underline that *wa*-style objects or practices is recognised as ‘tradition’ when it is particularly categorised as Intangible Cultural Heritage or when people realised that it’s continuity is endangered (i.e. Taneodori in Taketomi Island discussed in the 1.4-2). As reiterated, the concept of ‘tradition’ was created and established after the Second World War in the process of nations’ economic and social development, sometimes referred to as ‘Americanisation’ (Aoki, 1999). Tradition in the school education system asserts the paralleled relationship of ‘modernity’ and ‘tradition’ in such a way that they do not interfere with each other.

1.5 Reflexive ‘tradition’: between the divine and the secular, the example of Ise Shrine

In looking through the material and social environments constitutive of ‘tradition’ in present Japanese society, one might conclude that signs of ‘tradition’ are ubiquitous, and also that the respectful attitude of the Japanese people toward their ‘tradition’ is somehow *programmed* within their socio-economical activities. Meanwhile, it is a fact that people still practise religious customs in contemporary society. Throughout the year, and during an entire life-time, a typical person may undergo numerous Shinto or Buddhist practices. One typical annual celebration can be seen at New

Year. On the day of New Year's eve (31st December), national TV broadcasts the sound of a bell ringing 108 times: a custom known as *Joya-no-kane*, undertaken in major Buddhism temples in Japan to purify the minds of the practitioners for New Year²³. On New Year's Day (1st January), families gather together and enjoy New Year's dishes in which certain ingredients have a symbolic meaning (e.g. lotus root is involved in a dish called *Nishime*, since the holes through the stem of the lotus is taken to represent the capability to foresee the future). In mid August, *O-Bon* is celebrated, a festival of souls in which each household's ancestral spirit is believed to return home – an event marked with special food and fireworks. Japanese people also preserve ritual rites such as celebrating their children's growth, starting at the age of three months, and then the years 3, 5 and 7 (known as *Shichi-go-san*), as well as coming of age parties at 20 years. In these ritual occasions, people turn up in kimonos to local Shinto shrines. When someone dies, more often than not that person's family will hold a Buddhist-style ceremony (even though many people will have had Western-style weddings when they get married, as mentioned in 1.4-1) in which the presiding monk gives the person who past away a posthumous Buddhist name, known as a *kaimyo*. The family will keep a small wooden panel, on which the *kaimyo* of the deceased is written down, and place it at the family altar as a bastion of his/her spirit. In addition to the above, many people involve some religious items in their daily life.

Daniels observes Japanese people's daily consumption of religious objects. She focuses on *Engimono*, small good luck charms sold in shrines and temples. *Engi* is good fortune, and the item of *engimono* is intended to establish a bond with certain deities to bring *engi*. By an attributed sympathetic link between a name and a specific action, *engimono* enables the owner and the luck to communicate via the item's function²⁴: scooping rice can 'mean' scooping good *engi*. The name of a religious

²³ In Buddhist custom, people believe that the individual person retains 108 earthly desires, hence the number of rings of the bell (Jōdo-Shin-Shu 2012).

²⁴ For instance, in a good luck arrow called *Hama-ya*, originally a Chinese character of 'hama', representing the seaside, was used. The 'ya' (arrow) was enrooted in the story that a heroic warrior, Minamoto Yoshitsune presented an arrow to the seashore Tsurugaoka-hachi-mangu shrine of Kamakura when he settled the area in the 11th century. Since then, the character *ha* stands for 'breaking' and the character *ma* for 'the devil'. The action of shooting implies the 'hit'. Therefore, *hama-ya* implies it is against bad luck and encourages the 'hit' of good luck. (Tsurugaoka-hachimangu 2012)

place stamped on the scoop's surface empowers the efficacy of *engi* by linking the scoop and the deity. Daniels, investigating people's attitude to *engimono*, states that 'the spiritual is considered to be present in all realms of life and people may turn to religion in their search for success, wealth, and prosperity' (Daniels 2003: 619). She concludes that *Engimono* scoops signify the link between the spiritual and the material, the symbolic and the functional; i.e. the subject and the object (Ibid). Her observation suggests that in Japan religious objects and customs mediate between people, their beliefs in god, and their lives. I will encompass the reciprocity of these entities – religious objects, religion, god, and human beings – into the social functions of cultural heritage and the context of 'tradition' in contemporary Japanese society. People conceive the moral value of heritage as following from its role as a social institution by which people both relate to their past and present seeking to preserve aspects of their 'tradition' in their modern way of life. I will explore the interactive relationship between religion, people and objects in the context of cultural heritage by examining Ise Shrine and the re-building custom of its sanctuaries.

1.5-1 Ise Shrine and the rebuilding custom of Shikinen-Sengu

In the heritage discussion, the Japanese attitude towards religious objects and buildings is often raised as an example of their difference in approach to certain issues from that of the West. As mentioned the 1.1-3, as Rowlands underlined the different notions of 'heritage' between the West and Islam, *Shikinen-Sengu* of Ise Shrine is another such example of a situation that doesn't fit into the Western heritage concept (Pye 2006, Jokilehto 2010, Alivizatou 2011). The wooden sanctuaries of Ise Shrine, known as Shikinen-Sengu, have been rebuilt every twenty years since 690. This site is particularly noted by Western scholars for its significant heritage value; "2,000 years of history, Yet Never Gets Older than 20" contrasts with Western "attempt[s] to slow the process of change" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004). Nishida, a Japanese architect explains Shikinen-Sengu not as the status of object but as a ritual practice:

the ritual of reconstruction testifies the spontaneous action of keeping and transmitting a form like history, it does not satisfy itself as a monument. I wishes to be immemorial; it wishes to be the flow of time. (Nishida 2005: 22)

Ise Shrine is located in Ise City of Mie Prefecture, in the middle of the southern edge of the Main Japanese Island, toward the Pacific Ocean. The shrine is rooted in ancient history and the birth of the nation 'Japan'. In ancient times people believed that the divine world was centered by the timeless continuity of emperorship, and the Emperor was referred to as *Sumemima-no-mikoto*: 'the divine messenger's sacred body' (Onuki-Tierney, 1991). In the seventh century, under the Taiho Code, a constitutional form of government, modelled after that of China (T'ang 618-690), was introduced, and the centralised political system under the Emperor was operated until the beginning of the Shogunate Era (1192-1867). During the Yamato Period (4th –mid 7th century) and Nara Period (710-794), the capital city of Nara became Japan's political centre, and therefore the Emperor established the loci for worshipping their divine god *Amaterasu-Ômikami* outside Nara, before eventually decided to settle it in Ise²⁵. There are two sanctuaries located in the local forest. *Naikû*, the inner sanctuary of Ise Shrine, is dedicated to *Amaterasu-Ômikami*, the supreme guardian god that is believed to be the ancestor god of the Japanese Imperial Family. *Ge-kû*, the outer sanctuary, is dedicated to *Toyoyuke-no-Ômikami*, the guardian god of the meal for *Amaterasu-Ômikami* and therefore the guardian god of harvest for the land throughout the whole of Japan. *Shikinen-sengu* is the custom of 'purifying' these two sanctuaries by re-building and by replacing all the treasures for these gods processed through thirty different festivals and rituals with eight-years length. Defined as "Nihon-no-Genkyo" (the origin of Japanese homeland), since the Japanese Emperor System (current Monarchical system) officially started in 701²⁶, Ise Shrine has been the *origin of Japan*, and the loci of the organic system of people and the land, and therefore as divine as the blood of the Imperial Family.

Aside from the symbolic status of Ise Shrine for Japanese people, its material significance is related to discussions of Western heritage. It was at the occasion of Nara Conference on Authenticity, held in 1994, that Ise Shrine was particularly

²⁵ According to the *Nihonshoki*, the Chronicle of Japan, around 2,000 years ago the divine Yamatohime-no-mikoto, daughter of the Emperor Shuinin, set out from the sacred Mount Miwa, situated in what is now Nara Prefecture, in search of a permanent location to worship the goddess Amaterasu-ômikami, wandering for 20 years through the surrounding regions. Her search eventually brought her to Ise, where she is said to have established Naikû after hearing the voice of Amaterasu-ômikami saying "(Ise) is a secluded and pleasant land. In this land I wish to dwell." (Ise Jingu Shikinen-sengu Koho-honbu 2008)

²⁶ In 701, the Japanese emperor system was established under the bureaucracy known as the Taiho Code.

mentioned. The aim of Nara Conference was to define a different context of ‘authenticity’ of cultural heritage from the ‘classic European’ notion defined by the Venice Charter, which requires the recognition of ‘age value’ (Rowlands 2007). The Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites is the international framework of conservation of tangible heritage, and was established by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and UNESCO in 1964, with the aim of conserving these sites for future generations with ‘the full richness of their authenticity’. To that end, for instance, in Article 4, the charter states that ‘[I]t is essential to the conservation of monuments that they be maintained on a permanent basis’ (ICOMOS 1964). As the process of globalisation has progressed and social dynamics have become more complex, necessitating the acceptance of a more pluralist perspectives, this heritage context confronted limitations on the degree to which it was possible to integrate a worldwide heritage system. Eventually, following Japan’s signature of World Heritage Convention in 1994, UNESCO and ICOMOS, along with other heritage organizations, started to discuss the question of authenticity in the light of the growing acknowledgement of the existence of different values of heritage exemplified in the Japanese practice of periodically dismantling significant wooden structures such as Hōryūji, the wooden temple in Nara and Ise Shrine²⁷.

²⁷ Examples of the excellence of some skills developed in ancient times are also found in *Horyu-ji* buddhism temple, a site of World Heritage, constructed in the 8th century²⁷. While *Horyu-ji* is supported with a stone substructure with tiled roofing, Ise Shrine stands on wooden pillars standing on the ground, with a thatched roof that is not durable beyond twenty years. In 688, they decided to use a style that requires continuous maintenance rather than employing the existing skills of *Horyuji*.

Figure 1.17: New and old old sanctuaries of Ge-kû of Ise Shrine. (Image: cited from brochure of Jingu-Shicho, Ise Shrine, n.d.)

Some studies particularly highlight the action of deconstruction and reconstruction of objects through religious customs in contrast to the prevailing ‘Western’ vision of cultural heritage as storing or maintaining objects as they are. For instance, Bharucha, in his work “politics of erasure” highlights the problematic notion of preservation in which the Western discourse on museums and cultural heritage is rooted. Calling as ‘anti museumisation’, Bharucha suggests that Asian museums should combine the ideas of erasure, impermanence, and renewal, which they

practice in local festivals (such as Hindu festival *pujas* he studies in Kolkata) in which people discard sacred statues in the river in the end (Bharucha 2000). Alivizatou observes these non-European customs of discarding objects, in which ‘[T]he erasure of status does not signify the loss of cultural heritage, but actually allows for its renewal during the next season’ (Alivizatou 2011:42). These Western heritage perspectives reveal that their primal focuses draws on the object’s status of disappearance through action of erasure to invite the rebuilding action. However, in general, Ise Shrine’s Shikinen-Sengu is not understood as the ‘elasure’ of the sanctuary buildings. Rather than the material status of being erased or rebuilt, is understood as the action of maintaining the building’s ‘purity’ of material status. The materiality of the Ise Shrine is a very Japanese ontological conception, highlighting ‘reality as structured in shifting contexts’ without fixed subjectivity (Eisenstadt, 1995: 190). Shikinen-Sengu is “the institutionalized idea of reconstruction” (Tanaka, 1988:85) and is a custom that highlights the organic relationship between the human and the material not only through the activities of deconstruction and reconstruction of the structure itself, but through all the activities oriented toward the continuity of the religious practice occurring at the sanctuary. In the *Engishiki*, one of the earliest written records of imperial etiquette, completed in the 10th century, detailed protocols for the annual rituals conducted in various shrines, including Shikinenn-Sengu, are set out. The precise reasons for the 20-year cycle of deconstruction and reconstruction are not entirely clear, but according to the Ise Shrine PR office, this span of time may have been determined according to the endurance of the wooden material of the building, and in particular its thatched roofing, as well as the time required for previous generations of craftspeople, carpenters and priests to transmit the necessary knowledge and skills in construction, ceremony, and protocol to the younger members of the community (Ise Shrine and Shikinen-Sengu Koho-honbu 2008). In addition to the ‘flux-like’ continual reconstruction of the shrine itself, the materials that go into its construction are also recycled: when the building is dismantled, all the ‘off-duty’ parts of the sanctuary, such as pillars, walls and joists, are donated to other local Shinto shrines throughout Japan. Individual shrine re-use the pieces of wood from the supreme shrine and incorporate them into their own structures, as ‘sacred’ wood. Therefore, throughout the entire organic system of Ise Shrine, it seems there is, strictly speaking, no action that really corresponds with the idea of ‘erasure’; rather, it is more accurate to say that all the activities associated

with the shrine are associated with facilitating an ongoing dynamic circulation of the system. Ise Shrine describes Shikinen-Sengu as the following:

The most important thing (for Ise Shrine) is that the ritual festivals continue to be practiced in the same way, forever, in sanctuaries that remain fresh and pure throughout the twenty-year cycle. The maintenance of eternal purity is the most essential point of Ise Shrine. (Ise Shrine Koho-Honbu 2008: 10, authors' translation)

In other words, the ongoing phenomenon of ritual practice is itself the very *raison d'être* of Ise Shrine. The significance of its architecture and the techniques involved in maintaining it are often emphasised: '[N]early 100 skillful carpenters devote two or three-years to its construction where "every stroke of an adze and every cut of a saw is presided over or executed by carpenters who have been specially purified and who wear white clothing to avoid defilement of the sacred site"' (Coaldrake, 1990: 5). In practice, these techniques and required forms are written into the protocols of *Engishiki*. However, it is a fact that these protocols don't document the timeline of the entire process of re-construction. It is therefore, difficult to tell when preparations actually begin for the next re-construction: as Tanaka explains, 'they might begin the next day after completion' (1988:92). This situation is analogous to the *kula* exchange system in Papua New Guinea, with its custom of food and gift exchanges that must be preceded with ritual practices. The entire cycle of transaction, of producing and consuming, and the bonds created and maintained thereby, is of vital importance, and the cycle itself is both an outcome and a signifier of value. A transaction creates a sense of closure, yet at the same time, it extends the potential for future transaction (Munn 1986). In such a cyclic system, the act of dismantling itself signifies that of reassembling, and this process of circulation is aimed at ensuring – indeed, is an intrinsic part of – the continuity of ritual practice. The Shikinen-Ssengu of Ise Shrine must be understood as an agency by which to mediate between people and deities as well as between the divine god *Amaterasu-Ōmikami* and the Imperial lineage. Since the 7th century, Ise Shrine has been continually generating and regenerating the social meaning of 'Japan' through its continuous embodiment of the relationship between the landscape of Ise Shrine, the gods, and the ritual institutions of the imperial system. The forthcoming 62nd Shikinen-Sengu is due to be held in 2013, the total cost of which is estimated at JPY 5.5 billion (GBP 432 million) (Ise Shrine Shikinen-Sengu Koho-Honbu 2008). As also mentioned in Daniels'

observations of *engimono* (small charms sold in the shrines and temples), this huge expenditure on single cycle of Siki-en-Sengu testifies to the deep importance to Japanese people of ritually relating to gods to ensure their prosperity: an institutionalised animist system of reciprocity between the human and non-human that is reified in the emperorship. Approximately 7 million people visit either one or both sanctuaries annually (Ise City 2008).

1.5-2 Nature-culture relationship in Japan and the landscape of Ise Shrine

This constant practices relating to Ise Shrine, and their implicit social value, must be explained with reference to the Japanese image of gods as “generators of the world but not as creators” (Eisenstadt, 1995: 192) which is itself directly related to the Japanese idea of nature. In Western society, the human and non-human aspects of experience are often considered to be separate from, and even in opposition to, each other, most notably expressed in the nature-culture dichotomy, as Descola describes:

in the case of western cosmologies where nature is defined negatively as that ordered part of reality which exists independently from human action’ (therefore)
‘(it is a) dream (for) positing a relation of reciprocity between humankind and nature, conceived as partners or entities of equal status, an impossible to achieve since, in a naturalist cosmology (of the West), there can be no common ground between humans and non-humans’ (Descola 1998:86,97).

In marked contrast to this, Japan retains the perspective of nature in which humankind is located within the domain of nature at large. Japan is an arc-shaped island chain in the Pacific Ocean, and nearly eighty percent of the land is covered with mountains. It is still fresh in our minds that Tohoku area, in the northern part of the Main Island, was severely devastated by the tsunami on the 11th March 2011, in which nearly 20,000 people lost their lives (official statistics as of February 2012 from Iwate Prefecture, Miyagi Prefecture and Fukushima Prefecture 2012). The shock and sorrow still remains for many people, yet, such disasters are not a new phenomenon in Japan. Many still remember some other previous major disasters such as Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in 1995 and Niigata-Chuetsu Earthquake in 2004. Historically, many other massive earthquakes and tsunami have been recorded, the earliest written record, in *Nihonshoki*, the Chronicle of Japan, is of an incident in 416 (Samukawa 2011). Through these experiences, people have come to share the

understanding that no matter how far science and technology are developed, the products of modernity (the entire social infrastructure, including the nuclear power plant in Fukushima) may be demolished in only a few seconds by the power of nature. It is therefore common in Japan that in the context of such a potentially catastrophically unpredictable natural environment, there can be no stable, dependable or 'separate' subjective ground for humankind.

The people of Japan have adapted themselves to the reality of a spatial environment imbued with a sense of the ever-present power of nature, and thus developed the notion of the 'subject perpetually changing' (Berque, 1987). This attitude is reflected in their agricultural activity. Due to the fact that they hold winter snow, which, as it melts in spring, produces water that enables rice fields to flourish in villages below, the mountains are understood to act as vital agents within the entire ecological system. As Higuchi suggests, the mountains dictate how land forms and how people live (1981), and so the technological progress of Japanese agriculture acted in favor of increasing productivity of the land, whereas in Europe it acted in favor of increasing labour productivity (Berque, 1986:104, Watsuji, 1967). Ito describes the relationship between agriculture and the religion that:

Agriculture is greatly swayed by the yearly change of climatic conditions. Shortage of irrigation water was dreaded most. Ancient people thought that deities were living on the summit of mountain and controlling the distribution of water. It was believed that the deity sometimes became violent and brought disasters, but if it was cordially enshrines and humored by people, it brought happiness. (Ito 1994:39)

The Japanese people have practiced rituals and festivals to worship local deities that generate their agriculture and industry (Schnell 2007: 865), and created local landscapes which sacralise the image of mountains. They believe in the existence of mountain gods who 'delegate' agricultural operations to the rice field god (Tanaka, 1988). Local shrines were built at the feet of sacred mountains to guard their deities and ancestor spirits (Higuchi, 1981). Here it can be seen that mountains are considered to function as media to divide, as well as connect, the human and divine world (Higuchi, 1981; Berque 1986, Eisenstad, 1995, Kalland, 1995; Schnell, 2007). People have therefore developed a sacred image of Ise Shrine that is embedded within the idea of a nature strongly linked with the mountainous landscape, religious

beliefs and people's experience of the space, as well as associated with the 'purity' of the Imperial Family.

The significant spatial division between secular and divine is articulated by my actual experience of Ise Shrine and its *Nai-kû* (inner sanctuary) space. As is the case with the *Ge-kû* (outer sanctuary), *Nai-kû* is located in the middle of forest. The significance of the Ise Shrine sanctuaries is that, before getting into the sanctuary area, there are numerous points at which one is intended to purify the body and mind. I will introduce the spatial character of the shrine by referring to the map of *Nai-kû* in Figure 1.18. First of all, people start from the big parking space to the forest area. To enter the forest area, visitors must first cross a bridge over Isuzu river, called Uji-bashi (Point 1). At the start and the end of Uji-bashi, there are towering Shinto style gates, known as *torii*, through which visitors must pass as they cross the bridge. Some people take photos while others make a bow before passing through. Walking across this bridge makes people acutely aware that they are approaching the sacred forest. They then pass the pine forest planted by the 123th Emperor Yoshihito (1879-1926), before reaching the font for ablution called Temizu-sha (Point 2, Figure 1.19) to purify their hands and mouth just on the side of the Dai-ichi Torii (the 'First Gate', Point 3). Before passing through which some people again make a bow (Figure 1.20). After the gate, they reach the shore of Isuzu river (Point 4) called Isuzu-gawa Mitarashi, where they purify themselves before entering the second gate, Dai-ni Torii (Point 5). Here again, some people make a bow before passing, then continue by Kagura-Den, where priests and priestesses conduct rogation and ritual dance, and where some other activities are conducted, such as the selling of charms. After some minutes' walk, people realise that they are now within the deeper forest as the trees get closer to the pathway, until eventually the visitors reach the main sanctuary space (Point 6). After climbing up stone steps to the top of the sanctuary, people reach the last *torii*, the final sacred gate (Figure 1.21) which guards the sanctuary proper (point 7). Once pass the *torii*, there is a big wooden box for donating money as can often be found placed in front of the gate at many temples and shrines. In the gate hangs a pair of white cloths like curtains, which signifies that this is the closest point to the sanctuary that people are allowed to be. In their last few steps, people start to open their wallets to prepare some coins to worship. Once they have thrown some coins into the box, people follow the etiquette of Shinto style praying. It is a sequence of

two bows followed by two claps, hold the second and put their hands together in front of their heart for a closing bow after their prayers. As far as I observed, almost all the visitors followed this sequence of praying in addition to throwing some coins. While waiting in the queue of those worshipping in front of the donation box or while praying, occasionally the wind blows and the white curtain is lifted up randomly. Such moments are the only opportunities when people can get a glimpse of the sanctuary building. On their return from the shrine, they pass by the new *Nai-kû* sanctuary located very close to the older one. The new *Nai-kû*, while under construction, is entirely covered up with white cloth (Point 8 the square; empty space next to the main sanctuary). Apart from the main sanctuary, there are also some other sanctuaries such as Kaze-no miya, dedicated to the god of wind, and Misaka-dono, dedicated to the god of sake, which visitors can explore on their return journey, as shown in Figure 1.18.

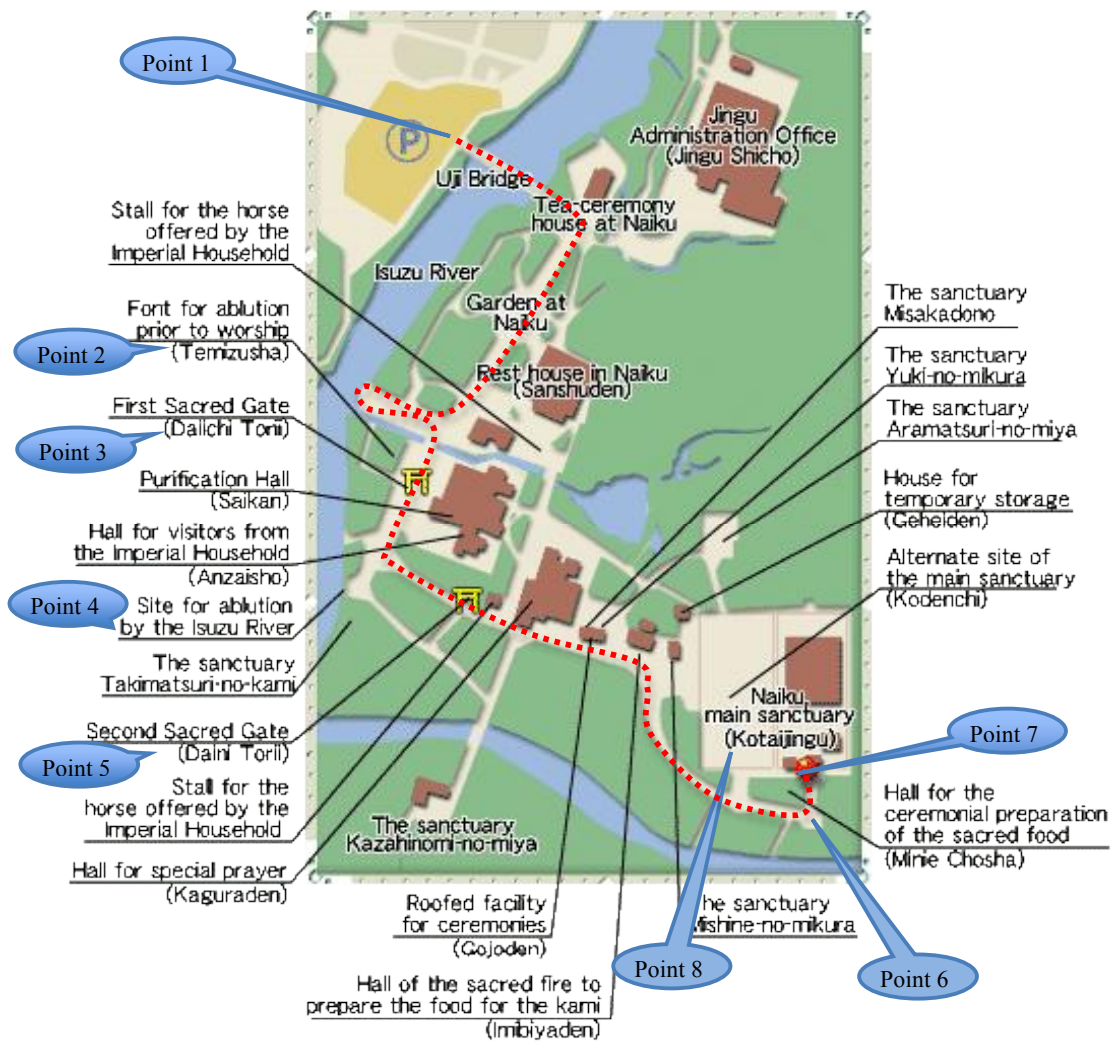


Figure 1.18: Walking map of Nai-kū of Ise Shrine (Image: cited from Online Ise shrine 2012)



Figure 1.19: at Temizu-Sha, people purifying mouth and hands with the spring water (Photographed in Ise Shrine on 11th January 2012)

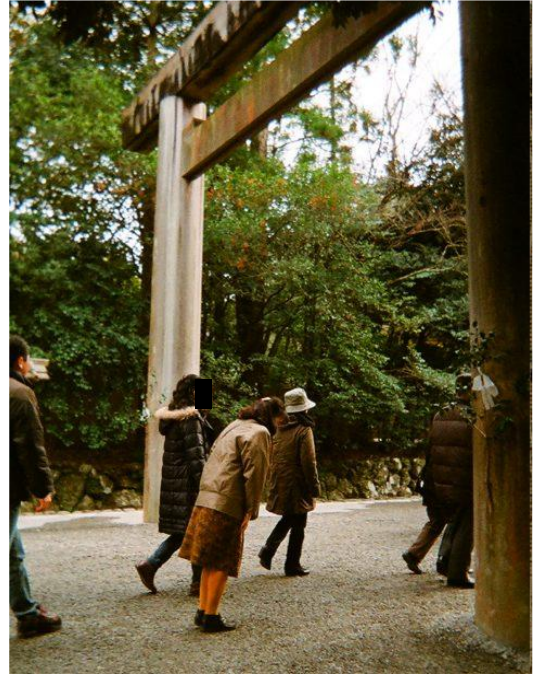


Figure 1.20: a woman bowing before entering Dai-chi Torii



Figure 1.21: people climbing the stone steps to the sanctuary

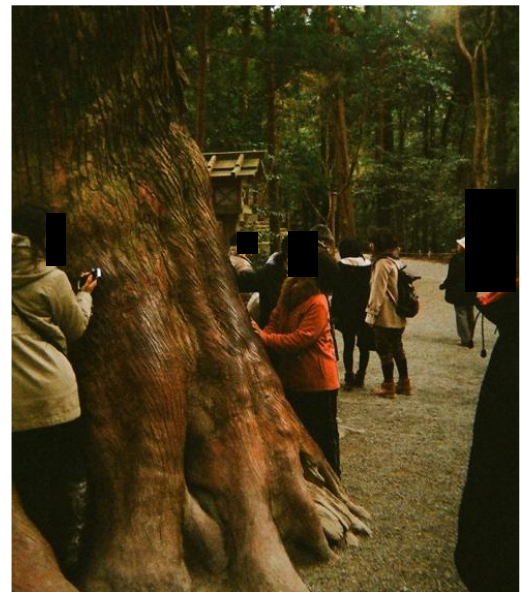


Figure 1.22: people looking up, taking photos, touching and smelling the big trees in the forest of Nai-kû

Throughout the excursion to *Nai-kû*, people ritually purify themselves as they go through the gradually transforming space marked by the five *torii* (sacred gates) and two ablution spots. From the parking area to the river, from the river to the forest, from the forest to the mountain, and from the bottom of the stone steps to the top of sanctuary space, the bodily experience of spatial transformation creates boundaries between the secular and divine world. Each ritual bodily engagement, such as the passage through the *torii* and the act of bowing before them, the washing of the hands with water, walking through the forest, and even preparing coins in the queue before praying, enhances the sense of ‘purifying’ the body and mind, getting progressively closer to the divine world; a process of transition that culminates with the confrontation of the white curtain of the gate of the sanctuary itself. The entire sensory experience of visiting the site, including the sounds of the Isuzu River and the footsteps of other people on the stone pavement, and the smell of the trees and the feel of the fresh air, develops the spatio-temporal character of the sacredness of *Nai-kû*, a sacredness deeply associated with nature. As the image in Figure 1.22 shows, people experience ‘being there’ (Tilley 1994:11) by touching and feeling the big trees in the sacred forest. Viewed from a phenomenological point of view, the landscape of Ise Shrine can be understood as an agency to communicate between the human, the divine, and the natural world.

1.5-3 Secular and divine, public and purity

Apart from the geographical and spatial features of Ise Shrine, it also demarcates an institutional border between the secular and divine worlds. Despite its frequent mention in heritage discussions, in practice, Ise Shrine is not officially declared to be cultural heritage in Japanese law. Neither is *Shikinen-Sengu* understood to be an activity of heritage conservation: rather it is considered ‘a ritual practice’ (Inaba, 1994:331). For Japanese citizens, the significance of Ise Shrine and *Shikinen-sengu* is something greater than that which can be encompassed by concepts such as ‘heritage’ or ‘tradition’. In fact, it is possible to further clarify the institutional disjuncture of Ise Shrine from other cultural heritage sites. The Agency of Cultural Affairs (ACA), under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), operates the cultural heritage system, within which ‘heritage’

is classed as either tangible or intangible. Meanwhile the Imperial Household Agency, Kunai-cho²⁸, a government organization placed under the Prime Minister, takes charge of the state matters concerning the Imperial House, and oversees all the operations of Ise Shrine. Most of the rebuilding practices and festivals are conducted by Shinto priests (Figure 1.23 shows the occasion of logging trees on a sacred mountain for the construction) and some by the Emperor himself (see Figure 1.24) in strict secrecy. Some are undertaken exclusively among local people. Some parts of rituals are recorded, and the video images continually shown in the museums and rest houses in the shrine (see the Figure 1.25). The general public are only allowed to join in and to access the closer space to the sanctuary during two festivals. People join in to help pull the sacred timber (during *Okihiki*; Figure 1.26) or stones (during *Oshiraishimochi*) that will become the raw material of the new building to the site. They first undergo a purification ceremony, then join the pulling of sacred materials up to near to the sanctuary space. These practices are designated as Intangible Folk Cultural Property.

All the skills necessary for assembling wooden buildings without nails, for making ornaments for rituals and treasures to present to the gods, have been transmitted from the 7th century. They have been learned and passed on by skilled carpenters in each successive generation. According to the booklet of the shrine, ‘*no craftspeople leave their names in their works, since they are dedicated to God*’ (Ise Jingu Shikinen-Sengu Koho-Honbu, 2008). The magazine *Katei-Gahō* has featured articles focusing on those craftspeople who have engaged in the manufacture of Ise Shrine’s treasures. Akitsugu Amata (aged 85) is a Living National Treasure in *katana* making. He started to work for Shikinen-sengu since 1955. He describes the meaning of working for Ise Shrine as the following:

‘[O]n one hand it is a great honor to work on O-Ise-Sama (Ise Shrine). On the other it means I should be more than extremely careful. If something goes wrong in my job, all the works of previous craftspeople from the 7th century will be ruined. It would be a really shameful thing, therefore cannot be allowed to happen.’ (Katei-Gahō January 2012, p.101. Author’s translation)

²⁸ The origin of the Imperial Household Agency can be traced back to the provisions on the government structure in the Taiho Code, which was enacted in 701 under the reign of Emperor Monmu. On 1 June 1949, when the Law Establishing the Prime Minister's Office came into force, the Imperial Household Office became the Imperial Household Agency, an external agency of the Prime Minister's Office. (Imperial Household Agency 2012)

The other craftsman interviewed, Seiichi Kakutani, is reminded of his father whenever he works on Ise Shrine to make the moulded copper mirror. The late Ikkei Kakutani of Seiichi was the LNT in casting, and he struggled to revive the skill of copper casting, which was close to dying out, when he received an order from the shrine in 1974. After many trials and failures, informed by his studies of ancient texts, eventually he succeeded in making a mirror. As young Seiichi helped his father all the time, the work for Ise Shrine always reminds him of his father's admonition that, '*should I fail to make it in time for the Shikinen-Sengu, even hara-kiri cannot compensate for it*' (Ibid: 102).

For craftspeople in any period, working for the ruling class was considered an honour. Moreover, if the commission is from the Imperial Household Agency for *Shikinen-sengu*, it represents an order for the god and is beyond the value of such concepts as secular 'honour'. By contrast, in the present Japanese ICH system, each craftsman's name is on a list marking them as the Holder of an Important Intangible Cultural Property, known as '*Ningen Kokuho (Living National Treasure)*'. It is significant that under the domain of god, the craftspeople of Living National Treasure are deprived of rewards that contribute to their secular status or sense of 'self'. The status of LNT doesn't hold any merit in this domain, yet such 'self-less' or 'name-less' status serving for the god is an honour, and humbling. This contrasts with Benjamin's theory of authenticity, in which that the authentic material reduces its 'aura' by making copies of it (1936). In the case of these craftspeople, the action of making copies for the god in *Shikinen-Sengu* is as worth their very lives, as the craftsman Ikkei Kakutani indicates in his mention of *hara-kiri*. The meaning of working for the god itself conveys a moral weight due to the quality of the work of past craftspeople, the sense of continuity of *Shikinen-Sengu*, and the divinity of the god. In that sense, *Shikinen-Sengu* is the activity of transmission of 'aura' from the past and creation of 'aura' for the future procedure.

Ise Shrine provides a reflexivity of value: once people access and engage it, they realize its sacredness. The recorded rituals aired on the screen of the rest house (Figure 1. 25) and the images of the Emperor's engagement in the rituals (Figure 1.24) lend an openness to the operation of *Shikinen-Sengu*. At the same time, all the more so because of this openness, a sense of secrecy pervades the site and the

associated rituals, through visitors' bodily experiences of 'layers' of sacredness of Ise Shrine. At the sanctuary space on the top of the forest, people can occasionally glimpse the inner sanctuary building when the wind blows and lifts up the white curtain in the gate. Such glimpses last only a moment. The openness, the visibility of the sanctuary is itself controlled by a natural force: the wind from the sacred forest. Indeed, the shrine marks the boundary between the sacred space and the rest of the world. The boundary is translucent, as if made of crystal, yet it is at the same time unbreakable, as it is governed by the power of nature, so that only the god can communicate through it.

In contrast, the concept of 'cultural heritage' in Japan exists in the domain of the secular world, so that it is as accessible as 'heritage' to the public. This composition of secular (the heritage) and divine (god) corresponds to the concept of 'reflexivity of tradition' made by Anthony Giddens, which argues that most of what is considered 'tradition' is actually invented. '[t]he real past is effectively unknown while people share the 'reality of the past'' (Giddens 1994). The composition of Ise Shrine and cultural heritage testifies to this reflexivity in that 'tradition' becomes popularised as 'heritage', and is made accessible in various forms in magazines, craft markets, and school education. Meanwhile the secrecy of the 'origin of Japan' is maintained through the perpetuation of invisible, intangible values: human persons' engagement in rituals and their experiences of the landscape of Ise Shrine, the myth of the *Amaterasu-Ômikami*, and the purity of the bloodline of the Emperor.



Figure 1.23: A ritual conducted by a Shinto priest for trimming the sacred tree (Image: cited from the Ise Jingu Shikinen-Sengu Koho-Honbu, 2008)



Figure 1.24: At *Kake-kachi* festival to hang bunches of the cropped rice raised in the Ise Shrine rice paddy. In this picture, Emperor Hirohito is cropping the rice. (Image: cited from the Ise Jingu Shikinen-Sengu Koho-Honbu, 2008)



Figure 1.25: People watching the sacred rituals aired on the video at the rest house near Nai-kû (Photographed on 11th January 2012)



Figure 1.26: 40,000 people gathered from all over Japan to take part in the *Okihiki* Festival in 2004. They deliver the sacred timber by pulling it on a giant wheeled cart to the sanctuary of the shrine (Image: cited from the Ise Jingu Shikinen-Sengu Koho-Honbu, 2008)

1.6 Authenticity and heritage in Japan

Returning to the discussion of heritage and the topic of authenticity, for which the case of Ise Shrine was raised to illustrate an alternative to the Western idea of this concept, at the Nara Conference on Authenticity in 1994, Lowenthal suggests that ‘the concept of authenticity has become constantly changing; the more we try to define it, the further way it seems to go’ (Larsen 1994: 72). Jukka Jokeilehto introduces some studies of ‘authenticity’. He mentions Martin Heidegger’s work on art, in which he identifies authenticity as the ‘truth’ or an ‘aesthetic’. He also introduces Walter Benjamin’s idea that in traditional society authenticity was conceived in the cultural dimension, and the ‘aura’ of the work of art was established in the quality of traditional continuity, rather than in the historical uniqueness of a single object. (Jokeilehto 1994:27). Referring to these studies, perhaps, for the Japanese people, the bloodline of the Imperial Family, continuous since the 7th century, and the power of nature, as integrated into the divinity represented by Ise Shrine, comprise the ‘truth’ of Japan. For them, the purity of Ise Shrine maintained through Shikinen-Sengu is an ‘aura’ generated and maintained by people’s belief in god.

Therefore, while the deeper, sacred secrecy and divinity of Ise Shrine are maintained for the god, the outer surface of the domain of ‘tradition’ is now staged as Cultural Heritage for the public. Oshima, a Japanese Intangible Cultural Heritage administrator of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, defines the characteristics of ICH as follows:

- it is human activity itself;
- it illustrates ‘non-reproductiveness’;
- it inevitably exists with the assumption that its form will change;
- it is restricted to represent a certain, specific status of [physical] movement, distinct from all other, shifting conditions at the very point of designation; therefore, it is impossible to articulate all its activities in a list (Oshima 2006a:52-53, author’s translation).

Referring to Ise Shrine's 'maintenance of eternal purity' through the 'regeneration' of sacred wood and continuous engagement of craftspeople to make 'copies' of its treasures, Oshima emphasises the 'non-reproductiveness' of the process, and the fact that its shifting status ensures the metamorphic essence of ICH: that is, that 'tradition should be evolved' (Kurin 2004:74).

More often than not in contemporary Japanese society, the metamorphic essence of 'tradition' seems to be widely shared idea, a fact borne out by observations of people's appreciation of creativity in traditional crafts and performing arts and the substantial size of the market for traditional goods and performances. Practices of ICH continue through its production and consumption in the domain of 'tradition', which has always adjusted to the on-going social change. As examined in 1.3-3, the practitioners of tradition, its forms, its products, and consumer, all mediate between and reciprocate with one other in an Agent-Patient interrelationship (Gell 1998) within the context of 'tradition'. Through the expansion of values in the fields of economy, culture and education, the domain of 'tradition' does become more multifaceted and more open to the public. At the same time, I argue that this variability and fluidity of 'tradition' is effective in light of that the fact that there is a hidden layer of 'truth' in Japanese culture, articulated in the existence of Ise Shrine and associated religious activities. Following this examination of the duality of Japanese socio-cultural structure composed of separate, though related, layers of religion and 'tradition', in the following chapter I will portray the secular domain, the 'tradition' through an examination of *Bingata*, a traditional textile dyeing

Chapter 2

Metamorphic ‘tradition’: Bingata, a dyed textile from Okinawa

As I discussed in Chapter 1, the majority of cultural expressions considered ‘traditional’ in contemporary Japanese society have been shaped into their present form by their adoption as counter-values to the nation’s Westernisation and Americanisation after the Second World War. Since then, ‘tradition’ has been popularised as a social institution under the Cultural Property Protection Law, established in 1950, in which the government recognises both the materials and techniques of traditional performing arts and crafts as Important Intangible Cultural Property, and accords their practitioners the status of ‘*Ningen-kokuho* (Living National Treasures)’. In order to provide a specific example of Japanese Intangible Cultural Heritage, I investigated a textile dyeing technique known as *Bingata*, from Okinawa Prefecture, where I conducted a yearlong field research assignment beginning in October 2008. There is one Bingata craftsman designated as LNT, as well as some others designated as holders of traditional craft technique by other, more local authorities, such as Okinawa Prefectural Government. At present, Bingata fabric is sold in the Japanese kimono market as a luxury local item. However these facts alone provide no information as to why Japanese people recognise Bingata as ‘traditional’, nor do they inform us about how Bingata fabric and the technology used to create it relate to each other in such a way as to attain such social recognition. A promising anthropological approach in the context of this situation is to investigate the interrelationship between the material itself and the activities involved in its production. Tilley identifies that the cultural material (i.e. objects that people made) is ‘a medium through which people came to know and understand themselves, a mean of creation and self-creation, one in which a consciousness of the thing was a fundamental part of social being’ (Tilley 2011:348). The approach suggested above is useful in understanding Bingata’s role as such a medium: to relate the material form of Bingata fabric, the recognition of its means of production activity as ‘tradition’, and its popularisation in modern Japanese society. The approach also underlines the importance of the subjects who learn and practice the techniques involved -the Bingata craftspeople themselves. Following the idea of ‘invention of tradition’ – that traditions were invented according to the social transformation

declared by Hobsbawm and Rager (1983) and explored by Giddens (1994) – in this chapter I will document the Bingata craftspeople’s experiences of social change and their interaction with non-Okinawan values, focusing on the ways in which their experiences have influenced the transformation of both the production techniques and material form of Bingata as a means of representing their local cultural identity. Tracing out the social backdrop of Bingata, composed of craftspeople’s experiences, their memories of the past, and the material and the technological transformations they have both witnessed and taken part in, this chapter aims to clearly describe the metamorphic character of tradition embodied in the production activity and social dynamics within which Bingata is embedded.

2.1 The social meaning of Bingata in the past

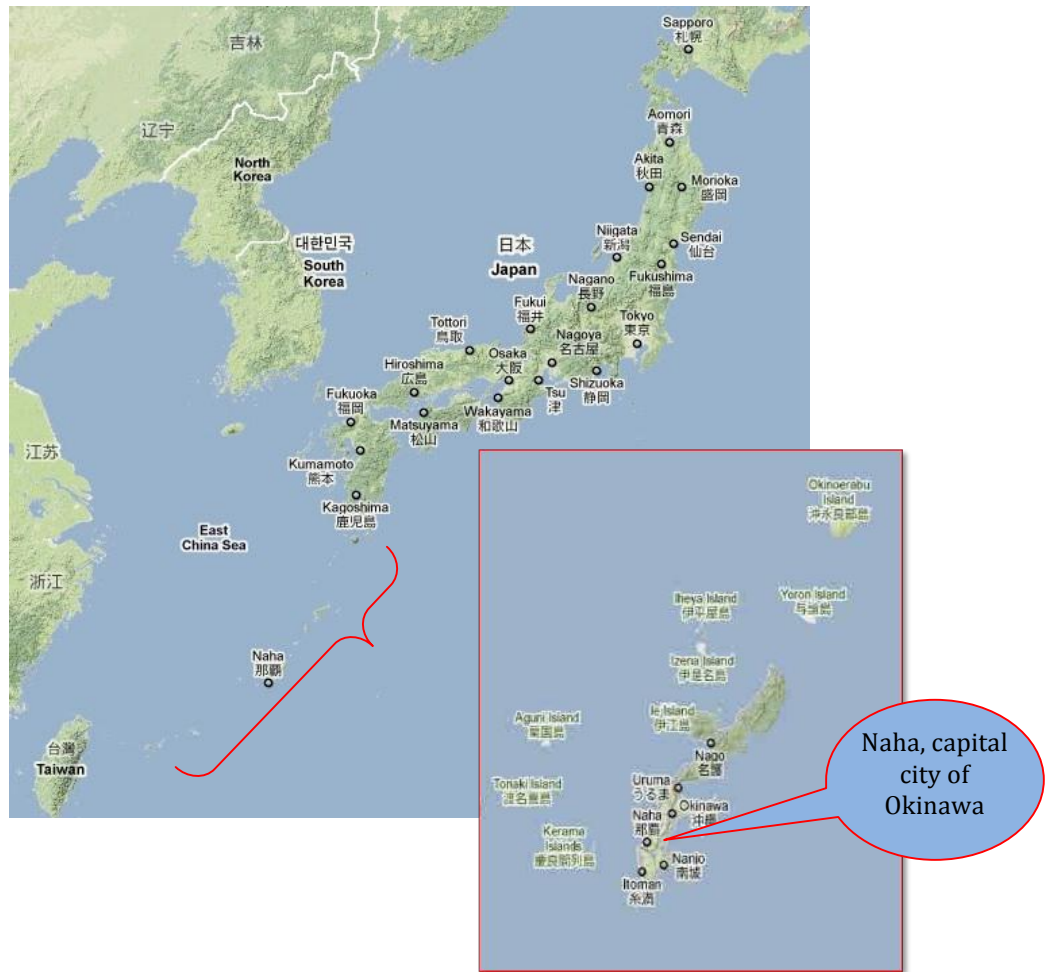
Bingata textiles and their production technology were developed during the unique history of Okinawa, located at the southern edge of the Japanese archipelago. Okinawa consists of more than 100 islands, with the Okinawan capital, Naha City, situated on the largest, Okinawa Island (Figure 2.1). It used to be an independent country, known as Ryukyu Kingdom, from the 15th century until its amalgamation with Japan in 1868. After the Second World War it remained under the control of the US until 1972. People struggled under conditions of drastic social and political change, and many still share feelings of antagonism toward the non-Okinawans who occupied their land in the previous century. In line with the people’s experience of social change, Bingata textile has also undergone notable transformations in its materiality. During the Ryukyu Kingdom era, Bingata was worn exclusively by the Imperial Family and upper aristocrats, and was not available to ordinary people. When the Kingdom fell and the place became a part of Japanese prefecture, Bingata production collapsed. However, in more recent years it regained social value as a symbol of Okinawan identity partly due to the emotional antagonism of the Okinawan people towards Japan and the US after the Second World War. Gradually its production became industrialized, and the product circulated in wider Japanese society, until eventually it became a ‘traditional craft product in Okinawa’, consumed by non-Okinawans. Sahlins underlines the cultural hybridity that any

cultural expressions have developed by involving foreign essences through people's contact with outsiders (1999:411). Bingata can therefore be analyzed as a symbolic order of 'tradition' that necessarily undergoes a process of metamorphosis along with people's experience of social change as well as the influx of outside value from outside of Okinawa in the flow of modernisation.

In order to study the progressive social context of Bingata and its relations with technique, material shape, craftspeople, and the market, the following three points will be particularly discussed:

- 1) the identification of the past materiality of Bingata during the Ryukyu Dynasty through evidences such as artifacts, other local textiles, and documents;
- 2) the revival of techniques and the establishment of a new materiality as a symbol of Okinawa after the Second World War, and its significance in the context of the shared memories of the local people;
- 3) its technological evolution in pursuit of new markets outside Okinawa.

Figure 2.1 Map of Okinawa Prefecture, composed of numerous islands (source: Google maps)



2.1-1 Textile of a ruptured past

In contemporary Japan, Bingata fabric is known for its original use in the garments of the ruling class of the past Ryukyu Kingdom, as well as for its value in trading relations with Chinese Dynasties and feudal Japan. According to the historical studies of Bingata in the Kingdom era (Okamura 1932, Kamakura 1968, Yonamine 2009), the Ryukyu court authority controlled all of its production, delegating to the appointed Bingata workshops and monitoring all materials (e.g. stencil paper, dyestuffs and the textiles themselves). The size of the pattern and the colours used

were regulated according to rank; the higher the rank, the larger the pattern and the brighter the colours. The crown princess, for instance, wore Bingata with a pattern of non-Okinawan flowers and Chinese birds appear on Chinese myth on a bright yellow background, as shown in the Figure 2.2. The yellow colour was obtained from a local tree called 'Fukugi' (*Garcinia subelliptica*), and was used to symbolise the power of the Court. Other colours were applied using powdered pigments mostly brought from China and feudal Japan, the provision of which to craftspeople was carefully controlled by the court authority. Craftsmen did not design patterns themselves; this task was performed instead by painters appointed by the court. Most workshops were located in the castle town of Shuri, the capital of the Kingdom, and three prominent Bingata families (*Chinen*, *Takushi*, and *Shiroma*) were responsible for the majority of Bingata production (Kodama 2005, Tonaki 2005).



Figure 2.2: Classic Bingata pattern with a Chinese mythological bird on bright yellow background dyed with the skin of *Fukugi* tree (*Garcinia subelliptica*). This is a section of a Bingata garment dating from the 18th century preserved on Kohama Island, on the north west side of Okinawa Island (Photographed in Kohama)

According to studies of old documents preserved by the *Sho Family*, a descendant of the former Imperial Family, as well as those written by Chinese envoys who travelled to the Kingdom, the production process of Bingata had been fully established by the 1700s; with a general form as described below:

There were two ways of transferring the pattern onto the cloth with dye-resist paste called '*Nori*': by using paper stencils and spread nori over them, or by putting nori in a bag and squeezing it out from the bottom to draw the pattern. After the pattern was transferred and had dried, the colour of pigments or natural dyestuffs was applied with brushes, and then finally finished by washing out the nori. Bingata normally involved a variety of colours except a type of combination of dark navy and blue involving only indigo and ink. This is called '*Ê-gata*', Ê refers to indigo in Okinawan dialect. Both types of Bingata were used exclusively in garments for the Imperial Family, higher aristocrats or for the costumes of performing artists to welcome Chinese envoys. (Kodama 2005: 22, authors translation)

Surveying these studies, along with information provided by the Bingata Industrial Association, the current production process of Bingata can be described as follows:

- Designing pattern and drawing it on stencil paper
- Cutting out the pattern on paper (*Katahori*)
- Attaching a layer of mesh (*Shabari*) to fix the pattern with onto the stencil paper (these two processes are to make the *Katagami* stencil)
- Making the dye-resist paste (*Nori*) with powered rice and powered rice bran (*Noritaki*)
- Applying Nori (*Kataoki*: see Figure 2.3) to the cloth over the *Katagami* (stencil) by spreading it evenly with a spatula to transfer the pattern
- Removing the stencil, leaving the pattern behind, and allowing it to dry
- Applying *Gojiru* made from soya milk to the patterned areas in preparation for colour filling, so that the dye doesn't run to other areas (*Gobiki*)
- Allowing it to dry
- Applying the dye to the patterned area (*Irozuri*)
- Making graduated shading (*Kumadori*) with stronger colours
- Steaming to fix the dye
- Washing out the Nori, at which point the motif becomes visible

- Covering the motif parts with Nori (*Norifuse*) as a mask using the Nori bag
- Applying the background colour (*Jizome*)
- Steaming to fix the applied colour
- Washing out nori (*Mizumoto*) (Bingata Industrial Association 2005).



Figure 2.3: “*Kataoki*”: spreading *nori* (dye-resistant paste) over the patterned stencil to transfer the pattern onto the textile (Photographed at Tamanaha Workshop in Naha)

The above is widely available information about the technique of Bingata as a traditional dyed textile of Okinawa. As with many other traditional craft practices, however, the process of the transmission of its technique often remains unknown to the general public. As Bingata’s production and consumption were exclusive to the court of the Ryukyu Kingdom until its fall in 1869, it is very important to discuss how the practice was sustained from that time until it became a ‘tradition’ in more recent years, signified by the establishment of “*Okinawa Bingata Dento Hozon-Kai*” (Association for Preservation of Bingata Tradition), which was designated as a group holder of Important Intangible Cultural Property by the Okinawa Prefectural Government in 1973. Ellen (2009) offers an innovative approach to understanding

the transmission of technical knowledge with an example of a type of basket widely produced among Nuaulu clans in Indonesia. He observes the evidence of distinctive characteristics, attributable to different overlapping geographical and social domains, in each of the categories of morphology, function and technical manufacturing processes exhibited by examples of these baskets produced in various locations, both inside and outside the area in which their production originated. He then uses this information to track the modulation of the understanding and transmission of the skills involved. The more apparent the influence of multiple overlapping domains in shape, function and involved techniques in any given basket, the more that basket can be taken to indicate that production knowledge in that area and at that time had become common, so reinforcing its transmission; conversely, the less evidence of domain overlap, the more indicative of the erosion of those skills (Ellen 2009). This modular approach is applicable to the task of identifying the social understanding of 'Bingata-as-object' during the past dynasty. By comparing past and present Bingata textiles, what has remained and what disappeared in the motif, pattern and colour can be recognised. At the same time, such observation of material significance invites the question of immaterial aspect in the transition of Bingata production: what made such changes occur in the material? Having discussed Gell's theory, when viewing Bingata as a cultural reproduction activity, the interactive agent-patient relationship between the practitioner, the work, the skill and consumer is vital when considering the immaterial aspect of Bingata. Ingold develops this idea of an interactive character of production activity, especially in relation to the skill and the material, body, mind and the environment. Supporting the phenomenological approach, he proposes that people's understanding of material is the outcome of one's experience with it in ever shifting and interactive material environment. With that ecological view, according to him, the knowledge of stonemason, smith, potter or carpenteris garnered from "a lifetime's experience of working with the material":

This is a knowledge born of sensory perception and practical engagement, not of the mind with the material world... but of the skilled practitioner participating in a world of materials. (Ingold 2007:14)

His analysis is essential when considering how an environment creates or maneuvers human interaction with thematerial and encourages the development of skills towards it. In respect of technological development, Ingold offers the idea of 'enskillment'

that learning certain techniques predicates human bodily action and the way to connect to the environment. Through the bodily practice, one imprints the physical experience such as ability, habits and tendencies on the anatomy and the mind. The development of skill is therefore the process of ‘embodiment’ of mind and ‘enmindment’ of body in the environment. (Ingold 2000: 240)

So what sort of environment has made craft skills significant as part of the ‘tradition of Okinawa’? To answer the question, the place of Okinawa should be observed as the active environment that interacts human action and emotion empowered by Okinawans’ experience of modernity. As discussed in the Introduction, Brown (2005), Leach (2007b), Strathern (1996) and Geismar and Tilley (2003) argue that it was the power of the political economy that made cultural forms significant as ‘traditions’. By establishing the authorship and popularizing the products to non-locals as ‘traditions of Okinawa’, craftspeople endeavored to create moral, economic and political value in their products. Examining technological innovations, struggles to keep the balance between the new and old production methodologies, decades of physical practice and creativity to be competent in craft market, the ‘enskillment’ of Bingata production should be examined through craftspeople’s physical, emotional and time-space experience of material. In addition, local Okinawan’s experience of drastic social change as a result of the Second World War, U.S. control and the amalgamation of Japan in 1972 should be considered as an important component of the land and environment out of which a multifaceted social meaning of Bingata developed. From the phenomenological perspective (Tilley 1994, also refer the Introduction), the landscape of Okinawa has established a meaningful relationship between its people and material. By being in the place of Okinawa, people have actively engaged in a relationship with an external environment and exchanged values with each other in order to develop the social meaning of Bingata and project their identity. I will study the production of Bingata as a practice of establishing relationships between past and present, body and mind, place and time, self and other and material and immaterial.

First of all, in order to trace the process of change in the general social understanding of Bingata after the Kingdom’s fall, I would like to introduce the subject of the study and collection of Bingata fabric by non-Okinawan people.

After the amalgamation with Japan in 1869, studies of Okinawan textiles were undertaken for the first time by non-Okinawan artists and academics from the rest of Japan. The Mingei (folk craft) movement, which started in the 1930s (examined in 1.2-4.) further accelerated the ‘archiving fever’ and interest in Okinawan craft materials. For instance, Yoshitaro Kamakura (1898-1983) collected more than 1,400 Bingata stencils from workshops in the small town Shuri, where most of the Bingata workshops were located. He conducted interviews with Bingata craftspeople, and continued to record the production process despite the fact that most of these workshops were about to close down due to the political changes and consequent low demand for their products (Harada 1999). In practice, the name ‘Bingata’ was created by Kamakura and became popular among the non-Okinawan scholars around that time. Bingata used to be called ‘*Katachiki*’, a name that appears in documents dating back to the 1600s, as well as in the records of those non-Okinawan scholars (Kodama 2005:22). In this term, *kata* refers to ‘the stencil’ and *chiki* refers to the ‘adhering’ or ‘transferring’ of the pattern. *Katachiki* thus describes cloth patterned with a variety of colours by stencil, as opposed to other local textiles, which were woven without such colourful patterns. The ‘*bin*’ in *Bingata* is believed to refer the crimson pigment ‘*bengara*’ brought by Indian traders, which was so precious that it was only used by those involved in the manufacture of *katachiki* (Bingata) for the hints in bright patterns. These terms, then, indicate the symbolic status of Bingata textile, transferred to it by the power of the Ryukyu court. Then again, it was also Kamakura who popularised the idea that ‘*bin*’ referred to the colour of the dyestuff that Bingata distinctively features.

The German government purchased a substantial volume of Okinawan textiles and other artifacts for their own collection when the island was unified with Japan. They bought 543 items, including 6 items of Bingata clothing, for 1,490,275 JPY, through the German Consulate in Tokyo (Shukumine 1955). According to recent studies, 27 Bingata garments from the Ryukyu dynasty era are owned by museums and individuals in the USA (Le Barts 1991). A few that barely survived fires during the

war are kept in some institutes and museums in Okinawa²⁹.

Therefore, with only a few exceptions, the archiving and study of classic Bingata textiles from the dynasty was primarily undertaken by non-Okinawan people. This indicates the social context of Bingata in the years immediately after 1869. Nobody needed Bingata in Okinawa during that time. People were desperate to adjust to the social changes and new values brought by modernization and westernization. Indeed, a veritable haemorrhage of Buddhist objects flowed out of Japan during the Meiji Era. Okinawa was no exception in such desperate times. The collections referred to above are the material evidence of a fracture in the social meaning of Bingata, and highlight its disjointed relationship with its own past. In brief, after the ruin of the Kingdom, and until the re-unification of Okinawa with the rest of Japan in 1972, classical Bingata was treated mainly as an art object, studied and evaluated by ‘others’ outside of Okinawa. This typifies the disconnection of Bingata with Okinawan society during that time. At the same time, the erosion of the value of Bingata within Okinawa can also be understood to have contributed to the creation of its new materiality as an art object and to the academic interest shared by non-Okinawans. The creation and popularisation of the word ‘Bingata’ by Yoshitaro Kamakura can be considered the lexical parallel to the material and conceptual acquisition of Bingata by the rest of Japan. As Ellen suggests, the transmission of the techniques of a cultural form must not be considered to have happened within only one place, but also in other places in which the shared techniques are commonly practiced (Ellen 2009). As a result of detailed study, Yoshitaro Kamakura imported the technique of Bingata production to Kyoto and combined it with the already existing Kyoto-style stencil dyeing technique, thus establishing *Kyoto-Bingata*. Kyoto-Bingata also became a popular item in the kimono market. With its muted colour combinations with a hint of crimson, Kyoto-Bingata appears in marked contrast always to the original Bingata of Okinawa, so it is always possible to tell the difference. This marks a significant transformation that the concept of Bingata has undergone since the collapse of the Kingdom. Details of the materials and techniques

²⁹ Some portions of classic Bingata are kept in the Palace Museum in Beijing, China, brought as tributes to their former Emperors from the Ryukyu Kingdom. I do not mention this collection in the main text since it was not collected with the purpose of archiving at the fall of the kingdom.

involved, such as paper stencils, were released to the rest of Japan, and helped establish a social concept of Bingata by way of a sibling product.

2.1-2 Textile weaving as a symbol of women in past Okinawan society

In investigating the social meaning of classical Bingata after the Kingdom's ruin, it is important to understand the larger social context of the material by comparison with other local textiles. At the time of writing, sixteen individual craftspeople and seven craft groups in Japan are designated Holders of Important Intangible Cultural Heritage (LNTs) in the category of traditional dyeing and weaving techniques (ACA 2011). Four out of the sixteen individual craftspeople and three out of the seven craft groups are from Okinawa Prefecture. Of those, only a single craftsman falls under the category of dyeing – a practitioner of Bingata – while the rest of all are involved in weaving. Furthermore, the Ministry of Trade and Industry registers eleven types of textile as 'Traditional Textiles of Okinawa Prefecture' under the Law for Promotion of Traditional Craft Industries. Bingata is the only dyed item on the list, the other 10 being woven examples; this out of a total of 44 textile items recognised in the whole of Japan (Japan Traditional Craft Centre 2012). This density of 'traditional textiles' originating in Okinawa is significant, especially regarding woven items and related techniques. The inspection and official recognition of these 'traditional textiles in Okinawa' started in the 1970s, just before Okinawa's re-unification with Japan. It is estimated that more than a hundred different kinds of 'woven' textiles had existed during the Ryukyu Kingdom era but that their production was decimated due to the chaos of modern Okinawan history (Yonamine 2001). The contrast between the singularity of Bingata and the commonness of many other woven textiles helps to crystallise our understanding of the socio-political structure of the Kingdom.

During the Kingdom era, both types of textiles had important roles in the kingdom's diplomacy and domestic policy. As stated earlier, the major reasons for production of Bingata was the creation of gifts to the Chinese Emperors and for use in the garments of the Imperial Family, and the entire manufacturing process was conducted in workshops in Shuri, a castle town of the Ryukyu Court, under the supervision of the court authority. Artifacts kept in the Okinawa Prefectural Museum as well as those in

China³⁰ contribute some clues as to the nature of the classical Bingata production system. Some artifacts remain that indicate the original form in which the raw textile was produced, with the width of 38cm and a length of 10 metres, kept in a roll with the name of the workshop and the date of production on the very end of the piece. According to these artefacts, most of them were produced by workshops such as Chinen, Takushi and Gusukuma (currently called Shiroma). Each was run by a craft family under its own name. According to the study by Kamakura, the Kingdom authority and noble patrons supported these workshops, providing these crafts people with a social status equal to that of bureaucrats in the Ryukyu Court (Kodama 2005: 24, also mentioned by Kamakura in his record of an interview of a craftsman from Takushi Family, Institution of Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts 2004:699). In a strongly patriarchal society, where the first son of the family was generally handed the father's entire enterprise on the father's death (a custom still widely practised in Okinawan society and other areas of Japan), and where only men could hold bureaucratic positions in the court authority (Ikegami 2005), I presume that by and large Bingata production was run and practised by men.

By contrast, woven textiles were produced by women throughout the islands. The practise of weaving by women at this time can be ascertained on the basis of certain socio-political and cultural evidences. With its tropical climate, Okinawa is rich in raw materials for textile production, such as banana leaf, cotton, ramie (a strong fibre obtained from the bark of a bush: Oxford 2012), silk and hemp; every woman used these local materials to weave their daily cloth. Furthermore, this cultural density of weaving and the significance of its practice meant that it was a social norm, and was expected of women regardless of status; even the crown princess took part. Kodama records that whenever a female child was born to the Imperial Family or one of the aristocrat families, they expanded the plantation of banana leaves to supply raw materials for the 'new weaver' (Kodama 2005:84). Evidence relating weaving with the social roles of women can also be seen in one of the popular local dances that comprise Ryukyu Court Dance.

³⁰ They presented artifacts of past tributes from the Ryukyu Kingdom to the Chinese Emperors kept by the Palace Museum of Beijing at the special exhibition "*Yomigaeru-Ryukyu Okoku-no-Kagayaki*" held at Okinawa Prefectural Museum (1st November -21st December 2008).

Ryukyu Court Dance was originally developed in the Court of the Kingdom specifically for the purpose of entertaining the Chinese envoys who visited once every two years or so. When the Kingdom fell, this custom, including the associated costumes, songs, music and dance techniques, was taken by the ordinary people for their entertainment (Hokama 1986). There are numerous different performances depicting life in the Kingdom era at all levels of the social hierarchy, such as the dance of the guard, involving some movements from local martial arts, and the dance of the peasants' harvest celebration. Dances about love affairs are particularly popular. *Kahikaki* is a piece that lyrically describes an aristocrat woman's affection for her beloved through her actions associated with weaving. *Kashikaki* is originally a technical term for the winding up of thread onto a reed to prepare it for the loom. In the performance a dancer, dressed in a Bingata costume to look like an upper-class woman of the Kingdom era, performs the actions associated with winding thread onto the reed using props (see Figure 2.4). The lyrics of the *kashikaki* song are translated as follows:

<i>Nana-yomi Tu-Hatin Kashikaki-ti Uchiti:</i>	It's the seventh of the reed and wind some more as fine as the twentieth
<i>Satuga Akezuba-ni Nshu Shirani:</i>	Let's make a beautiful one, light and smooth like a dragonfly's wing for you (my beloved)
<i>Wakumui Tukashi-Ni Kurikaishi-gaishi:</i>	Winding and winding on the reeds
<i>Kakiti Unukaji-Nu Masati Tachurasa:</i>	This skein is meant to interrupt my thought about you
<i>Kashikakiti-Tujiya Naranmu Sarami:</i>	However, as the skein grows,
<i>Kurikaishi-gaishi Umido Masaru:</i>	So does my heart for you
<i>Kashin Kakimichi-ti Dikao Tachimudura:</i>	Now the skein is done so I will go home
<i>Satu-ya Waga Yadu-ni Machura Demunu:</i>	The home where my love waits for me.



Figure 2.4 *Kashikaki* performance of the Ryukyu Court Dance (Photographed in Naha)

During the performance the singer is accompanied by court musicians playing *sanshin*, a traditional Okinawan guitar, and bamboo flute. Throughout the performance, the combination of Bingata costume worn by the dancer and the slow and graceful movement winding the skein highlight the image of woman in earlier times of Okinawa. Naji studies the carpet weaving practices of women in Morocco and suggests that the weaving of textiles symbolises the status of females in their society and embodies their role in the domestic environment (Naji 2009). Her praxeological and phenomenological observation of carpet weaving by Moroccan women suggest that it is in some ways analogous to the weaving practice of women described in the dance performance of *kashikake*. The rhetorical and metaphoric import of the song, music, and the slow and graceful movements of the Bingata-clad dancer winding the skein indicate the social values associated with femininity in the Ryukyu era. In this way, Ryukyu Court Dance reanimates and romanticises the past practice of weaving, along with the image of women and their love relationships, as a form of popular entertainment.

Apart from the performing arts, the biographies of members of the older generation supports the commonness of weaving practice. A woman aged 72 showed me a very old garment made from *Bashōfu*, a textile made out of the fibres of local banana

leaves, as well as a garment of *Oshima-Tsumugi* fabric, produced on the Northernmost island of Okinawa. At present, these two types of textiles are sold at a very high price in the Japanese kimono market. According to this woman, when she was young she saw her mother throwing the Bashōfu kimono into the bin. She thought the cloth was still useful so she picked it up from the bin and has kept it until now. She describes her memories of her grandmother, interwoven with those of these textiles:

[A]t the time I picked up this cloth from the bin, I could hardly have imagined the current value of Basho-fu. I have no idea how my mum got this, or how old is this. I just remember that this Basho-fu reminded me of my grandmother and her weaving with her loom. I remember when I was small, whenever I visited her place and stayed over there, I was always disgusted with the silkworms raised in the hatchery upstairs in her house. I hated them, especially how they looked and the way they moved. In the night, I could hear those silkworms eating their leaves up there. I tried not to hear the sounds coming from upstairs but usually I failed. On the other hand, I was always very curious when my grandmother was weaving textiles with it [the silk] in her own loom. I wonder where those clothes made by her went. Even I do not know how this Bashōfu relates to her weaving. Currently Oshima-Tsumugi is also very expensive, like Bashōfu. But in my generation, people generally owned one or two examples of Tsumugi (*silk fabric*). Some were handed down by their mothers or relatives and some were bought from local workshops. I do not remember how much this Tsumugi cost, yet surely it can't have been too expensive. (Mrs. Toshiko Yoza, interviewed on 3rd November 2008)

Another, woman aged 70, told me a story about her mother after the Kingdom broke up. She proudly told me that her family has been bureaucrats of the kingdom authority and had lived in the castle town of Shuri for some centuries. Currently she runs a kimono retaining shop in the busiest shopping street in Naha City, the capital of Okinawa Prefecture. She told the story of her mother, who had organised weaving skills training for local women when the former Ryukyu was unified with Japan in 1869, and also about the present Okinawan textile market situation inside in Okinawa:

After the Kingdom fell and the Royal Family left the castle, my mother gathered up local ladies at the empty Shuri Castle and started a sort of weaving training class. All of these ladies brought their own looms, which were usually kept in their houses, and started to produce their own woven textiles to sell at the street market. At that time, Okinawa became open to *Yamato* people (*Okinawan term for the rest of Japan*) and lots of textiles were sold to them. As the business became successful, the weaving class

became very popular among local ladies. It seemed like it could be a nice way to make some money to support their families. Eventually, after the war, the course was recognised by the Education Board and formally registered as the Weaving and Dyeing Textile Designing Module at Shuri High School. I am a one of the first generation of graduates of this course. Therefore I am very proud of Okinawan textiles. (The president of Marumi-ya, a kimono retailer in Naha, Okinawa, interviewed on 10 December 2008)

These narratives suggest that weaving had been practised by women even after the Kingdom's collapse. Although they had stopped weaving due to the influx of new materials and wider social changes, these women of previous generations share the memories of the past practice of weaving. As stated above, a number of weaving practices are recognised as 'traditional' by the government. Yet these local people's memories depict the shared social value of weaving practices. In short, weaving textiles from local materials was a common practice of women in Okinawa until quite recently. In contrast to the studies of past Bingata production conducted by non-Okinawan scholars and artists, of the accounts of weaving in the past that are offered by ordinary women, with their vivid memories and the pride they feel for the fabric product itself are much more detailed and lively. This further illustrates the past hierarchical materiality of Okinawan textiles: Bingata was exclusively produced by craftsmen, transferring patterns onto the best qualified woven textiles in plane made by ordinary women: i.e. it is to dye the symbol and the power of the Ryukyu Court over the best part of ordinary women's work. Meanwhile all the other kinds of textiles were woven by these women as a social norm for domestic purpose and for the contribution to the upper class people's garment to apply Bingata pattern as well. In the midst of social change after the kingdom fell, while Bingata workshops were closed down and the value of Bingata leaked away from Okinawa, women continued to practise weaving more or less widely.

2.1-3 Negative memories of the past: Aizome, a woven textile, and the old Bingata costume of Kohama Island

The contrast in materiality between Bingata and all the other kinds of woven textiles that prevailed in Ryukyu Kingdom society is also revealed when examining the political system of the court authority. Beyond the cloth produced to cater for

domestic needs, weaving practice was further promoted by means of taxation. Especially in small islands of Yaeyama and Miyako areas, the western edge of Okinawan archipelagos, the Kingdom authority imposed a heavy tax, called '*Jintō-zei*', meaning 'tax per head', on each household unit. In areas without large-scale farming, men paid the *jintō-zei* by labouring in the Kingdom's infrastructure developments, while women aged 15 to 50 did so by engaging in the production of local textiles (Hokama 1986:215). The establishment of the *jintō-zei* system was imposed due to the Kingdom's subordination to a Japanese feudal clan, Satsuma, who controlled what is now Kagoshima Prefecture of Kyushu, at the southern end of feudal Japan to the immediate north of the Okinawan archipelago. The Satsuma clan invaded Ryukyu Kingdom in 1609 and started to impose heavy taxes in return for allowing the kingdom its continued independence (Takara 1993:68). Under pressure from the Satsuma clan, in 1637 the court authority therefore began promoting textile production, especially on the more remote islands, under a strict monitoring system, starting with the grading of raw materials. The quality of plant fibre varies between different parts of the plant. For example, in the case of *Bashōfu*, a woven textile made from the fibres of banana leaves, fibres are divided into four grades: from the softest and thinnest fibre, taken from the centre of the stem, to the coarser, thicker outer fibres closer to the skin. The softest and finest fibre was presented to the Court, with the second finest grade going for export by the court authority, while the third and fourth grades were consigned to local and domestic use (Association for *Kijyoka-no-Bashōfu* 2006:4). Similarly, woven textiles were ranked by three grades according to their quality, with the best, whitest ones sent to the Bingata workshops in Shuri for stencilling with patterns for use in the Imperial Family's garments (Kodama 2005: 27). We can only imagine the massive and ubiquitous system of woven textile production organised and engineered by the Kingdom's social hierarchy under the tax system of *jintō-zei*. In contrast, again, the exclusiveness of the power of the court limited the production and use of Bingata strictly to those within the court itself.

A woven textile from Kohama Island further reveals the past socio-political structure. There a fabric is still woven in which the thread is dyed with local indigo, by local women with their own looms. Kohama is located in south eastern Japan, in the Yaeyama Islands, at the south western end of the Okinawan archipelago. It is

very small – about 7.84km² of land – with a population of only around six hundred (Yaeyama Ward Office 2009). The textile is called ‘*Aizome*’ where ‘*ai*’ means indigo and ‘*zome*’ means dyeing.

Unlike other local textiles recognised as ‘traditional textiles of Okinawa’, *aizome* woven fabric production in Kohama is not industrialised, but domestically produced especially for costumes used in local festivals. There are three festivals in Kohama: 1) *Honen*, around June, for good harvest after planting seeds, 2) *Ukui*, in September, to welcome the ancestral spirit, and 3) *Ketsugan*, around October, to give thanks for the harvest. These three festivals are designated as Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property by the Japanese government. In the dynasty time, the land was divided up by farming and social practices into north and south quarters, until these areas were unified under land reform in the 19th century (Hateruma 1993). Today the inhabitants revive this old custom for the festival, separating into north and south quarters, to compete with each other. Each festival is three days long, consisting of a pre-festival rehearsal, the festival day itself, and the closing ceremony. On the last day, the people from each area gather at the garden of the chief of their quarter and then process deep into the local sacred forest, *Ufudaki*, where they worship their local god. North and South take turns on the stage they have built to perform their dance for the local god. Unfortunately, on the last day of the festival that I visited in 2009, they decided to perform in the gymnasium of a local primary school instead of in *Ufudaki* due to bad weather. Performers include children, young men and women accompanied by men playing *sanshin* (Okinawan guitar), bamboo flute, and drums, while the older local people are generally spectators. The exception is one old man, who is usually someone who holds an important position in local society, such as the president of the local school or the head of the town council, who plays the most important role, *fukurukujû*, representing the local god. The person who plays this role wears a costume with a mask and sits on the side of the stage during the entire performance to represent the god’s attendance (see Figure 2.5). All the male spectators (as well as who play the musical accompaniment) wear *aizome* kimono dyed and woven by their female family members or female relatives. In the spectators’ area the seating plan is strictly set according to gender and seniority, with the eldest man, bearing the title ‘*Chô-rô*’, sometimes a centenarian in his wheelchair, seated in the middle of the front row and “younger” spectators (in their 80s and

below) seated behind. After the block of old men in *aizome* kimonos, old women in their everyday clothes (such as dresses and t-shirts) take seats, often together with their daughters-in-law and grandchildren. All the women are involved in preparing the food and costumes as well as in the performance. On Kohama, the position of the spectators at *Ketsugan* festival clearly define the roles of male and female, young and old, being entertained or entertaining, as well as drawing a clear distinction between those who wear *aizome* and those who weave it. Of course, in earlier decades, everybody wore *aizome*.



Figure 2.5: At the dance performance of *Ketsugan-festival*, a man in the role of *Fukurukujû* sits on the side of the stage wearing a mask and the costume to represent the local god. The old male spectators are in their *Aizome* kimono, woven by their female family members (Photographed in Kohama Island on 22nd October 2009)

I was seating in the last row of the spectators to watch the festival. A woman aged nearly 70 was seated next to me and she started to talk about the background story of each performer as they appeared onstage one after another, as well as about herself. She used to perform herself until she handed over her role to her daughter-in-law two years ago. She told me her memory of *aizome* when she was young:

[W]hen I was little, I could dress in pink only on special occasions such as my birthday. The rest of the days were in local *aizome*. Therefore I do not have much love for it; it's just too familiar, and boring cloth. *Aizome* is not something special for me. On the other hand, it is always very nice to see these women performing, since I know everybody. (interviewed in 21st October 2009)

Some people offer a more practical and critical perspective of their *aizome* practice. Mrs Kedamori is one of the core members who raise the local *ai*-indigo, dye the thread with it, and weave the *aizome* textile. She has been practising this for nearly 20 years since she retired from her job. She describes the current situation:

[T]here are not many local ladies who want to help me to dye the thread or weave with it these days. People still have some stock made by their mother or relatives. Even if they don't, they will be supplied somehow by neighbours or relatives. They don't take the situation seriously, so the transmission of *aizome* is about to break down. (Eiko Kedamori, interviewed on 10th October 2009)

While the people of Kohama consciously or unconsciously identify the value of this *aizome* custom, their attitude to Bingata appears in marked contrast. There are a number of very old Bingata costumes, dating back to the 15th or 16th centuries, involved in the festival; their age and origins were identified through the enumeration of festival costumes conducted by the government as part of the festivals' designation as Important Intangible Folk Cultural Heritage. They were owned by a family one of whose ancestors was a former bureaucrat of the Ryukyu Kingdom in Shuri. In fact, some of the Yaeyama islands, including Kohama, used to be part of a penal colony for bureaucrats who had fallen from favour, who brought many aspects of court culture, such as Ryukyu Court Dance, music, music instruments and Bingata, to these islands. The inhabitants of Kohama use these classical Bingata costumes for performing the Ryukyu Court Dance, which occupies a third of the festival programme. It is intriguing to consider the fact that until the government conducted the inventory of these costumes, the people didn't realize their value. They told me many anecdotes about these Bingata costumes, all of them relating how they previously they had treated the Bingata very roughly without knowing how valuable it was:

“Until about 10 years ago (before the government came to do its research), people treated these Bingata costumes very roughly. They didn't know the value of Bingata at all. They were not interested in them at all.”

“When it rained while they were practicing the dance performance prior to the festival, they put [the Bingata] over their heads and covered their bodies with it. They used Bingata like an umbrella.”

“Some Bingata costumes were worn out and were disassembled into pieces (since kimono, including the Ryukyu-style garment, are made in many square pieces from one long textile and stitched together) and distributed. Some made duvet covers with these pieces and some used them as tea towels to wipe the Awamori (Okinawan distilled liquor) which had been spat on the table from it!”

“Before, they were kept hanging with other costumes in a cupboard in the town council centre, but ever since the government officers came to research the costumes, they’ve started to keep them in a nice wooden box”

“[An old man asked me] ‘[C]an you guess how much these are worth?’ [I replied] ‘should be priceless...’ [Then he proudly told me:] ‘[T]hey would be no less than 8 million Yen [approximately £65000] according to some people’s estimates!’”

In fact, I visited this island on the recommendation of a curator in Okinawa Prefectural Museum. He told me that Bingata costumes as old and valuable as that should be kept in the museum. So I assumed that it was due to the local people’s enthusiasm for ‘safeguarding’ their Bingata costumes that they were used in the festival practices. However, as the above comments indicate, this seems to have been far from the case. Indeed, these stories testify to how Bingata used to be, and indeed remains, rather detached from the emotional lives of the local people when compared to their woven textile of *aizome*.

Moreover, the dance performance illustrates the past social hierarchical social system, as well as prevailing memory of the past subordinate relationship to the court at Shuri. As the aim of the *ketsugan* festival is that of offering the local god gratitude for this year’s harvest, one third of the dance performance is devoted to describing the people’s labour in farming. These dances involve movements that describing planting, sowing, and harvesting, and are performed by dancers carrying farming tools, dressed in short sleeves and knee-length costumes in beige and other earth colours (see the Figure 2.6). Another third of the programme is about the production of *aizome* textile, performed by dancers in *aizome* costumes woven by local women such as Mrs. Kadamori, interviewed above. The performance *Nunu-sarashi-uta* describes the old women’s efforts to make good quality fabric. As we can imagine from the Figure 2.7, the movements of this dance describe the entire process of

production, culminating in the presentation of the fabric to the Kingdom, under the system of *jintō-zei*. These dances and costumes are in clear contrast to the Court Dance (see the Figure 2.8) which describes the lives of the bureaucrats and aristocrats of Shuri wearing their colourful Bingata costumes.



Figure 2.6: A farming dance in the costume of short-length brown kimono. The barefoot dancers mimic the movements of digging up the field and planting etc. with prop agricultural tools (Photographed in Kohama on 22nd October 2009)



Figure 2.7: The performance of *Nunusarashi-uta*. The movements the dancers are currently making describe the process in which finished fabric is inspected by the kingdom authority. The dancers wear Aizome costumes woven by Mrs. Kedamori



Figure 2.8: A performance of a Ryukyu Court Dance in a very old Bingata costume, dated from the 15th-16th century (Photographed in Kohama on 23rd October 2009)

Ever since the Festival's designation as Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property in 2005, a local council officer gives a speech at the opening ceremony each year, mentioning the designation and the funding received from the government. Some members of the city authority attend the festival to ensure its completion, while other officials take part in the performance themselves to boost the rather low number of young male performers. The role of *Ketsugan* festival is therefore intertwined with the diverse intentions of many different people: it serves many purposes, from leisure and the maintenance of community ties, to the preservation of weaving practice; from achieving the individual role in his/her family such as taking part in the performance or being a spectator in *aizome*-kimono to preserving local 'heritage'. Through the practices and materials involved, the local people reaffirm community values called forth by their memories of the past, symbolised by the *jintō-zei*. Mr.

Hanashiro, age 74, who played the role of *fukurukujû* this year, explained his feeling towards the designation and the past memory of the court:

[P]rimarily our festival is not for showing to tourists or anybody; it is for our own living. The festival is an important occasion to beg for kami, a good harvest and people's health. It is good that we got the government funding (from the registration of Intangible Folk Cultural Properties) since now we can fix some of the old costumes. However, we have never performed this festival simply because we consider it a 'tradition', nor because of the funding we receive from the government. It is our life itself. Anyhow, we should continue as long as we engage in our daily routine labour work in the crop field. Besides, our labour in the fields is of course associated with the harsh memories of *jintô-zei* that our aizome custom symbolizes. In this sense, the town of Shuri (the former capital city during the kingdom era) means, for us, the place that exploited us in the past. (Mr. Hanashiro interviewed on October 22nd 2009)

His words imply that the solidarity of the Kohama community revealed and maintained by the festival reflects a degree of local social antagonism against larger-scale power structures, especially the past rulers – the Kingdom authority in Shuri and the Japanese feudal clan, Satsuma. The *Jintô-zei* system ran from 1637 until 1903, therefore for some people living on these remote islands, *jintô-zei* is almost within living memory. In the light of this, the abovementioned Bingata stories relating how islanders had made duvet-covers and tea towels out of old Bingata costumes might, be considered not merely as funny stories of their ignorance of the value of Bingata: but also as cynical reinterpretations of their image of the former rulers and the social memory of *jintô-zei*. The example of Kohama Island thus crystallises the social context of Bingata in the past in its relation to other woven textiles developed under subordination to the kingdom and its capital town, Shuri. The chart in Figure 2.9 compares the social contexts Bingata and other, non-Bingata Okinawan textiles during this time.

Table 2.1: Social context of Bingata and non-Bingata woven textiles in the Ryukyu Dynasty era

	Bingata	Woven textiles
Location of production	Shuri, the capital town of the Ryukyu Kingdom	All over Okinawa
Producer	Male craftspeople working in family-owned workshops	Most women, even including the crown princess
Production system	By the appointment of court authority under patronage relations	Under the tax system of <i>jintō-zei</i> and as a daily commodity
Consumer	The Imperial Family, higher aristocrats, Court Dance performers, and use as tributes to Chinese Envoys (though there is no material evidence of actual utilization of Bingata brought into China)	Best grade: Imperial Family and Chinese Emperors and Japanese feudal clans Middle grade: Exported to south East Asian countries Lowest grade: Ordinary people
Shape of material	Ryukyu court style garment in long length with long sleeves	Ryukyu style daily kimono in knee length and short sleeves, <i>Tisāji</i> -piece of cloth using for handkerchief, bags, underwear, etc.

The density of woven textiles inventoried as ‘Traditional Craft Products of Okinawa’ is, therefore, a product of the past dual structure of society: ruler and subordinated, exploiter and exploited, Shuri and the rest of Okinawa. Moreover, these small and remote islands were less influenced by more modern culture coming from Japan after the Kingdom’s fall and from the USA until the end of their occupation in the 70s. As a result, people still preserve old values, including festival practices, clear gender divisions and deference to seniority, weaving practices, and even a sense of their previous generations’ grudges against the court authority in Shuri, as well as against the Satuma, as Mr. Hanashiro indicated. Weaving was integrated as a major industry into the structure of the Kingdom through the tax system, incorporating it deeply into the day-to-day lives of the ordinary people. Even today in the Miyako and Yaeyama island chains local stories, folk songs, and performing arts relate to their history of being exploited under *jintō-zei*³¹. In contrast, there are no folk songs or local stories about Bingata production as far as I am aware. The significance of Bingata was that it was an object exclusive to those at the very top of the social hierarchy, so with the fall of the Kingdom, the social significance of the material in Okinawa was completely lost. Meanwhile, Bingata, and its associated ‘remoteness’ from local society, remained in the minds of many as a dark reminder of *jintō-zei* – a memory

³¹ According to studies of Okinawan history, due to the heavy duty of the *jintō-zei*, in Miyako Islands, Yaeyama Islands around that time, certain extreme practices were widespread, such as the killing of newborn babies and encouraging abortions by very rough means; some people enslaved themselves to farmers so that their household might thereby disappear from the registration. (Hokama 1986:215)

that has been kept alive through folk cultural practices such as *ketsugan* festival, folk songs and old tales.

Rowlands studies the role of memory in the transmission of culture, with reference to Kuechler's 'mode of transmission' (1987), and emphasises the durability of objects as a mnemonic device facilitated by their cultural reproduction (Rowlands 1993:141). He goes on to underline Kuechler's suggestion of a 'social template' that generates a range of possible images and interpretations of the objects (Kuechler 1987:246). He also applies insights from Whitehouse's study (1992) on the significance of 'incorporating' or 'inscribing' in cultural practices, which produces unconscious memories that become associated with certain objects, colours and elements of performance (Rowlands 1993:142). His study is helpful in identifying the 'mode of transmission' of woven textiles of Okinawa. The reproduction of materials doesn't merely indicate the duplication of an object; it is also, and importantly, an exercise of recalling and reinterpreting aspects of cultural memory. The *Kashikaki* Ryukyu Court Dance and the *Aizome* fabric of Kohama Island, along with other extant local woven textiles, promote positive reminiscences over past inhabitants' weaving practices, yet also resonate with the negative folk memories of *jintō-zei*. Such forms are examples of a 'mode of transmission' in which people practise, remember and narrate. In contrast, I would emphasise that there is no such 'mode of transmission' in the case of Bingata. This fact invites curiosity: how, then, did Bingata become perceived as a 'tradition of Okinawa'?

2.2 Invention of 'tradition' and the transformation of the technique and materiality of Bingata

In contrast to the what might be expected in the light of the historical context of Bingata related above, presently it is inventoried as a 'Traditional Craft Product of Okinawa', under a single broad heading that it shares with other woven textiles. Despite the past antagonism against the former ruling class that is still felt in some areas (i.e. Kohama Island), the holder of Important Intangible Cultural Property (the Living National Treasure) in the technique of Bingata is an admired figure, as are the LNTs in the techniques of other, local fabrics of Okinawa. This fact highlights the

efficacy of 'tradition', as generated by modern society, in which the remoteness of Bingata from general popular significance, and the negative cultural memories associated with it are liquidated, and the objects and techniques are then popularised as 'tradition'. As mentioned in the previous section, Kuecheler (1987) provides the idea of a 'mode of transmission' whereby people reproduce the traditional object by interpreting the past memory and generating the image of the object and relates people and the society. In her study of *Malagan-art*, a kind of ritual sculpture that is produced and sacrificed at the death of a person in northern New Guinea, Kuecheler examines the mode of transmission of the art object in relation to its social and political significance. Interpreted as the 'skin' of the deceased person, the artists transfer a pattern onto the wooden surface of the artifact, according to narratives about the person, a process that involves the inclusion of some symbolic, and perhaps mythical, images of the local culture. A *Malagan* artform is the imaginary work of an individual artist, yet always achieves both formal and informal recognition as a ritual object in the society in which it is produced. She examines the reproduction of history and the transmission of art as two aspects of a mnemonic process that:

are mutually related and it is on the basis of this relationship that Malagan-art attains its political and social significance. One of the preconditions for the spreading of the Malagan-system is the sharing of a common conceptual framework that enables people of different languages and social settings to receive, interpret and transmit the imagery embodied in sculptures. (Kuecheler 1987:241)

Through the social 'template' according to which Malagan art is judged to communicate in a socially relevant manner, Kuechler examines the variation in the designs of the motifs that appear on each work in relation to the 'general likeness' of the collective image of Malagan art that that each conveys:

the tension between constancy and variation in Malagan-art can be understood as a property of the mnemonic process to which sculptures are subject in the course of successive reproductions....
The totality of names and motifs comprises a stock of knowledge that is the basis of social integration and differentiation. (Ibid: 244)

I have already stressed the isolation of Bingata from general society and the fact that consequently people do not share in its 'mode of transmission' as they do in the case of local weaving practices. In order to identify the currently recognised status of Bingata as a 'tradition', its 'mode of transmission' should be explored with a means

of interpretation that is empowered by modernity. While the social value of the Malagan art object itself is chiefly limited to its use in local rituals and its inclusion in foreign museum collections, here, when investigating the social value Bingata, I expand the general idea of the relation between the object and the transmission activity to encompass a wider social context: the modern Japanese milieu that began to emerge after the Second World War; one heavily influenced by both politics and the post-war economy. I will analyse Bingata with reference to the Japanese experience of modernity: a social context that encourages the continued production of pre-Western Japanese craft forms with the intention of preservation, while also allowing a degree of flexibility and variability in the techniques and material forms involved in their production; attributes which are key in the appropriation of Bingata by modern Japanese society. My argument will follow those of Hobsbawm and Rager (1983) on 'inventing tradition', and will also be informed by Giddens' assertion that '*tradition is the very medium of the 'reality' of the past*' (Giddens, 1994: 94). Sahlins provides a great example of 'invention of tradition' and the variability in its form with the Japanese sumo practice. Involving the myth of *Amaterasu*, the creator *kami* of Japan, present style of sumo practice became highly ritualised by involving the purification process of sprinkling salt at the Shinto style roofed ring. These practices were introduced in 1911 to link the ideology of the battleship and the divinity of Emperor when Japan stepped forward to the Great Wars. These ritualised features in sumo attract fans and the industry continues thriving. Sahlins underlines that:

traditions are invented in the specific terms of the people who construct them. Fundamentally, they are atemporal, being for the people conditions of their form of life as constituted, and considered coeval with it. It follows that if such traditions are authoritatively narrativiz[ed], or when they contingently rise to consciousness, they will be aetiologized: that is, as charter myths. (Sahlins 1999:409)

Regarding people's narratives of their experiences of modernity as a 'stock of knowledge', I will examine the transformation of the social meaning of post-Kingdom Bingata from the 19th century onwards, and thereby map the trajectory of the changing social recognition of Bingata from the fall of the Ryukyu Kingdom up to its modern integration as 'Okinawan tradition'.

2.2-1 The Revival of Bingata, and Eiki Shiroma, a hero of Bingata

The Takushi family used to keep a tuition book that set out the details of the technique for dyeing textiles, which was as thick as 2 *sūn* (approximately 6 cm). However, not realizing its value,, they unbound the pages and affixed them to their sliding doors to fortify them; how regrettable.

This gentleman said he once travelled to China, and showed me a painting that he brought back from there. He said he gained this painting in exchange for the specimen of a painting for katachiki (*Bingata*) that he brought (from *Ryukyu*). He seems to have studied the technique of katachiki (*Bingata*) there.

He was granted the status of Takushi-chikudun-pêchin (a higher bureaucrat within the *Ryukyu Court Authority*) and had remained in service until Haihan-chiken (the abolition of feudal clan system and the allocation of prefectural system undergone by the Meiji government in 1871). He was the last representative of the dyeing workshop of the Takushi family.

(Interview with Mr Jino Takushi, aged 61, at his house 77 Kumoji, Naha City).

-Cited in the ‘Kamakura Nôtô’ (*The field research note of Okinawan textiles recorded by Yoshitaro Kamakura*) (Author’s interpretation, Institution of Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts 2004:699).

In the 1920s Yoshitaro Kamakura, a Japanese researcher and a textile artist, travelled to Okinawa for the first time and there began to study textiles including Bingata (Harada 1999). Kamakura’s field research – collected records of the verbal accounts of people living in Shuri at the time, along with his collection of relevant material artifacts such as Bingata clothes and stencils – provides a lot of evidence about the nature of Bingata production during the Kingdom era. The quotation above is from an interview with a former craftsman of the Takushi family, one of the major Bingata families in the castle town of Shuri. As with other Bingata families such as Shiroma and Chinen, the Takushi family terminated the production of Bingata at the same time that their former status as *Takushi-chikudun-pêchin*, equivalent to that of upper bureaucrats in the Ryukyu court, was lost due to the Kingdom’s ruin. As already stated, the fall of the Kingdom resulted in the spread of many former aspects of court culture outward into the wider community, where they developed into new cultural forms. For instance, *Zō-odori*, developed from the classic Ryukyu Court Dance, is characterised by a more casual and cheerful form of expression than its more formal

ancestor, as it describes the lives of ordinary people in the past. Other aspects of former court culture, such as music and theatre performance³² were evolved into new forms such as *Okinawa-shibai* (stage drama), which became widely popular among the general population as a new form of entertainment during the Meiji Era (1868-1912) (Hokama 1968:182). As a result, those craftspeople who had previously been used to working under the auspices of court authority instead began to take orders from ordinary people in response to popular demand for these newly established cultural practices. For instance, I noticed a statement in the corner of a Bingata stage curtain used at the *Ketsugan* festival on Kohama Island (visible at the back of the stage in Figure 2.7) ‘Presented by Kohama Women’s Association in 1923’. On my return from Kohama I showed the photo of this Bingata curtain to some old craftspeople in Shuri. None of them could identify whose work it was, although usually they are able to tell exactly which family made this or that piece just by looking at. One craftsman, aged 74, said, ‘*It is not the work of my master. I heard that at that time, some craftspeople ran Bingata businesses by themselves using leftover materials, as a means to make a living*’ (by Mr. Tamanaha, interviewed on 25th October 2009). I imagine that some craftspeople (former workers in these Bingata families) managed to make ends meet this way by catering to on-the-spot demands from ordinary people after the Bingata families had closed their businesses.

In contrast to the ambiguity of craftspeople’s lives after the Kingdom’s fall, present-day Okinawans relate the story of one particular Bingata craftsman as that of a hero who would go on to restore the social meaning of Bingata amidst the devastation that had befallen Okinawa. Eiki Shiroma (1908-1992), the 14th master of the Shiroma family, is currently revered as the ‘Father of Bingata’ in Okinawa. The stories of the hardship and challenges he faced in reviving Bingata production are widely told and celebrated by local people. The following is a summary of his autobiography, which appeared in a local major newspaper, the *Okinawa Times*, in 1977 as part of a series on the lives and experiences of war survivors, entitled ‘*Watashi-no-Sengo-Shi*’ (‘My Post-war History’):

³² They were originally inspired by the Japanese no-gaku and kabuki that was introduced to the court during 17th to 19th century. (Hokama 1986:62)

Eiki Shiroma was born in 1908 to one of the three major Bingata families in Shuri. Despite centuries of running a family enterprise, the Shiromas, like many other Bingata craftspeople, were faced with the possibility that they would have to close down their workshop. As the family was badly off, eventually, at the age of 13, Eiki was sent to an island to the north of Okinawa, where he worked as a fisherman to help pay back his family's debts. However, despite such hardships, he never forgot about Bingata. When he was 20, he was finally released from his debt and returned to Shuri. There, he started to work again with Bingata, despite other people's cynical comments (e.g. "we have entered the era of industrialization. Why are you doing something useless?"). Things seemed to stabilise briefly, though the onset of World War II put an end to this. He lost his wife and one of his sons during the conflict. After the war, most people in Okinawa worked in the US military factory, but Shiroma was never tempted to do so. Instead, he began making Bingata again, while supplementing his livelihood through fishing. He scoured rubbish bins at the US military base for items that could substitute for Bingata materials; military maps made of waxed paper became stencil papers (see the Figure 2.9), broken pieces of phonodisc (LP records) were used as spatulas for spreading the dye-resistant paste and tubes of lipstick were used for the dye itself. For *Norifuse* (drawing motifs on the cloth with a line of dye-resistant paste), he used the bullet cartridges that could be found anywhere in Okinawa at that time. Making a hole on the edge of the cartridge, he attached it to the bottom of a bag of dye-resistant paste, which was then squeezed through the bullet 'nozzle' (see Figure 2.10 and 2.11). He also worked tirelessly to revive the motifs of the classic Bingata style by tracing the old stencils that had somehow survived the bombing. Some craftspeople and artists supported him. Painters provided pigments and offered suggestions for his sketches. A *basho-fu* (textile woven from the banana leaf fibres) craftswoman brought him her work and he applied a pattern to it. The materials became coasters and place mats that proved hugely popular amongst American service personnel and their families. And thus, against all odds, Shiroma's Bingata business survived. With the increasing success of the business and the social recovery of Okinawa, he embarked upon a full-time career as an artist. In his designs, he often incorporated something related to the sea, recalling his days as a fisherman, while continuing to employ the classic motifs. Some of his works became very popular in Tokyo marketplaces, and on occasion he even received orders from the Japanese Imperial Family. While training his pupils, he established "*Okinawa Bingata Dento Hozon-Kai*" (Association for Preservation of Bingata Tradition) in 1975. He passed away in 1992 at the age of 84.

Figure 2.9: An old stencil paper transferred a motif of old Ryukyu trading ship made by Eiki Shiroma over the backside of a waxed military map. Through the paper, we can identify the printed map of Amami Chain Islands and the caption “Amami-Shotō: military top secret”. This map seems to have been used by the former Japanese army in the battle with the US troops during the Second World War (Photographed in Naha, by courtesy of Eiichi Shiroma, 18th Oct 2009)



Figure 2.10 (right): Bullet cartridges with holes for the attachment of nori-bags
Figure 2.11 (left): Norifuse technique used to mask the pattern, with nori emerging from the cartridge nozzle (Photographed at Tamanaha Workshop in Naha)

In Eiki Shiroma’s story, we can begin to appreciate the transformation of the materiality of Bingata that occurred in post-war Okinawan society, from its use in the garments of the former Imperial Family to its role as a commodity sold to Americans. The use of alternatives to traditional utensils, fabrics and patterns became permissible on the grounds that the original materials were in short supply,

and it was understood that if craftspeople restricted themselves to using only the historically established materials it would have severely constrained Bingata production. Indeed, in the affect-tinged discourse of the aftermath of the war, the substitution of more modern alternatives, such as bullet cartridges, military maps and American LP records, became widely endorsed by Okinawan people, for whom these items brought to mind the shared (albeit sorrowful) experience of war. Shiroma's story shows the importance of the involvement of *collective memory* (Giddens 1994) in the process of the creation of 'tradition'. The charismatic 'Father of Bingata' story mitigated the antipathy toward Bingata that people may have felt due to the association of the use of local materials with the past social hierarchical order, as examined in the previous section. With the collaboration of Bingata and Bashōfu producers, the *marriage* of two techniques *overcame* the past hierarchical relations: the symbolic patterns of the Ryukyu Court were applied, by members of formerly appointed Bingata families, onto textiles originally woven by ordinary women for the purpose of paying taxes. Despite the fact of the Shiromas centuries-old family enterprise and the social status gained by its appointment to the court authority, Eiki's story doesn't mention the glorious past use of Bingata in the garments of the Imperial Family, but instead highlights the reality of the abject poverty that the Shiromas experienced after the Kingdom's collapse. There is also no mention of the previous study of Bingata by non-Okinawans such as Yoshitaro Kamakura. Therefore, for local people in Okinawa, Bingata became common for the first time through an association with their war memories and the spirit of solidarity raised by the social antagonism toward imposed Japanese and the U.S control. In these social circumstances, Bingata officially became a 'tradition' of Okinawa by Eiki's establishment of "*Okinawa Bingata Dento Hozon-Kai*" (Association for Preservation of Bingata Tradition).

2.2-2 New social meaning and the material form of Bingata

Poverty, material shortage and the market provided by the presence of a new customer (Americans) also allowed Eiki to create a new classification of motif patterns of Bingata: he distinguished between his family's patterns, referring to those produced for the ruling dynasties as 'classic', and those that he had designed more recently himself, referring to them as 'modern'. As the 'classic' patterns were

generally designed by painters appointed by the Ryukyu Dynasty Court, Bingata craftspeople at the time were rarely involved in the process of design and motif composition. In Bingata's more recent incarnation, however, Shiroma brought creativity into the production process; he had created a marginal space that extended from the past to the present by providing a new form and function for Bingata, alternative materials and a novel design process to sustain the original. As Gell suggests, the production and circulation of artworks requires an external force to drive it, as artworks themselves 'are connected to other social processes (exchange, politics, religion, kinship, etc)' (1998:3). As with other artworks, the production of post-war Bingata was driven by the prevailing social chaos such as the Kingdom's fall, the Great Wars and the U.S. invasion. The figures below show examples of the new form of Bingata pattern created by Eiki Shiroma targeted at American customers based in Okinawa after the Second World War. Figure 2.12 shows a Christmas card bearing the English inscription 'OKINAWAN DYE WORK" beneath the motif of the gate of Ryukyu Court that used to be involved for the products to export China and feudal Japan. During the actual battle against the US in the final period of the Second World War, the court building functioned as the command central of the Japanese Army, and as a result by the end of the war it had been entirely demolished. This motif was therefore created by referring to the extant classic Bingata objects to establish the image of 'tradition' of Okinawa. In contrast, some new motifs emerged under the specific conditions of the new social environment. The Figure 2.13 is another example of a Christmas card made by Eiki Shiroma. The scene depicted is of a pair of dancers in a costume of *kasuri* pattern. *Kasuri* was one of the common patterns of the woven textiles of Okinawa, and that particular costume was involved for performing a *zō-odori*, a new interpretation of the Ryukyu Court Dance developed around this time. It is highly significant that here, for the first time, the pattern of a non-Bingata woven textile is depicted in a Bingata image. Previously, Bingata motifs had always incorporated some foreign objects such as snow, or flowers and animals native to feudal Japan or China, as they were the beyond the reach of ordinary people and therefore their appropriation served to symbolise the power of the Ryukyu Court. Figure 2.14 is also a new composition of pattern: it features a classic Bingata motif of pine leaves, bamboo and plum flowers, but here they surround the central image of a cross. This suggests the growing demand for

church artifacts, due to the heavy influx of the American culture into Japanese and Okinawan society.

Figure 2.12: A christmas card with pattern applied by Eiki Shiroma. On the back, the English words 'Bingata: OKINAWAN DYE WORK' are inscribed (Photographed in Naha, by courtesy of Eiichi Shiroma, 18th Oct 2009)

Figure 2.13: A christmas card designed by Eiki Shiroma motified with a pair of dancers performing a *zō-odori* in an woven textile costume

Figure 2.14: A tapestry for a church bearing a pattern tranfered by Eiki Shiroma

Without these new products and new patterns, Eiki and the rest of his family might never have been able to survive the war chaos; nor might the classic patterns and the techniques of Bingata. These new products indicates the diversion of the social

meaning of Bingata from an artifact previously isolated and exclusive to something new and common, available to all the Okinawan people, that also embodied the image of the war and poverty, the influx of heteronymous value, and the identity of Okinawa. At the same time, the patterns and motifs from the previous century were also retained though production activities targeting a different customer who required artifacts with different shapes and functions. These new Bingata products, then, can certainly be interpreted as mnemonic objects by which people narrate their past. Through the imbuing of the original reproduction activity with new forms, Bingata became a ‘mode of transmission’ by which people share a collective recognition of its value and meaning. Post-Kingdom Bingata articulates the reproductive capacity of ‘tradition’ and the tension between the ‘constancy and variability’ of the cultural form that generates the ‘mnemonic’ power of the object (Kuecheler 1987, Rowlands 1993) through which people recall the past memory as well as its metamorphic power, which fulfils the current demands of the people in the region.

2.3 Development of the ‘tradition’ of Bingata: technological alternatives and innovation

Benjamin suggests that the authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from the beginning (of its first creation), ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony of the history which it has experienced (1935: 215). Ellen also studies the transmission of the cultural form by observing the overlapping aspects of the object in locations beyond those in which the object first originated (Ellen 2009). This approach – the identification of transmissible and overlapping aspects in the existing cultural form – is very pertinent to the question of Intangible Cultural Heritage; how is the existing ‘traditional’ form maintained within the flux of changing social dynamics? At present, it is significant that the majority of Bingata products recognised as ‘Traditional Craft Product of Okinawa’ take the specific form of kimono sold both within and outside of Okinawa. It is not too much to say that the both the current Bingata technique, and the social recognition of the product, are outcomes of diligent studies of Japanese kimono production and the contemporary market. As a result, Bingata has achieved the status of a luxury item, sold in the top Kimono retail markets in Japan. This was driven by the social process in Okinawa after the US occupation and its re-amalgamation with Japan in 1972.

Here, ‘social process’ refers to both political changes and economic developments, the integration of which necessarily involves a heteronomous value enforced by ‘others’. In this section I aim to articulate the point that the externally-imposed values contribute to the establishment of a distinction between ‘self’ and ‘other’ through the reproduction activity of ‘tradition’, and engineers the surrounding locality by promoting technological evolution and variability in visual expression. I also wish to highlight the fact of human subjectivity inherent in the discussion of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Here, ‘human’ refers to the practitioners of the technique in question, with both their memories of the past and their experiences of the present, ongoing social process. In the next part, I will focus on the Bingata craftspeople and their production activity after its successful revival through the ingenuity of by Eiki Shiroma, and their struggle to retain a sense of locality while simultaneously incorporating the new materials and technology in order to popularise their Bingata products in the wider social context.

2.3-1 Okinawan identity and the victimhood

First of all, I will provide a broad picture of the particular socio-political environment of Okinawa, which bolsters the sense of local identity at the same time as it feeds feelings of antagonism toward ‘others’ outside, as exemplified in the biography of Eiki Shiroma. Okinawans call themselves *Uchinan-chu* (‘insider’) and the rest of Japanese people ‘*Yamaton-chu*’ (Yamato ethnic group, believed to be descended from the original Japanese) in their local language (now taken as the Okinawan dialect on the main island). This lexical categorization of people is only used by Okinawans; it is hardly used at all in the rest of Japan (Takara 2001). This phonetic sign underlines the detached sense of space between Yamato and Okinawa, due not only to geographical or climatic reasons, but also to the past servile position of Okinawa relative to Japan. This detachment is widely expressed through such varied historical, social and political issues as the following:

- 1) From 1609, for more than two centuries Okinawa was controlled by the Satsuma feudal clan of Kyushu as a subsidiary. This system eventually brought down the Ryukyu Kingdom, leading to the formation of a united Japan in 1868.

- 2) Under Japanese Imperialism, the expression of local culture was forbidden, and people followed the global Japanese process of modernisation.
- 3) During the Second World War, Okinawans experienced firsthand the realities of battle following the landing of US troops on Okinawa Main Island in April 1945. Most of the civilians of the island were involved in the fighting, and it is believed that more than one third of local population was lost (Naha City 2012) during the four-month battle until the official surrender of Japan on 15th August 1945.
- 4) After WWII, Japan as a whole gained independence from U.S. control in 1952 , but only under the condition that it allowed the U.S. retain their control of Okinawa as a military base to prepare for the Korean and Viet Nam Wars as well as to act as a breakwater against communist states in Asia.
- 5) In 1972, Okinawa finally became independent and decided to join Japan. However, as Japan doesn't hold military power beyond that necessary for self-defence, her security fully depends on the U.S. and their base in Japan. Currently 85% of the US military facilities are located in Okinawa.
- 6) Environmental damage and accidents caused by military exercises, as well as criminal offences perpetrated by soldiers against local citizens, often evoke offensive reactions from Okinawans against the Japanese government and their security policy. Meanwhile, as fears about North Korea's military power grew recently, U.S. considerations regarding a possible expansion of their base in Okinawa provoked major political and diplomatic tension³³.

These issues are widely shared in Japan through peace education and their airing due to ongoing political concerns. The mass media always covers the Japanese Prime Minister's yearly condolence visit to the annual peace memorial ceremony held in Okinawa, as well as those in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Under the rather conciliatory Japanese attitude towards Okinawan people, many local people share a generalised idea of themselves as '*higai-sha-ishiki* (shared victimhood)'. In addition, a strong sense of inferiority to the rest of Japan is also shared among members of the older generations. After Okinawa returned to Japan in 1972, these people had to struggle to

³³ For instance, The Economist reports the Japanese diplomacy allied with the US military power. America's security treaty with Japan, The new battle of Okinawa: Wrangling over an American base puts Japan's new government in a bind, *The Economist*, 14 January 2010.

recover from the effects of U.S. control and to catch up with the economic development in the rest of Japan. According to some local people in their 60s and 70s I spoke to during my field research, many of those Okinawans who travelled to big cities such as Tokyo and Osaka to study or find work at that time experienced prejudice for being ‘underdeveloped’ or ‘troublesome’. This social backdrop nurtured the initial identity of Okinawans as a people distinct from ‘others’ such as Yamato and Americans.

2.3-2 From ‘Amerika-Yö’ to ‘Yamato-Yö’: the economic development of Okinawa after 1972

The intensive bombing by the US during the war destroyed the local Okinawan landscape extensively. Naha, the capital of the main Okinawan Island, in particular experienced a drastic transformation of its landscape after the war. During the period of U.S. control, Naha became the location of the social facilities of the military base, with much of the younger labour force engaged in US military related industries (with the notable exception of some, such as Shiroma Eiki). According to those I interviewed who were over 60 years of age, at that time most people worked for the US factory. They told me that working at the military factory offered much better pay than anywhere else. The industrial system and social structure in Okinawa therefore substantially depended on the U.S. base after the war; a period known as ‘*Amerika-Yö* (the Era of American control)’.

In 1972, ‘*Yamato Yö* (the Era of Yamato control)’ was ushered in when Okinawa rejoined the rest of Japan. As Japan had by that time attained a substantial post-war economic recovery, a process of nationwide land development was undertaken. The post-U.S. Okinawa was targeted to fulfil this goal. This was done through a series of state-level initiatives known as the ‘Okinawa Promotion and Development Plan’ (Cabinet Office 2012). Since economic activity had until then been dominated by industry related to the US military base, after the withdrawal of *Amerika Yö*, no large-scale industry remained. A new initiative was therefore launched with the aim of creating a ‘new reality’ in Okinawa in addition to incorporating it into the nationwide Japanese economic development process, to overcome its image as a ‘defeated nation’ and to restore its international reputation. Promotion of tourism and

the industrialization of local products were brought into the front line to drive the new reality.

Expo '75 was an iconic event that took place between 20th July 1975 to 18th January 1976, in part conceived to commemorate the American handover of Okinawa to Japan. As the venue was located north of Naha, substantial infrastructure development was undertaken. One significant piece of work was the development of the 'Route 58' motorway, a long seaside route connecting Naha in the south to the northern area of Okinawa Main Island. Following the Expo 'tropical' and 'ocean' themes, tropical plants such as hibiscus, bougainvillea, palm tree and cycad were carefully selected and planted by the side of the road. Route 58 was replaced 'Army Way 1' developed by the former ruler, and succeeded not only logistically, but also visually in helping to remove the painful memories of the Second World War (Tada, 2004:53). The image of the 'tropical island' invited investment in tourism from Japanese businesses outside Okinawa – money known as 'Yamato capital' – for the development of seaside resort hotels and golf courses. Even before 1972, Okinawa had a popular tourist destination for Japanese people, to whom it represented the closest tropical and exotic location. Thereafter, as the main island enjoyed rapid economic development, Okinawa went on to become the top domestic tourist destination (Japan National Tourist Organization 2012). In practice, the industries associated with the landscape and tourism changed the local demography of the labour force: previously composed mostly of factory workers on the US base, it was now composed mainly of those working in the tourism industry established through Yamato capital. The creation of the new landscape therefore contributed heavily to the identification of a new socio-economic structure of Okinawa controlled by the ongoing enforcement of the power of Yamato. This social transformation became known as '*Amerika Yō -kara-Yamato Yō-ē* (transferred from the Era of American control to that of Yamato control)'.

2.3-3 Industrialization of craft materials as ‘product of Okinawa’

Under these conditions, Okinawans still share a ‘sense of victimhood’ with their socio-economic structure driven by non-local capital; local craft products have consequently become imbued with an objectified sense of ‘self’, supported by the craft industrial promotion of the prefectural government. Despite the past hierarchical social system, Bingata, in particular, as the textile distinguished by association with the glorious past of the Ryukyu Kingdom, has proven its worth as a bright social symbol with which to clothe all the negative experiences of the war and its aftermath. In this setting, Okinawans supported Eiki Shiroma’s attitude toward externally-imposed power and unreturned feelings expressed towards antinomy of *Amerika Yō* and *Yamato Yō*. Bingata became one of the Okinawans’ social templates by which to maintain their sense of ‘self’. The experience of the ruin of their past culture and the social transformation caused by the removal of the former hierarchical system, effectively *united* the people through the symbolic order of tradition by drawing on the remote, and *romanticised*, past of the Ryukyu Kingdom, as discussed in the previous part.

Meanwhile, the promotion of tourism had a notable impact on craft society. Bingata and other woven textiles were very popular souvenirs in the street market in central Naha City, the new capital of Okinawa. The Okinawan craft boom was also facilitated by the Mingei (Art Craft) movement that was occurred outside from Okinawa from 1930s. As the result of the studies conducted by Kamakura and other scholars, artists who supported Mingei (e.g. Kichiemon Okamura, Shoji Hamada, Soetsu Yanagi, Taro Okamoto) aspired to visit Okinawa and study the craft production. One of the artists, Taro Okamoto, describes his shock in his biography when he visited Okinawa for the first time and described the space as having ‘*the beauty of emptiness*’ (1966:71). The urbanisation and high-pitch capitalist economy that prevailed from the 1960s aroused strong sentiments, expressed in the anti-war movement against the cold war (Toyoshita 1996). As a reaction of melancholia against through the modernisation, some academics begun ethnographical studies of peripheral communities (e.g. led by Horiguchi 1973 and Yanagida 1978) and Mingei movement was facilitated in this social and academic trend of beautification of

peripheral culture. Through this social phenomenon, Okinawan craft gained popularity among many people in big cities of outside of Okinawa.

As I mentioned in part 2.1-2, some local women started their own businesses with their woven textiles during this time, a movement that led to the establishment of a textile weaving course in Shuri High School in 1958, which eventually became, in 1973, the ‘Designing for Textile Dyeing and Weaving’ module, taught in Shuri High School. In addition, in 1969, ‘*Kôgei Centâ* (Craft Technique Training Centre)’ was established to promote the industrialization of local craft products with the support of the Japanese government. During this time active exchanges of skills, knowledge, materials and manpower took place between Okinawa and the rest of Japan, and as a result craftspeople making Bingata and other woven textiles began to focus on textile production outside of Okinawa. Below, I outline some of the experiences of Bingata craftspeople at that time based on my interviews.

- **Bingata craftspeople, informant 1: Mrs. Sachiko Nagayama’s story**

Born in 1941 in Shuri, Mrs. Nagayama graduated from the Designing for Textile Dyeing and Weaving module at Shuri High School. She then took a trainee placement in the Tanaka-nao fabric dyeing shop in Kyoto. This retailer, established in 1733, had a substantial store of information about dyeing textiles. After two years’ training at Tanaka-nao, Mrs. Nagayama returned to Okinawa, where she opened a Bingata souvenir shop in the busiest shopping street in Naha. In 1973, she closed down the shop and established her current Bingata workshop in Shuri. Currently her two daughters are working together at her workshop. She relates aspects of her story below:

I still remember, during my schooldays, when on one occasion the great master, Eiki Shiroma taught me directly.. He took my hand and guided me through Tutsugaki (*a technique of drawing the motif by squeezing out dye-resist paste from a nozzle of bag*). At that time, he was already above the clouds. That was one of the most exciting memories of my school days at that dyeing course. After graduation, I travelled to Kyoto to work at the Tanaka-nao shop. That was before the reunion with Japan, so, holding my passport, I took a two-night long trip to Kyoto onboard a ship. At the shop, I learned a lot about the dyeing techniques and dyestuff as well as ancillary materials such as binder (*a liquid that both makes the colour dye thin and also makes it last longer than using water*). It all looked very different from anything that I had known in Okinawa, and I was especially

overwhelmed by the steaming technique used to fix the applied colours. Though I suffered a bit due to unfamiliar food – maybe because I was too young to enjoy it – overall I had a great time there. The shop people were very friendly and took me to many other workshops. I gained knowledge of the wider craft industry in Kyoto, not only of the cutting-edge dyeing techniques. It was so new to see the industrial structure of kimono production in Kyoto, in which individual processes were conducted by independent workshops specialised in the technique, whereas in Okinawa, all the processes are done within a single workshop. Of course, this also surprised them. They really adored the fact that I knew all the procedures, to the extent that they didn't want me to leave.

When I returned to Okinawa (in the early 1960s), I opened a workshop on the side of Route 58, which was in the busiest shopping area, with three other schoolmates from the Shuri High-School. As time passed, each of them entered different stages of their lives, such as raising kids etc, and we closed that shop down in 1972. We divided the materials and utensils between us. I then established my own shop on 1st August 1973, here in Shuri. This land was originally owned by my grandfather. At that time, I thought anywhere would be fine if I could work on Bingata, yet now I realised how luckily I was to establish Bingata workshop in Shuri (where Bingata originated).

As tourism became popular, we started to receive tour-group visits to our workshop to witness the process of making Bingata. I wholesaled some items to a craft souvenir shop in Kokusai-Street (the busiest shopping street in Okinawa). In addition, during the Expo time, I got lots of order for table centres sold in the sites. Oh – I also remember that I often got orders from these American Generals for work bearing the motif of a red horse. I didn't have any idea when they loved the horse in red so much but I made it countless times. Therefore both before and after the return [of Okinawa] to Japan, the business was quite successful and at one time I once had 16 workers. However after the Expo, a lot of negative feedbacks came out about the radical industrialization of craft materials, and our business was no exception. We carried a vast inventory of products. We invented a new product, the *māsū* bag, using these leftover textiles: a charm against evil consisting of a pinch of salt kept in a tiny bag, which Okinawan people could always carry around attached to their belongings³⁴. It was very popular among Okinawans. Also, I made some items for the Japanese Tea Ceremony such as screens and decorations. Indeed, customers naturally told us what they would like us to make. We gradually started to join the kimono industry then. The largest effort that I made was I needed to re-make the stencil to transfer the pattern since the width of Yamato kimono is much narrower than that of the original Ryukyu style kimonos. We learnt the Yamato way of kimono design; how they

³⁴ In Japan and Okinawa, salt is still used today in protecting against evil. For instance, a small bag of salt is provided at funerals, and then, when the mourners return home, before entering their houses they apply the salt to their bodies to purify themselves and repel any evil spirits that they may have brought back from the funeral venue.

make the pieces to stitch together out of the roll of fabric at the Craftō Centā. They also taught us the variations of pattern allocation according to the occasion by inviting kimono sewing experts from Yamato. (Interviewed on 18th September, 2009)

- **Bingata craftspeople informant 2: Ms. Sachiko Yafuso's story**

Ms. Yafuso was also engaged in Bingata production at this time but in slightly different way. Also a graduate of the Dyeing and Weaving Course at Shuri High-School, she travel to Tokyo to study the promotion of Okinawan products such as jewelry made of local coral. When she returned to Naha, she opened a shop selling Bingata production materials targeting at local Bingata craftspeople. She pursued her business, holding classes to teach Bingata to ordinary people while establishing her career as a craftswoman, which she continues to practice today. During my field research, I also joined her class and leant Bingata technique in a local recreation centre in Shuri. She related her experience of Bingata up until now.

After I graduated from Shuri High School, I tried to get work under Eiki Shiroma at his workshop. However, unfortunately I was rejected. Then somehow I travelled to Tokyo to study jewelry and the market under an Okinawan lady who ran a business there. She was the pioneer of Okinawan business in Tokyo and a successful entrepreneur. In those five years' hard work, I learnt about business strategy and the market in Tokyo and then returned to Naha. I opened a dye materials shop for the Bingata craftspeople with the help of a Tokyo-based wholesaler of dyestuff called Seiwa. At that time in Okinawa, despite the big demand for the advanced dye materials from Yamato, nobody had tried to import them into Okinawa. Therefore this was Seiwa's first experience of shipping to Okinawa. The uncertain sea route was the biggest difficulty, even though historically lots of goods had been exchanged through that sea route. As the business became successful, I had the idea of opening a class for ordinary people, following the suggestion of the wholesaler that many people were interested in Bingata in Tokyo.

In contrast to the popularity of Bingata items in Yamato, I was very shocked at local Okinawan people's lack of knowledge of both Bingata and other Okinawan textiles. Even the Ryukyu Court Dance teachers failed to explain the difference between the weaving and dyeing on their costumes. It's a shame to be an Okinawan who doesn't understand such wonderful craft materials. Despite feeling sad about this, I felt a sense of responsibility for remedying this situation. It was then that I set up a class aimed at ordinary people such as housewives. It was a sort of 'taboo' among these established craftspeople (such as those working under the Shiromas) to train ordinary people and provide them with a textbook. Some were offensive in their attitude, and I knew that some pupils from the Shiroma workshop tried to spy on my class. I found space in the

YMCA for cultural activities. In the beginning, my class was full with Yamato (non-Okinawan) ladies whose husbands had been posted to Naha. Since 'Ryukyu mono' (Okinawan textiles) were very popular in Yamato, maybe also because of the tourism boom, they knew much more about Bingata. They appreciated my course, and said 'Oh, we are very lucky to learn Bingata!' Some years later, my class caught the attention of the city councils and local authorities for their cultural promotion activities. I was invited to some authorities to hold Bingata classes. Gradually local ladies came to join. Now the majority of my class members are Okinawans. I guess even if I didn't do, sooner or later somebody would have spotted the demand for this kind of craft class and begun to teach it." (Interviewed on 9th May, 2009)

From these two craftswomen's narratives, we can identify a significant social shift from the chaos of war to economic development and social stability that occurred in Okinawa. Nagayama's souvenir business success story, Yafuso's venture to supply Bingata materials and provide Bingata classes for housewives signify the new social meaning of Bingata. In addition, these two craftswomen's lifelong engagement in Bingata production testifies to the breakdown of traditional gender structure in this area. Once, production used to remain within families traced according to the paternal line and practiced by craftsmen; nowadays it is open to these craftswomen and its practice is even extended to housewives as a hobby. The epistemological impact of the land achieved through its visualisation and presentation as a tropical tourist destination facilitated the active exchange of people, money, information and goods between the two spaces, Okinawa and the rest of Japan. These dynamics led to the potential for Bingata production to become more accessible, and for the Bingata materials and information to be exchanged in a wider social context, thus bringing a new dimension of social meaning to the product. Once a materialised symbol of social antagonism toward Yamato, now Bingata gained new social status as a 'local culture of Okinawa'.

In this way, the social meaning of Bingata after 1972 became multifaceted and the object became common in a much wider social context, driven by industrial and political empowerment. This is a significant phenomenon in the birth of 'tradition'; as a result of popularisation, Bingata started to reflect the variability between the past and present in its form, technique and purpose of use, through an increase in production and market activity. These two craftswomen's experiences of

technological exchange in Kyoto and Tokyo certainly stimulated their creativity, reminiscent of Leach's discussion of 'differentiation' through the interaction of different technological disciplines (Leach 2007a). By integrating new technology into the existing production methods, and by gathering market information in the rest of Japan, craftspeople try to invent the *sui generis* aspects in Bingata.

The big inventory of Bingata products caused by the booming economy of tourism, the Expo and the mass production of craft objects prompted Nagayama to realise the necessity of creation of a new form, promoted as an Okinawan charm, which more closely conformed to the local demand. Likewise, Yafuso recognised that the temperature difference between inside and outside of Okinawa was a factor in the appreciation of Okinawan craft materials. Her endeavour to popularise Bingata production to others prompted furious reactions from local craftspeople. Both of these pioneers explored the materiality of Bingata by stepping back and forth between constancy and variability, recognising the relative validity of both old and new values emerging both inside and outside Okinawa. In addition, like other craftspeople in the same generation, both craftswomen never missed an opportunity to talk about their memories of Eiki Shiroma. Shiroma's legacy succeeded in contextualising the 'Bingata tradition' as a 'mode of transmission', becoming a benchmark of 'tradition' by which to explore both the constancy and variability in their own Bingata production activities. Eventually, in July 1973, the "*Okinawa Bingata Dento Hozon-Kai* (Association for Preservation of Bingata Tradition) established by Eiki Shiroma, and succeeded by his son, Eijun Shiroma after his death, was designated as the group holder of Important Intangible Cultural Property in Bingata by the Okinawa Prefectural Government. According to law, Bingata technique was contextualised as the following:

- 1) The purpose should be that of producing craft materials.
- 2) The means to transfer the pattern should involve a stencil pattern with a dye-resist paste or hand-drawing with a dye-resist paste.
- 3) Natural dyestuffs should be used in applying the colour onto the pattern.

(Regulation of Okinawa Prefectural Government for Preservation of Cultural Heritage. Enacted on 30th July 1973 under Okinawa Prefectural Regulation Act 25, author's translation)

This is the trajectory followed by a cultural form as it becomes an example of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The reproduction activity of a cultural form, its social recognition, and the repercussions of past memories attached to the form are subjectively driven by both practitioners and social demands (consumers), and empowered by politics, economy and social conditions. When this ‘mode of transmission’ is expanded into a wider social context, eventually the production activity becomes codified by law as ‘tradition’.

2.4 Technological innovation: joining the kimono market

Nobody will buy ‘handmade cake’ if it isn’t tasty. If the handmade products are worse than the machine made, they won’t be in the shop. In the 1970s, Okinawan textiles were still very rough and were always sold on the discount rack. They were genuinely ‘handmade’, but they weren’t good enough products for the top kimono market. When I visited Shiroma’s workshop for the first time, I was shocked by the very poor facilities. Until I visited, they didn’t think it so important to fix the colour since they didn’t have obi (*a broad sash that wraps around the body tightly*) before (*when they made Ryukyu style garment in the past*), and they used a steamer originally intended for making dim sum to fix the colour! A steamer for textiles should be made of thick metal with a tight lid so that it can reach higher temperatures and steam at higher pressure. Therefore, I acquired a proper steamer from a workshop in Kyoto and brought it to Okinawa. In addition, their works were always uneven in background colour, which made them useless for the mass market. It was because they couldn’t remove all the Nori (*dye-resistant paste applied to transfer a pattern from the stencil*) in the washing process. Then they applied the background colour to the textiles with Nori still remaining in the fibres. That’s why the background colour came out unevenly. In Kyoto, they had long used an ancillary material for removing Nori, so I brought this to Okinawa too. As a result, there were many blurred and uneven spots found in their products. Not only did I bring the steamer, I also brought a table made of oak used in Shinshu (current Nagano Prefecture). It was used for *Sämë-komon*, a very small dot-pattern stencil dyeing technique. (*Sämë means ‘shark’ and this textile looks like the skin of shark with tiny dense dots.*) Before that, they used plywood-veneer.

The veneer is solid in the beginning but eventually bends. If the table is not solid and stable, they cannot apply the pattern accurately throughout the length of the fabric. The very elaborate and dense work is produced with the help of a solid table that never bends under any conditions.” (Mr. Nomura, President of ‘Ryu-ai’, the largest wholesaler of Okinawan textiles, interviewed on 15th September 2009 at his office of Okinawa branch)

Around the time of the economic boom brought by the Expo in 1975, Bingata craftspeople started to set their sights on the Japanese kimono market in addition to producing small souvenirs for visiting tourists. However, joining the kimono market would prove an enormous challenge. These words from the kimono wholesaler based in Kyoto portray something of the backwardness of the facilities and techniques available at the time. He also describes the competitiveness of the market in which these local products, referred to as ‘handmade’, required much accuracy and a certain degree of uniformity to compete with the machine-made products. So far, Bingata craftspeople had made only small items such as coasters and table runners for souvenir. The first challenge they had to overcome in their attempt to join this market was to make something wearable as kimono.

As Nagayama mentioned, these craftspeople needed to learn the Japanese kimono pattern, as organised by the Craft Training Centre; this was because Japanese kimono is worn in a slightly different way from that of the past Ryukyu-style garment. The difference in its use and manufacture required a technological evolution as well as the adoption of new material alternatives. In addition, they also faced the difficulty of having to accommodate the visual image of Bingata held by the craftspeople to the Yamato taste in kimono, especially regarding colour combinations and pattern variation. While retaining the social image of Bingata of Okinawa, they needed to also produce an local kimono considered attractive to customers in Tokyo and other Japanese cities, where they had developed their own tastes in colour and motifs during their long history of kimono practice. This part will provide an example of the traditional craft object in the larger economic and social context, where it necessarily faces a dilemma between conforming to the social dynamics on the one hand and maintaining some aspects of its original character on the other.

2.4-1 Praxeological accountability: Ryukyu and Japanese-style garments

Japanese kimonos have a structural and figurative similarity to Okinawan garments in that both are made up of one long (~12 meters) piece of cloth that is cut into square pieces and sewn together. Therefore, in the planning and the cutting of the cloth, unlike most western clothing, the pieces are rectangular, with straight edges. As shown in Figure 2.16, the kimono consists of a long neckband piece, long body pieces to cover the front and back of the body from the front to the back (made separately, right and left side), a pair of long sleeves, and some triangular pieces (*Okumi*) which sit around the chest in between the neckband and the body on both sides. There is a seam up the back of the right and left part of the body, and the neckband folds around both sides at the front. The sleeves are also attached to this main body piece. Since these parts are rectangular in shape, the completed garment is flat, and can be hung on a stick through the sleeves, or folded into a square along the seams. Both styles also involve innerwear that is partly visible under the outer layer. The major difference in the pattern of the two styles is the shape of the sleeves, the width of the neckband and the length of the body part. Japanese kimono sleeves are closed until the near the end where the hands emerge. In contrast, the sleeves of the Ryukyu kimono are shaped like open shaped cylinders. The length of Japanese kimono is much longer, so that people lift up the cloth in the middle of the body to adjust it to their height; it is then bound with a string and fixed with the broad obi (sash). The Ryukyu style is much shorter, intended to be worn over the inner wear loosely like a robe; wearers hold the right and left neckbands together in front with their hands when they walk around. These differences signify the alteration of the basic garment pattern to suit the weather in each location. Japanese kimono is designed to be adjustable to varied weather, including cold winter days, whereas the Ryukyu style with wide sleeves and an open front, allows the air to circulate around the body, so as to keep it cool in tropical weather.

A major difference between the two styles is in the mode of dressing; the Japanese Kimono involves a six-metre-length obi (sash) that wraps around the upper body and fastens tightly at the back; a decorative shape is then fashioned with the rest of the length (see also the difference between the two styles in Figures 2.16 and 2.17). In addition, other items that accompany the Japanese style are a belt and a scarf to fix

the shape of the obi. The Ryukyu style is much shorter, intended to be worn over the inner wear, a simple two-piece garment *Dujin* (red top) and *Kakan* (white skirt with drapes) loosely like a robe.

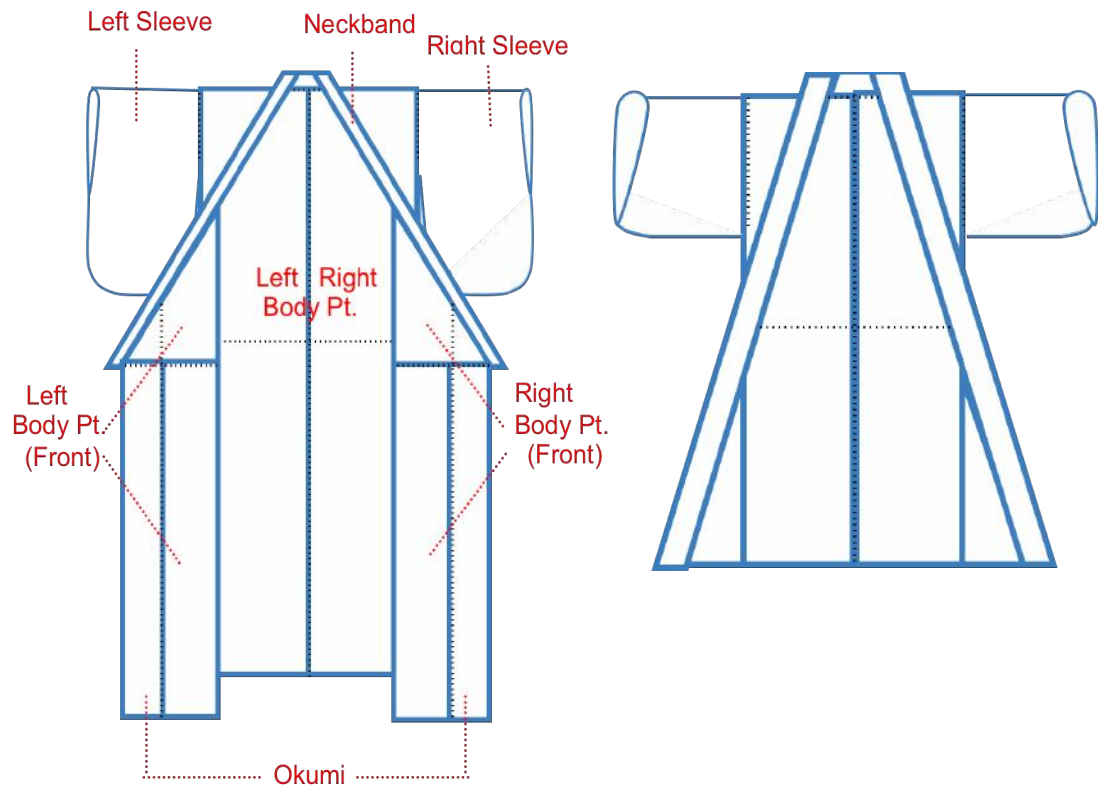


Figure 2.15: Patterns of Japanese style kimono (left) and Ryukyu style kimono (right)



Figure 2.16 (left): The Classic Bingata costume worn over *Dujin* (a red top) and *Kakan* (white pleated skirt) at the Ryukyu Court Dance performance (Photographed in Naha)



Figure 2.17 (right): Bingata in Japanese kimono style with obi fastened on the upper body (Photographed at *Mitomo* in Tokyo on 23rd July 2009)

Described as ‘wrapping the body’ (Hendry, 1993) Japanese kimono requires many layers, each of which is bound with strings and finished with the broad obi tightened around the body. With this mode of dressing, Japanese kimonos involve a greater physical friction between layers of fabrics than Ryukyu kimono, especially around the upper body where the obi is located. The fabric of the obi also must have great tolerance for friction, which goes with the complicated process of making its shape on the back. Therefore, the kimono textiles and obi must be more resistant to motion and abrasion than those of the classic Bingata kimonos. In the Japanese textile industry, the specific quality of being colourfast against rubbing is called ‘*Kenrō-dō*’. Achieving this was a major struggle for producers of Bingata, which features a colourful pattern produced with powdered mineral pigment and some natural dyeing materials made from plants. These finely –powdered pigments (much like powdered cosmetics), are easily removed through the friction of wearing.

Douny studied *Hausa* material, an embroidered wild silk gown worn by men in north Nigeria from a praxeological (Warnier 2001) perspective. She observes that wearing

Hausa clothing materialises male status, wealth and the power that embodied by the symbolic pattern and the technique used in its manufacture (Dourny 2011). The praxeological impact of the symbolic cloth is seminal to identify the inter-linkage between technique of production of the cloth and the mode of wearing it. In the early days of both feudalistic Japan and the Ryukyu Dynasty, ruling class females used to wear the outer layer of a large patterned kimono loosely over simple inner garments (like the Ryukyu Court costume in Figure 2.16) and this style was popular from the 15th century until the early 17th, then during Edo era (1600-1867) it became common among the workers in brodels to entertain their customers (Hashimoto 2005)³⁵. When walking around in this style, both sides of the neckband were held together at the lower end and lifted with both hands so that the hem didn't touch the floor. This physical status depicts the past hierarchical social system both in feudal Japan and the Ryukyu. The thick layers of garments made the wearers' movements slow and graceful; they had to exert careful control over their bodies and when using their hands in lifting the hems. They were always accompanied by servants who carried their belongings. The big motifs of the colourful patterns applied to the outer garment were the visualised and materialised symbols of their identity and their power as ruling class females. This mode of dressing, complete with the heavy layers and the accompanying physical control required in wearing them was shrugged off when the hierarchical social structure went down in the dawn of modernity. In contrast, the style involving the use of the obi sash around the middle of the body was widely popular among ordinary people. To work in the crop field and undertake domestic tasks, they tucked up the cloth to make the length of kimono shorter, and fixed it with the obi. Therefore, current Japanese kimono style can be understood as an outcome of the 'transmissible' (Benjamin 1935) aspects of past ways of clothing the body.

Past Bingata garments took on a similarity pattern and purpose of use as Japanese kimonos. This similarity was the transmissible aspect that enabled Bingata to explore the present-day kimono market. Meanwhile their commonality with the Japanese kimono also highlighted the limitations of the methods of production that had come into effect due to the way in which Bingata garments had been worn in the

³⁵ This style is called *Uchikake* and is still employed in Japanese style weddings.

past. The new materiality of Bingata as kimono required a specific praxeological accountability: the adherence to a particular pattern of wearing and fastening with obi. In order to overcome this challenge, as Mr. Nomura, the kimono wholesaler in Kyoto, stated, they incorporated the use of new technology: a pressure steaming machine, ancillary materials such as an enzyme to dissolve Nori (dye-resist paste) made of rice powder, and binder to form the colours, as well as some chemical dye stuffs.

This technological transformation, driven by outside demand, functional requirements (i.e. to be worn as kimono) and market competitiveness reveals the ‘constancy and the variability’ (Kuechler 1987) of ‘tradition’. It is, I reiterate, subjectively chosen and controlled by the craftspeople according to their technical capabilities, image of ‘tradition’ and collective memories of the past.

2.4-2 Dilemma between social demand, new materials and the image of tradition

At the same time that new technologies were being introduced, crafts came under a new, contrasting pressure to preserve ‘tradition’ and improve quality to meet the demands of the market. In this part I will introduce the accounts of some craftspeople as they describe their struggle with new materials and their own personal images of ‘tradition’.

- **Bingata craftspeople informant 3: Mr. Sekikō Chinen’s story**

Sekikō Chinen is a Bingata craftsman based in Shuri. He took over the current workshop from his father, Sekigen Chinen. Sekigen was born into one of the three main Bingata-families in Shuri (Shiroma, Takushi and Chinen) dating back to the Kingdom era. Like Eiki Shiroma, he was one of the pioneers of the post-war Bingata revival movement. Sekikō had helped his father since he was small. Like Eiki Shiroma, after the war he tried to make use of materials gleaned from the bins of the US military base for Bingata production. During the day, Sekikō worked in the US factory, and in the evening helped with his father’s work on Bingata.

After Okinawa was reunified with Japan (in 1972), we started to make kimonos and got some orders from Yamato. Before that, we made quite a lot of souvenir products such as table centrepieces and coasters. Since we started making kimonos, achieving Kenro-do (*colour fastness to rubbing in dyed materials*) became a big challenge for us. Before the steaming machine was introduced, we sometime received claims from customers that the pattern was ruined when they made obi with the fabric. In addition, we also received a suggestion from the Kimono wholesaler that it was better not to use the red colour too much, since it didn't suit the taste of people in Yamato. Following their guidelines, we made kimono in slightly muted colours. As well as new techniques, many materials became accessible to us, including chemical dyestuffs. Chemical stuffs are more resistant to physical friction compared to pigment dyes; however they don't last as long. Once I used them and when I washed the fabric to remove nori (*the dye-resist paste*) they washed off in the water. Maybe at that time, the quality was much worse; presently it is getting better, I believe.

Recently, however, some young people have begun to use chemical dyestuffs heavily, even in these traditional patterns, and sometimes I find chemical dye is becoming the main colourant and pigment the substitute. These works look very shallow, they don't have the same depth of colour. I can understand they have taken an easier path in struggling to achieve Kenro-do. I wonder what this tendency to use chemicals will be like in the future.

For me, tradition is handing over what I've learnt from my father and preserving the identity of the work as that of Chinen Family in some fashion. This does not necessarily mean sticking to making kimono only, but also to be able to produce other things that people may need. While working to preserve the Chinen family's work, we shouldn't end up left behind in a world in which people's demands keep changing. I also think we shouldn't make anything too expensive. When I receive orders from customers, I learn a lot from them. If somebody has bought my work, it is an evaluation of it as a craft, I think. I want to produce what people want. It is a great responsibility to produce something new while also preserving tradition. Recently young people have started to make and new, modern things, whereas our generation always started with classics. Therefore, their works look different from Bingata: a mix of many elements of Bingata and some other textiles. (Interviewed on 28th September, 2009)

- **Bingata craftspeople informant 2: Ms. Sachiko Yafuso's story**

As long as Bingata is registered as Important Intangible Cultural Properties of Okinawa by the Prefectural Government, and as long as it is identified by the use of

pigment, I think we should stick to it. We shouldn't use chemical dyestuffs. Some people use urethane-containing chemical dyestuffs; however, it makes the colour form too sleek. Only I, in Okinawa, use the traditional pigment. Also, recently some people design the patterns and cut the stencil papers using a computer. It sounds very accurate, but actually the lines made by computer are too sharp. We can easily spot such patterns from the sharp and tasteless lines. In order to make attractive lines, we need to practice, then we can gain better skills than a computer.

Some people say my colour is very strong and that doesn't much fit with Yamato taste. However, the classic Bingata features strong colours, and that is the Bingata that I believe in. Recently, Bingata crafts have come to use muted colour too much due to conforming to the tastes of Yamato. It looks like Kyoto's Yuzen (a stencil dyeing textile technique originating in Kyoto). However, some people love my colours because they're very strong and look very much like classic Bingata. Once I made an obi in a peony pattern with very strong red and pink. Even I thought it was too much. However, it was worn by a shop attendant from a kimono retailer in Tokyo. She received some inquiries from customers: 'where did you get the obi?' and then my pattern became very popular and I got lots of orders from the wholesaler. I presume that people sometimes need a vivid item to enjoy themselves in a slightly different way from others in their style. That's why Okinawan products became popular in Japan. Meanwhile, I think preserving tradition just as it is is not always correct in some hands. I've never seen the classic pattern of the scenery of Ryukyu stonewalls with Basho-fu (a banana leaf) tree actually being purchased, though I have seen the item on sale sometimes in the craft exhibitions. Even though it uses grey and other muted colours, it is not so popular as a pattern. Though I think it is the classic and very Okinawan, perhaps I do not like that pattern and the motif so much, therefore I have never used it for my work. (Interviewed on 4th April, 2009)

- **Bingata craftspeople informant 4: Mrs. Michiko Tamanaha' story**

Michiko Tamanaha (aged 76) is a daughter of Eiki Shiroma and is working under a workshop that her husband, Yuko Tamanaha, runs. This couple are some of the earliest pupils of Eiki Shiroma, who since became independent and now run their own workshop. Mrs Tamanaha is therefore from the generation that experienced the entire transformation of Bingata technology and its material form:

I remember the time when I worked for my father; of course we were very poor so I could not afford even to pay for my school education; however the atmosphere was somewhat more relaxed. So many things happened, such as war, losing my mum, looking after my family in her absence, and digging through the rubbish bins at the

(*military*) base. When the new items, such as table runners for American people, were sold, my father was very glad and greatly enjoyed creating something new while also studying the remaining old materials. That time was something exciting, although I had to work very hard. Then I got married to one of his pupils, who used to be a blacksmith from Ishigaki Island. By observing his way of working at the workshop, I thought he was very dexterous, that's why I married him and became independent, and I have now been running this workshop for more than 40 years. We tried so many things and I have always admired my husband's capabilities in technique, design, and coming up with new ideas. We often present our pieces at the art exhibition held at Mitsukoshi (*one of the oldest shopping malls in Tokyo, which runs craft exhibitions annually*) and visit there sometimes. These craft works, gathered from all the techniques from all over Japan, are so amazing! Such experience cannot be gained in Okinawa. We spend an entire day looking at these works; all are stimulating to our own works.

(*Regarding the alternative materials,*) ... Nobody can tell what percentage of chemical or pigment should fulfil the criteria, since we do not have codified criteria. Recently the quality of pigment is getting better. However, these are mostly imported, not locally produced. Besides, we stopped using some local materials such as Fukugi (*a local plant the bark of which was used to dye Bingata and other woven textiles during the Ryukyu Dynasty time*)³⁶ that features in the bright yellow background of Bingata in the past. These days, maybe because of climate change, the Fukugi tree no longer makes an attractive colour as it did before, so we stopped using it. It's a shame. It is impossible to create the same colour as we can see in some artifacts from the old times in museums. It is even hard to repeatedly produce our own products exactly the same every time, since we are human and all our works are done by hand. However we need to produce something good, and which is appreciated as Bingata, for present people by doing what we can do now.

These days, people wear kimono as they like, regardless of their age. Before, it was thought that young people should wear bright colours, and more muted ones as they got older. In addition, people do not choose Bingata because of the brightness of the colour. Some like muted colours, others like bright. We just try our best to provide quality and fit to their demands. Tradition is a process by which we use old techniques and create something new. (Assembled many interviews held from October 2008 to October 2009)

These stories reveal how Bingata was embodied as a local product by these craftspeople in the face of outside values. Chemical dyes became an alternative for

³⁶ Fukugi was originally introduced from South East Asia by traders in the Kingdom era as a plant for use in windbreaks against the occasional assault of typhoons in summer. (Nagase 1993:70) Today the fukugi tree is still evident in Okinawan landscape.

the solution of the problem of achieving kenro-do (the resistance of colour to rubbing in dyed materials) after the steaming machine was introduced, and are often considered somewhat anti-traditional among these craftspeople. Of course, as Yafuso mentions regarding the designation of Intangible Cultural Property, natural dyes are by law a compulsory element in the production of items sold as Bingata. However, rather than being overly concerned with the codified context of 'tradition', craftspeople have chosen to negotiate between using natural and chemical dyestuffs, mostly because of the colour form that they pursue. They never explain what the traditional colour is, nor is it ever stated in the regulations of ICH provided by the government. However, by continuing to produce their own works, criticising others' works, and attempting to meet the market demands, individual craftspeople have established his or her own idea of 'Bingata tradition'. While chemical dyes (and the stencil-cutting technology done by computer) are defined as anti-traditional to some degree, new materials and purposes for Bingata, such as Japanese kimono, and alternative technologies such as pressure steamers, are essential to the preservation of this 'tradition' as well as to gaining market competitiveness.

On the other hand, these same craftspeople also experience the reality of certain aspects of past values, as demonstrated by the example of the unpopular pattern of classic Ryukyu scenery mentioned by Yafuso. The Fukugi dye that Tamahana talked about signifies a non-transmissible aspect of the past. As it produces a very vivid turmeric yellow, it became commonly used in dyeing in the Kingdom era and produced the yellow background colour in Bingata supposedly used in the garments of the highest ranking members of the Ryukyu court. Currently craftspeople make a similar colour by using the pigment orpiment (a monoclinic arsenic sulphide mineral) but they do not use this colour as a background any more (except for the Ryukyu Court Dance costumes). According to current kimono trends, people choose muted or soft colours for kimono, as the craftspeople observed, and choose bright and vivid colours only for the obi. In this way, the changing taste in kimono favoured alternative colours, and consequently Fukugi was retired from Bingata production. This is an example of the act of balancing the present market needs against the values of the past; a responsibility shared by all the craftspeople who are involved with 'traditional' practices. I argue that this exercise is not driven only by the economy, since the market is neither the subject nor the object of 'tradition', but is

rather the location of popularisation of the object chosen by these craftspeople. Indeed, the production of a ‘traditional’ object is not as straightforward a task as simply making a replica of a form as it appeared in the past. Through their production activity, craftspeople have struggled to choose between what is transmissible from their past and what is not, between what is applicable according to the outside and what is not, and to discern the degree to which the application of a given technology, historical reference, or style is ‘acceptable’. The production of traditional objects is, as it unfolds through these individuals’ experiences and choices, the act of embodying *the image of ‘tradition’*.

2.5 Metamorphic ‘tradition’, always served in fresh

[P]eople often talk about ‘tradition’. However, do you really know what ‘tradition’ is? Tradition is a new thing. Tradition is something that has always been needed; that’s why it has survived for a long time. Tradition means to keep trying to create something new. ‘Transmission’ is older. Just following the past is transmission and it is no good.

-Kisaburo Ogawa, a LNT in *Kenjo-Hakata-Ori* (woven textiles from the Hakata area, Fukuoka Prefecture). From a video interview in the exhibition “*Craftworks of Today in Kyushu and Okinawa - Tradition and Creation*”, Kyushu National Museum, 1st January - 15th March 2009.

Bingata was once an object exclusive to the ruling class and the symbol of the social hierarchical system of the Ryukyu Kingdom. However, after the social chaos brought by modernity, it came to be an object to unite Okinawan identity and an idealised object of the social recovery. Eiki Shiroma contextualised Bingata as a ‘tradition’ in Okinawan society through its association with memories of wartime, and those craftspeople who struggled to compete in the kimono market configured it as a local product through the memory of Shiroma, the technological innovations brought from outside Okinawa, active economic development, and a desire to enter the broader market. They strived to utilise Bingata in expensive material forms (e.g. kimonos and obis) by striking a balance between ‘tradition’ and the market. While chemical dyes are defined as ‘anti-traditional’, new materials and technologies for Bingata are simultaneously adopted to maintain the ‘tradition’. This is an exercise in negotiating the dual materiality of ‘self’ and ‘other’ in the context of traditional craft production. Craftspeople ceased to use some techniques and materials from the past in order to

externalise their materiality for the 'other', and then internalised these past technique as their own in their memories. This highlights the metamorphic character of 'traditional craft products' empowered by the market economy to create exchange value in the realm of 'tradition'. These craftspeople's struggles with technological choices, and the number of trials and errors undergone in the process of exploring kimono production might call to mind the mythologised memory of Eiki Shiroma and his fortitude. Oscillating between different temporalities (i.e. past and present) in their production processes, these craftspeople select the most appropriate means by which to employ 'tradition' to mediate the values of 'self' and 'other'. As a craftsman Kisaburo Ogawa above highlights, 'tradition' that continues to present has been always *new* to keep up the ongoing social change and people's demand. I underline that reproduction activity of traditional craft products does not mean repeating the same thing *ad nauseam*. The metamorphic essence of tradition, in this way, became a common idea in Japanese ICH as a result of a long series of technological, visual, and figurative transformations in conjunction with history and the vicissitudes of social demand.

Chapter 3

Production of Bingata: techniques, apprenticeship and the creativity

In this chapter, I will consider the techniques of Bingata production and craftspeople's bodily engagement as a social representation of 'traditional craft technique'. This representation of tradition enables Bingata products to feature at the high end of the Japanese kimono market, and to be exhibited as objects of art. By underlining the links between techniques, materials, spatial setting (the workshop), and craftspeople and their practices, I will argue that the technical attainment of each worker and the product embodied by their experience of practice at the workshop facilitate social recognition of the Bingata technique as Intangible Cultural Heritage. Prior studies have highlighted the interrelation between the spatial setting and human experience in technical attainment (Julian and Warnier 1999, Mahias 2002, Lemonier 1992). In these works, the materiality of an object is considered not as something inherent to it but rather as existing in its 'coming-into-being' (Ingold 1992) through people's engagement with the material. Warnier's 'praxeological approach to subjectivation in a material world' (2001, 2004) is central to my analysis. Warnier sees material culture as the medium that relays human motion and is subject of 'sensory-motricity' (physical movement with bodily sensation) toward the material. Influenced by Foucault (1989), he centralises the body that governs the subject's emotion, sociality, and relation to the rest of the environment, describes as 'a technique of the self'. His praxeological approach toward material environment is that material not only mediates the body, but also drives the techniques of self. It is closely akin to phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty 1962), which highlights how bodily experience in a space develops the social meaning of the subject by relating it to the rest of the environment. Warnier stresses 'the space of power' that governs each subject's mind and motion against other subjects (Warnier 2004). Therefore, through the bodily experience of the space of power he/she elaborates his/her psychic motion. Naji also developed the phenomenological and praxeological approach to technology in her work on weaving among women in Morocco, noting how their bodily practice projects their representation of gender, desire and social status and how these representations are projected to each motion involved in weaving, including bodily positions and hand movements (Naji 2009).

As described in Chapter 1, traditional products are found throughout contemporary Japanese society and the market of traditional craft products is therefore competitive. Traditional craft products can be seen to achieve the following processes:

- involving (human) technique that the past generation utilised in local production processes;
- differentiating the purpose of the product from art objects that is mainly for decorating, and underling functional reliability utilised in daily or specific occasions;
- comprising artistry and some degree of singularity in comparison to machine-made products.

These traditional craft products should be accessible to people, while at the same time retaining the material character that is attainable only by human technique with certain length of experience of the practice. The technique is expected to deliver a certain degree of accuracy and perfection to compete with machine production. In addition, the physical appearance of the product is also considered important. In practice, all of the craftspeople known as ‘Living National Treasures’ have won awards on prominent art exhibitions. At the same time, they produce products in the competitive craft market with help from apprentices at their workshops.³⁷ By referring the market competitiveness and the artistic representation of craft products, I will explore the dual aspects (i.e. art and craft) of Japanese traditional crafts in the sense that the view that to the technological attainment and creativity of craftspeople as well as the transmission of techniques to younger generations. Given this focus, the technique of Bingata will be explored with reference to the interrelation between the bodily movement of individual craftspeople, the material environment of the workshop, the apprenticeship, and the social value of the product. I will introduce the Tamanaha Bingata workshop, where the master, currently 76-year-old Yuko Tamanaha, is a ‘Living National Treasure’ in Bingata production. During my field research, I stayed in the town of Shuri in Naha City, where the workshop is located, and observed and interviewed most of the craftspeople working there. In addition to my observations, I also practised Bingata production at a class held in the Shuri Cultural Centre under the supervision of Ms. Sachiko Yafuso (a craftswoman who

³⁷ At present, there are 120,393 people engaged in the production of traditional crafts, covering some 1,275 varieties of item (Dento-teki Kogei-hin Sangyo Shinko Kyokai 2007:22).

established and is still running tuition classes of Bingata open to ordinary people; see Chapter 2.3-3). Thus, the explanation of the technique is based in part upon my own experience of Bingata production.

3.1 Space, craftspeople and Bingata production

The present-day process of Bingata production was developed by Eiki Shiroma and became widespread due to its adoption by the kimono industry, as discussed in Chapter 2. It differs from the process used during the Kingdom's era in the following ways:

- Craftspeople select the motif and design the pattern as they wish. Previously, all designs were created by painters appointed by the court.
- The product is designed primarily for use in Japanese-style kimono (38-centimetres x 1200-centimetres) and obi (38-centimetres x 600-centimetres). Previously, Bingata was used chiefly for the Ryukyu-style kimono.
- Orders come from kimono wholesalers, mostly in Kyoto and Tokyo. Previously, orders came by Ryukyu court authority.
- Both genders participate. Previously, only men worked on Bingata.
- Some pieces are produced for art exhibitions. Previously, there was no opportunity for craftspeople to display their work as art.

Despite these differences, Bingata production retains several commonalities with the past, including the fact that the entire operation, from making stencils to fixing the applied colour, is performed within each individual workshop. This is quite unique in the Japanese kimono-fabric industry. In some parts of Japan there are similar dyeing practices that utilise stencils and dye-resist paste to transfer the patterns; however, each stage of production is performed in a different workshop. In Kyoto, for example, each workshop operates one specific process, such as making the stencil, dyeing the background colour or steaming the textile for colour fixing. Then, an agency called '*Shikkai-ya*' collects the fabric and brings it to the next workshop for further work, with this process being repeated until the product is finished. Once all the work is completed, *Shikkai-ya* brings the fabric to the wholesaler to distribute to the retailer. This system of labour division and specialisation, which is highly

oriented to the growth of output and the reduction of inventory (cf. David Ricardo 1817), reflects the classic economic theory of industrialisation. It has also been applied to the development of Japan's kimono industry since the 17th century (Koshimura 2003). In contrast to the situation in Kyoto, in Okinawa, where textile production was historically controlled by the Kingdom authority, no such system of industrialisation and merchandising developed. As a result, when produces in Okinawa joined the kimono industry in the 1970s, they evolved their own strategy for promoting local textile production by establishing the image of 'limited output' of 'genuinely handmade' attained by skilful craftspeople. The sacrifice of quantity-output in their particular production system enabled manufacturers of Bingata and other Okinawan textiles to use scarcity to market their products and thereby differentiate their products from mass-produced kimonos. However in this production system, there was a challenge to retain the balance between scarcity and quality. In order to compete with products manufactured under a system of specialisation, Okinawan craftspeople needed to perform all the techniques required at a higher level. Thus, the Bingata production system appeared to feature the multiple technical achievement within a workshop.

In order to demonstrate this point, the function of the Tamanaha workshop, including the use of utensils, appliances and apprentices, will now be discussed. From a Foucauldian perspective,³⁸ and also the phenomenological and praxeological standpoint, I will explore how these craftspeople acquire all the required techniques by repeating the same motions for decades under the labour division system.

3.1-1 The apprenticeship

"The search for mastery never ceases."

"Learning is stealing the master's secrets."

(From *Fūshikaden*, written by Zeami, quoted and interpreted by Shingleton 1989, 1998.)

The above dictums are instructions for teaching and learning written by Zeami Motokiyo (1363-1443), the founder of Japan's classical Noh theatre. Even today, the

³⁸ Primarily the theory of discipline as realised through bodily engagement in a certain material and social settings (cf. Foucault 1977)

process of learning traditional Japanese craft skills and performing arts is often described with these words, as many Japanologists have discovered during their field research.³⁹ Adopting the approach of “situated learning”, which takes apprenticeship as a fundamental model of experiential education in “authentic arenas of practice” Singleton examines Japanese craft education in depth (Singleton 1989, 1998). By examining some non-Japanese scholars’ experiences (including his own) in the workshops of weavers, mechanics, female sea-shell divers, and potters, he identifies the following fundamental learning activities:

- routine practice with the repetition of basic forms of technique;
- all apprentices start from the beginners’ level at the workshop regardless of any background education gained prior to employment therein;
- observation and imitation of the master’s technique as the principal method of learning.

Through his experience of basic repetitive practice in a pottery workshop, Singleton interprets the mental mode of craftspeople, which is only attained through tireless devotion to a technical routine. Indeed, the workshop is a ‘community of practice’, where:

sincerity, motivation, and loyalty are tested in the process of craft learning. Mastery of the technical craft skills are a goal of the educational process, but the apprentice should also absorb the professional values of the craftsman. A single-minded, whole-hearted dedication to the craft is expected. The self is submerged in the craft. Persistence in practice and application in learning is the ultimate requisite of a successful apprenticeship. Talent is to be developed through persistence, it is not considered to be inherited or innate. (Singleton 1989: 29)

Bingata production in the Tamanaha workshop is not the exception where craftspeople are expected to behave in the way as Singleton examines. In the past, the court authority afforded Bingata craftspeople a social status according to their experience: started with *Chikudun*, *Nyaa*, and the highest was *Chikudun-Pechin* (Kodama, 2005:22). However, no such system exists in contemporary craft society. Instead, craftspeople are ranked according to the length of time they have worked at their respective workshops, and thus by the degree of responsibility and technical

³⁹ See, for example, “Copying the master and stealing his secrets: talent and training in Japanese painting” (Jordan and Weston 2003), “Secret Teachings in the art of Japanese Gardens” (Slawson 1991) and also “Zeami’s performance note” (Hare (trans.) 2008).

proficiency that they have attained. For instance, novice workers always start their careers by preparing basic materials, such as making nori and dye-resistant paste or grinding the pigment with mortar. Other basic techniques undertaken by novices include filling the colour with other, higher-grade craftspeople. However, novices are expected to add only weak colours to the pattern in case they make mistakes, such as applying dye to the wrong part of the design (which can be rectified by senior practitioners through the use of a stronger colour). In this way, the extent of a worker's experience becomes an important measure of his or her attainment of the skill, as illustrated by the following words from craftspeople working in the Tamanaha workshop:

Once in a decade, at best, we do a piece where the entire process has gone really well. Basically, a piece with all lines clear and without blurring of colour in the motif. But rarely can we be perfect. Each process is equally important and everything relates to each other. Therefore, I always tell our staff to tell me straightaway when they make a mistake so that I can fix or amend it. Nobody can hide mistakes. I can tell everybody's contribution through the work. The work reveals everything.

Many people have knocked on our door to join only to leave within a month. Actually, I can tell from the beginning which ones will quit and which will last. If they last for 10 years, they can do this job forever.

(Kiyoshi Tamanaha, aged 56, 40 years' experience)

If you want to be a good craftsman, I think you should stay at a workshop for at least a decade. I cannot quite explain why it takes 10 years, but I believe this is the minimum length of time to experience all different kinds of technique.

(Osamu Ashitomi, aged 42, 16 years' experience)

I never made something like a 'masterwork' in my life. Because I am still a young boy as a craftsman! Hahaha!

(Yukyo Tamanaha, aged 73, Living National Treasure with more than 60 years' experience)

These words signify that they share a certain scale of time only exists in this community of practice. As Kiyoshi Tamanaha underlines, even with a decade of practice, they rarely create a perfect product. Osamu Ashitomi thinks a decade is bare minimum for the production of quality Bingata. Yuko's attitude to his

experience as a ‘young boy’ completely denies the limitations of the persistence of practice. They seem to testify to Zeami’s words: “*The search for mastery never ceases.*”

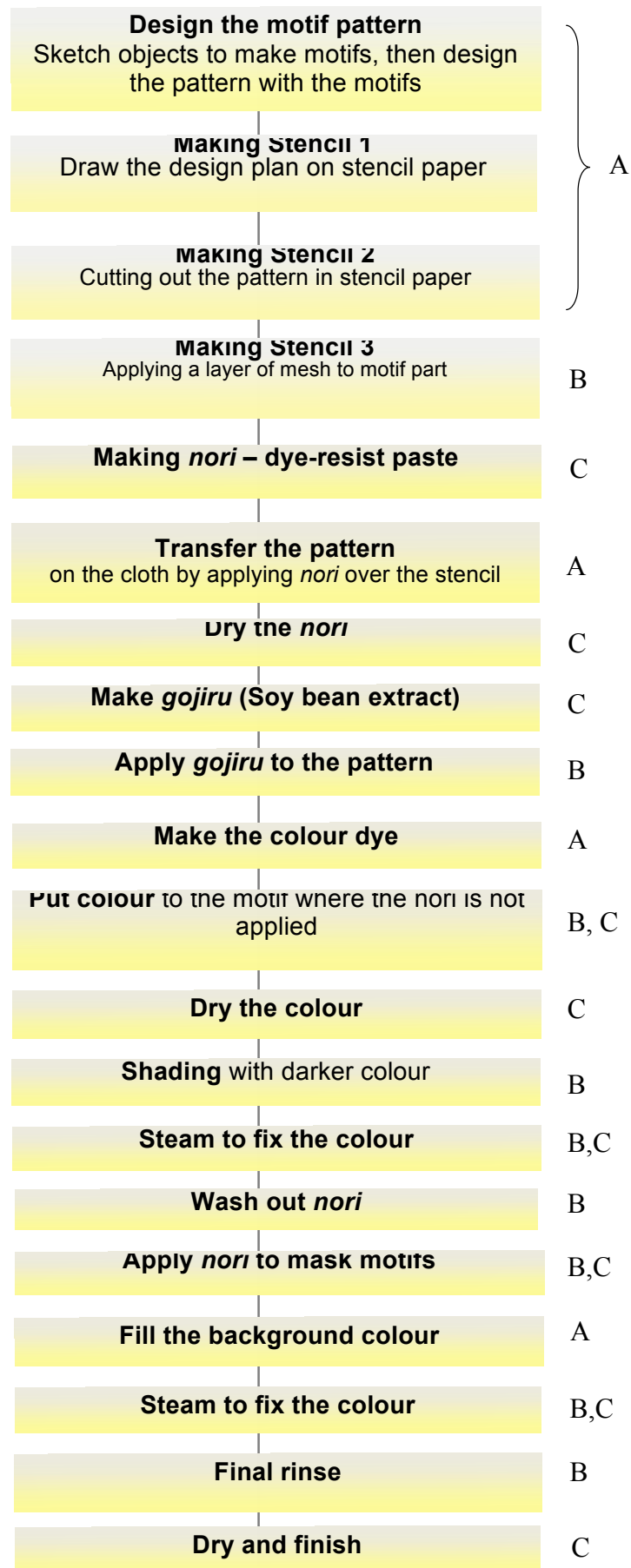
In Yuko Tamanaha’s workshop there are 12 craftspeople, including Yuko himself and his wife Michiko, who is a daughter of Eiki Shiroma. There is also Kiyoshi Tamanaha, Yuko’s cousin. These three craftspeople started out as pupils of Eiki Shiroma and have been practising Bingata for over 50 years. The other workers come from a variety of backgrounds. Some have degrees in textile dyeing from the Okinawa Prefectural Art University, others graduated from the Dyeing and Weaving Design course at Shuri High School, and a few trained at the Craft Technique Training Centre run by the prefectural government. In contrast, one or two entered without any background in textile crafts. Mr. Ohashi, the least experienced member of the workshop, travelled from Osaka in previous year and negotiated with Mr. and Mrs. Tamanaha for a job.

I formed a three-grade system to distinguish members of this workshop according to length of experience and the division of labour: level ‘A’ comprises the highly experienced; level ‘B’ denotes those with intermediate experience (of more than a decade); and level ‘C’ consists of the relative novices (see the Table 3.1). These grades correspond to the division of labour and participation throughout the entire Bingata production process as shown in Figure 3.1. It is important to note that this grading system is based entirely upon my own observation and interviews and is never applied explicitly in actual craft society.

Table 3.1: Labour force in Tamanaha Workshop as of September 2008

Grade	Name (Age)	Gender	Years of Experience	Background
A Highly Experienced	Y. Tamanaha (73)	M	50+	Living National Heritage
	M. Tamanaha (70)	F	50+	Wife of Y Tamanaha, daughter of Eiki Shiroma
	K. Tamanaha (56)	M	40+	Cousin of Yuko Tamanaha
B Intermediate	O. Ashitomi (42)	M	16	Graduate of Okinawa Art Unv.
	Taba	F	15	Introduced by the former worker
	Hokama (41)	M	14	Graduate of Okinawa Art Unv.
C Novice	Yoshikawa	F	6	Introduced through a job agency
	Taira (26)	F	5	Graduate of Craft Tech. Training Centre
	Sakukawa (21)	F	2	Graduate of textile course at Shuri High School
	Miyagi (21)	F	2	Graduate of textile course at Shuri High School
	Tamaki (21)	F	2	Graduate of textile course at Shuri High School
	Ohashi	M	1	Travelled from Osaka

Figure 3.1: Labour division throughout the Bingata production process according to experience ranking (A-C)



The labour division shown in Figure 3.1 reveals how a piece of Bingata is completed through the use of different techniques by multiple craftspeople with varied levels of experience. Bingata production is predicated on teamwork, since the numerous methods that comprise the process are closely interrelated. Whereas high-quality hand weaving is achieved through individual technique, density and the evenness of the texture, or sophisticated pottery is thrown on a single wheel, by a single pair of hands, Bingata production is very much a team effort. As Figure 3.1 makes apparent, some Bingata processes are done only by experts (A-grade), including designing the pattern, cutting the motif background, transferring the pattern to the textile, making dye, and applying background colour. These processes require extensive experience and a mastery of technique. Meanwhile, other processes, such as carefully moving the wet textile pieces to the dedicated drying space, require a different kind of perfection. Two novices (C-grade) hold the textile at each end, keeping it taut and parallel with (though not touching) the floor. Although they are novices, their work must be done without fail or applied pattern. For novice and intermediate workers, this division of labour involves several instructive elements:

- Recognising the value of one's physical, mental and temporal investment in the discipline through the outcome (i.e. the Bingata work);
- Ensuring the technique gained at the moment and supposing the next technique to practice in the future by observing the practice of higher grade craftspeople;
- Witnessing some complicated modes of movement or fecundity that are attainable only by A-grade craftspeople;
- Learning the logistics of Bingata production.

The abovementioned labour division makes clear each worker's technical achievement by placing them alongside workers of other levels. This is a 'technique of the self' (Warner, 2001:10) that is realised through interaction with others' techniques. By co-operating, communicating, comparing, and even competing, they recognise the current 'technique of the self'. Then, through routine practice, this recognition may afford each worker the emotional capacity to foresee future progress.

It is worth underlining that, as Singleton examined in different settings of apprenticeship, regardless of age or background, each craftsperson starts with C-grade work. Everyone is evaluated equally according to the length of experience. Therefore their persistence, technical attainment and emotion can be transmitted to the length of experience at the workshop space. Despite the hierarchical division of labour, everyone shares a common goal: producing a good ‘work of Tamanaha’. If we look at a finished textile sold at a retailer, we can find the stamp of ‘Tamanaha Bingata Workshop’ on one hem. From the surface of this item, it is difficult to imagine the myriad layers of craftwork that go into its creation. This attests to the efficacy of quality control at the workshop; even though the production process involves multiple techniques applied by craftspeople with varied levels of ability, it gives rise to a textile that can be sold at the top end of the kimono market. Myriad of individual craftsperson’s routine practices are materialised as a piece of work. Therefore, the work is the segmentation of ‘technique of self’. With the completion of the work, all of them share the feeling of accomplishment and pride in their workshop.

3.1-2 The workshop: everything in the right place in the right manner

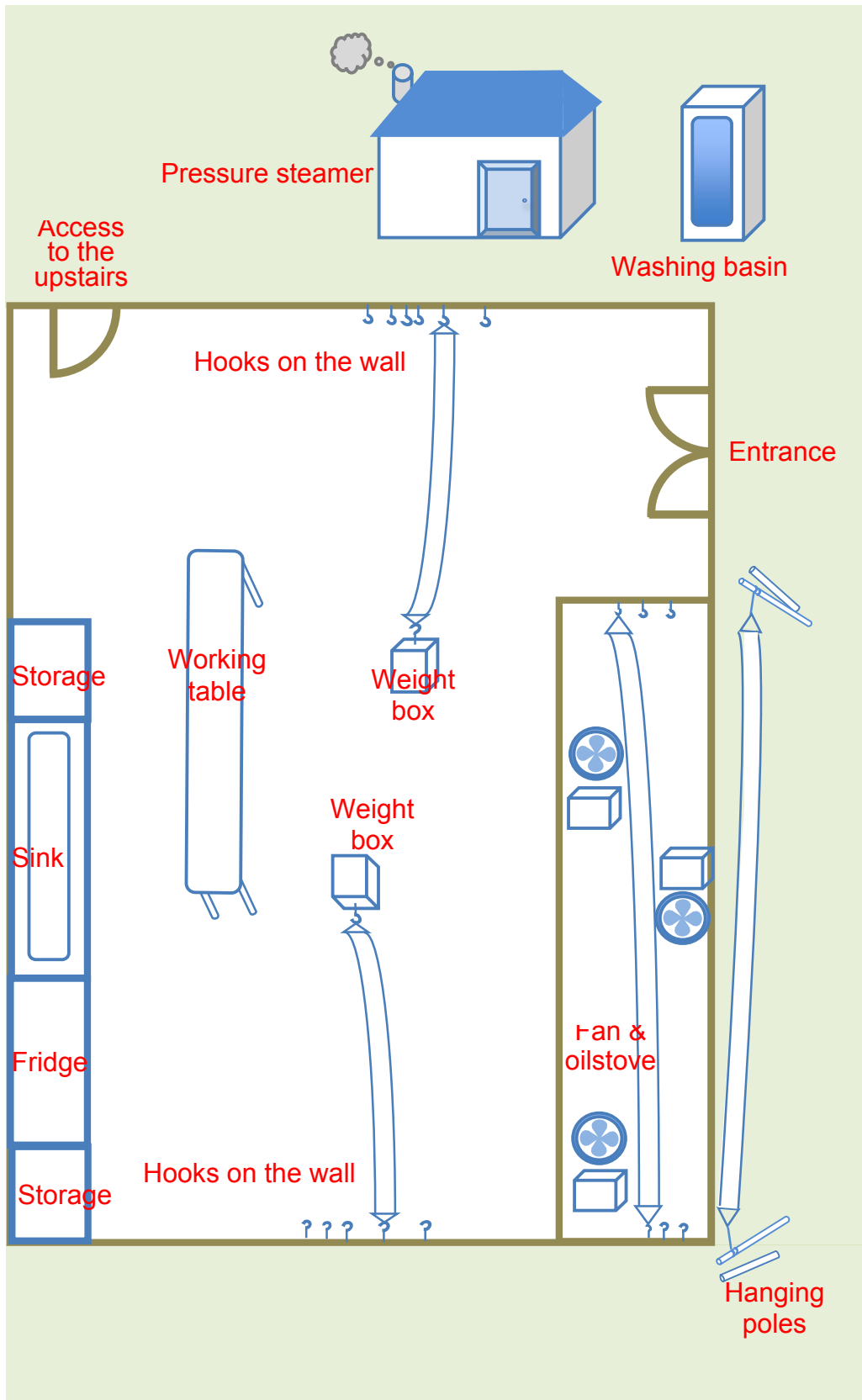
“I have been a kimono wholesaler for 40 years and I have visited workshops throughout Japan hundreds of times. In all my visits I never saw an untidy workshop producing works of Living National Treasures or similarly qualified craftspeople. From the entrance to each corner, everywhere is clean, without any visible dust. The entire space is simple and functional, arranged for making textiles and wholly free of clutter. Workers - old or young, men or women - are very polite, in modest clothing. A good job can be done in such environment. All things and all people are arranged in the right place and the right manner for one specific goal: creating a good textile.”

(Mr. Masahiro Nomura, a kimono wholesaler based in Kyoto, interviewed on 3rd October 2009)

Figure 3.2 is a rough plan of the Tamanaha workshop, located on the ground floor of the two-story home of Mr. and Mrs. Tamanaha. The workshop space is totally

separated from the living space, with access between them via a staircase. The ground level is completely dedicated to Bingata production. As in Mr. Nomura's description, this workshop is kept clean and tidy at all times. Spaces are fashioned to accommodate necessary appliances, which are arranged sparingly to maximise the efficiency of Bingata production. In the Tamanaha workshop, there are three distinct spaces: first is the outside area, where the steaming house, washing basin and hanging space are located; second is the large space inside the workshop, equipped with working tables and utensils; and third is the small space used for drying textiles as quickly as possible, which features electric fans and oil stoves. Together, these three spaces cover all stages of production.

Figure 3.2: Tamanaha workshop plan



In the larger working space, the walls at either end feature several small hooks at various heights (from around 30 to 200-centimetres). These are used to hang textiles parallel to the floor (see Figure 3.3); the hooks at higher levels are used for drying, while the lower ones are used to hold the textile while it is worked on.

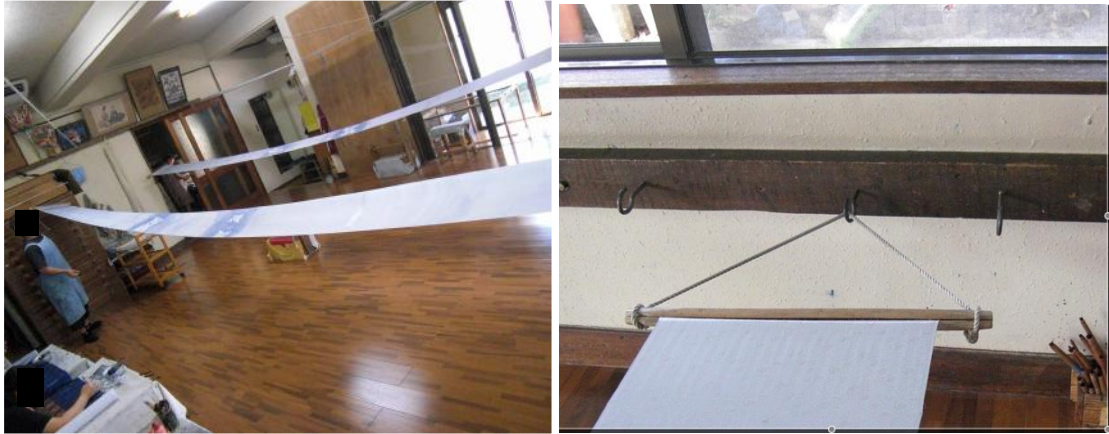


Figure 3.3 (left): Textiles are hung parallel to the floor, held taut along their lengths

Figure 3.4 (right): Hooks on the beams of the wall. The strap of *keta* (the wooden textile clip) is supported by the hook

At the workshop, textiles are hung parallel to the floor most of the time (Figure 3.3). Each narrow end is pinched with a *keta*, a long clip made of two wooden bars, one of which is lined with small needles to keep the textile from slipping. The other bar covers the needles and so closes the clip. The strap of *keta* at each end of a length of textile is supported by a hook (Figure 3.4), keeping the material taut. When the fabric is being worked on one *keta* is attached to a low hook and the other is supported by a ‘weight box’ placed an appropriate distance away from the wall. The ‘weight box’ contains a piece of lead heavy enough to hold the textile taut 25cm above the ground while craftspeople work on it seated on the floor (Figures 3.5 and 3.6). Occasionally the textile is placed upon a long heavy oak table for stability while craftspeople add some of the finer details. The fridge houses the workers’ lunch boxes as well as some wide brushes and raw materials such as rice powder (for making *nori*) and soybeans (for soy milk to mix with dyes). As Okinawa has a tropical climate, these ingredients would be ruined if not refrigerated.



Figure 3.5 (left): Weight box
Figure 3.6 (right): Working on textile



A smaller area, originally a corridor, is separated by glass sliding doors from the main working space. Wet textiles are brought here to dry straight after the pattern is transferred with *nori* (dye-resistant paste). Oil stoves and electric fans are positioned in the space to dry the hanging textiles quickly and evenly. There are seven electric fans and five oil stoves operating at the same time (see Figure 3.7). As in the main working room, there are hooks at either end of the room from which to suspend several layers of textile drying at the same time.



Figure 3.7: Textiles dried with fans and stoves in the small working space

Outside the building is a garden that has been adapted for use in Bingata production. There is an old bathtub used as a rinsing basin (Figure 3.8), which is long enough to hold a stretch of textile for soaking to remove *nori* after the pattern has been filled with colour. Lengths of steel and plastic pipe driven into the ground serve as poles

for hanging textile horizontally using *keta* at each end. After the textiles have been soaked and hung from the poles, they are wiped off and carried back to the main working space inside (see Figure 3.9).

Another important use of this outside space is steaming. There is a shed (referred to henceforth as the ‘steaming house’) containing a stainless steel pressure steamer with thick walls and a lid (3.10). It is designed specifically for steaming textiles to fix the colour. The vapour penetrates textile fibres thoroughly and evenly without forming any drops that might cause the colour to run. The steamer reaches temperatures in excess of 150 C° thanks to a powerful generator made by *Samsung*, a Korean conglomerate. The steamer can accommodate 10 rolled-up lengths of textile at any one time.



Figure 3.8: Textile is soaked in the old bathtub



Figure 3.9: Steel poles for hanging washed textile



Figure 3.10: Pressure steamer inside a small shed. The steamer is made of stainless steel, with a locking door-like lid at the front

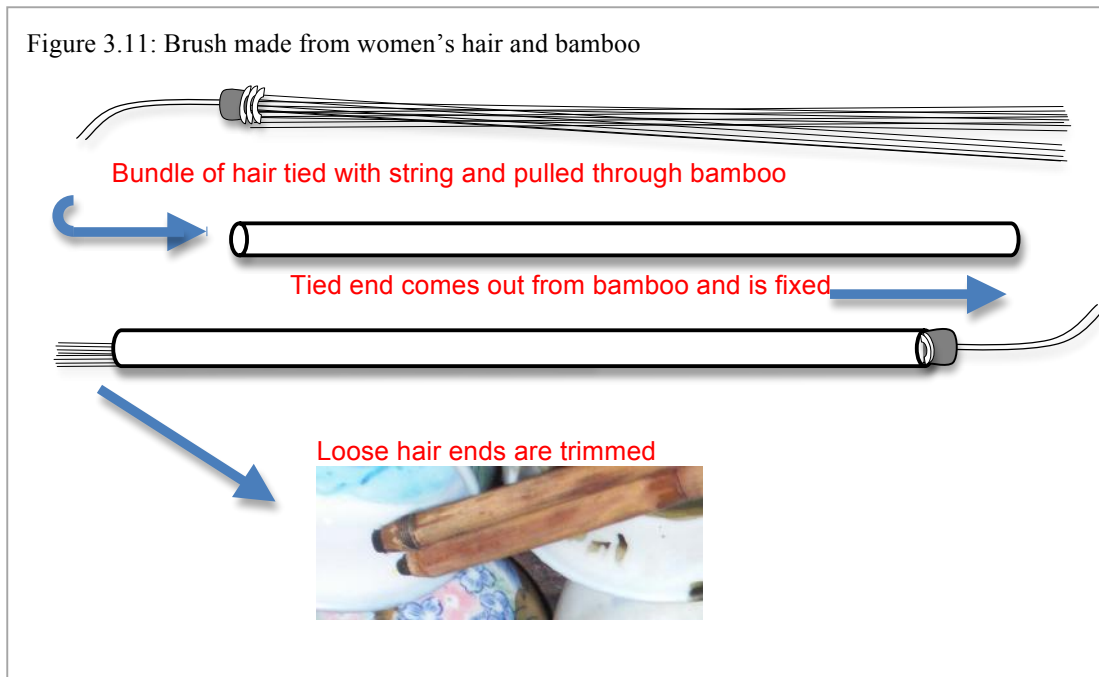
The steaming machine and the oak working table were introduced to Okinawa after the 1970s, when the region first joined the kimono market, as explained in Chapter 2.3. Apart from these two items, the main pieces of equipment, such as the bathtub, hooks, fridge, stoves, and electric fans, were not specifically designed for textile production. Rather, this paraphernalia was assembled through a process of trial and error, with miscellaneous items appropriated for the specific purpose of keeping textiles in the right condition for Bingata production.

In addition to the equipment mentioned above, there are numerous other utensils used in Bingata production. Some of these date back to the dynasty era, yet most have been imported from outside Okinawa. Traditional utensils made by craftspeople include the following:

- Fine brushes made with human hair;
- *Shīgū*, a thin knife with a curved blade for cutting stencil patterns;
- *Rukujū*, a dried tofu underlay used when cutting out stencils with *shīgū*;
- Nozzles for *nori* bags used for drawing patterns, which, following Eiki Shiroma, are made from bullet cartridges (see Chapter 2.2).

The small brushes for applying colour are made with women's hair, as it is finer than that of men or animals and therefore more suitable for working powdered pigment into textile fibres. The hair is sourced from local hair salons or from family members. To make the brushes, a bundle about 0.7cm in diameter and 25cm in length is pulled through a thin bamboo cane. Then, the opening of bamboo is sealed with glue and

thread to fix the hair ends in place. Finally, the hairs are trimmed and the brush is ready for use (see Figure 3.11).



The *shigû* knife is made by affixing a thin curved blade to the end of a bamboo stick (Figure 3.12). The blade tapers towards the point and is curved like a bird's beak, which is attributable to the specific technique of cutting the stencil; rather than passing the knife along the outline of the motif, a Bingata maker pinks (pierces) the stencil many times then traces the outline through the holes. This allows a detailed and dense pattern to be cut and makes curves more accurate.



Figure 3.12: The curved and pointed blade of *Shigû* knife

Rukujû underlay, used when cutting motifs into a stencil, is made from dried tofu (Figure 3.13). Large pieces of raw tofu are left outside for three months until they dry out. Once this is done, the surface of these hard, dense lumps can be worked with a plane⁴⁰ until smooth, producing something that looks like a big bar of soap. *Rukujû* is prepared every December when the weather is cool and dry. When making Bingata,

⁴⁰ A plane is a carpentry tool used for smoothing wooden surfaces.

it is placed underneath the stencil paper before pinking along the outline of the motif with a *shigû*. Today, some craftspeople choose to use rubber underlay, but many continue to use *rukujû* for a number of practical reasons. For a start, the dense but smooth texture of dried tofu gives a clean motion to the *shigû*, requiring less force than with a rubber underlay. In addition, soy oil given off by *rukujû* is said to protect the knife from rusting. And moreover, once the surface of *rukujû* becomes marked by the poking and slicing of the knife, it can be polished off with a plane and reused again and again.

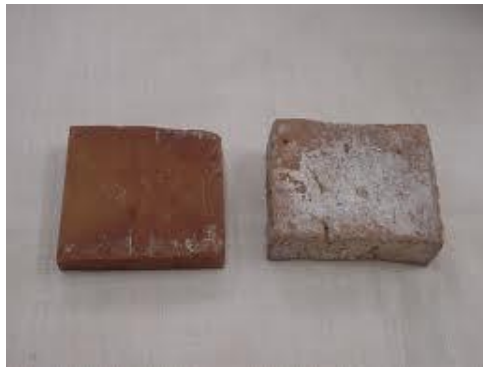


Figure 3.13: *Rukujû* (dried tofu) (right) is polished with a plane until smooth and ready for use (left)

Some utensils used in textile dyeing were introduced to Okinawa from outside the region. *Shinshi*, for example, are bamboo sticks with needle ends (Figure 3.14) used to hold textiles taut across their widths. Each *shinshi* is a little longer than the textile is wide, so when inserted across a stretch of material by piercing it at opposite edges, a slight bend in bamboo tenses the textile. *Shinshi* are inserted at regular intervals along the stretch of textile, keeping it taut (Figure 3.15). There are a variety of *shinshi* with different lengths and thicknesses for different textiles.

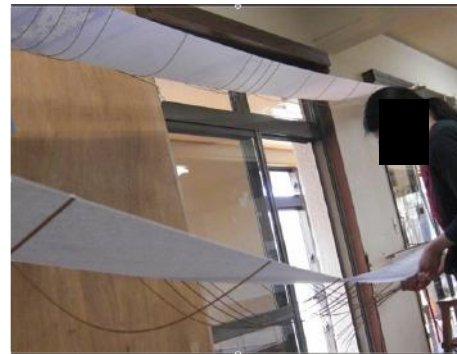


Figure 3.14 (left): *Shinshi* (bamboo sticks with needle ends)

Figure 3.15 (right): Inserting *shinshi* to tense textile across its width

There are various other items and utensils used in the production of Bingata (Figures 3.16 - 3.19), including the following:

- A multitude of white ceramic teacups for distributing dyes to each worker. (The white ceramic ensures subtle differences in colour development are easily visible.)
- Mortar and pestle for grinding particles of powdered mineral colour dye.
- Brushes made of horsehair for initial application of colour to the pattern.
- Cloths (usually old face towels) for wiping off excess dye from brushes.
- Plastic containers with lids for soaking textiles in an enzyme solution to remove *nori* paste. These would originally have been domestic fabric storage boxes.
- Brooms and dustpans for keeping the floor clean.



Figure 3.16: Ceramic tea cups, mortars and pestles, together with many set of brushes



Figure 3.17: Pieces of cloth used to remove excess dye from brushes



Figure 3.18 (left): Plastic container for soaking works

Figure 3.19 (right): Workers sweeping the floor at the end of a working day



Regardless of their original purpose, all of the items in the workshop have been carefully selected and positioned for the single purpose of Bingata production. Most Bingata workshops are equipped with these same items and appliances. According to my observations, however, the type of equipment varies depending on the size of the workshop and the number of craftspeople working there. For example, small workshops do not use weight boxes but instead lay out textiles on a table for filling in colours, thus limiting output to the size of the working table. In larger workshops like Tamanaha's, in contrast, weight boxes enable colours to be filled while the working table is used for other purposes, thereby maximising production. In other large workshops, similar contraptions are found. Thus, we see how the material environment of workshops comes to reflect craftspeople's quest for efficiency and perfection and their efforts to minimise uncertain or unpredictable conditions during production.

3.2 The techniques of Bingata: self and other

Bingata production involves numerous processes and a wide variety of techniques. At the Tamanaha workshop, as mentioned previously, each worker assumes a different role according to his or her experience. This division of labour reflects the relative complexity of each technique. Primary production of Bingata requires two different processes: 1) designing the pattern to identify the work as Bingata; and 2) transferring the pattern onto the textile. At the Tamanaha workshop, the process of designing the pattern and making the stencil is done exclusively by Yuko, the Living National Treasure. The rest of processes required to transfer the pattern are performed by the other workers. In this section, I will examine the roles of these craftspeople according to their grades (A-C) (see Chapter 3.1-1) with the aim of revealing the correlation between techniques.

3.2-1 Roles of novice craftspeople (C grade)

Novice workers are responsible for the preparation of basic materials and are also involved in some simple production techniques. There are six workers in this grade and all have more or less the same roles.

- ***Noritaki*: preparing *nori*, dye-resist paste**

To make *nori*, workers put powdered rice and powdered rice bran into a pan and boil them with water, stirring continuously until they form a hard, gooey paste. This is then placed into a bowl and kneaded until it becomes smooth like dough, after which it is steamed for 50 minutes. Next, the workers place the dough in a large bowl and beat it repeatedly with wooden sticks, which introduces air to the mixture and causes its texture to become smooth. Finally, they add small amount of blue acrylic colour so that they can see the applied pattern of this *nori* over the white textile. The workers can make subtle variations to the hardness or softness of the *nori* by slightly changing the ratio of powdered rice to rice bran depending on the weather that day. In the humid summer months, for example, they add more powdered bran with a pinch of lime, which prevents the *nori* from getting too soft and thus causing the pattern to melt on the fabric after it is

applied. In winter, meanwhile, it is customary to add a glue made of seaweed and glycerine to maintain moisture. Without these, the applied pattern will crack as the textile when the textile is dried. If colour is applied to such cracked pattern, the dye will run into the crack and ruin the detailed motif. Although these failures rarely happen at Tamanaha's, if they do, workers will not proceed to the next stage but instead will wash the textile in water before repeating the entire process.



3.20 (left): Steamed *nori* ready to be beaten
3.21 (right): *nori* mixed with blue acryl colour

- **Making *gojiru***

Gojiru is a soymilk used for 1) the *Gobiki* process and 2) mixing with pigments and other dyestuffs to make dye. *Gobiki* involves applying a thin layer of *gojiru* over the patterned textile and allowing it dry before filling the colour on the motif. This makes it easier to fill the colour without it running into the wrong place. Workers soak a cup of soybeans in water for a night, then drain them and place them into an earthenware mortar, where they are ground with a wooden stick (Figure 3.22). After a short while, a smooth paste is formed. This is placed into a cotton bag and squeezed over a bowl until a thick liquid comes out. (In some workshops, the electric blender has replaced the wooden stick in this process; at Tamanaha's, however, the traditional method is preferred. These novice workers say using earthenware mortar makes the paste much stickier, so that the soybean extract becomes adhesive to the fibre of the textile.)

Apart from performing these tasks, novice workers play a part in the steaming process, loading the rolled-up textiles into the steaming machine and unloading

them after an hour (Figure 3.23). They are also expected to wash up used utensils, sweep the floor to maintain their workshop clean.



Figure 3.22: grinding soaked soya beans with a wooden stick to make *gojiru*



Figure 3.23: unloading the textile from the steaming machine

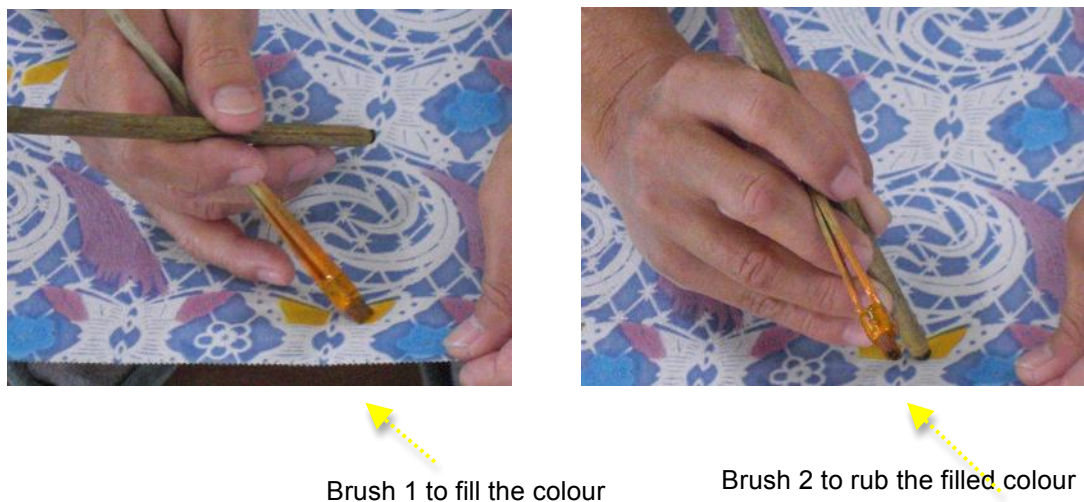
Novice workers participate in some processes that are more closely related to pattern transferring. The following two practices involve cooperation by craftspeople of every skill level.

- ***Irozuri*: applying the colour to the motif**

Irozuri refers to process of inscribing the dye by applying it to an area of the motif and rubbing it with two different types of brushes. One brush is made from horsehair and has a wide, flat edge (Brush 1, Figure 3.24), while the other is made from women's hair and has a thin, round edge (Brush 2, Figure 3.25). Craftspeople of all grades hold these two brushes in one hand, crossed one on top of the other and with the heads facing away from the holder. The thinner brush (Brush 2) is held between the thumb and forefinger, while the thicker one (Brush 1) rests underneath it. Craftspeople begin by dipping Brush 1 into the prepared colour and carefully applying this to the correct parts of the motif.

Then, they change the angle of their hand to Brush 2 and start to rub the part with it. As the colour is made of powdered mineral, the finer hair of this second brush is more suitable for working the minute particles of pigment deep into the fibres. As these craftspeople rub the filled colour with the thinner brush, they move the tip in small, circular motions, repeating this delicate rhythm so that the particles are worked evenly into the fibre.

Figure 3.24 (left) and Figure 3.25 (right): The method for holding two brushes and processing irozuri



In the first movement (filling the colour), craftspeople have to do it accurately on the part of the motif by controlling the stroke of Brush 1. For the second movement (rubbing), if they rub too weakly, the powdered dye may not get deep enough into the fibre and the motif will disappear when the nori is washed out. However, rubbing too strongly will damage the fabric.

For *irozuri*, multiple craftspeople work on the textile simultaneously, with the fabric stretched between the lowest hooks so that workers can sit cross-legged on the floor (a posture known as *seiza*). Some put a thin cushion underneath themselves to make the arrangement more comfortable. If anybody is not used to *seiza*, his or her legs will soon become numb from the weight of the rest of the body. With training, however, it is possible to maintain *seiza* for many hours. During *irozuri*, Kiyoshi Tamakana (A Grade) allocates teacups of different coloured dyes to novices and intermediates respectively. Novices are always given the lighter or weaker colours, such as pink, light purple and yellow, while

intermediates work with stronger colours, such as vermillion, indigo and ink-colour. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, this is in effect a risk management strategy; if a novice were to make a misplaced stroke, it could be easily covered up with a stronger colour. The reverse would be impossible, and hence the more skilful workers are charged with applying the stronger colours. Each will persist with a single colour throughout one piece of textile to the end to maintain the evenness of application. Several workers sit across the textile and keep processing on their own parts. This allows several colours to be filled simultaneously without interrupting the other craftspeople (Figures 3.25 and 3.26).

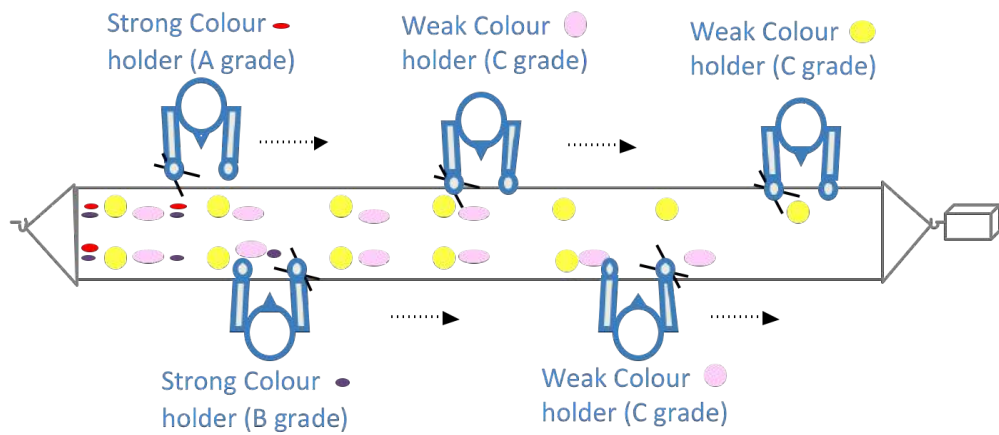


Figure 3.25: allocation of colours according to the grade of craftspeople



Figure 3.26: Several workers applying different colours simultaneously

- ***Norifuse: Covering the motifs with nori***

Once the *irozuri* and *kumadori* (adding shading to some parts of the motif) are completed, the colour dye will be fixed in the steaming machine and then the pattern applied with *nori* will be removed to make motif appear on the textile. Then these novice craftspeople apply *nori* to certain parts to prepare for *Jizome* (applying the background colour). Using a *nori* bag, they mask certain parts of the motif with *norifuse* to prevent background colour from affecting them when it is applied. Applying *norifuse* works much like decorating a cake, with the *nori* being placed into a bag and then squeezed out through a small nozzle (Figure 3.27). First, these novice craftspeople draw the outline of motif, then they spread it using their fingers. They use a variety of nozzles with holes of different diameters depending on the size of the motifs. If the part to be masked is very small and detailed, workers may use toothpicks to apply the *nori*.



Figure 3.27: Norifuse process

These duties, especially the preparation of materials and tidying up the workshop, seem to be little more than ‘chores’ (MacKenzie 1991:60) when compared to the rest of the production process, which involves more complicated techniques. However, these novice workers do not consider them as such. They know that without proper preparation and maintenance, no single Bingata textile will come out properly. These basic works are closely linked to the other processes and ultimately influence the entire outcome. For instance, after many years’ experience of making nori, they will likely have specialist knowledge regarding the ideal composition of the mixture. Their movements are continuously monitored by other experienced craftspeople: how much water should they boil, how long should they steam, how long should they beat the dough, and so on. By using their physical force against the material, by touching and feeling the texture of the material repeatedly, novice workers learn about the best condition of the material to which the next stage of technique is invested. Compared to the rest of processes, which I will introduce below, these processes are undertaken in a much more controlled condition, involving the supervision of the higher-grade craftspeople, and hence the chances of failure in the total process of Bingata production are minimised.

3.2-2 Roles of intermediate craftspeople (Grade B)

There are three intermediate craftspeople in the Tamanaha workshop. Their roles require a certain accuracy of the movement. Although their length of experiences

at Tamanaha workshop do not vary greatly, they assume different roles in the workshop.

- ***Shabari: attaching a mesh layer over the patterned stencil***

Yuko makes stencils by tracing the design of the desired pattern onto stencil paper, adding joints between the motifs, and then carefully cutting away the background sections (see the description of *Kataoki* mentioned later and in 3.3). Following this, a thin nylon mesh cloth is affixed to the wrong side of the stencil by brushing on lacquer. This process, known as *shabari*, is intended to make the motif separate from the frame by removing the joints and also to fortify the stencil. It is usually carried out by Mr. Ashitomi (16 years' experience). *Shabari* requires good brush control in order to attach the mesh to the stencil paper, and the entire work should be done very quickly (i.e. before the lacquer sets). Mr. Ashitomi passes the brush slowly and evenly over the stencil to remove the air bubble between the two layers (see Figure 3.28). He also knows the ideal strength for the liquid lacquer, which he modifies using small amounts of thinner. If the lacquer is too strong, it will dry too quickly to complete the air removal operation; if it is too thin, the mesh will not adhere and the motif will come off when the joints are removed. Once the lacquer sets, Yuko removes the joints, taking care not to damage the line of motifs or the mesh.

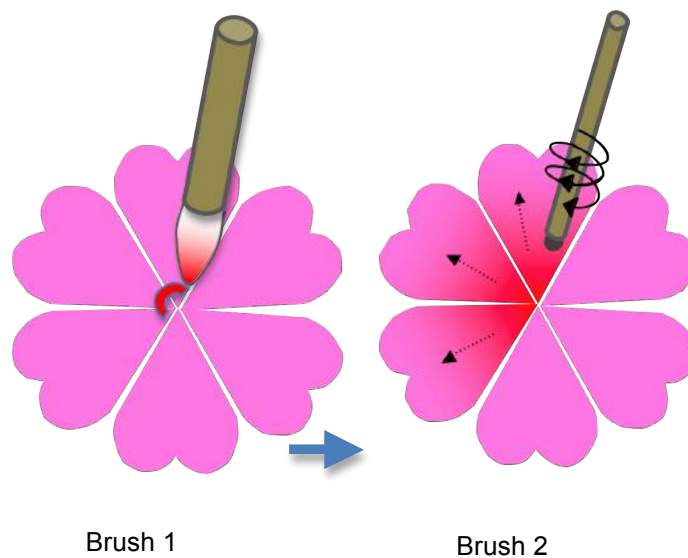


Figure 3.28: Mr. Ashitomi spreading lacquer over the mesh to attach it to the stencil

- ***Kumadori*: applying shading effect to the motif**

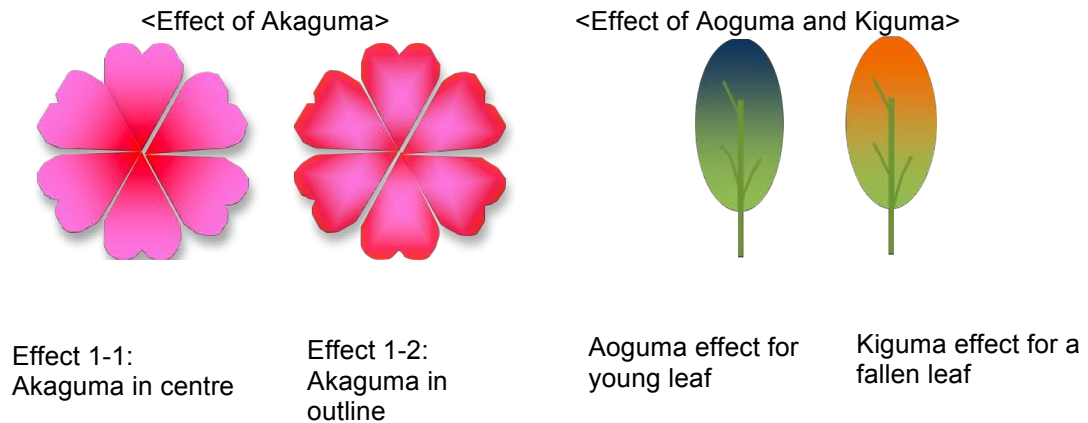
Kumadori is the process of adding a shading effect to the motif. After *irozuri* is completed, they add a tiny hint of darker or stronger colour on certain part of the motif and rub it in to make a gradation (*kuma*); this gives the motifs a three-dimensional effect. As in *irozuri* (discussed previously), two different brushes are held in the same hand: one for adding the colour and the other for spreading it. For *kumadori*, however, much thinner brushes are used, since the gradation occupies a much smaller area of the motif (see Figure 3.29).

Figure 3.29: *Kumadori* using two brushes



The combination of colours and the ratio of *kuma* to the rest of the motif are different in each work. For instance, Effect 1-1 in Figure 3.30 is achieved by adding red *kuma* (known as *Akaguma*) to the centre of a pink flower motif and spreading this outwards. It creates depth in the centre of the flower. In contrast, applying *kuma* from the outside of the motif towards the centre (Effect 1-2) looks different from the Effect 1. Similarly, when the design of a leaf motif look young and fresh, they apply a deep blue *kuma* (known as *Aoguma*) to some part of the motif (*aoguma* Effect 1 in Figure 3.30), while for a more autumnal look, a deep yellow *kuma* (*Kiguma* effect) is used.

Figure 3. 30: Varieties of *kumadori*



Generally speaking, *kuma* should be applied evenly to each section of motif throughout the whole textile. If the *kuma* is not realised consistently, the textile will look messy and the process will be considered a failure. Therefore, more delicate and precise hand movements are required for *kumadori* than for *irozuri*. *Kumadori* is usually undertaken at the table (i.e. where the textile can be laid out flat) and is never done while seated on the floor. According to a wholesaler, Tamanaha's *kumadori* has a reputation for being as perfect as that produced by machine; throughout the entire pattern, which comprises hundreds of motifs, one finds the same ratio of gradation.

- ***Mizumoto: washing out nori***

After the steaming, novice workers soak the textile in a rise basin for couple of hours to remove the applied *nori* (Figure 3.31). Then, placing the textile on a veneer board over the bathtub, they hose down the material to remove the *nori*. *Mizumoto* (as this process is known) is usually completed by Mr. Ashitomi. Holding the hose at a distance to increase the water pressure, he sprays from side to side thoroughly and evenly while *nori* is coming out (Figure 3.32). Since he is tall, he is able hold the hose in one hand while grasping the textile with the other. After washing out the *nori*, he loads the textile into a plastic container filled with an enzyme solution and leaves it for 30 minutes. The enzymes break down the proteins found in *nori* and *gojiru* that remain on the fibres. All the time he deals the textile very carefully so that he doesn't scratch the motif and ruin it.



Figure 3.31 (left): soaked textiles ready for mizumoto
Figure 3.32 (right): spraying water to remove nori

- **Finishing: minor amendments and stamping the sign of Tamanaha**

Once the entire process is completed, Ms. Taba rolls up the textile and then slowly uncoils it, checking every detail of the pattern carefully as she goes. Sometimes one finds blurred lines or parts of the motif that are missing for some reason, such as nori getting into wrong area while the pattern is being transferred or irozuri not being performed thoroughly. By moving her eyes systematically across the textile, Ms. Taba checks the entire pattern of detailed motifs. When she spots imperfect parts, she amends them by drawing lines (of 1mm or less) with dye of the same colour using a toothpick attached to the edge of a bamboo stick (Figure 3.33). Yuko Tamanaha invented this drawing stick for this process. Michiko describes this process as ‘non-official’ or secret, since the pattern is supposed to be transferred primarily by stencil and nori according to the regulations. A few Bingata workshops engage in this practice. It could be seen as cheating or disloyalty to the ‘traditional mode of production’, which dictates that stencils be used to transfer the pattern. However at the same time, it should be noted that this technique is only effective to a good work got a few amendable failures of lines in hundreds of motifs on a textile of up to 12 meters in length. When I visited a kimono retailer, I identified a number of items produced by other workshops that had unclear lines in throughout the entire length of the pattern. Such imperfections are derived from unsuccessful pattern application or

bad quality nori making. For these works, it would be impossible to amend all the motif outlines by hand without in effect redrawing the entire pattern, an unfeasibly arduous process.



Figure 3.33: drawing line with a toothpick to make the motif perfect



Figure 3.34: the stamp of “Tamanaha’s Bingata”

According to Ms. Taba, “*Yuko-sensei’s patterns are always very elaborate and complicated. Lots of little details are accommodated in such small motifs and they are arranged in complicated orders as a pattern. Therefore, I’m paying a big attention from a line to a dot.*” This role of minor amendment can be only achieved by the experienced workers who have a good knowledge of the patterns that Mr. Yuko Tamanaha (Yuko-sensei) creates. After many years’ experience of checking the patterns carefully, Ms. Taba might have established the image of Yuko’s work. When every part has been examined, she stamps the sign of “Tamanaha’s Bingata” (Figure 3.34) on the edge of the textile in vermillion ink. This red stamp signifies that the work is complete and ready to be sent to wholesalers. This process is the judgement of the work to be perfect enough as a product or not. It is determined by her visual definition of “Tamanaha’s Bingata” gained through her fifteen years’ experience there.

3.2-3 Roles for highly experienced craftspeople (Grade-A)

As Yuko and Michiko are both over 70 they do not spend all their time at the workshop with other workers; Michiko often looks after her grandchildren during the day, while Yuko might be designing pieces upstairs or at his atelier in Yomitan City (located in the centre of Okinawa Island, north of Naha City). Occasionally, they come down to the workshop to check that everything's running smoothly. At all other times, though, the grade-A tasks (except *kataoki*) are performed by Kiyoshi Tamanaha (age 56), the youngest among these highly experienced craftspeople in this workshop.

- ***Kataoki*: transferring pattern onto the textile by spreading nori over the *katagami* (patterned stencil)**

Kataoki is one of the most complicated techniques in Bingata production, requiring considerable precision in the bodily movements of the practitioner. In the Tamanaha workshop, the job is usually done by Mrs. Michiko Tamanaha, while all the other staff are required to move in certain ways in order to support her. It is usually undertaken in the morning of a fine day, when the bright sunlight improves visibility and helps the pattern to dry more quickly.

- **Preparation-Logistics**

Prior to *kataoki*, various preparatory procedures are carried out, including *noritaki*. While some workers (C grade) beat the nori, others clear the floor or prepare the textiles that are due to receive the pattern, attaching *keta* at either end to stretch the textile lengthwise. They then place a strip of textile on the table in such a way that one long side of it lines up precisely with the edge of the table. This helps ensure that the *katagami* is placed at the right angle. Mr. Homaka (B level) prepares the *katagami* and other utensils, such as the spatula (a square piece of plastic, originally it was the part of broken underlay used for a notebook), then proceeds to scoop the right amount of *nori* onto a wooden dish, which he passes on to Michiko. When everything seems ready, Michiko carefully checks the width of the textile with a ruler, leaving a tiny pencil mark at the point where the pattern will be applied to the textile.

- **Processing *kataoki***

When everything is ready, Michiko carefully places the *katagami* on top of the textile such that the top and bottom edges of the frame run exactly parallel to the long sides of the material. She then scoops up some *nori* with the spatula and, holding the frame of the *katagami* with her left hand and the spatula with her right, makes vertical strokes to the side of the textile from top to bottom. She puts pressure on her four fingers while moving the spatula downwards so that the *nori* is spread evenly all over the frame. Now the *katagami* is scored by several vertical stroke marks. Thus, after removing any extra *nori* from the spatula, Michiko sweeps the tool from top to bottom over these existing lines, again putting pressure on her four fingers. She then changes the angle of the spatula, using her thumb to move it upwards in a further curved movement. By repeating these overlapping strokes, it is possible to spread the *nori* evenly over the *katagami* without leaving a single trace.



Figure 3.35 (left): first vertical stroke

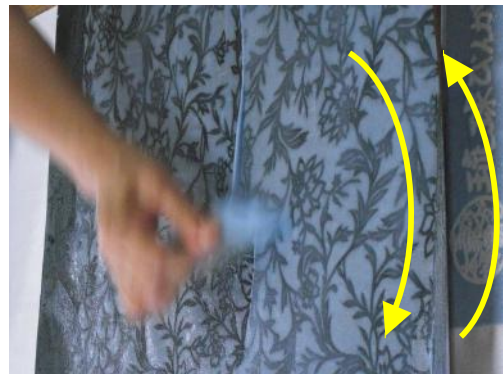


Figure 3.36 (right): further strokes for spreading nori more evenly

Once the first application is finished, Michiko carefully removes the *katagami* from the textile by lifting it up from left to right; now the pattern appears on the edge of the textile. Then she applies it again right alongside the first application. In order to make the pattern run smoothly throughout the textile, the *katagami* must be placed as accurately as possible, with no gap left between successive applications. However, as the pattern applied previously will still be wet, the subsequent application must be conducted without touching the former. By lifting up the left side of the *katagami* frame with her left hand and holding the rest with her right, Michiko is able to place it carefully from top to the end of the border between the two patterns (see Figures 3.37 and 3.38).

Now the *katagami* is positioned precisely next to the first application without the border between the applied pattern and the rest of the blank part. Michiko then starts to spread *nori* in the same way as in the first application. She repeats this three or four times, then hands the *katagami* to Mr. Hokama for washing in the sink. A brush is used to remove the *nori* from the mesh of the detailed motifs, as any build up in these areas will reduce the quality of subsequent applications. Once the *katagami* has been cleaned, Mr. Hokama wipes it carefully before handing it back to Michiko to repeat the process.

Figure 3.37: Attempting to place *katagami* right next to the previous application



No gap between the two different surfaces



Figure 3.38: A successful placement of *katagami*

To transfer the pattern over the 12-metre length of textile used for kimono, Michiko applies 22 times with a single *katagami* and takes her 25 minutes to complete. Throughout the application, she maintains the same pressure on the spatula, the same rhythm and the same posture so that all of the applications are exactly even.

In my experience during Bingata class, just spreading the *nori* proved to be very difficult, and it was almost impossible to remove any stroke marks made by the spatula. If the pressure is too strong when the *nori* is spread, the spatula can scratch the *katagami* and ruin the pattern; if it's too weak, the layer of *nori* will be too thick, and the lines won't set when the *katagami* is removed, thus ruining the detailed pattern. Hokama describes her movement as follows:

“If you see the way Michiko-sensei does it, kataoki looks quite easy. [Because she moves so smoothly and rhythmical.] But in reality, it is very difficult. It is impossible for me to do it in the same way as her.”

As Michiko performs *kataoki*, all the other staff follow her movements closely and are ready to support her. Mr. Hokama, for example, hands her the wooden plate with the right amount of *nori* at exactly the right time. In a similar vein, once Michiko comes to the end of the working table (which is half the length of one piece of textile), other workers move in to carefully slide the textile away and hang it then the remaining part will be processed. While Michiko

works on the other half of the textile, the other craftspeople start to fill in the tiny gaps between the applied patterns with a thin brush and nori to make it perfectly seamless (Figures 3.39 and 3.40).



Figure 3.39 (left): Staff making minor amendments



Figure 3.40 (right): Filling the gap between the two application with nori

If craftspeople fail to place the *katagami* precisely parallel to the side of the textile, the pattern won't be applied precisely. Michiko told me how difficult this is to achieve:

“[I]f people find it too hard to place the katagami right next to each other, they use marking pins [pins placed vertically into the textile along the borderline between the wet and dry sides of the pattern to assist with positioning the katagami. The line of pins prevents the frame of the katagami from touching the wet part.] But it takes time and interrupts the process so I don't use them. However, anyway, it is done by human beings, so some errors are unavoidable. I cannot do it perfectly. Each time I do kataoki, I became a bit nervous.”

During my fieldwork, I witnessed marking pins in use at a number of other workshops. Furthermore, these craftspeople of other workshops spread the *nori* over the table to adhere the textile to the table, or else use double-stick tape for this purpose. Sticky table with spread *nori* is very efficient since it prevents the three layers - table, textile, and *katagami* - from moving slightly with the

movement of spatula. However, Michiko never uses either of these methods; instead, she keeps placing *katagami* precisely at her first attempt, repeating this process over 20 times.

Once all the application has been done, two staff members (C grade) carefully move the wet textile by holding it by both ends (i.e. keeping it horizontal) and re-hanging it, this time at a higher level, using the wall hooks and the portable weight. Then they put *shinshi* widthways on the other side of the patterned as quickly as possible without touching the surface to keep the work flat. Having done this, they move the textile over to the small working room, hang it horizontally and taut along its length, and leave it to dry above the oil stoves and fans. Everything is done rapidly but with extreme care, and all movements are synchronised yet silent.

- ***Gobiki: applying a thin layer of gojiru liquid***

Once the transferred pattern has dried, the workers apply a liquid made of *gojiru* to the textile. Kiyoshi makes a mixture of *gojiru*, *gloiopeltis* (a glue made from seaweed) and water. *Gobiki* is a process to make *irozuri* easier. By applying a base layer of protein (in the form of soy milk) and seaweed glue over the motifs and allowing it dry, it makes *irozuri* easier, since it prevents the dyes from running into each other and becoming blurred.

Other craftspeople outside from Tamanaha say the ratio of *gojiru* to water is usually around 1:3, though this may vary depending on the material and the types of textiles. If it is made from cotton, hemp, and other plant fibres then a higher percentage of *gojiru* is required, since these absorb much more water than other types of material. In contrast, if it is a close-woven textile, such as silk, less *gojiru* is needed. Therefore, once he prepares the liquid, Kiyoshi always tests it on the edge of the textile before proceeding. If it is too strong, it prevents even the colour dye from getting into the textile and the entire colour will be weakly applied. If the reverse is true, however, the liquid colour dye spreads when it is filled.

Once the liquid is ready, Kiyoshi starts to apply *gojiru* over the whole patterned area with a wide brush. He moves the brush one arm's length to his right, then repeats the motion to his left, moving gradually downwards until the whole side is covered. Having done this, he turns the textile over and applies more *gojiru* to the other side, moving quickly to ensure that the other part does not dry in order to maintain the evenness of the layer. All the while, he puts the pressure on the brush, especially for the patterned side, to make sure that *gojiru* gets into every detail of the motifs. There is no fixed composition for the liquid; Kiyoshi controls it for each material, which requires extensive knowledge of the characteristics of each fabric.

- ***Irozukuri*: Making liquid dye**

Irozukuri is also carried out by Kiyoshi Tamanaha. Table 3.2 is an example of colour variation for Bingata, which provides a broad idea of the variety, names, and ratio of pigments used for each colour. If the work is brand new, Yuko, Michiko, and Kiyoshi will discuss it by referring the draft that was made by Yuko. Then Kiyoshi decides the best colour according to their opinions.

First of making colour dye, he puts a tiny scoop of powdered pigment for the base colour (the highest amount ratio in colour combination) into a cup and mixes this with some *gojiru* and binder (a liquid that makes the colour dye both thinner and longer lasting than water). After this, he adds minute amounts of the other pigments and mixes these in, repeating this process until the colour, which he tests on a piece of white cloth, is just right. Once this is done, Kiyoshi tries the dye on the textile to be used for the current piece, since the sharpness, brightness, and darkness of the colour can vary according to the fabric. Then he hands cups of each colour to the other workers according to their experience.

Table 3.2: Colour guide of Bingata (provided by Yafuso Bingata Workshop 2005)

Colour	Tone	Name (translation)	Ratio amount for blending		
			50-30%	40-20%	10% or below
Red	Vermilion	<i>Shu</i>	Crimson+ Cochineal		Orpiment
Pink	Pink	<i>Momo</i> (peach)	Crimson	Seashell Calcium	
	Rose	<i>Buki</i> (general name of flower petal)	Cochineal/ Crimson	Seashell Calcium	Ultramarine
Purple	Deep	<i>Kikyo</i> (bell flower)	Crimson		Indigo+Ink
	Mild	<i>Fuji</i> (wisteria)	Crimson	Seashell Calcium	Ultramarine
	Dark	<i>Kikyō-buni</i> (bell flower stem)	Crimson+Cochineal	Indigo	Ink
	Red	<i>Murasaki</i> (purple)	Crimson+Cochineal		Indigo
Yellow	Bright	<i>Kiuro</i> (yellow)	Orpiment		Crimson
	Orangish	<i>Ochiba</i> (fallen leaves)	Orpiment	Crimson	
	Dark	<i>Kuchiba</i> (leaves to decay)	Orpiment	Crimson	Ink
Green	Deep	<i>Osa</i> (seaweed)	Orpiment	Indigo	
	Light	<i>Wasabi</i> (green horse radish)	Orpiment	Ultramarine	Indigo
Blue	Light	<i>Mizuiro</i> (colour of water)	Ultramarine	Seashell Calcium	
	Indigo	<i>Ai</i> (indigo)	Ingigo		
	Light Indigo	<i>Tan-ai</i> (weak indigo)	Ingigo	Seashell Calcium	
	Dark Indigo	<i>Koi-ai</i> (strong indigo)	Ingigo	Ink	
Grey	Light	<i>Bē</i> (ash)	Ink	Seashell Calcium	
	Yellowish	<i>Chin-bē</i> (dark, yellowish ash)	Ink	Seashell Calcium	Orpiment
	Reddish	<i>Aka-bē</i> (reddish ash)	Ink	Seashell Calcium	Crimson
	Bluish	<i>Ao-bē</i> (blue Ash)	Ink	Seashell Calcium	Indigo/Ultramarine
Brown	Mild	<i>Chairo</i> (colour of tea)	Orpiment		Vermilion+Ink
	Dark	<i>Kogecha</i> (bister)	Crimson	Orpiment	Ink



Figure 3.41 (top left): Adding gojiru to the dye to mix
 Figure 3.42 (top right): Checking the colour against the photo
 Figure 3.43 (bottom): Dye in cups ready for distributing to the workers

Irozukuri is very difficult. It requires considerable experience to acquire the proper understanding of colour as well as the skill of compounding the pigments. From my own experiences in Bingata class, for instance, I found that cochineal (a red colour gained from a scale insect) and ink offer very strong colour and that only a tiny pinch is required to provide vivid colouring once the two substances are dissolved in liquid. Orpiment and ultramarine, meanwhile, are much easier to control. However, whenever I tried to make *kikyo* (bellfollower purple) by mixing pigments according to the directions, I came up with something that looked less like bellfollower than the River Thames after a heavy shower. Similarly, if I tried to make *kiiro* (bright yellow), which I thought was simply a matter of mixing a scoop of orpiment with a hint of crimson, I would feel that I had succeeded until I saw how my teacher, Ms. Yafuso, produced the colour. Her *kiiro* was much warmer and sharper, even though it was

made from exactly the same materials. Controlling the subtle amounts of pigment and making the right amount of the right colour depend entirely upon each craftsman's sense and experience. Therefore, in addition to being able to control the precise ratio of pigments, an acute sense of colour is required. Although these highly experienced craftspeople have a shared idea of the colours they call "*ochiba* (muted yellow like fallen leaves)", say, or "*kuchiba* (dark yellow like decaying leaves)", each craftsman has a different way of identifying them, and describes "*our (workshop's) kikyō (bellflower purple) is something like ...*". In addition, they make each colour by considering how it will fit with the other colours in the motifs, the background colour and the overall feel of the work. As far as I observed, each craftsman has his/her own unique definition of each colour in each individual work.

If one pattern is a combination of small motifs in a regular order and involves several similar colour combinations (e.g. with *ai* (indigo), *tan-ai* (light indigo) and *koi-ai* (dark indigo)), novices often get confused. If this happens, Kiyoshi guides them by showing them a specimen photo, such that they can get a sense of how the completed work should look. Kiyoshi got the image of the "Tamanaha's colour". Besides, he got the technique to compound colours: the combination of pigments, the ratio amount of each pigment.

- ***Jizome*: applying the background colour**

Once the pattern application is completed and the motifs got *norifuse*, Kiyoshi makes the colour dye in the same way as for *irozukuri*. When everything is ready, he soaks a thick, wide brush in the dye, and then starts to spread the latter quickly over the textile. The movement of the brush hand is rapid and dynamic, a stark contrast to its motion during *irozuri* (Figure 3.44). Kiyoshi makes a systematic series of figure eights from side to side, which he repeats without interruption until the colour is worked in evenly. This requires both concentration and a certain discipline to keep moving the same way for the entire 7-12-metre length of textile.



Figure 3.44: Spreading background colour with a wide brush



Figure 3.45: Checking the colour on the piece of cloth

Before applying the background colour, Kiyoshi tries the colour dye on a piece of cloth (Figure 3.45) in order to account for the fact that the colour becomes slightly lighter as it dries. (Very occasionally, once Kiyoshi has finished jizome, the colour is found to be too weak, so subtle modifications are required. He told me that it is impossible to match the colour exactly to a previous version. He also confessed that he sometimes created nice colours purely by *accident*.)

3.2-4 Body, space, self, and one's relation to others in the workshop

What I have described here is the entire Bingata production process as performed in Tamanaha workshop, except the design and katagami making. All the workers are expected to move in a precise way, with the right postures and timing and with ultimate care for the details of the pattern that are often less than 1mm. When I asked her what she thought about while performing irozuri, Ms. Tamaki, a grade C worker, answered: *"I cannot think about anything except what I am doing now and the work in front of me. Otherwise, I will make a mistake. Doing my best is not making any mistakes; otherwise everybody gets in trouble."* At this point, I felt a little embarrassed to have interrupted her work. It is not only at this workshop that workers are expected to concentrate on each role. In most Bingata workshops, as I observed, nobody talks except to ask questions or make suggestions, and, needless to say, nobody carries mobile phones while they are working. In order to break the silence,

there is usually a radio on in the workshop, tuned to a local music programme. Occasionally, Yuko comes down from upstairs to check the textiles and to observe the workers' progress (Figure 3.46). At that moment, I could sense that everybody became nervous and the atmosphere was marked by a heightened tension.



Figure 3.46: Yuko observing the workers while Mr. Hokama applies *norifuse*

According to Mr. Hokama,

“whenever Yuko-sensi appears, I get stressed. At first, I don’t notice that he is standing behind me gazing at my work, since I’m concentrating on what I am doing. Eventually I become aware of him, and then I start to get scared and stressed. Even after 14 years, I always get nervous in front of him.”

Mr. Hokama's words suggest the power of Yuko in the workshop. Through the repetition of systematic movements of one's body, each craftsperson establishes the mental mode of Bingata practice. They do not choose what they do, however; instead, their movements are determined by the custom of apprenticeship, i.e. length of one's experience at the workshop. Mr. Hokama's reaction to Yuko's presence suggests that, under the master's inspection, each worker acknowledges the position of the 'self' (and the aura of their 'superiors') in the hierarchical structure of labour. In his study of human discipline in a controlled environment, Foucault describes the phenomenon as follows:

Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an 'aptitude,' a 'capacity,' which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection. Disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination (Foucault 1979: 138).

Foucault's observation is helpful when considering the mental mode of craftsmanship that is developed through a controlled human relationship (i.e. apprenticeship) within a specific material setting (i.e. the workshop). At the same time, however, it is important to acknowledge other aspects of craftspeople's minds, such as cooperativeness with other craftspeople and a desire to improve oneself. In fact, most of the craftspeople are concerned with attainment of the technique through their discipline rather than discipline itself. Thus, their mental mode may not be passively cultivated through discipline.

In examining the mentality in craft practice in relation to craftspeople's bodily movement, Warnier's praxeological approaches are a useful entry point. According to Warnier, the bodily discipline gives rise to a 'technique of self' (Warnier 2001) that controls their movement according to their relationships with the other. In the division of labour found in the workshop, it is obvious that each individual's role is directly connected to the rest of production process. In this sense, 'self' can be interpreted as 'connected to other workers'. Despite the tense atmosphere, in all roles (e.g. *kataoki*, *irozuri*) the individual workers move rhythmically through their respective repetitive actions. Furthermore, each process is smoothly linked to that which follows. As well as individual routine practice, teamwork is also important in Bingata production, as evident when Michiko performs *kataoki*: some workers are involved in fixing the gaps between the applications with *norii*, while others affix *shinshi* to tense it widthways before moving it away for drying. Meanwhile, another group of staff members tidy the working table and wash up used utensils in preparation for the next round of *kataoki*. Thus, a work of Bingata is processed through the resonance of each worker's bodily rhythm occurring in the enclosed space of the workshop. All share the spatio-temporality of the Tamanaha Workshop, and their solidarity is signified by the completion of the work. As such, work with the stamp of "Tamanaha" is the embodiment of each worker's sensory-bodily

experience of material, time, space, and their pride of being a part of “Tamanaha’s work”.

3.3 Mastering technique and the Living National Treasure

“The talent is to be developed through persistence, it is not considered to be inherited or innate.” (Singleton 1989:29)

As mentioned in 3.1-1, Singleton emphasises how a successful apprenticeship in a Japanese workshop draws upon the novice’s selfless and wholehearted dedication to the craft and his or her loyalty to the master. Echoing this observation, we see how all novice and intermediate workers at the Tamanaha workshop view their master with awe and strive to express their loyalty through diligent practice. In practice, Yuko is independent at the workshop; he does not participate in every stage of the production process alongside the workers, but instead concentrates on designing the patterns and making katagami. This indicates the importance of artistry in the production of Bingata in addition to the half-century’s discipline that Yuko has proceeded.

In fact, the Japanese government recognises craftspeople as holders of Important Intangible Cultural Property, known as Ningen-kokuho (Living National Treasures: LNT) not just for the extent of their experience and technical achievement, but also for their *“high historic and artistic value”* (Law for Important Intangible Cultural Property, article 71-77). Thus, the government funds LNTs for their transmission activities (see 1.3-3 and 1.4). As I mention elsewhere, contemporary craftspeople produce objects for two different categories of social field: 1) craft markets accessed by ordinary people for their own consumption; and 2) the art world, including exhibitions and galleries. Craftspeople therefore have two different identities: workers and artists. Gell defines artists as follows:

Specialized art production, as social practice, implies that most adults are either failed, or relatively unsuccessful artists; only a few talented individuals, and/or individuals who receive institutional encouragement, specialize in the production of really fine work. They are artists. (Gell 1998: 68)

Yuko’s title of LNT is attributed largely to two facts: the artistry of his pattern designs and his success in reviving the duplex dyeing technique that existed in the Ryukyu dynasty era. In this section, I examine Yuko Tamanaha’s Bingata production

techniques in relation to his artistry and the bodily engagement. In analysing his technique, I will consider the following questions: what is the ‘high artistic or historic value’ of his production; what drives him to produce the work; what does his work mean to society; and what is the ‘tradition’ of Bingata practice?

3.3-1 Designing the pattern: visualising a cognitive image of Bingata

To begin, I will introduce the process of pattern designing and stencil making by observing some other highly experienced Bingata craftspeople, including Yuko Tamanaha. In most Bingata workshops, including Tamanaha’s, I observed that this process is completed solely by the master, while the other craftspeople are responsible for the rest of tasks. Contemporary Bingata craftspeople make two different kinds of patterns: the classic form that has existed since the dynasty era, and the modern, self-designed styles that Eiki Shiroma explored after the war. In all but a few cases,⁴¹ the two types of pattern can be distinguished by the fact that the classic form features non-Okinawan objects brought from feudal Japan and China (Figure 3.46), whereas post-war Bingata usually has designs based on the present-day Okinawan landscape, as examined in 2.1-1. For instance, certain tropical flowers became popular motifs in post-war Bingata patterns, including *Deigo* (*Erythrina variegata*), bougainvillea, *Matsuba-botan* (*Portulaca grandiflora*), and hibiscus, *tokkurikiwata* (*Ceiba speciosa*). Most of these originated in South America, India or the South Pacific. Some Okinawan objects also came to be featured, such as *Dachibin*, a ceramic container for *awamori* (an Okinawan distilled spirit) (Figure 3.47) and *Shiisã*, the lion-god who appears in Okinawan myth. Since these tropical flowers and objects cannot generally be found in the rest of Japan, it seems that the post-war Bingata pattern represents the general images of Okinawa. However, designing the pattern is not quite so straightforward.

⁴¹ For instance, there are some patterns that feature designs based on the landscape of medieval Okinawa, such as stonewalls with banana palms, the gate of Shuri Castle and the port of Okinawa, complete with trading ships heading to China or feudal Japan. All depict the glorious past of the Ryukyu dynasty in order to publicise the power of the kingdom to the rest the world.



Figure 3.47: A classic pattern with peony motif from the Tamanaha workshop. In medieval Okinawa, peony was not a native plant and was believed to have originated in China.



Figure 3.48: Motif featuring Dachibin, an Okinawan ceramic work, from the Tamanaha workshop

Patterns also vary according to their placement on the fabric and the styles of kimono for which they will be used. There are two main kinds:

- Representational patterns: using a motif or some numbers of motifs in a space separated from the background, giving the appearance of a picture in a frame. This type of pattern is often used for non-kimono products, such as tapestries. When used in kimono, it is associated with the *Homongi* or *Tsukesage* styles, where the pattern usually features in limited areas, such as on the lower part of the hem and sleeves. Figures 3.47 and 3.48 are examples of representational patterns.
- Abstract pattern: the orderly chain of combination of motifs. This pattern covers the whole textile without interruption. Kimonos that employ such patterning are called *Komon* (see Figure 2.17).

- **Designing the pattern**

To design the pattern, craftspeople begin by sketching an object that will become the motif. They draw the object in three dimensions from several angles (see Figure 3.49), then translate it into two dimensions for use as a motif. By combining a selection of these motifs, they create either representational or abstract patterns to which colour and shading can then be added.

Figure 3.49: Mr. Chinen Sekiko's sketchbook. He draws the object (a plant called *hōraikagami*) from several angles to consider the deformation. (Photographed at Chinen Workshop on 30th October 2009)

Yuko explained how he often finds inspiration for motifs in the local forest. However, he was quick to point out that he does not only use items associated with Okinawa. As he put it, *“I design something that I like and that also looks nice if it is worn as a kimono or hung on the wall as a tapestry. I have no idea how I could make a pattern featuring papaya, through we find it everywhere and eat it almost*

everyday.” Ms. Yafuso told me that apart from sketching objects, she sometimes got inspiration from the patterns printed on rolls of pretty gift-wrap, they often combine motifs with geometric patterns or inorganic objects such as fans, musical instruments or classical Japanese motifs. Therefore, all the patterns are entirely imaginary works born of their creators’ appropriation of a variety of objects for Bingata motifs. Once the object becomes a motif, it appeared to obtain a subjective meaning to represent as Bingata pattern. There are certain criteria that must be satisfied if Bingata production is to be classified as ‘traditional’, including the use of stencil patterns, nori and natural dyes. However, there are no such regulations regarding the selection of motifs for use in the pattern. Therefore, the craftspeople’s designs are attributable entirely to their cognitive image of Bingata. Kuechler’s study of ‘mode of transmission’ (mentioned in Chapter 2) is instructive when exploring the process of designing Bingata. She examines *Malagan*-art reproduction technique:

[It] seems to lie at least partially in its correspondence to the cognitive requirements and operations of the mnemonic process. This process is the ‘method of loci’, which is known to have been practiced by Greek and Roman orators for the memorising of speeches. (Kuechler 1987: 249)

Citing Yate’s ‘The art of memory’ (1978), Kuechler shows how the method of loci involves a number of cognitive operations that relate a word to an image and the image to a particular social location. In contrast to *Malagan*-art, in which the specific names of motifs correspond to ritual practices found in New Ireland, classic Bingata patterns and motifs do not have names. However, motifs do retain the name of the process, such as *kataoki*, *irozuri* and *kumadori*, the name of the utensils, such as *rukujū* and *shīgū*, and name of the certain colours expressed by Okinawan craftspeople. Craftspeople become aware of these terms through their bodily practice of Bingata in the workshop. For instance, without decades of experience, it is hard to identify the colour of *kikyo* (bellflower) or *chinbē* (deep ash gray) in the way Kiyoshi does. For the workers of the Tamanaha workshop, the word ‘kataoki’ is directly connected to Michiko. Through decades of physical engagement with specific movements, such as those required for *kataoki*, *irozuri* and *kumadori*, they understand the specific meaning of these movements meshed with their image gained at the workshop and their bodily experience. This is the ‘method of loci’ of Bingata practice, where craftspeople, their time-space experience at the workshop, and the cognitive image of Bingata work are integrated. As a result, experienced craftspeople

learn to visualise Bingata by manoeuvring objects. This is why the design of the pattern is completed exclusively by the most experienced craftspeople. It is the ‘talent’ that is accrued through decades of practice.

3.3-2 Katagami (stencil) mediates technique and artistry

In his theory of art, Gell underlines the functional and intrinsic aspect of the decoration of the object, defining it as the ‘component of social technology’. He says that decoration ‘binds the object and the owner’ so that it represents the ‘personhood’ of the owner as a fashion (Gell 1989:74). This is true also of Bingata. Once a plain piece of fabric of 38cmx1200cm attaches the ‘decoration’ as Bingata pattern with the technique, it becomes Bingata kimono and gains a social value, such as ‘traditional craft product of Okinawa’ or a luxury and rare item. People choose Bingata items according to the occasion and their fit with other kimono products. I will look further at the social technology of Bingata decoration in Chapter 4. For now, though, I would like to turn my attention to the role of *Katagami* (stencil), a media between the fabric and the pattern to make the fabric as Bingata. Making katagami is a way for craftspeople to project their design into the fabric, thus materialising their image of Bingata.

- **Making *Katagami***

Once the design of the pattern is drafted, they cut the ST-paper (a water-resistant paper for stencil making) into a rectangle of 45cm x 50cm. Katagami comprises the pattern itself and the 4cm-wide frame that surrounds it. They place the draft of the pattern in the middle of the ST-paper and copy it by placing a carbon sheet in between the two layers and then following the lines of the motifs with a pencil. Narrow joints are added between the motifs so that they won’t be separated from the frame. Then the background of the motifs is cut away (a process known as *katahori*). As mentioned in 3.1, they pink the stencil repeatedly with the curved edge of the *shīgū* before tracing the outline through the holes. Holding the *shīgū* in one hand with the thumb, the forefinger and the middle finger, they move it vertically and follow the line by changing the angle of the paper with the other hand. This method for cutting out motifs is called *tukibori*, while the other common technique (passing the knife along the outline of the motif) is called *hikibori*. The movement of *tsukibori*

is akin to cutting wood with a jigsaw. The densely applied holes enable the craftsperson to make intricate motifs with smooth, precise curves. One's ability to control the shīgû is entirely dependent on one's skill and experience. (Although this process is the responsibility of the workshop master, all other workers are expected to begin practising *tukibori* privately as soon as they start their careers. Therefore, at the Tamanaha workshop, when a new craftsperson joins the team, Yuko present him or her with a *shīgû* that he has made himself.) Once *katahori* is completed, a thin layer of mesh is affixed to fortify the *katagami*, after which the joints between the motifs can be removed to make it independent from the frame.

Figures 3.50, 3.51, and 3.52 show a design, a completed stencil and a work produced by Yuko respectively. Taken together, they reveal how an initial idea is realised as a finished work of Bingata. If we look at the *katagami* in Figure 3.51 (it still has joints between the motifs since this photo was taken during the shabari process, we see how this pattern features two different kinds of flowers with intertwined stems and leaves. Figure 3.52, meanwhile, shows the completed work, in which the two motifs have been coloured and shaded with indigo and dark purple. Light blue is applied to some leaves while others are green with indigo *kumadori*. There are also some with yellow colouring and some that remain blank. At a glance, it appears that there is no order to the pattern, with colours applied almost at random, yet at the same time there is a sense of harmony in the piece, with the hint of blue colour on leaves, or with larger motifs, or the dark curves of the stems. Apparently this flower is a fictional one.



Figure 3.50 (top): A draft
Figure 3.51 (middle): *Katagami*
Figure 3.52 (bottom): The work finished with *irozuri* and *kumadori*

To study the density of the pattern and its impact on the motif, Gell describes the pattern in decorative objects as follows:

[I]t exploits the particularly (visually) salient part-to-part relationships produced by the repetition and symmetrical arrangement of motifs. The application of a decorative pattern to an artefact multiplies the number of its parts and the density of their internal relationships (Gell 1998:74).

[S]heer complexity, involution, and the simultaneous suggestions of a great many formal relationships between motifs is a characteristic of decorative art in general (ibid.: 79).

By repeating *kataoki* more than twenty times, the intense combination of motifs continues in sequence over the textile. And then, the density of the pattern is multiplied with the colour through the processes of *irozuri* and *kumadori*. Yuko's Bingata work signals the 'technology of enchantment' (Gell 1994); a plain fabric gains value thanks to an intricate pattern as well as the colour attained through a mastery technique. His work also enchants his team through their bodily engagement in the production process. The density of motifs and the complicated colour variation in his work recalls the struggle of the workers. As one novice worker explained, "*doing my best is not making any mistakes*" (see 3.2-1); and in the words of another (an intermediate responsible for small amendments), "*Yuko-sensei's work is very complicated*" (see 3.2-2). Even Michiko, equally experienced as Yuko, admitted, "*I cannot imagine how can he elaborate from such a tiny flower into absolute complexity with many variations. It is awesome!*" It is possible that their loyalty to Yuko derives from their bodily engagement in his work. The pattern seems like a dense and complex maze created by Yuko for these workers to explore and overcome.

3.3-3 Living National Treasure and the duplex dyeing technique: a bridge between the past and the present

Yuko's challenge to his technical complicity isn't limited to one side of the fabric. The unique aspects of his method include the duplex dyeing technique, a tradition he revived from the past Ryukyu dynasty. As Okinawa has a tropical climate, the garments have no lining and were worn over *dujin* (a red top) and *kakan* (a white pleated skirt) (see Figure 2.16). Old craftspeople applied dye to these woven local

fabrics (made of hemp, lamie, and fibres from banana leaves), which have a lightweight texture to keep the wearer cool. The duplex dyeing technique enables much clearer pattern transformation effects on these thin and sheer fabrics. In this production process, Yuko does *kataoki* with a 38-centimetres x 50-centimetres frameless stencil along a 12-metre length of textile, being careful to avoid leaving any gaps in the pattern. And as if this were not difficult enough, he also applies the pattern as a mirror image to the reverse of the fabric. Figure 3.53 shows both sides of the *kataoki* bordered by a yellow line. Once the *kataoki* is completed, the entire process is repeated on both sides. In Figures 3.54 and 3.55, we can see the difference between the successful part and the slightly blurred part caused by being unsynchronised to work with between the two sides.

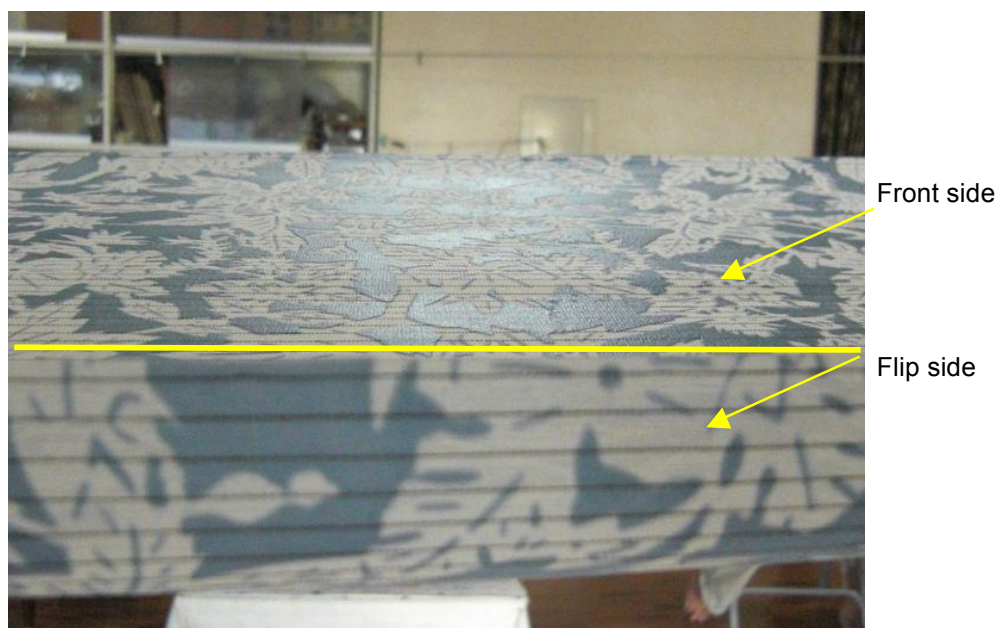


Figure 3.53: The applied pattern on both sides. The flip side is shown by lifting up the side edge.



Figure 3.54: Successful duplex applications



Figure 3.55: Unsynchronized duplex applications

The problem of colourfastness is overcome through the introduction of new materials and facilities, such as the steaming machine. The duplex dyeing technique is impractical and unnecessary for commercial production. As one kimono wholesaler informed me, the use of duplex dye is too expensive for retailing due to the technical complexity, and hence it has no place in the kimono market. Therefore, the duplex dyeing technique is limited to the production of textiles-as-art, where the value resides in the singularity of the object rather than in mere exchange (Kopytoff 1986; 82). Currently, Michiko's role consists primarily of producing kimonos for retail with the help of the rest of the workers, while Yuko spends most of his time

designing and creating works for art exhibitions. Here, I would like to highlight the two different orientations found in contemporary Bingata production: the ‘art object’ made by an individual, such as Yuko Tamanaha; and the ‘commodity’ produced by a workshop. While the latter are destined for the retail market, the former are mostly presented to museums. After Yuko gained LNT status, he donated a number of his works to local museums and other public buildings, including a primary school on Ishigaki Island from which he had graduated. Yuko explained his role as follows:

I design patterns and then transfer them to the two different kinds of works: commodities and exhibition pieces. In the case of the former, we generally follow the wholesalers’ directions about colour and combination. From their orders, I learn contemporary customers’ tastes. They do not like Bingata if it has a flashy colour, as in the classic works. In the production of artwork, meanwhile, I can do whatever I choose. It is very exciting, although I am rarely at ease during production since all the processes are related to each other, and if I fail one it ruins everything! After I attained the status of Living National Heritage, we became much busier, but we didn’t become much wealthier: while making a living by selling kimono in this bad economic situation, I keep creating my own pieces using the duplex dyeing technique for presenting in exhibitions or sometimes donating to local museums. When I see somebody wear one of my kimonos (commodity) it feels very nice, whereas my artworks involving the duplex dyeing technique are usually on display in museums. Even though these artworks won’t be worn by anybody, I feel a sense of responsibility to leave as many works of duplex dyeing as possible for future generations. For while it is always very difficult and there is a big risk of failure – compounded now by my weak eyesight and chronic back pain – it is precisely this challenge that motivates me to continue with my art. My works are my footprints. (Interviewed on 9th October 2009)

I have no idea how craftspeople in the past managed to use duplex dying for all their works when I can barely make four or five in a year. They didn’t have electric appliances. However, sometimes they did it on cotton fabric. It is terrific! Cotton is one of the worst fabrics to do kataoki since it absorbs moisture from nori very quickly and it is hard to spread the pattern smoothly. If I died, I would look for them in the heaven and ask them how they did it! (Interviewed on 11th December 2008)

In contemporary Japan, craftspeople usually have both personas: the artisan *and* the artist. Craftspeople interpret current social demands and adopt the appropriate persona, which, in turn, requires the careful manipulation of age-old techniques for

modern purposes (i.e. commodity). While using his craft to make a living, Yuko has also enamoured himself to the art world with techniques (e.g. duplex dyeing) that are unsellable in the market. Consequently, he has succeeded in reviving and preserving these traditional methods. The embodiment of the technique achieves mnemonic power. Through his engagement in (and struggle with) duplex dyeing, Yuko communicates with the past and can conceptualise traditional modes of practice. His exertion in the reproduction of Bingata also draws on the future speculation. Accounting for the likelihood of future social change, he donates his works to museums in the hope of transmitting the techniques and spirit of Bingata inscribed in his works to the next generation. Living National Treasures are persons who create a marginal space from which to bridge the past, present and future. Imagining the past with a creative mind, Yuko's duplex dyeing practice is attributed 'high historic and artistic value'. In addition, Yuko negotiates multiple temporalities – past, present, and future – in the reproduction of Bingata by presuming social transformation. In plural temporalities he reflects upon the present meaning of his works. His description of his works as 'footprints' testifies to the social meaning of 'tradition': marking the present cultural practice as 'tradition' to make it remain in the future where people might demand different social meaning to the practice from that of the present. By reproducing the work, Yuko tries to hinge current Bingata practice to the future.

3.4 Transmission and creativity for the future

When the working day is finished, all of the craftspeople except Yuko and Michiko go home. Even at home, instead for resting, some workers work on the piece to prepare for the art exhibition. I sometimes witnessed staff members asking Kiyoshi if they could borrow utensils from the workshop for their own work. Occasionally they would go upstairs to show Yuko and Michiko their work and to hear their comments. Ashitomi described his struggle to balance his daily routine with his own personal projects as follows:

“When the deadline for the art exhibition is near, I really need to work on my own piece even after work at the workshop. Sometimes I can work really well but sometimes I feel so tired and feel, “Oh, I’m doing the same

thing again today [at the workshop and at home]”. Some people, after a few years’ experience, they become independent. However, to get independent is very tough, especially financially. That’s why most craftspeople remain at a workshop as employees. However, someday I have to change my life. I want to be a popular artist, not just a worker at Tamanaha. Meanwhile, it is interesting how colleagues from different workshops are able to identify my work at exhibitions: they say my work is Tamanaha-ish.

Working under the master isn’t easy. I am often confused, since my master is very silent and I cannot guess what he wants me to do. Then he orders me to do something abruptly and gives me hassle. I wish we had a sort of general meeting at the beginning of the day so that all the staff could work together more smoothly. Recently, I’ve felt that my master has become an old man, as Michiko-sensi and Yuko-sensei himself often tell. We truly need to think about what we will do when he retires. This is our generation and it is our task to decide what Bingata will we make.” (Testimony from Mr. Ashitomi, collated from interviews conducted throughout the research period.)

Some years ago Mr. Hokama got married to one of the former employees at Tamanaha’s, and his wife now helps with his work at home. He also had much to say about his future career prospects:

“I can gain many things at this workshop that will be useful for the future, when I become independent and run my own workshop with my wife. When wholesalers visit us, from their conversation, I can learn about current tastes in kimonos. I also learn how to allocate each craftsperson according to their skill. The work is not easy, yet it’s still very exciting to think of the day when I have my own workshop. For the art exhibition, I usually create my own Bingata work by imagining the condition that it is worn by my wife.” [At this point Mr. Hokama starts to blush.]

(Testimony from Mr. Hokama, collated from interviews conducted throughout the research period.)

According to Mr. Ashitomi and Mr. Hokama, their salary is more or less similar to the average company employee in Okinawa. However, they told me that they did not receive a bonus in either 2008 or 2009 due to the recession. The situation in the Tamanaha workshop is still much better than that in other workshops, some of which have recently been forced to close. Everybody in the workshop, including the master, appears to live a modest life. Despite this, as both of these craftsman made clear, they had a certain vision of their career path. Mr. Hokama's practical account of how his current experience at the workshop could benefit his future (independent) work suggests that these craftspeople step back and forth between two parallel spatio-temporalities: being a craftsman hired by Tamanaha and being an 'independent artist' outside. This seems contradictory to Singleton's observation that apprenticeship is predicated on apprentices' 'selfless' 'devotion' and 'loyalty to the master'. At the same time, it highlights the interface between the two spaces (i.e. inside and outside the workshop). Taking part in art exhibition is an opportunity for workers to represent an independent 'self', to visualise their own image of Bingata and realise it with techniques gained through daily practice. The exhibition is a space in which to project the 'self' as an artist from one's discipline in the workshop. As Warnier underlines, emotion is an important resource for driving the 'self' to engage one's bodily practice (Warnier 2001, 2004). Either Mr. Ashitomi's or Mr. Hokama's vision of the future is in many ways at odds with that of their master. While Yuko is concerned with leaving his works as 'footprints' for the uncertain future, these workers think about leading Bingata crafting in their future. Their goal is not to set aside works for posterity but rather to create their own era of Bingata practice. Their orientation towards future practice doubtless contributes to the transmission of Bingata as a 'traditional Okinawan dyeing technique'. However, they do not necessarily realise this, since they are in the very moment of the practice with desire, love, creativity, and hope. They are the future of Bingata itself, and hence they do not objectify themselves as 'tradition' to be remained. Transmission of 'traditional craft techniques' draws highly upon these young craftspeople's emotions and creativity as shaped by decades of workplace discipline at the hands of a Living National Treasure.

Chapter 4

Consumption of Bingata, consumption of ‘tradition’

In this chapter, I will underline the reciprocal value of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) by focusing on the consumption of Bingata products. Recent studies of consumption have taken the view that consumption is a means of creating reciprocal values towards an object (Miller 2006). Miller observes that this idea rose out of the classic attitude of anthropologists and other academics, who, with the influence of Marxist ideas, tend to view consumption as a ‘wasting disease’, ‘opposed to production’ and ‘using up [natural] resource[s]’ In the rise of capital economy and industrialisation, therefore, consumption has been considered as ‘synonymous with destruction’ in an environmental sense’ (ibid: 342). To counter these arguments, recent studies of consumption have focused on an object’s ability to generate social meaning or appeal to a class, status, gender, religion and individual’s taste. Such a relationship between object and consumer involves both social complexity and human relations. Of course, many ethnographers introduce exchange values of goods in social circulation systems such as the kula exchange system of Trobriands in Papua New Guinea introduced by Malinowski or a social system of gift exchange to establish or maintain human relationships as exemplified by Mauss (1990). Gell explores consumption activity that involves the incorporation of the consumed item into the personal and social identity by observing consumer culture in the Muria tribe in India (Gell 1986). Bourdieu offers a perspective that clothing isn’t a mere reflection of class distinction, yet it is a primal means of expression and therefore reproduction. The segmented actions of reproduction and consumption create a material environment in which people unconsciously operate. Such a naturalised order is studied as *habitus*. (Bourdieu 1979). Apart from symbolic meanings of consumption, studies which extend to the relationship between materials and humanity in daily life, have discussed examples of objects in homes and how people place or discard them in architectural settings (Miller 2001). In contrast to the extensive focus on consumption in the field of anthropology, consumption in heritage is still comparatively underdeveloped.

In one of the current debates in the field of heritage studies, academics are primarily concerned with the negative impact of consumption on heritage. In their studies, consumers and the market economy have hitherto been commonly reviled as negative forces that exploit peoples, their cultures and the landscape, manipulating them and eventually distorting the original forms of tradition (Urry 1990, Clifford: 1997). To discuss heritage as mediated by economic (and political) actors is still perceived by many as an 'ivory-towered outrage' (Bendix 2009:254). In the context of ICH, negative attitudes towards consumption heavily draw upon the ethno-centric perspective: ICH primary means something indigenous to small scale societies in underdeveloped nations as opposed to the monuments and sites known as World Heritage which are dominantly located in Europe. Of course this view of ICH is further intertwined with the over-emotional trend in developed nations to support indigenous movements as examined by Kuper (2003). Given the heavy influence of these Marxist perspectives on consumption, viewing the Recipient/Consumer as an agent of ICH is a new and challenging approach. This is also due largely to the fact that the basic assumption of the study of ICH is that a cultural form is objectified as a 'tradition to conserve'. From this viewpoint, the subjects tend to be the practitioners of the cultural form, authorities such as UNESCO, local governments, NGOs and museums, and, in a recent development, local communities (as discussed in Chapter 1.3). However, it is important to note that a cultural activity is essentially reciprocal: people practise a cultural form to be evaluated by others. In this chapter, I wish to emphasise that a cultural form indexed as ICH is primarily a human activity, and that the sphere valorised as 'heritage' is just one aspect out of the numerous social meanings that it retains. I would like to propose that studying ICH with the focus that ICH is a reciprocal activity of production and consumption of value and 'tradition' in human life in contemporary society will be of great value to Anthropology.

Consumers and recipients of a cultural form are by no means always identical to the social actor. In some local festivals, for example, spectators often play an important role in addition to their commercial capacity. At the *Ketsugan* festival in Kohama Island (discussed in Chapter 2.1-2), the male spectators in Aizme-kimono, who are seated in front of the stage according to their seniority, are as important as the performers in creating the spatio-temporality of the festival. Here, I refer to the

Agent-Patient relation (as explored in Chapter 1.3-2) and the four elements that act together as follows:

- (1) the *work* (a cultural form or activity);
- (2) the *skill* to inform the work;
- (3) the *practitioner* (for example, a performer, craftsperson, or festival or religious practitioner) who obtains and retains a *skill*;
- (4) the *recipient* who consumes or is acted upon by the work.

As I argued previously, the recipient (consumer) is necessary to justify the work of the practitioner, by showing appreciation and enjoyment. They are the social actors who represent and reciprocate the work's value.

In the case of Bingata as a cultural form, as with other craft practices, production and consumption occur in different spatio-temporalities. It is important to underline that once a Bingata work leaves the workshop and enters wider society, it acquires numerous social meanings: 'a traditional craft product'; 'a kimono' or 'a place mat'; 'a luxury item'; 'an Okinawan product'; 'a work of art'; 'one Bingata item out of many'; or 'an example of Intangible Cultural Heritage'. It is up to the consumers to decide what Bingata means to them. Here, consumers do not appreciate Bingata and the skill behind its production through their relationship with the work alone. Rather, they compare it with other craftworks, sample its different forms and represent themselves with it (e.g. by wearing a kimono) for specific occasions and purposes; it is thus an item through which to shape one's social relationships with others. Taking consumers as social agents of a cultural practice, then, it is impossible to objectify a Bingata practice solely as 'a tradition to conserve'.

In order to extend our understanding of the social meaning of Bingata as a human activity, biographical research regarding the relationship between Bingata products and consumers has been undertaken. I have chosen three specific social settings in which to investigate this issue further: 1) a museum where Bingata is displayed as an artwork and visitors come to try it on; 2) kimono shops where customers can purchase Bingata kimonos; and 3) large stores where small craft products and mass-produced (machine-printed) Bingata items are offered to consumers at low prices. These three settings are intended to shed light on the differences in the social

meaning of Bingata, particularly its economic and moral value as determined by, among other things, the shape, purpose, and ownership status of the item. These three different settings of Bingata consumption seem to be a 'social map' empowered by capitalism, an established framework of Bingata distinctions into which consumers passively fit themselves according to the market price and their social or financial condition (Miller 2006:343). This is partially true, since the production of Bingata is primarily an economic activity. At the same time, however, I would like to highlight the humanity in Bingata consumption through biographical observations on the social meaning of 'tradition'. The core question is what does 'tradition' mean in the material once it is purchased by consumers? Daniels' study of the consumption of gifts in Japanese domestic places and her biographic observations are provocative and relevant to my investigation. Daniels questions previous studies' assumption in the gift exchange, especially the permanence of human relations and moral value attached to an object once it is gifted to an individual (Mauss 1990, Weiner 1992). Supporting the commodity chain research (Appadurai 1986), she observes unused gift items in contemporary Japanese domestic situation with the view that the value of the 'object changes, transforms and expands as it move through space and time' (Daniels 2009: 387). From the perspective of an ICH study, I would like to ask a similar question. Will the value of 'tradition' continue in the material of Bingata once it is purchased or even offered in market? Unlike Daniels' in-depth observation of the real domestic situation of unused materials and due to my uneven time-length allocation between production and consumption sites in my field research, excepting a few, my analysis is mostly based on the narratives of consumers in the moment of purchasing or trying on the material. My study focuses on the essentiality of a market economy in producing the value of 'tradition' along with 'locality'. I will explore the potentiality of 'tradition' in a market economy to negotiate between material (as products) and immaterial aspects such as patterns, involved motifs, colour combinations, shape and function. Then, I will observe the way consumers establish relationships with the material along with these immaterial aspects. By reflecting on consumers' narratives gained in the three different social settings, I will tease out the role of 'tradition' in the consumption of Bingata.

4.1 Case study 1: Artwork - the Ryukyu-style duplex-dyed kimono presented in the museum

The following interviews were held in a hands-on workshop space known as *Fureai-taiken-shitsu* in the Okinawa Prefectural Museum, where visitors can come to touch and experience Okinawan folk objects. On display are many woven textiles produced in different regions, including one Bingata item, and there is even an area where visitors can try on traditional garments, allowing them to experience the shapes and patterns of the past. All are tailored in the style of traditional Okinawan (Ryukyu) kimono. As introduced in 2.3-1, a Ryukyu-style kimono comprises two pieces of inner wear (a red top called *Dujin* and a white pleated skirt called *Kakan*) and a woven or Bingata covering worn loosely over the top. People can try these over their own clothes with assistance of museum personnel. The Bingata piece presented in this space was designed and donated by Yuko Tamanaha, a Living National Treasure in Bingata technique. Also on display are framed samples of classic patterns from the dynasty period, together with labels giving brief information about the textiles, such as the techniques and materials used, the place of production, and the name of the producer.



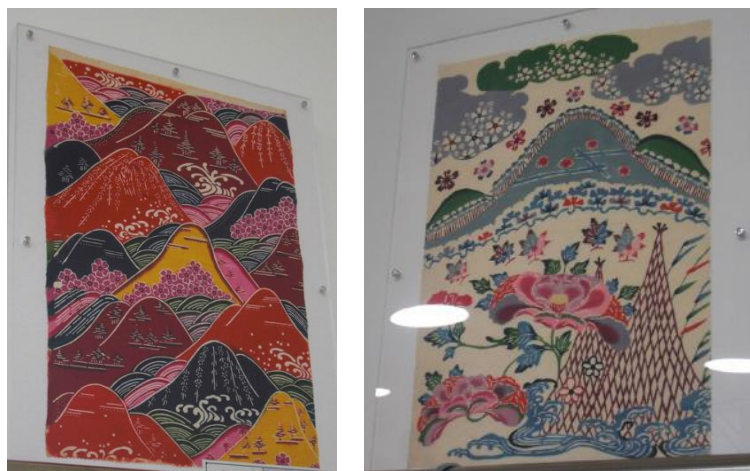
Figure 4.1: The Ryukyu-style kimono trial space (indicated by the arrow) at *Fureai-taiken-shitsu* in Okinawa Prefectural Museum. The Bingata work by Yuko Tamanaha hangs in front of the other pieces. On the wall above them are framed samples of classic Bingata patterns. (photographed in Naha)



Label on the frame:

Bingata
Technique: Stencil dyeing (Duplex dyeing)
Material of textile: Linen
Place of production: Shuri, Naha City, Okinawa Prefecture
Type of dye: Pigment
Producer: Mr. Yuko Tamanaha

Figure 4.2: Framed sample of modern Bingata



Label on the frame

Bingata
Technique: Stencil dyeing
Material of textile: Cotton
Place of production: Shuri, Naha City, Okinawa Prefecture
Type of dye: Pigment
Producer: Ryukyu Bingata Industrial Cooperative Association

Figure 4.3: Framed samples of classic Bingata

With the permission of the museum, I interviewed visitors who tried on the Bingata piece between 28 August and 28 September 2009. I helped them to get dressed and explained the entire production process as the museum personnel usually do for visitors. On some of the days, I attended wearing one of my own kimonos so that people could compare the Japanese (Yamato) style with the Ryukyu-style kimonos. During August, the hands-on workshop was very popular with primary school children and their parents. In September, it was more popular with tourists from

outside Okinawa. Figure 4.4 shows the questionnaire I prepared for use during the interviews.

It took about 7-8 minutes to get a visitor dressed in the Bingata. Once this was done, they usually looked at themselves in a nearby mirror and had some photos taken. On average, they spent around 10 minutes in the Bingata kimono before taking it off with my assistance. In total, 78 people (3 male and 75 female) tried on the Bingata item and 42 of them agreed to be interviewed. All but three of my interviewees were female; half were local people and the rest were tourists from outside Okinawa. The ages and places of origin of non-Okinawans are summarised in Table 4.1.

Questionnaire for the hands-on workshop at the Okinawa Prefectural Museum

<General information about interviewee>

Age:

Gender:

Occupation:

Place of abode: (Inside Okinawa) (Outside Okinawa)

People/person who accompanied:

Purpose of visiting the museum: Exhibitions/Special exhibitions/Using Fureai-taiken-shitsu/other

Time spent for Fureai-taiken-shitu:

Time spent for trying Ryukyu style kimono trial:

Items of tried:

<1. Trying on the Bingata work>

1. Why did you choose this item to try on?
2. How did you feel wearing this Bingata kimono?
3. What is the main difference between your regular clothing and this style of kimono?
(Good part)
(Bad part)
4. Would you want to wear it again in the future? If you owned this kimono, when would you want to wear it?
5. Do you know how craftspeople make Bingata?
6. What is the main difference between Japanese (Naichi/Yamato) kimono and the Ryukyu?
7. Do you think this is an Okinawan product? If so, which aspect of it appears Okinawan to you?
(Pattern)
(Colour)
(Other)
8. Comment from the people/person accompanied
9. Do you know who used to wear Bingata?
10. Which pattern do you prefer between the classic Bingata (framed samples) and the modern that one you are trying on?
11. Do you think this Bingata pattern is modern or traditional? In which aspect do you find it modern/traditional?
12. If you were to make your own Bingata, what colour, motif, and pattern would you choose?
13. Do you think craftspeople should use Okinawan subjects for Bingata motifs?
14. Do you feel different before and after wearing Bingata?

<2. Kimonos in general>

1. Do you have a chance to wear kimono? If so, when do you wear it?
2. Does anyone in your family wear kimono regularly?
3. What sort of kimono do you have? Which one is your favorite kimono?
4. How do you feel when you are in kimono?

Figure 4.4: Questionnaire used for interviews conducted at *Fureai-taiken-shitsu*, Okinawa Prefectural Museum

Age	Okinawans	Non-Okinawans
0-9	1	1
10s	2	2
20s	6	2
30s	3 (2*)	3
40s	1	7
50s	2	5 (1*)
60s	5	1
70s	1	0
Total	21	21
*Numbers of male interviewees		

Place of origin of non-Okinawan interviewees	
Tokyo	8 (1*)
Osaka	3
Fukuoka	4
Tochigi	2
Okayama	1
Kyoto	1

Table 4.1: Summary of ages and places of origin of interviewees

4.1.1 General image of Bingata

The reasons given for trying on the Bingata kimono were mostly related to its visual attractiveness, including the colourful pattern and densely applied motifs. People who had some knowledge of kimonos showed particular interest in the trial. Five of the Okinawan women aged over 50 knew the producer, Yuko Tamanaha, and his title of LNT. Some of their comments are presented below:

“I know Bingata is very expensive so this is a rare opportunity to touch a real one.”

“It is such a huge honour to try Bingata that was applied by Mr. Tamanaha, who I greatly admire!”

“My friend had a Bingata kimono made for her daughter’s coming of age, and it cost 1 million yen (approximately GBP 7,400). I thought that was too expensive for one kimono so for my daughter’s coming-of-age ceremony I rented a Printo-Bingata (machine-printed Bingata on polyester fabric). Now, however, after trying on the real

material, I regret my past decision. It is such a superb textile. I should have got one for my daughter.”

Some Okinawans in their 20s compared Bingata to certain locally woven textiles. To quote one such respondent:

“[I]’m very familiar with woven kimonos; they remind me of my grandmother. They are usually beige, brown, or indigo and look like peasant pieces. Of course, I do appreciate these traditional textiles and I know that they involve a lot of work. Compared to these woven textiles, Bingata is very cheerful and colourful, with floral patterns. [The kimono that I tried on] is certainly great Bingata. I presume it is expensive, but I should buy one some day in the future to wear for special occasions, such as dates, parties or weddings.”

Most Okinawan interviewees had some in-depth knowledge about Bingata. Seventeen of them answered ‘yes’ to question 1.5: “*Do you know how craftspeople make Bingata?*” Ten of them were able to describe the entire production process, and four of them had taken a Bingata class with the same teacher as I had during my stay in Okinawa. To question 1.9 (“*Do you know who used to wear Bingata?*”), most Okinawans answered correctly that it was the Empress and crown princess. Some appreciated this aspect of the experience, making comments such as “*I feel as if I’ve become upper class. I feel like a wealthy person*”. In contrast, the majority of non-Okinawan people could not begin to describe the production process. Only a few correctly identified it as “*using stencil patterns*”, which they attributed to having seen it in kimono magazines or on TV. Most of the non-Okinawan respondents knew very little about the past role of Bingata.

Despite valuing the experience of real Bingata and having an appreciation for its history, a substantial minority of Okinawan respondents felt negatively about the cost of Bingata as a product. Six of them made comments of the following kind:

“It is nothing but a luxury product. Bingata kimonos are beyond our reach. We can afford only small [Bingata] items, such as postcards, coasters, and tapestries.”

“It is too remote from our daily life.”

“I wish it were less expensive.”

In contrast, the non-Okinawans appreciated Bingata as a novel cultural experience. Their typical views included the following:

“I have learned that Bingata is not just an item for postcards and stage costumes, but also a textile for wearing.”

“I used to think it was too showy and therefore suitable only for costumes as opposed to clothes. Bingata is often worn by people working at tourist sites to entertain visitors, so I thought it was not suitable for everyday clothing. However, once I put on the kimono, I felt it wasn’t a costume but rather a really fine garment.”

“With such colourful patterns, I see Bingata as a product of Okinawa, a foreign country to me. I have never seen another kimono with such vibrant colours.”

In brief, Okinawan interviewees confirmed Bingata’s historical place and its remoteness from their daily life due to its high market price. By referring to alternative products such as postcards, coasters, and machine-made polyester substitutes, or comparing it to woven textiles, Okinawans identified Bingata kimonos as a luxury item. For non-Okinawan people, meanwhile, Bingata was a local item that was largely unfamiliar, and that they related to their touristic activities in Okinawa and their personal experiences of other Japanese kimono traditions.

4.1.2 Material shape and the mode of dressing: the Ryukyu-style kimono and the Japanese-style kimono

Most non-Okinawans were amazed by way in which the Ryukyu kimono was worn in comparison to the Japanese style with which they were more familiar. The latter involves layers of inner wear and a top layer of kimono all tightly wrapped and supported with strings, which is bound by a thick, broad obi fastened tightly around the upper body. Like the Indian Sari, wearing a Japanese-style kimono correctly requires a certain technique. Furthermore, there are many rules governing choices of pattern and material, which vary according to the occasion. In contrast to the complexity of the Japanese kimono, the Ryukyu-style kimono is quite easy to wear. When asked how they felt wearing the latter, both Okinawans and non-Okinawans compared their experience favourably to Japanese-style kimonos:

“It is so easy to wear and feels very light without an obi fastened around the upper body. The obi makes me feel suffocated, especially when I dine in a kimono.”

“It is a loose garment and I feel relaxed. It is a big contrast to when I’m in a [Japanese-style] kimono. In [a Japanese-style kimono] I feel very neat but also restricted, since I cannot raise my arms freely.”

One Okinawan woman in her 60s described her sadness about the common preference for Japanese-style kimonos:

“We should popularise the Ryukyu-style kimono more. I think the Yamato [Japanese] style has too many rules and restrictions and they were created in Yamato, not in Okinawa. I think Okinawan people should wear kimono their own way and not necessarily follow the rules in Yamato. I often buy second-hand woven kimonos, take them apart and remake them as summer dresses.”

It was significant that nearly all of my interviewees had experience of the Japanese-style kimono, regardless of their age and place of origin. In order to study the ‘cultural density’ (Kuechler 2005) of kimono custom in contemporary Japanese society, I posed the following set of questions, the answers to which are set out in Table 4.2 and 4.3:

<2. Kimonos in general>

1. Do you have any chance to wear kimonos? If so, when do you wear it?
2. Does any of your family wear kimonos regularly?
3. What sort of kimonos do you have? Which one is your favourite kimono?
4. How do you feel when you are in kimono?

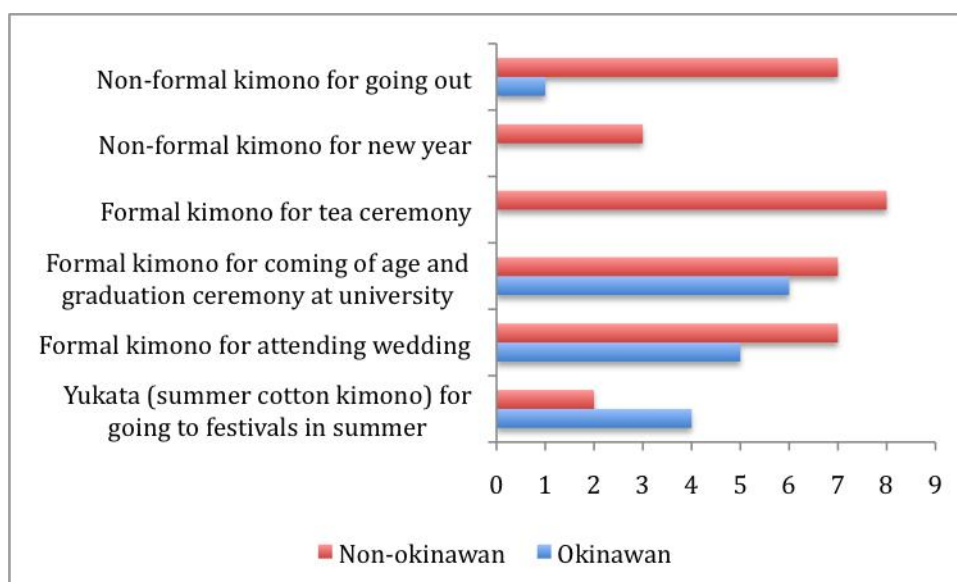


Table 4.2: Answers to question 2.1 (‘When do you wear kimono?’). Provided by interviewees who answered ‘yes’ for ‘Do you have any chance to wear kimono?’

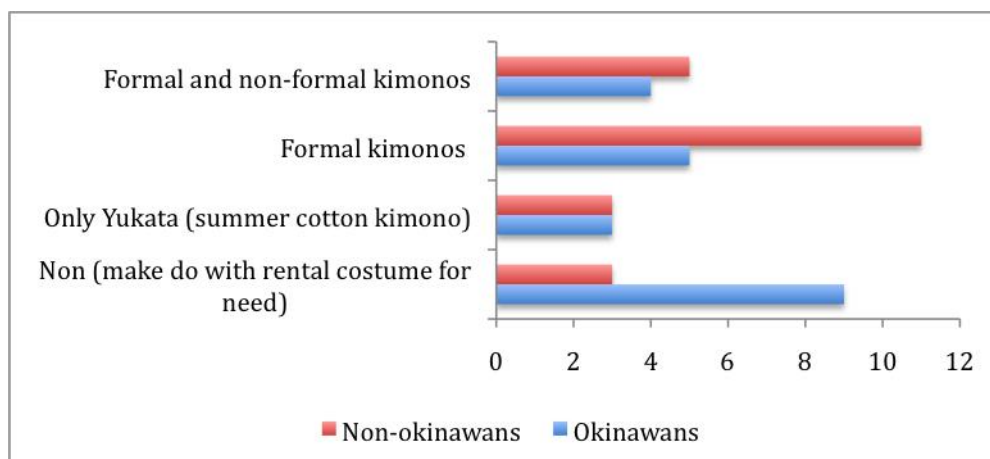


Table 4.3: Answers to the question ‘What sort of kimonos do you have?’

Yukata, a cotton summer kimono, was popular among the under-30s in both groups. *Yukata* involves neither a multitude of layers nor the complicated shaping of an obi at the back, and costs much less⁴² than kimono items, all of which makes it more accessible to the younger generation. They reported wearing yukata mostly for attending night festivals in the summer.

Most Okinawan interviewees reported wearing kimonos less frequently than non-Okinawans: “*except in the midst of winter it is too hot to wear kimonos in Okinawa*” (seven interviewees from 40s to 70s). Non-Okinawans owned more kimono items and wore them more frequently for both formal and informal occasions. Respondents in their 30s and 40s who had young children noted the impracticality of wearing a kimono:

“I don’t even have any free time for myself, let alone for enjoying kimonos. Nor can we afford it while most of our savings are going towards our kids. Even if I could afford a kimono, I cannot imagine I would have time to go to the kimono-dressing class and learn how to wear it properly. I don’t have any negative views of kimonos, and in fact, I liked seeing my grandmother in kimonos when she was alive. However, it’s just not for me right now. Maybe I’ll be more interested in them when I get to my grandmother’s age and am free of household chores.” (Okinawan woman, aged 41)

⁴² Even UNICLO, a large discount clothes retailer, sells yukata sets (a cotton kimono and a ready-made obi) for the equivalent of GBP 30.

Meanwhile, collecting and wearing kimonos seemed to be a popular hobby among people in their 50s and above, both in Okinawa and beyond. One Okinawan woman (aged 69) told me the following:

“In my generation, we usually had some local woven items handed down from the elders to the younger people. Such old items are for casual occasions according to kimono etiquette. Therefore, we often prepared formal kimonos [in the Japanese style] when we got married, starting with the ‘tsuke-sage’ and ‘homon-gi’ [both formal kimonos with pattern applied on the lower hem and sleeves], then moving on to the ‘tomesode’ [for attending weddings held by one’s relatives; same pattern placement as for homon-gi but on a black background]. That’s how I came to have a kimono chest full of formal items. But lately I have become too lazy to take the trouble to wear kimonos. I need to go to a hair salon for a professional to dress me up properly and also arrange my hair. Attending occasions in a dress is much easier. I think I should wear my kimonos more frequently, at least for my relatives’ weddings.”

Overall, Japanese-style kimonos were commonly regarded as expensive and troublesome to wear. So would Ryukyu-style kimonos, which are more ‘user-friendly’, prove more practical? The answer is no. Some Okinawans pointed out the inaccessibility and impracticality of the Ryukyu-style kimono:

“I feel this is a purely Okinawan product, since it is displayed in the museum of Okinawa. The material is unfamiliar, however, since most people wear kimonos in the Yamato [Japanese] style, even in Okinawa.”

“I think this kind of loose garment [Ryukyu-style kimono] matches the tropical weather of Okinawa and its relaxed atmosphere. But it might look very strange if worn in colder weather, or outside Okinawa.”

“I cannot imagine that people outside Okinawa would buy and wear this Ryukyu-style kimono.”

“I would prefer to wear this pattern in shirts.”

Most non-Okinawans were amazed by the lightweight and airy feel of the Ryukyu-style kimono. However, theirs was the enjoyment of a tourist enjoying a new cultural experience. Some showed an appreciation of Bingata that went beyond its practical use in Ryukyu-style kimonos:

“I think this textile can be enjoyed in many different forms, like a [Japanese-style] kimono or dress. I don’t think it is easy to wear for going out.”

“It is a pleasant material, but I would not want to wear the Bingata in this style outside Okinawa. Despite all the trouble, I would rather wear this material as a [Japanese] kimono.”

In contrast, both Okinawans and non-Okinawans expressed positive attitudes towards Japanese-style kimonos as unusual, special, and self-expressive. The common responses to the question “*How do you feel when you wear a Japanese-style kimono?*” are summarised in Table 4.4. In their answers, people identified restrictions on bodily movement caused by a tightly fastened obi as having a positive effect on their posture.

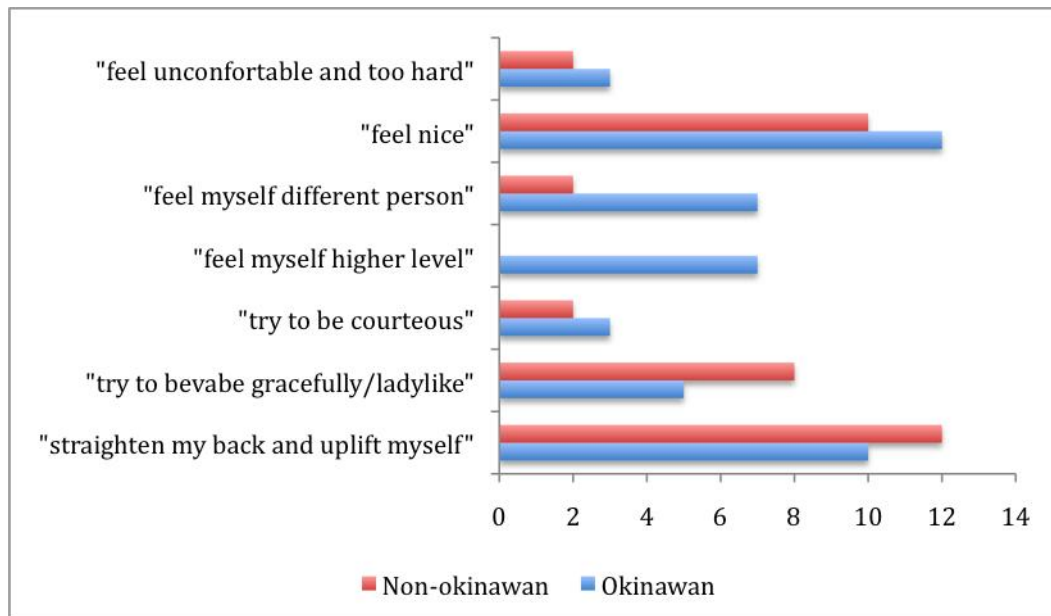


Table 4.4: Common answers to the question “*How do you feel when you wear a kimono?*”

In addition, many interviewees in both groups pointed out the difficulty of maintaining one’s posture in a Ryukyu-style kimono. By lifting up the lower part of the neckbands, the wearer creates a round silhouette on their back. It is this feature of the Ryukyu-style kimono that creates its airy circular shape, in contrast to a tightly fastened obi around the upper body in the Japanese-style kimono. However, the wearer must continually lift the hem with both their hands (as discussed in 2.3-3; see also Figure 4.5). People used to the Japanese-style kimono, which leaves both hands free, may therefore feel uncomfortable in the Ryukyu variety. Both groups of

informants' bodily experience of Ryukyu style invites them to imagine how people in the past lived with these garments:

"It is very hard to keep holding the hem perfectly. I can imagine that this outfit was for upper-class people who did not have to carry their belongings and didn't move around much. Everything was done by their servants."

"I think people in the olden days were trained to move gracefully without moving their arms."

"The restriction of the hands makes my movements very slow. The beautifully kept round silhouette and the slow movement creates a graceful and sensual atmosphere. This kind of feeling might not be possible with Yamato [Japanese-style] kimonos in busy modern society. I think only in the past could people do it properly."



Figure 4.5: A woman trying on the Ryukyu-style Bingata kimono, holding the hems with both hands in the traditional way (photographed at *Fureai-Taiken-Shitsu*, in Naha)

Due to the popularisation of Japanese-style kimonos after the fall of Ryukyu Kingdom, the Ryukyu-style kimono slowly disappeared from the everyday lives of Okinawan people. It became a fragment of “the past” that no longer fitted with mainstream (i.e. Japanese) kimono practice. The retrospective attitude and speculation about life in the past engendered by wearing a Ryukyu-style kimono is in

contrast to people's more grounded feelings about the Japanese-style kimono, such as "it straightens my back and uplifts me".

4.1-3 Pattern, colour and Okinawan imagery

As explained in Chapters 2 and 3, the patterns and motifs of Bingata were influenced by both social change and craftspeople's creativity. In the past, motifs commonly featured Japanese and Chinese objects, whereas in modern patterns, it is more common to evoke the locality by including elements from the Okinawan landscape. It is worth noting that classic patterns are more widely seen in daily life in Okinawa than the modern patterns designed by craftspeople. The classic patterns are used for costumes at major tourist attractions, Okinawan-style restaurants, bars, live music venues, and local festivals (see Figure 4.6). These costumes are mass-produced and printed by machine on polyester. In addition, materials featuring classic Bingata patterns are widely used in souvenir products (discussed further in subsequent sections). It is evident that prints of the classic Bingata patterns are ubiquitous in Okinawan society, whereas modern patterns designed by craftspeople appear only in expensive craft shops and kimono retailers outside of Okinawa. Against this social backdrop, what do visitors think about the pieces displayed at the museum?

Figure 4.6: Women wearing costumes featuring a traditional Bingata pattern performing at a local festival, 3 November 2008 (Photographed in Naha)

I started with a question about the modern pattern designed by Tamanaha – “*Do you identify this textile as a product of Okinawa?*” – to which 90% of all respondents answered “yes”. I then explored this subject further: “*In what aspect does it appears Okinawan to you?*” (Question 1.7). Five Okinawans replied “I cannot explain which one aspect is Okinawan in this material since it looks absolutely Okinawan in its entirety”. The most common comments from both Okinawan and non-Okinawan visitors were as follows:

“It looks exotic and tropical, which corresponds to the atmosphere of Okinawa.”

“The motif has clear outlines, which makes it stand out from the background.”

“The effect of gradation (kumadori) in the middle of the flower motif is rarely seen in any other pattern.”

Many non-Okinawans were surprised by the density of colour combinations in the motifs. Some identified this with the landscape:

“The strong colour form and combinations match the bright sunlight against the emerald-green ocean. If the colours were weaker, they might not be so visible in the strong sunlight of Okinawa.”

“In tropical climates the plants are more colourful, whereas on the main island of Japan plants have more subtle colours. Consequently, Okinawan textile is colourful like hibiscus, while Japanese is pale like cherry blossom.”

In addition, use of grey within a flower motif would be quite extraordinary in a Japanese kimono, whereas Tamanaha applies grey to parts of the stem, the leaf and the petal (see Figure 4.7). One Okinawan interviewee explained this in the following way:

“Bingata features somewhat unrealistic or impossible colour combinations that one cannot find in the real landscape. During the Ryukyu dynasty, people brought motifs from Japan and China and composed them in their imaginations. Therefore, I imagine motifs became detached from the real world. They transferred a pattern that was an idealized cosmos to the textile. This is why elements of grey are possible in parts of the Bingata flower motif.”

Unrealistic colours and combinations are also observed in the panels of framed classic patterns. For example, there are mountain chains in varieties of colours, such as navy,

yellow, grey, and red (Figure 4.3). Non-Okinawan visitors saw the use of grey as having a different effect to that of Okinawans.

“Despite such vibrant patterning and bright colour combinations, it [e.g. the garment] retains a totality throughout the work. I think this is due to the hint of grey. It mitigates the confounding colour combinations, such as red, yellow, and blue. Without it, the material would be too flashy.”



Figure 4.7: Leaves, stems, and petals in grey in a modern pattern

Table 4.5 summarises respondents’ answers to the question *“Do you think this is an Okinawan product? If so, which aspect of it appears Okinawan to you?”* (Question 1.7), and Figure 4.8 details any references to colours in their answers.

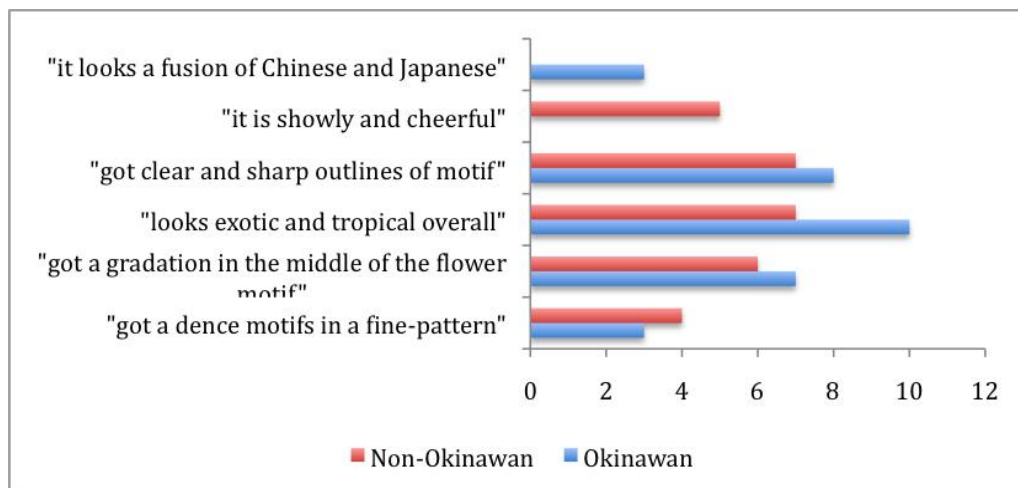


Table 4.5: Answers to the question “in which aspect of it appears Okinawan to you?”

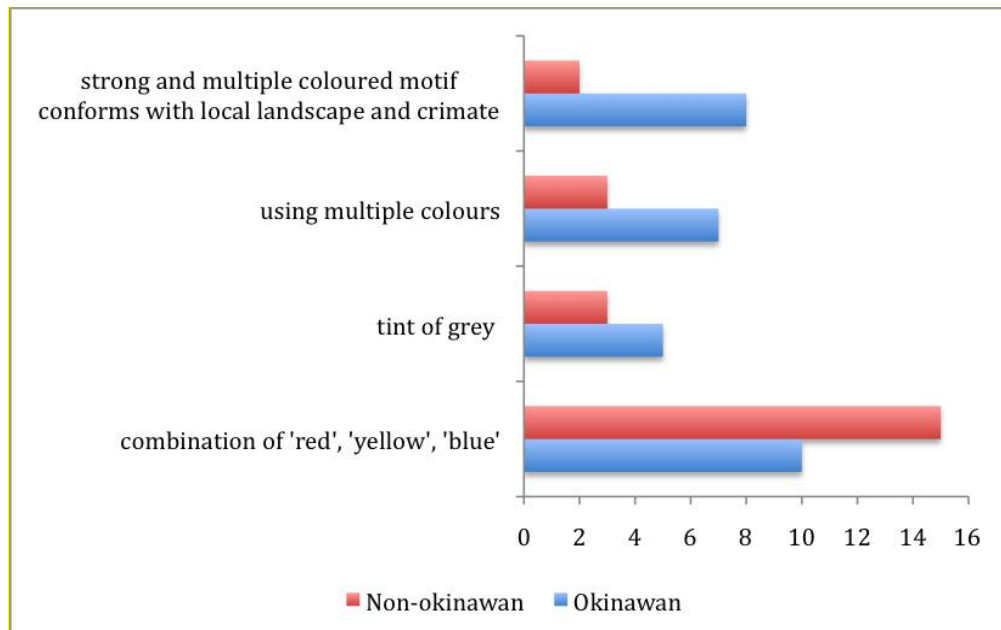


Table 4.6: Comments about the use of colour in Tamanaha's Bingata work

To the question “Do you think this modern Bingata pattern is traditional? In which aspect do you find it modern or traditional?”, most interviewees answered in the affirmative. The major reasons given for this were as follows:

- It involves old techniques
- There are multiple bright colours in the pattern
- There are gradation (*kuma*) effects in the pattern
- The object is classified as a “tradition of Okinawa” by the museum

While respondents identified Tamanaha's Bingata as a traditional product, they also pointed out many modern aspects of it. Okinawan people noted the following telltale attributes:

“The use of grey, which is new in Bingata. Usually Bingata comprises many bright colours. The combination of grey with bright colours is avant-garde.”

“The outline of the motif has corners, whereas classic patterns are usually curved.”

“The pattern is composed of a single motif of a flower, whereas classic ones also feature mountains, birds, streams, and rivers.”

“The flower is deformed and not used as figurative motif.”

“It looks like an evolution of classic patterns.”

“It could easily be used for other garments, such as kariyushi-wear, whereas none of the classic patterns could be imagined for this purpose.”

The non-Okinawan interviewees identified further modern hallmarks:

“It does not look like the antiques or artefacts displayed in museums.”

“It expresses the character of the craftsman who made it, whereas classic items look all the same and say little of the character of the producer.”

“It has a uniformity or totality while retaining the mishmash character of Bingata, whereas classic patterns are just a mishmash involving many objects from outside Okinawa.”

“This pattern is composed of a single motif, whereas others are composed of many objects in a limited space.”

“It could be wearable in a different form, like as a summer dress.”

Classic Bingata patterns are found on a wide variety of objects used in everyday life in Okinawa, as illustrated in Figure 4.6. As a result, Okinawans and non-Okinawans had developed a clear visual image of Bingata through their daily activities or touristic experiences. With this impact, people identify Yuko Tamanaha’s work as Bingata created by a modern craftsman. By distinguishing it from the widespread Bingata visual images characterised as ‘old’, they come to appreciate the artistry, originality, and humanity apparent in the work. Walter Benjamin famously argued that the popularisation of photographs causes an overflow of copied images of artworks, such that the ‘aura’ of original object is lost (Benjamin 1936). In contrast, in the case of current Bingata production, the ‘aura’ of the work and the creativity of the craftspeople seem to be more noticeable due to the proliferation of replica Bingata products empowered by social and industrial dynamics.

4.1-4 Museums as a contact zone between past and present

James Clifford proposed the idea of ‘museums as contact zones’ as a way to rethink the museum’s role in relation to other cultures. His aim is to challenge one-sided imperialist appropriations of the indigenous artefact and to instead consider the

benefits from both sides, that is, for both museums *and* the cultures they purport to represent (Clifford 1997). The hands-on workshop space of '*Fureai-taiken-shitsu*' clearly assumes the role of a 'contact zone' by offering visitors the opportunity to touch and feel the past and present of Bingata. As noted in Chapter 3.3, duplex-dyed Bingata items are rare and do not usually appear in the kimono market or in any other social settings. It is almost impossible for people to have a chance try these pieces on. According to Yuko, he offered the duplex-dyed work for free to the museum when he was awarded LNT status. In Chapter 3.3-2, I introduced his professional philosophy, encapsulated by the saying 'my works are my footprints'; thus, he donated this duplex-dyed work to the museum in order to leave a trail. Now his footprints are part of museum archives. Therefore, for Tamanaha too, the museum is a 'contact zone' through which to enter the annals in the history.

In response to my interview questions at the museum, both Okinawans and non-Okinawans talked not only about the particular kimono object that they were trying on in that space at that particular moment; they also narrated their life's experience, related to and evoked by not only the object but also the action of wearing it. Through the act of trying on the Ryukyu-style kimono, they recalled their actual experiences of Japanese-style kimonos. Some Okinawans described the former's high retail price and the social pressure to follow the 'Yamato' rules as 'unfair'. Others mentioned their laziness when it came to taking the trouble to go out to the hair salon to get their kimono tied properly. Both Okinawans and non-Okinawans agreed about the positive sensation gained through the Japanese style of dressing. They also acknowledged that the Ryukyu style was not suitable for modern-day use. This case study shows the mnemonic power of the objects presented in the museum. Through the work made by Yuko, people recalled their experiences of the 'tradition' of Japanese-style kimonos and their image of Bingata. By trying on the Ryukyu-style kimono and becoming aware of the impractical aspects of this garment, they confirmed that it was an object whose form was rooted in the past. This hands-on workshop space highlighted the essential involvement of consumers in popularising a cultural form as 'tradition'. By being used in the present, a 'tradition' will continue; otherwise, it will become an redundant artefact.

4.2 Case study 2: Bingata kimonos retailing in Tokyo

Research for the second case study was conducted in Tokyo and focused on consumers who purchased Bingata kimono items produced by Yuko Tamanaha and other highly experienced craftspeople. As Japan has experienced rapid Westernisation since the 19th century, daily life here is much the same as in other developed nations. As examined in Chapter 1.4, the material culture can be roughly divided into two social categories: ‘*Wa*’ (Japanese style) and ‘*Yo*’ (Western style). As can be seen in Figure 4.8, which is a photo taken in a busy Tokyo station, clothing provides the most obvious example of these two distinct styles; here, we see *wa-fuku* (kimonos) and *yo-fuku* (i.e. everyday dress brought from the West, such as suits, jeans, shirts, and dresses). Despite the dominance of *yo-fuku* in daily life, as also apparent from the previous analysis of museum visitors, people often adopt kimonos for religious customs and festivities, such as for celebrating their children’s growth at the ages of three, five and seven (known as *Shichi-go-san*) or attending coming-of-age parties and weddings. Apart from the economic value or material significance out of the ubiquitous style of *yo-fuku*, people who wear kimonos share a certain moral value with each other. In Africa and some South Pacific societies, textiles are considered a form of wealth and play important socio-cultural and political roles. In Madagascar, for example, hand-woven silk is used for reburial ceremonies, in which ancestors’ bodies are exhumed and reburied in the material. The woven silk signifies the link between the living and dead and enables people to communicate their ancestral spirit (Feeley-Harnik 1989). In the South Pacific, people exchange textiles on specific occasions, such as births, weddings and funerals, as a means to signify these as social events. Weiner has looked at the fine mats in Western Samoa that are stored for many generations and exchanged on social occasions. Described as ‘inalienable property’, these mats are often received at the funeral of someone of a similar or sometimes higher social status to the beneficiary; the latter will store some of these for their own funeral, to be distributed among persons of appropriate standing. These mats symbolise the social status of the family and their relationship with others, and are therefore part of family history (Weiner 1989). While there is no such system of exchange among owners of kimonos (except in terms of second-hand markets), these items share a certain inalienable quality. In general, kimonos are rooted in their owner’s and his/her family’s kinship relations,

since most formal kimonos used for religious occasions or festivities are prepared by the oldest female member of the family. People often keep old kimonos handed down from their parents. Daniels, in her study, looks at a variety of outcomes for these kimonos in contemporary Japan, in addition to the kimonos being worn or kept within households. By using family kimonos, some people create handbags and scrolls to decorate their homes. Daniels observes that these recycled kimono materials ‘*embody material family ties*’. She also discusses the treatment of old kimonos which have been removed from family relationships. Some are sold and appear in antique markets targeting foreign tourists, some are found in kimono-recycling markets for younger generations who use them as fashion items but not in accordance with the original style of the kimono (Daniels 2010: 153). Such use of kimonos involves high-heels, western style hats and belts and is often criticised by traditional kimono fans and older generations. For example, when the Japanese representative of Miss Universe 2009 appeared in her mini-length kimono showing her pink stockings and suspender belt, mass-media reported substantial criticism from the public who regarded her behaviour as ‘a shocking betrayal of Japanese elegance’ (Yomiuri Shinbun, 28 July 2009). The president of a kimono retailer who donated an *obi* (a bread sash to bind kimono in the middle of the body) to this event told me that the secretariat of the Miss Universe Japan had failed to inform him in advance of the contestant’s intended style and that had he known, he wouldn’t have supported them (interviewed on 5 August 2009). This incident reveals that in contemporary Japan, people still strongly revere the cultural and historic values of kimonos, a point which is underlined by Goldstein-Gidoni in his discussion of the use of kimono in wedding ceremony (2001). The Japanese people expect traditional values and remain attached to them, particularly in the matter of how to wear a kimono.

Miller has noted how people in Trinidad consider what they wear ‘*not fashion – that is, the collective following of a trend, but style – that is, the individual construction of an aesthetic based not just on what you wear, but on how you wear it*’ (Miller 2010: 15). Similarly, people in Japan think of kimono as an extension of the aesthetic sense of the wearer. The depth of kimono culture is also affected by the rules and etiquette that wearers are expected to follow. Given this, I will now turn my attention

to the cultural density of kimono fashion in contemporary Japan and its importance for the production of traditional textiles.



Figure 4.8: Two ladies in kimonos next to a man in yo-fuku (Photographed in Tokyo)



Figure 4.9: Tamanaha's corner with the duplex-dyed Bingata work (indicated with an arrow) on display alongside other products (Photographed on 23rd August 2009)

From 22 to 26 July 2009, *Mitomo*, a kimono retailer in Tokyo, held a sale of Okinawan kimonos. With the permission of the store's sales manager, I was able to observe the reality of Bingata kimono retailing. Apart from Bingata works, several varieties of Okinawan woven textiles (produced by local craftspeople and craft associations) were on display. In a separate space, the "Okinawan Living National Treasures corner" was set. Together with their works, they displayed panels featuring information about the Okinawan LNTs, such as their biographies, techniques and award records at art exhibitions. In the section of Yuko Tamanaha, they displayed a duplex-dyed work that was priced at JPY 12,000,000 (roughly GBP 96,414) (see Figure 4.9). All the products were displayed as rolls of fabric rather than as tailored kimonos. When a customer wished to try on a kimono item, a shop assistant would skilfully arrange the fabric over their body, folding and pinching the material instead of cutting it. Eventually, the customer would find the style or 'cut' that they wanted (see Figure 4.10). While getting the customer dressed, the shop assistants would tell

them something about the product and the craftspeople who made it. This is exemplified by the following description of an obi provided by one of the staff:

“This product is the result of a collaboration between two genius Okinawan craftspeople. The pattern was applied by Yuko Tamanaha and the textile was woven by Toshiko Taira. They are the Living National Treasures in Bingata and Bashōfu respectively. For weaving, they start by growing the local Basho (banana leaf). Three years later, they remove the softest fibres from it to make thread, which they dye with a natural plant pigment found locally. Then they start to weave it. In total, it takes five years to produce one piece of fabric, as all the processes are done by hand. The Bingata pattern is transferred with the magical skill of Yuko Tamanaha, a tradition passed down from generation to generation since the Ryukyu Dynasty era. This work is genuinely handmade. It looks a bit too colourful on display, but if you wear it with a slightly muted-colour kimono, like you have on now, the bright hints of the Bingata pattern will make your style stand out. This product is very chic and special compared to the other Bingata-patterned products. Such sophisticated and deep blue colour can only be created by a LNT like Tamanaha. In his workshop, they use pigment instead of chemical dye. No ordinary customer can wear this in the proper manner; it is to be worn only by those with a sophisticated taste in kimonos. It is of great value!”



Figure 4.10: The process of trying on a kimono
(Photographed on 23rd August 2009)

With the permission of the staff, I spoke to some of the store’s customers. Three people who bought Bingata items agreed to meet me some days later to talk about their experience of kimonos: Mrs. T (aged 67), Mrs. M (aged 51) and Mrs. K (aged

32). In our discussions, I used the same questionnaire (Figure 4.4) as I did at the Okinawa Prefectural Museum.

4.2-1 Narratives of kimono fans

Each of my three informants (Mrs. T, Mrs. M and Mrs. K) spent between JPY 300,000 and 1,000,000 (GBP 2,340-7,800) at the *Mitomo* sale. All three claimed to have an extensive collection of kimono items, as suggested by the number of kimono chests they had in their possession. A basic kimono chest has three or five drawers in which folded pieces of kimono are stored in paper cases. Nowadays, people use kimonos only for special occasions, such as weddings, coming-of-age parties, and funerals. Generally speaking, one kimono chest is large enough to accommodate all the basic kimono items needed for formal occasions. Therefore, those who have more than two kimono chests are likely to use kimonos not just for formal occasions but also for casual occasions as a fashion. In this sense, all of these informants can be seen as kimono fans. And since they were so fanatical about kimonos, each informant spent much more than the agreed two hours telling me their kimono story.

- **Informant 1: Mrs. T**

Mrs. T (aged 67) bought a Bingata obi for JPY 670,000 (GBP 5,245) at the event. (This was the piece described by the shop assistant in the dialogue above.) Mrs. T is a housewife who lives in a flat in Tokyo with her husband (aged 71) and daughter (aged 23). Her husband is a former bureaucrat; following his retirement from the government, he worked until recently for a quasi-private sector business. As a result, the couple have multiple pensions and retirement benefits. Their generation benefitted from the policy set up during the 1980s and 1990s when the Japanese economy was strong enough to promise elderly generation financially secured life after their retirement. Mrs. T began collecting and wearing kimonos only recently. She described her kimono experience as follows:

I started to buy kimonos five years ago when my children graduated from university and found jobs and my husband retired. I had much more time for myself and was better placed to enjoy the rest of my life. I wanted to wear kimonos for everyday dress, but I had only formal items. I started to explore the kimono shops in Ginza [one of the most

fashionable areas of Tokyo] and became a fan of *tsumugi*⁴³ (Shantung silk), especially the ones from Ibaraki Prefecture, which are dyed with the ash of mulberry leaves. I sometimes buy old *tsumugi* items at the antiques market. Old textiles have a somewhat deeper and more mature character in terms of colour and texture, one we rarely see in modern materials. This is due to the fact that they are ‘handmade’ with natural raw materials, whereas these days they tend to use chemical products. In this sense, I’m not interested in these items that are made by machine and make heavy use of chemical dyestuffs. I have my grandmother’s items somewhere in my kimono chest; I was given them by my mother when she passed away. I rarely wear them since they aren’t really my taste, yet I think they are very nice. Perhaps I should think of some way of using them instead of just keeping them to preserve her memory.

I wear kimonos at least once a week when I go out with my friends to lunch, the theatre, and art exhibitions in Tokyo. The benefit of kimonos for me is that they conceal my middle-aged body shape and make me look slender. Also, the obi fastened around my upper body straightens my back and helps me maintain a good posture. Besides, with the physical constraint, when I’m in a kimono, I become neat and my way of talking becomes delicate. Shop attendants and waiters/waitresses in restaurants treat me very differently, much more promptly and politely than when I am in Yo-fuku. However, I have difficulties when I use a public toilet. Basically, I am too self-conscious to use one, even when I’m not in a kimono! But when I’m in a kimono, the situation becomes much harder, what with the long sleeves and the hem. Therefore, I try not to drink too much water. Also, in summer, I tend to sweat a lot when I’m dressing myself, even with the air conditioning on. Yet once I finish, all the sweat goes away if I’m confident in my style. I spend roughly one hour getting dressed. I carefully check all the details, since I do not like the loose way of wearing kimonos. But despite this, I’m a big fan of all kimonos, not just wearing them but also observing others in them. All of my friends turn up in kimonos when we go out and we enjoy looking at each other and exchanging comments. My husband is too shy to comment, but he never objects to my kimono shopping. Of course, kimonos are expensive, but their fashions are more permanent than those of yo-fuku and so they are better value in the long term. My daughter will eventually wear my collection, although she isn’t interested in kimonos at the moment. If I didn’t have a daughter, I probably wouldn’t buy so many.

I think good taste is decisive when it comes to coordinating kimonos and obis. The material and colour of the kimono should go with that of the obi. Also, people should choose the right patterns and colours for their face and body. Besides, good-quality

⁴³ Tsumugi (Shantung silk) features a ribbed effect from the wild spun. The lumpy surface is what creates the luster of the silk. Shantung is not used for formal kimonos with big motifs due to its rough surface. Therefore, according to kimono convention, tsumugi is used for non-formal purposes, while yawarakamono is used for formal ones.

products require more specific sense. They should be worn in the way that makes the most of their quality. That's why *tsumugi* shouldn't be worn with an obi of Nishijin-ori (a brocade involving silver and gold thread produced in Nishijin area in Kyoto). A gilded obi might drown out the soft and lustrous texture of the silk. It is tricky to achieve a coherent style, given that the kimono, the obi, and the obi-band are all made in different places and from different materials. That's the elegance of wearing kimonos. I sometimes read books written by a kimono expert; however, I never attempt to mimic her style. It's just like cooking or painting: people cannot learn taste from books. With Kimonos, it depends on a sophisticated sense of colour and the skill to coordinate materials. People's way of wearing kimonos says something about them, their taste and aesthetics.

In addition, it is important that people should wear their kimonos neatly. I am really disgusted when I see people who wear them very loosely. If the collar is too far open either at the front or the back of their necks, they look dowdy, like a hostess in a bar. I also really dislike people who carry western-brand handbags while wearing kimonos. They do not match at all. I know one lady who always carries a Louis Vuitton bag with her kimono. I can't understand why she thinks it's a good match. I basically do not like these western brands, since anybody can buy them and they are all the same. But with craft products, every item is handmade and therefore unique.

- **Informant 2: Mrs. M**

Mrs. M (aged 51) bought a Bingata obi that featured a pattern applied by Sachiko Yafuso, another prominent Bingata craftsperson, for JPY 200,000 (GBP 1,620). She lives in a house with her husband, son (aged 26) and daughter (aged 23). She does not have a job, though she occasionally helps out with her husband's company, which produces metal parts for medical appliances. Thanks to her mother, Mrs. M became interested in kimonos at a young age. She owns four chests and eight extra boxes full of kimonos, 60 per cent of which were handed down from her mother.

My kimono hobby started during childhood. I remember when I was small, I often enjoyed looking around local kimono shops with my mum. I also enjoyed seeing her helping my father to get dressed in a nice kimono when he went out. I wanted to be like them when I got married. So I took a class in kimono dressing at the age of 22. I also took a course in sewing kimonos and learn tea ceremonies for some years. After I got married, I was hardly able to continue my kimono hobby. When my children were small, I couldn't spend time going around and looking at kimonos. However, when I needed items for a particular occasion, I would call my

favourite shops and ask them to pick out some nice things for me. As I am an old customer they know my tastes, so they had no problem choosing me a nice item from their collection.

I usually wear kimonos when I go out shopping in Ginza, or when I meet up with friends to go to the theatre or a restaurant. I wear them throughout year; it takes me around 15 minutes to get ready for these casual occasions. My favourite kimono is my mother's Edo-Komon (a stencilled dyed textile from Tokyo). It's really nice material, even though it's old. But honestly, I sometimes find it difficult to wear my mother's old pieces. Even though the quality is very high, it requires a specific compartment to wear in a modern way. Of course, I can hardly throw these unused old items away. There's one piece that I don't like in her collection, a kimono of Kaga-yuzen (a dyed item from Ishikawa Prefecture). The colour combination is too showy and flashy. I don't have any ideas how I could wear it. It looks like an ornament rather than something for wearing. My current favourite is an obi of Ryukyu-tsumugi (shantung silk of Okinawa Prefecture) made by Kyoko Inamine. She won an award at the Nihon Art Exhibition.

When I am in a kimono, I feel neat and graceful. My back is straightened by the obi and I become upright and elegant. Wherever I am - shops, restaurants, you name it - I am always served first, whereas in yo-fuku (western-style outfit), things don't go the same way. Everybody says I look much better in kimonos. People often say something like "your kimono is pretty", but really I want them to say, "you look pretty in your kimono!"

Good taste in kimonos means that a person chooses the right item for him- or herself. It doesn't matter how expensive the item is. Bad taste is where there is no coordination between the obi and the kimono in terms of colour and materials. It would be no good to wear a Nishi-jin obi with pattern embroidered with gold and silver thread with a plain tsumugi kimono. I think my taste has been influenced largely by my mother. I also enjoy observing people in kimonos in Ginza. I sometimes buy kimono magazines to look at the pieces. I love to attend talks by craftspeople organised by kimono retailers. It is a good opportunity to learn about local materials and the stories behind them. Once I become a fan of a particular craftsman, I tend to buy his or her works repeatedly.

- **Informant 3: Mrs. K**

Mrs. K (aged 32) is an office worker in a foreign capital insurance firm. She is married to a man working for a leading energy company. The young couple lives in a

flat in the centre of Tokyo. She bought a Bingata kimono at the *Mitomo* sale for JPY 900,000 (GBP 7,200). Having visited the store the previous day and been greatly impressed, she had decided to take a day off work to return to the event with her mother and grandmother. The two older women are supportive of Mrs. K's kimono hobby and paid for the piece she selected.

The youngest of my three informants, Mrs. K's kimono hobby started only recently. Despite this, thanks to the support of her family, she now owns a large collection of kimonos accommodated in three heavy chests.

I've been working for banks for a long time and my life is busy like others' in Tokyo. Given this, I wanted to do something different and traditional in my spare time. I came across a traditional Japanese dance called Jiuta-mai. As I needed to attend classes wearing a kimono, I started to buy kimono items, including casual ones. Even before that, I was always interested in kimonos, but I wore them only for formal occasions. I took a kimono-dressing course so that I could put them on myself. Although my mother and grandmother have some kimono items, they do not wear them often since they find it too much trouble. However, they are very supportive of my hobby. My recent favourite is Ojiya-Chijimi (*a patterned woven cotton kimono from Niigata Prefecture*).

When I'm in a kimono, I cannot display any ungracious behaviour, whereas when I'm in Yo-fuku I can take a small mirror out of my handbag and check my face in public. You can't do that in a kimono. It isn't just about vanity, since people do watch the behaviour of people in kimonos, and I am no exception. If I wear a kimono to visit my husband's family, I don't have to help my mother-in-law in the kitchen. She is also a big kimono fan. I was happy to hear that she talks about me very proudly to her friends, saying "my daughter-in-law wears kimonos". In Kyoto, there's a campaign promoting kimonos: people get to travel for free on public buses if they're wearing one. I enjoy a lot of these benefits, although most of my female friends seldom wear kimonos. Sometimes I have to be careful, especially when choosing from the menu at a restaurant. A leafy salad with oily dressing is potentially dangerous: the dressing could splash on my kimono so I usually avoid it. Despite having to take extra care, I always take pleasure in kimonos, not just the act of wearing one, but also the time spent preparing items and considering how they might go together.

I like people when they're in the right kimonos. On the contrary, if a kimono doesn't match the setting or the face of the person, no matter how expensive it is, we say that "that person is worn by the kimono" There are certain rules regarding

the material and the pattern, and the coordination with other items should reflect the occasion and the season. I'm a big fan of Empress Michiko's taste in kimonos. I sometimes buy kimono magazines and learn how to coordinate from the models. I also learn about it from old novels. Their descriptions are very detailed and sensory. My Jiuta-mai teacher also has good taste in kimonos. Despite the extensive coverage of the body, there are many open parts of the garment, such as the underarms and the cuffs on the sleeves, and these help me stay cool in summer. It is a really well-made garment; I wish I could wear it to my office every day, but I know that's impossible.

Like the interviewees at the museum in Okinawa, these kimono fans talked of enjoying the bodily sensation of wearing a kimono despite its physical restrictions. In addition, they described receiving preferential treatment on account of their attire wherever they went. According to these informants, the kimono is appreciated *unconditionally* in contemporary Japanese society, where daily dress consists primarily of yo-fuku (Sarashima, 2011). This underlines the fact that kimonos are widely valued for their impracticality (and hence the refinement of their wearer), the historic background of the fabric, the techniques involved and the price. It is very different from the ethnic garments one encounters in the U.K., such as South Asian saris, Scottish kilts and African dresses, most of which can be worn on a daily basis without concern for, say, the amount of water one is drinking or one's choice of meal at a restaurant. Furthermore, these other ethnic garments have a number of practical functions; saris, for example, have a sleeve in which people carry objects (Miller, 2010). In contrast, kimonos are never worn in the office, as Mrs. K regrets, and do not have any functional attributes.

On the other hand, people do not consider kimonos solely as complex, luxury items that require skill and effort to put on and wear, nor simply as a formal form of dress. In fact, my informants were not satisfied with the automatic respect their kimonos garnered from people in yo-fuku; they also had a critical view of others in kimonos, appraising people's style both in magazines and books and out in public. There are two major kimono magazines circulated quarterly, which are found alongside female fashion magazines in most bookshops. In kimono magazines, it is common to see celebrities such as popular models, actresses and newscasters modelling the items. Like the high-end magazine Katei-gahō introduced in Chapter 1.4-2, these magazines

often feature reports on local textiles and the craftspeople who produce them. The magazines also include features on topics such as hair arrangements for different kimono styles and small items like handbags and kimono shoes. In addition, as fashion magazines, they also include numerous ‘street shots’ of ordinary people in their kimonos. This depth of kimono culture can be seen as the ‘habitus’, in Bourdieu’s sense, through which people represent, rationalise, and justify their tastes in kimonos (Tilly 1997, Bourdieu 1984). The cultural density of kimono practice in Japan is controlled not merely by the ritual activities nor by the ‘exoticism’ of the national costume as a global commodity (the ‘Wa’ versus the ‘Yo’). Rather, it involves people’s aesthetics, sense of the style, and enjoyment of self-expression. Wearing kimonos is an established practice that requires certain tastes and criticisms. These informants’ narratives underline the competitiveness of the craft market and the requirement for high artistry in kimono products. In addition to the aesthetic aspects, people are expected to follow certain rules of etiquette when wearing kimonos. All of the women I interviewed stressed the importance of preserving certain ways of selecting materials and coordinating them with others; *tsumugi*, for example, is for casual occasions and should not be mixed with formal items, such as *nishijin-ori*. Although they used them only rarely, all three women had kept certain items from their mothers and grandmothers in order to preserve these relatives’ memory. In addition to this sentimental aspect, Mrs. T and Mrs. M appreciated the quality of the techniques and materials used in the past. Therefore, these old kimonos are a form of symbolic properties: fans identify the value and the importance of the transmission of craft techniques. These kimono fans’ narratives highlight the social significance of kimono practice. Kimono fans are not just contributors to the economic value of the craft industry; they are also agents mediating the layers of value associated with kimonos, such as moral, cultural, historical, aesthetic and ‘traditional’, by purchasing, possessing, and wearing the garments and being critical of each other’s tastes.

4.2-2 What do Bingata items mean to kimono fans?

As these informants mentioned, there are a huge variety of local textiles found in Japan. Currently, 44 local textiles are recognised as ‘*Dento-teki-kogei-hin*’ (‘Traditional Craft Products’) by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. In

addition there are many machine-made kimonos offered at cheaper price compare to these craftworks in kimono market. Among these numerous alternatives, consumers choose the right kimono for a particular purpose by following certain rules. In kimono protocol, there is a clear division between formal and informal; formal kimonos are made of silk and are either entirely plain (known as *muji*) or have patterns only in peripheral areas, such as the lower hem and sleeves (known as *hōmongi* or *tsukesage*), while non-formal kimonos are finely patterned called *komon*. Accordingly, most Okinawan textiles, both woven and dyed, are seen as non-formal due to their use of *komon*. This, coupled with the small output of the industry, means that Okinawan products are commonly identified as rare items for casual use by kimono fans. In fact, some retailers explained to me that people would only buy Okinawan items if they found some extra space in their kimono chests. This specific connotation of informality was clearly apparent in the way my informants discussed Bingata and their image of Okinawa:

- **Mrs. T**

Generally I have a positive image of Okinawa. I heard that local society is very close and that people look after each other, which is something we seldom experience in urban life. I also like their healthy diet. However, I'm not interested in living there since I'm now too accustomed to life in the city. It might be difficult for me to live in a tropical, isolated, small-scale society.

I was always interested in Okinawan woven textiles, which are considered chic and highly desirable among kimono fans. It is well known that Okinawan products are always genuine and honestly produced, and Bingata is no exception. I heard that once a kimono retailer in Korea trained local workers in the technique of Oshima-tsumugi (*a silk shantung from Amami Oshima Island*) in order to reduce production costs and pass off this Korean-made textile as 'Oshima-tsumugi' in the Japanese kimono market. I also heard that some other local fabrics involve heavy use of chemical dyestuffs. But with Okinawan products, this sort of thing never happens. I watched a documentary programme about Bingata on TV and know that they [the craftspeople] use a natural pigment for colour and somehow apply the pattern by hand. Usually I'm not a big fan of Bingata since it features a lot of different colours, which is not really to my taste. However, the obi that I bought [at *Mitomo*] looked nice on the kimono that I was wearing that day and the price was pretty reasonable. I liked the combination of blue and indigo. The shop assistant said that such delicate colouring is found only at the Tamanaha workshop. Although I never choose an item just because the craftspeople has a particular title, such as LNT, it is really such an honour to own something made by

these great craftspeople. The subtle brown colour of *bashōfu* creates a pleasant contrast with the blue and indigo colour combination of the Bingata pattern. It's exciting to imagine how this colour will mature in the future. This said, I do not know how people can wear classic Bingata pieces, which usually have too many colours in big motifs on a flashy yellow background.

For me, wearing Bingata means enjoying a handmade product of Okinawa that uses only local, natural materials. I generally love craftspeople's pieces; I can sense their spirit in their work. It is different from the fabrics produced in a factory, where people press a button and the product comes out from a machine. How old is Mr. Tamanaha? [I answered that he is 73.] I think he might not be able to work much longer. When he retires, the piece that I bought might be even more precious, since nobody can do the same job he does I presume. When I go home, I will look at the pattern more carefully. I think I'll wear the item for casual occasions, such as going shopping in Ginza. In the near future, I'll educate my daughter about the aesthetics of kimonos. I'll give her all my garments, together with instructions about the right occasions to wear them.

- **Mrs. M**

I first heard about Bingata a short while ago when my daughter took a stencil-dyeing textile course at art school. She went on to make her own Bingata items for her graduation assignment, so I know about most of the production process. We recently visited Okinawa and enjoyed everything there, except the US military base. It reminded us of the negative issues associated with Okinawa, including the war victims. When I think of Bingata, I tend to visualise the classic patterns, such as those involving the Chinese bird and the big motifs on a bright yellow background. Such vivid fabrics never existed in Japan, so in that sense, it makes me feel that Okinawa is a foreign country.

[At *Mitomo*] I bought an obi with a hibiscus pattern on a subtle blue-grey background. At first I thought the hint of red was slightly too strong, but when I looked at the pattern carefully, I saw that the red parts help maintain the coherence of the whole. It would be stunning (albeit a bit showy) if worn with a kimono in a muted colour. I also thought that I could share it with my daughter; I hardly share any yo-fuku items with her but with kimonos it is much easier. The piece was quite reasonably priced compared to those made by other experienced craftspeople. I always wonder why the textiles made by LNTs are so expensive. Of course, the price reflects their skill and experience. However, I think it's not good for a work to be valued according to the name rather than the quality. In fact, I can usually spot the pieces made by these big names because they've recently become so popular. Maybe I am just jealous since I can't afford them. Yet it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that the LNT thing has become like a brand. Mr. Tamanaha's Bingata patterns have become like Louis Vuitton! And just as you can

see Louis Vuitton patterns on all different types of clothing and accessories, so you can see Tamanaha's pattern on all different types of kimono items.

I started to buy Bingata work some years ago, and now I have five items. I wear a Bingata obi when the weather is fine; the bright colour on the pattern looks very nice in the sunlight. I also wear Bingata items when I'm going somewhere where others will be in their kimonos. If somebody knows about Bingata, they'll spot it and say, "Oh, it's Bingata! It's rare and chic." If they don't, they might ask, "What is this? Where did you get it? It's so colourful!" When I wear Bingata, I feel cheerful and uplifted. However, as it's a product from Okinawa, I also think about the negative aspects of Okinawan history and the issue around the US military base. In that sense, maybe I shouldn't enjoy Okinawan items so openly. However, I cannot help but take pleasure in the cheerful Bingata patterns.

I'll give these Bingata items and all my kimonos to my daughter. I'll be very upset if she amends them and tries to use them for anything other than kimonos! I can understand the trouble of wearing kimonos, but she just needs to practise. I know some tips [for kimono wearing] to help save time and effort, so I'll teach those to her! It is also much better for the craftspeople if their products are being worn rather than kept in a kimono chest because they're 'too hard to wear'.

- **Mrs. K**

The only thing I know is that Bingata is a textile from Okinawa, and that it's made using many colour dyes and patterned stencils. I don't know about the technique. For me, wearing Bingata is about enjoying something from "Ryukyu", a foreign country. My image of Ryukyu is that the local people look different from us. Okinawa also reminds me of the war, which I learnt about in history class. Originally, I didn't like the classic Bingata patterns, which have big motifs with many colours on a bright yellow background. I saw it in a soap opera about the history of the Ryukyu Kingdom and it fixed my image of Bingata.

Then my view of Bingata changed completely when I saw a finely patterned piece with a subtle blue colour combination in a kimono magazine. I was so fascinated that I rushed out to the Okinawan textile event being held at *Mitomo*. I bought an obi made by Tamanaha. I liked it because it had delicate lines of patterns with very deep and subtle colours. I wish I could afford a kimono made by him. I tried one on but it cost JPY 1680,000 (about GBP 13,000), which was too expensive. So instead, I bought a different Bingata kimono made by another craftsman, which was offered for a more reasonable price. It has a detailed pattern with a subtle blue background. My mother and even my grandmother looked nice in it! I'll wear it for casual occasions. It's not good to

admit it, but kimonos with a fine pattern are very practical because they don't show dirt so easily. I hope I can wear it for another 30 years. If I have a daughter and she likes it, I will allow her to use it. Eventually, I would give her all my kimonos I imagine. If I became rich some day, I would love to buy the duplex-dyed Bingata that was on display in the store. I didn't even check the price, but I'm sure it must be very expensive.

My informants' purchasing decisions were determined largely by the visual character of the products, including their colours, texture, and patterns. Once they found an item that is to their liking, they put the material over their chests to see whether it suited them (see Figure 4.10). Then they began the practical considerations, such as trying to work out which items in their drawers would go with piece in question, or whether they would pay in instalments or with a single transaction by credit card? As mentioned previously, the shop assistants are on hand to offer information about the techniques used to make the garment, its rarity, and the craftspeople who produced it in order to secure the sale. However, their primary concern was with the impression made by the products. It was not surprising that classic Bingata patterns from the Ryukyu dynasty, with their colourful motifs and bright yellow background (see Figure 4.11), didn't fit with present kimono fans' tastes in Binagta. They appreciated subtle and chic colour forms, which were in stark contrast to those of the classic designs. My informants didn't know about the production process, the technological innovations, or the craftspeople's struggles with the kimono market. As Mrs. M confessed, despite having certain negative feelings about the tragedies in Okinawan history, she finds Bingata a "cheerful and enjoyable textile". The historicity of Bingata, which was comprised with the complicated social backdrop of Okinawa, was not the essential aspect of these informants' purchasing decisions. They appreciated Bingata as an 'exotic material' produced in Ryukyu, a foreign country, and 'handmade' in a way that *necessarily* fits within their 'habitus' of kimono use (Sarashima, 2011). In fact, all of them also agreed that craftspeople should use Okinawan plants and flowers in their Bingata motifs. This is the market competitiveness of traditional craft products, with consumers evaluating goods according to the reality of social practice while expecting a certain element of locality and artistry in their character. It is argued that the 'archaeological' or 'historical' value of 'genuineness' in the old objects stored in museums is hardly

effective in processing ‘tradition’, as consumers do not appreciate it for their present use. Instead, the individual consumer defines the ‘authenticity’ of craft products according to their own experiences of the items. The aspects of locality and ‘tradition’ in these craft products are arbitrarily defined. Buyers choose a certain Bingata item by considering its design and colour combinations, as well as the craftsman’s skill in not producing something that looks old (such as the classic patterned Bingata).

Figure 4.11: Classic Bingata pattern with Chinese bird motifs on a bright yellow background (by courtesy of Naha City Museum 2009)

On display at *Mitomo* was a duplex-dyed work by Tamanaha (Figure 4.9). Even though nobody purchased it, the duplex-dyeing technique can be seen as ‘enchanting’ (Gell, 1998) these consumers. By being priceless, Tamanaha’s duplex-dyeing technique and his title of LNT were stood out of other products. The consumers’ appreciation of the craft techniques also fostered family bonds through their kimono collections. All of my informants had already begun to think about the future owners of the items they purchased, which they hoped would be worn as kimonos, such as their daughters and other descendants. Mrs. T can be seen to be investing in the transformative essence of a natural material, as she notes how the pigment will gain depth and character through aging. The materialized locality, technology, and creativity will acquire a ‘moral weight’ (Mauss, 1954:10) through consumers’ experience of kimonos, and this weight will in turn be bestowed upon future owners through their engagement with the items. It is clear that the survival of

traditional textile techniques in this cultural density of kimono practice driven by consumers.

To conclude this discussion, I present my informants' views on the concept of Living National Treasure, which underline the paradox between market competitiveness and the social respect of 'tradition'.

Of course we should appreciate the technique acquired through the efforts of these highly skilled craftspeople. However, such status puts them under a lot of pressure and this might have a negative impact on their creativity. I heard that some craftspeople lost the originality or character in their work after gaining LNT status, due to the social pressure to keep producing outstanding pieces. In addition, from the consumer's perspective, the LNT label is not necessarily a good thing, since it boosts product prices. This makes such works inaccessible to ordinary people. Some people think that crafts products are for decoration like art objects. I don't think it is right. Craft products should be accessible to ordinary people and appreciated by being used in everyday life. (Mrs. M)

I think it [LNT] is a very good thing as a system to protect tradition. However, I would never buy a product just because it was made by an LNT. Even if we didn't have such a system, I presume I would buy the products if they suited me. Of course, price is the major concern, but a good product is good in its own right and will be attractive to people. (Mrs. K)

I only have positive things to say about LNT. I think it is a very important institution to support these craftspeople, who have kept on doing the same thing for many decades. Among number of diligent craftspeople, only a few talented people gain the title. They are the top craftspeople and are an absolute treasure for our country. I think the LNT system might motivate other craftspeople to attain similar standards of creativity and diligence. (Mrs. T)

It is not too much to say that the social categorisation of 'tradition' provides the value of 'newness', 'singularity', 'individualism', and 'creativity', and that communicates the consumers, craft techniques, and the craftspeople actively through the economic exchange.

4.3 Case study 3: Other Bingata products

In this section, I turn my attention to consumers of other Bingata products, such as place mats, book covers, coasters, handbags and shirts called *kariyushi-wear*. These items are oriented towards daily use, and they are therefore available at much lower prices than kimonos. This case study to focus on consumers of these Bingata items was conducted in Naha, the capital city of Okinawa prefecture. While Bingata kimonos are mostly sold and consumed outside Okinawa, there is a sizeable market for these smaller items in Okinawa itself. As mentioned in Chapter 2.2, production of

small Bingata pieces played a major role in the revival of the craft during the post-war period. Since that time, Okinawa has established itself as a major tourism destination, and Bingata products have thus become popular souvenir items as well. In order to provide a broad picture of the myriad social meanings of Bingata, I will consider the following three types of products and consumers: 1) small craft products made by local craftspeople and consumed by local people; 2) machine-made Bingata shirts (called kariyushi-wear) worn by local office workers; and 3) mass-produced souvenir products purchased by tourists.

4.3-1 Handmade Bingata items

The Okinawa Prefectural Government and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) engage in the promotion of local craft industries. They delegate the task of quality control to each craft association, providing them with a stamp to certify items as “*Dento-Kogei-hin* (traditional craft products certified by METI)” (discussed in Chapter 1.2-4; stamp shown in Figure 1.3). In addition, they support craft unions’ activities for product development in order to popularise craft works in modern society. Numerous new Bingata products have been created under this scheme, such as casual shirts, sandals and handbags, which aims to make Bingata more a part of everyday life. The prices of such items vary, though they are generally much more expensive than machine-made alternatives. Unlike kimonos, which are produced and distributed with the same dimensions as other fabrics, these small items require additional manufacturing processes, such as cutting and stitching. As Bingata workshops primarily produce kimonos, the output of these small items is not big enough to reduce the entire production cost. Therefore, they turn out small hand-made items to be sold as luxury products (see Figures 4.12 and 4.13).



Figure 4.12: A shop selling Bingata scrolls. They cost JPY 6,000-10,000 (about GBP 48-80) each. (Photographed on 27th September 2009)



Figure 4.13: A place mat with Bingata pattern costing JPY 2,300 (about GBP 20). (Image: cited from the website of Rakuten Shopping)

One particularly popular small Bingata item is a type of shirt known as kariyushi-wear. *Kariyushi* means happiness or luck in Okinawan dialect. The concept and shape of kariyushi-wear is very similar to that of Hawaiian Aloha shirts. The shirts have a straight body line with an open neck, and people are allowed to wear them for business occasions. As part of a tourism campaign launched in the 1970s, local shop attendants started to wear shirts similar to Aloha shirts (called either “Okinawa-shirts” or “Okinawa-wear”) in order to promote the image of Okinawa as a tropical paradise. In 2002, as a part of an environmental awareness campaign⁴⁴ (and also to promote local industry), the Okinawa Prefectural Government declared kariyushi-wear the official term for the summer shirt-style office dress. They defined kariyushi-wear according to the following criteria:

- 1) the open-neck style shirt;
- 2) designed and produced in Okinawa and;
- 3) featuring motifs related to the landscape or culture of Okinawa (Okinawa Prefectural Government 2012, author’s interpretation).

As kariyushi-wear became an official outfit, local politicians, officers of local authorities and TV presenters started to wear it at work. The practice was soon widespread within the business community. Nowadays, most Okinawan people wear kariyushi-wear to work during the summer instead of a suit and tie. There are a wide variety of shirts available at different price levels, including cheap versions produced outside Japan. In order to distinguish locally produced products from these foreign-made varieties, the government introduced an official logo-tag (Figure 4.14). Among the locally produced pieces, prices vary depending on the manufacturing process. If they are made of real Okinawan textile or involve Bingata patterns applied by craftspeople, they generally cost over JPY 15,000 (roughly GBP 120) (Figure 4.15). Meanwhile, the most popular Bingata items – the machine-printed shirts – are available for JPY 4, 000-5,000 (GBP 30-40).

⁴⁴ This ecological campaign, known as “Cool-Biz”, was launched by the Ministry of Environment. Since then, government officers were allowed to wear shirts without a tie to work during summer to cut the costs of air condition. Okinawan Kariyushi-wear was introduced as an ideal summer outfit during this campaign.



Figure 4.14: “Kariyushi-wear” logo-tag introduced by the Okinawa Prefectural Government



4.15: Kariyushi-wear with Bingata pattern applied by local craftspeople, priced at JPY 18,800 (GBP 120)

Below, I present two female informants’ narratives of their experiences of Bingata craft products. One is Mrs. F (aged 68) and the other is Ms. Y (aged 22).

- **Informant 1: Mrs. F (age 68)**

Mrs. F is a housewife who lives in the centre of Naha City and with her two sons. Her husband passed away a decade ago and she now lives mainly on the money from her pension and some other minor income. Her hobby is making Bingata items in classes run by a local cultural centre. In addition to the pieces she has made herself, she owns a variety of other Bingata products.

After I lost my husband 10 years ago I started to think about how I would spend my time for the rest of my life. I was always interested in Okinawan craft products. Then, about six years ago, I came to hear about the Bingata class at the local cultural centre. I signed up, and was soon making Bingata items myself. My Bingata collection is not just my own work. For my 60th birthday, I asked Mr. Chinen [a prominent Bingata craftsman in Okinawa] to make me a kimono. As his wife is an old friend of mine, he gave it to me for a very reasonable price. I absolutely love it. I’ve worn it a few times at weddings and always receive nice comments from my relatives. My next favourite thing is a piece of kariyushi-wear where the Bingata pattern has been applied by a craftsman. I bought it in a local craft shop a few years back and I liked it a lot, so I got another one this year. I wear it when I meet up with old friends in nice restaurants. Usually I wear a dress on these occasions, but if I need to drive a long distance I have to be in trousers, in which case kariyushi-wear is the best thing. The bright pattern on a plain white background looks very refreshing. The problem is washing it. I need to take it to be dry cleaned every time I use it. I used to wash it myself by hand, but each time I did this the colour dye on the pattern faded slightly, so I don’t do it anymore.

This means that now I can't use it so frequently. However, I sometimes apply the pattern to plain kariyushi-wear myself at Bingata class. Though it isn't as perfect as the craftspeople's work, I still like it. These days so many people wear mass-produced, machine-made kariyushi-wear to the office. I also have some made-in-China items, but with many of them it's obvious they were made in a factory. Every time I wear 'real' Bingata kariyushi-wear, I receive a comment from my friends, like "oh, that's a nice one: real kariyushi-wear!" Despite the cost of dry cleaning, I still like these items a lot. I think my kariyushi-wear pieces are the most frequently used of all my Bingata items.

I hardly use those place mats made by craftspeople, neither for special occasions nor for daily dining. Instead, I always use an indigo-dyed place that I found in a 100-Yen shop⁴⁵. Even though it is made in China, it is very pretty, and besides, I can make a mess on it without feeling guilty. It is great value. I cannot imagine using a real Bingata place mat every day, having to take it to the dry cleaners every time I spill some food on it – that's ridiculous! I understand the value of real Bingata works. However, because of the price and the cleaning costs, they aren't really suitable for daily use. The tapestry and the wall scrolls are no different. If you hang one up for a few months, the colour dye will fade in the sunlight. Therefore, it is very hard for me to bring craft items into daily life. I sometimes buy these craftworks as gifts for friends, both Okinawan and non-Okinawan. They love these things and were always grateful.

Making my own Bingata in class is an enjoyable hobby. Sometime, thinking about the total cost of all the material I've used, not to mention my time and effort, I wonder whether my works might not be equally as expensive as the professionals' pieces! But regardless of whether it's my work or that of the real craftspeople, I like all things Bingata! (Interviewed on 11 May 2009)

- **Informant 2: Ms. Y**

Ms. Y (aged 22) lives in central Naha and is a graduate student at a local university. She is a fan of small 'pop-Bingata' items produced by young craftswomen at their workshop *Tida-Moon*. Their designs are closer to young people's tastes, with quirky

⁴⁵ 100-Yen shops offer numerous daily items for JPY 100 (roughly GBP 0.8). Most of their products are made in China or other South East Asian countries to minimise production costs. 100-Yen shops are found throughout Japan and are very successful.

motifs and pastel colour combinations attained using chemical dyes (see Figures 4.16 and 4.17).



Figure 4.16: A local primary school student with a Bingata charm with frog motif hanging from her backpack. (Photographed in Tida-Moon, Naha



Figure 4.17: Key rings with a dinosaur motif in various colours.

Ms. Y occasionally purchases items from Tida-Moon. On the day of our interview, she was wearing a hair accessory (Figure 4.18) from the workshop. She describes her experience of these products as follows:

I got this hair clip from my friend for my birthday. I am very fond of this and other items from Tida-Moon. The first thing I purchased from this workshop was a small framed picture of a flower motif, which I gave to my friend for her birthday. Then I bought a handbag as a farewell present for a foreign student who studied at my university. My friend and I are planning to get a nice thing from this workshop for another friend who is due to finish her master's degree soon.

When I wear this hair clip, people don't usually realise that it's Bingata. I love Tida-Moon's Bingata pieces, since the pattern is not too obvious like in other Bingata work. I often wear this hair band when I'm going to see somebody who is likely to notice the Bingata effect. At Tida-Moon, they use many novel motifs, such as dinosaurs and cute animals. It is unique and popular among younger generations. Even though their motifs

are not traditional, they use traditional techniques, so I think their works are definitely Bingata. I do not think craftspeople should have to stick to either traditional or local motifs in their work.

Honestly, I do not think products from Tida-Moon are practical for daily use. It is mostly because they are relatively expensive compared to most everyday items. I understand that these craftspeople do not really make much profit considering the labour costs. However, as a student, their products are not something I could use on a daily basis. In fact, whenever I visit their shop, I'm tempted to buy a T-shirts with a cute motif for myself, but eventually I decide against it. I suspect that the colour dye might be ruined when I wash it, despite the shopkeeper's insistence that the chemical dye is washing machine safe. Therefore, I feel that their products are only really for special occasions. In this sense, I think it is unfair that only rich people can enjoy nice Bingata products. And as for those machine-printed Bingata items sold in souvenir shops, even if they're offered at a low price, I can hardly choose them because they look very cheap indeed. Actually, I have never known any of my friends to purchase these machine-made products, except one who bought an item for his friend from Tokyo. That said, if I got a job in a local bank or somewhere where karyushi-wear is worn to work, I guess I would buy machine-made items a lot.

I know somewhere in my house we have many small genuine Bingata items, such as vase mats and coasters, produced by local craftspeople. However, I've never seen them in use. We just don't know how to use them, or maybe we're not aware that they *can* be used. Of course, we appreciate them and the skill behind them – that's why we don't throw them away. Someday, somehow, I hope I can use them. Compared to our old coasters, the 'pop-Bingata' works from Tida-Moon feel much more familiar. When I get a job, I will buy some items for myself and will use them every day. Eventually, I would like to ask a craftsman to make me my own Bingata kimono. That is my dream.

I think there are many meanings in Bingata practice: as craft, as art, and as a local industry. The dominant meaning of Bingata has been transformed since the time of the Ryukyu dynasty, and it is still changing I think. There is no fixed form or function in Bingata. I think the dinosaur motif won't be as popular as the classic designs one sees around Okinawa. However, as long as the products are made by Okinawans and enjoyed by Okinawans, they will be part of mainstream Bingata work. (Interviewed on 13th October 2009)



Figure 4.18: Ms. Y's Bingata hair accessory (Photographed on 13th October 2009)

Despite the authorities' aim of bringing local craftwork into everyday life, according to these informants, small Bingata pieces are impractical for daily use. Due to the effort and expense involved in using colour dyes and also the high retail price of the products, these small Bingata items are less popular than alternative products. Albeit that, these informants appreciated the 'singularity' (Kopytoff 1986) of these products, which was bestowed through the technique and originality of their creators. They didn't use them on a daily basis, but instead treated them as something for special occasions that can establish or consolidate specific social relationships; for example, Mrs. F enjoyed hearing positive comments from her friends when she wore the 'real' Bingata kariyushi-wear, while Ms. Y carefully chose the right occasion to wear her Bingata hair accessory for maximum effect. Although they acknowledged the impracticality of some aspects of the items, they did not reject the craft itself, but instead celebrated the impractical aspects for making the item non-quotidian and thus suitable as a gift. The 'moral weight' (Mauss 1954:10) of these small gift items was attained through their singularity and uniqueness, which were bestowed, in turn, by the exceptionality of techniques involved in their production as well as their high retail price compared to machine-made products.

Meanwhile, despite being offered at far more expensive prices and being used fairly infrequently, Bingata kimonos are also appreciated by these informants. This demonstrates the hierarchical order of craft products developed through the industrialisation of products and expansion of alternative shapes and functions of

them. As Ms. Y suggested, Bingata production has multiple social meanings, including as art, craft, and local industry. By adopting new technologies, Bingata craftspeople have succeeded in joining the Japanese kimono market. Yuko Tamanaha demonstrated the ‘high artistic and historical value’ of Bingata (as defined in Japanese ICH policy) by perfecting the duplex-dyeing technique. Likewise, other craftspeople, such as those at Tida-Moon, are also exploring the new social values associated with Bingata by experimenting with new motifs, colours, forms, and functions. The narratives of two Okinawan women discussed previously who purchased small craftworks suggest that all people appreciate niche craft products and their variations. Indeed, they are convenient means of self-expression, as evidenced by Mrs. F’s decision to wear handmade kariyushi-wear when dining with friends. In addition, these small items work well as gifts, as both Ms. Y and Mrs. F observed. I contend that producing traditional craft products does not mean repeating the same process; as Kisaburo Ogawa, a craftsman of Kenjo-Hakataori (woven fabric from Fukuoka), stressed, tradition is ‘a new thing’ (see Chapter 2.4) that is always ‘in the process’ (Tilley 1997) of being possessed, worn, used, and exchanged by people in the present. Thus, commoditisation and innovation in some aspect of the material are the fundamental operations for a craft practice to be kept alive.

4.3.2 Machine-printed Bingata: Kariyushi-wear and souvenirs

Termed ‘terminal commodities’ by Kopytoff (1986:75), mass-produced and homogenised items are supporting the value of priceless, and the singular products. In the hierarchical order of Bingata products, machine-printed, mass-produced are the commonplace items. Produced mainly in foreign countries, they appear in the market with a variety of forms and functions and are available at affordable prices. In this section, I will discuss the mass-produced kariyushi-wear sold to local people and tourists as souvenir items.

As mentioned above, kariyushi-wear is the most popular outfit in Okinawa during the summer months. By collaborating with apparel industries, local companies offer a variety of products featuring traditional textile patterns such as Bingata and designs inspired by local plants and objects. This locally produced kariyushi-wear (excluding the handmade items mentioned previously) is available at prices ranging from JPY

5,000 to 8,000 (roughly GBP 40-60). All products are sold with the official logo-tag provided by the Okinawa Prefectural Government (see Figure 4.14). For business occasions, however, kariyushi-wear made in China, Vietnam, and Thailand is very popular. These foreign made items are priced at around JPY 2,500-4,000 (GBP 20-30). They are generally made from a mixture of cotton and nylon, which makes them suitable for machine washing and drying, unlike locally produced kariyushi-wear, which is made from 100 per cent cotton. This mass-produced kariyushi-wear (both local- and foreign-made) signals the emergence of a new industry as well as a new group of consumers (O'Connor 2006). Below, I present personal narratives from two individuals who use these different types of kariyushi-wear.

- **Informant 3: Mr. H**

Mr. H (aged 38) works for the Okinawa Prefectural Government at the Unit for the Promotion of Local Industry. He uses locally produced kariyushi-wear in his position as the government official responsible for promoting this industry.

When it was introduced nearly a decade ago, kariyushi-wear wasn't so popular, mostly because there was a lack of variations in the designs. Female workers, in particular, avoided wearing it, since they didn't want to risk the embarrassment of coming to work wearing exactly the same outfit as one of their colleagues. These days, though, there are plenty of designs to choose from. As the style became popular, the industry flourished, facilitated by innovative product development. In this year's collection, the product with small motifs on a plain white background is a big hit. I think the kariyushi-wear phenomenon has been driven by the re-discovery of Okinawan identity. Okinawa is the only tropical region in Japan, and the colourful patterns and relaxed shape of kariyushi-wear reflect this. It is very practical and easy to wear and wash, though my wife complains that she has to iron it.

I do not think kariyushi-wear with Bingata patterns is a traditional product, even if it is made using traditional materials and craft techniques. Once the textile is tailored to make kariyushi-wear, it is no longer traditional, though it *is* a custom. For me, traditional Bingata should be used for kimonos. Maybe in the future kariyushi-wear will become a tradition, but at the moment it feels too familiar and I just cannot link it with traditional Bingata clothing. (Interviewed on 6 October 2009)



Figure 4.19: Okinawa Prefectural Government workers in kariyushi-wear (photographed on 3rd October 2009)



Figure 4.20: Kariyushi-wear catalogues (2009 edition) published and distributed by Okinawa Prefectural Government (Image: cited from Kariyushi-wear 2009 collection)

- **Informant 4: Ms. T**

Ms. T (aged 24) works for a local bank, the Bank of Ryukyu. Local banks used to provide uniforms for their female workers, but after the economic downturn of the late 1990s they abandoned this policy to cut costs. Following the Prefectural Government's initiative, kariyushi-wear was recommended to all workers for everyday use during summer time. Ms. T, like the rest of her colleagues, often opts for foreign-made kariyushi-wear at the office.

I'd guess my colleagues each have 10-15 kariyushi-wear items on average, though the number probably varies according to their age and salary. I often buy cheap kariyushi-wear in the local shopping centre for daily office use. They cost like JPY 3,200 (GBP 25). In addition to these, I have a few slightly more expensive items that cost around JPY 7,000 (GBP 50) and were designed and made in Okinawa. I wear these nicer items for special occasions, such as going on a date or going out with friends after work. When a senior worker – usually the chief of the division – is promoted and leaves our branch, we often buy them a top-quality piece of kariyushi-wear made from local fabrics. That sort of thing costs around JPY 20,000 (GBP 170), and you have to get it from a craft shop. You can spot authentic kariyushi-wear made using local materials and techniques at a glance. In general, machine-made kariyushi-wears are nice and practical. Shops have recently started to offer a greater variety of designs at a wider range of prices. Before, I was bit embarrassed if I saw one of my colleagues

wearing the same thing as me, but if we buy cheap items this sort of thing is bound to happen. Nowadays we're used to it, and if it happens we just laugh about it. It's very nice when businessmen come over from Yamato and change their shirts to kariyushi-wear when they visit our company. We value their attitude and respect for our customs.

I really don't think kariyushi-wear with Bingata patterns [she is currently wearing the item shown in Figures 4.21 and 4.22] can be considered traditional. For me, the traditional Bingata pattern is different from that found on kariyushi-wear. Recently, the motifs used for kariyushi-wear have become more casual by modifying classic motifs. I don't really care about the logo-tag provided by the prefectural government. Although the government expects the image of Okinawa in kariyushi-wear patterns, the image of Okinawa is in fact a diffused one, so there is no fixed motif or pattern in kariyushi-wear. (Interviewed on 15 October 2009)



Figure 4.21: Staff at the Bank of Ryukyu in kariyushi-wear. Miss T. is on the right (Photographed on 15th October 2009)



Figure 4.22: A popular piece of kariyushi-wear for women. This item was made in Vietnam and costs JPY 3,200 (GBP 25) (Photographed on 28th October 2009)

The next items I wish to look at are the mass-produced souvenir products popular with tourists. The forms and functions of these products are quite similar to those of other small craft items, such as purses, pencil cases, handbags, handkerchiefs, aprons, and t-shirts, yet they are available at much lower prices (between 500 and 5000 JPY (4-40 GBP)). When Okinawa became a popular tourism destination in the 1980s, some outside companies started producing souvenirs featuring local textile patterns. I met a sales manager from *Nanpūdō*, a souvenir production company with headquarters in Okayama Prefecture (located in the western part of the Japanese

Islands Archipelago). According to him, the plain fabrics are imported from Vietnam and China and brought to Kyoto for pattern transformation, after which they are sent to Okinawa to be cut into shapes. Meanwhile, some products are made entirely in China and Vietnam. The sales manager explained that there weren't any factories big enough to output these items in Okinawa. A common feature of these items is the use of classic Bingata patterns and colour combinations with kumadori-like shading effects (see the Figure 4.23-25). Another feature of these products, as Ms. Y noted, is that local people do not tend to buy them, since the profits usually go to non-local companies.



4.23: Bingata card case sold in JPY 1,050 (8 GBP). On the flower motif, shading effect is recognizable (Photographed on 28th October 2009)



Figure 4.24: Bingata handbag (left) priced at JPY 5,400 (GBP 40)



Figure 4.25: Tissue case with mountain stream motif

I interviewed 20 tourists who bought some of these souvenirs featuring classic Bingata patterns; these included seven school students (both male and female), nine

office workers aged between 20 and 50, and four elderly people. The study was conducted on a busy street in central Naha where there are numerous souvenir shops and stalls. Most of the interviewees were in tour groups and so had limited time to spend shopping for souvenirs. For this reason, I focused our discussion on two main questions – “*why did you choose this item?*” and “*who will use it?*” – in addition to more mundane enquiries about age, occupation and place of origin. Below, I provide some typical responses (one or two from each age group):

1) A female high school student (aged 17) from Niigata Prefecture (the northern part of Japan) visiting Okinawa with her class. She bought a handkerchief for JPY 1,050 (GBP 8):

I got this for my mother. I chose it because it's the only thing I could afford and it's compact and therefore easy to carry around. I don't know whether my mother will like it but it's definitely very Okinawan, especially this bright yellow colour. With this colour and the pattern my mother might recognise this as being from Okinawa. I liked the colourful pattern on this handkerchief; I have no idea what it's called but I know this pattern is something quintessentially Okinawan since you see it everywhere here.

2) A female high school student (aged 18) from Nagoya Prefecture (middle part of Japan) visiting Okinawa with her class. She bought a pencil case for JPY 840 (GBP 6):

I bought this to enjoy shopping in Okinawa with my friends. We bought matching items of souvenir together as a memento of our trip to Okinawa. I don't know how long I'll use it for, but certainly as soon as I get home, I'll replace my battered old case with this one. The bright yellow is very Okinawan. I don't know if the pattern is Okinawan but it definitely looks like something from around here. Thinking about it, I'm not sure that this pattern will go with the other stationery I have. Now I'm sorry that I didn't choose something in gentle colour! But I'm sure I'll enjoy it anyway.

3) A female office worker (aged 25) from Tokyo, who bought a cosmetics case for JPY 1,050 (GBP 8):

I bought this case for myself. I think it's a very nice souvenir of Okinawa, since anyone can identify it as Okinawan and it was affordable. I don't think it was that cheap as a product since I can buy the same thing in Tokyo for much less; this is a

souvenir price. I know this [design] is called Bingata. The bright yellow colour and the flower motifs are famous symbols of Okinawa. However, I don't know if this is traditional. I've seen many different Bingata items in craft shops and museums. This item looks similar to these craft works or museum artefacts but is somewhat dissimilar in shape. These craftworks are very expensive. I bought a lacquer dish made by local craftsperson for my family, so I've blown most of my budget! I think this pattern and colour are popular among tourists.

4) A male office worker (aged 38) from Saitama Prefecture (near Tokyo), who bought a handbag for JPY 5,400 (GBP 45) (Figure 4.24):

I bought this for my mum. She was interested in visiting Okinawa but her doctor said she cannot travel at the moment. I wanted to get something really nice from Okinawa for her. I chose this handbag because the motif is flowery and the colour isn't too flashy like on other items. Bingata is usually too colourful, and I wasn't too sure about other woven textile products. I hope she likes it; she'll definitely be able to identify it as Okinawan.

5) A self-employed man (62) from Tokyo, who bought a pair of bags for JPY 3,150 (GBP 25):

I got these for my two daughters. I'm not sure whether they will like them, but if they don't my wife can use them. I've got some other things I can give my daughters. I think this pattern is very Okinawan. I don't think it's really traditional, but you can't find it anywhere else in Japan.

6) A female graduate student (aged 40), who was given a pair of handkerchiefs by a friend who visited Okinawa (interview conducted in Tokyo):

I got a pair of handkerchiefs with Bingata and Basho-fu patterns from one of my friends who visited Okinawa. I quite like the pattern and the colour since I can't find such designs on the main island. I think it is visually quite traditional, as I can easily identify it as an Okinawan product. I do not know much about the production process behind it; quite possibly it wasn't even made in Okinawa. I've never used Basho-fu before, but I used the Bingata handkerchief for wrapping my bento-box (lunch box). It has a cheerful pattern and colour. I can't use it as a handkerchief since it is too colourful for my taste. I don't know how often I will use this but I suspect that I'll eventually get tired of it.

Judging from these comments from office workers and tourists, both kariyushi-wear and souvenir products are widely considered to be non-traditional items. They are

produced and consumed to satisfy the temporary demands of the mass market. For kariyushi-wear, the consumers' main demand is to have something that is easy to wash and wear. As a result of this ease of use as well as its affordability, kariyushi-wear has become an established working outfit in Okinawa. For tourists, the most important thing is to be able to buy souvenirs quickly and easily, with price not being a major concern. By using the motifs and colours of classic Bingata patterns (as shown in Figures 4.23-4.25), souvenir products are recognised by tourists as the objectified image of Okinawa. The production process, materials, shapes, and purposes of objects, together with their social meanings, are utterly different from those of the Bingata garment produced during the Ryukyu Dynasty. However, both of these Bingata-like products (i.e. kariyushi-wear and souvenirs) contribute to empower local business. Rather than being identified as either 'genuine' or 'fake', kariyushi-wear and souvenirs use classic Bingata patterns to harness the social and symbolic meaning of 'Okinawan-ness'. Thus, these consumers (i.e. local workers and tourists) process the spatial significance of Okinawa by purchasing, wearing, and using such products. By multiplying society exposure to Bingata patterns, consumption activities contribute to creating the landscape of present-day Okinawa.

4.4 The Bingata pattern that connects

In this chapter, I have looked at four different types of Bingata products: artwork; kimonos and mass-produced products; kariyushi-wear; and souvenirs. Bingata products are actively reproduced and transformed for use in various objects, and are constantly served 'fresh' to consumers both in Okinawa and beyond. By reflecting on their narratives, it becomes clear that these consumers play active role in circulating the reciprocal meaning of Bingata practice. Bingata objects are hierarchically ordered according to their rarity and their economic and cultural value. In this hierarchy, the artwork of duplex-dyed Bingata is located at the top, followed by kimonos and small craft products in the middle, with mass-produced item at the bottom. If we look at this hierarchy from a Marxist perspective, one might conclude that to speak of traditional craft techniques is to romanticise the role of human labour in mechanical production (Miller 2005, Schneider 2006). However, I wish to stress the essential relation between Bingata patterns and the consumers' engagement in purchasing, possessing, experiencing and narrating. Were (2010)

notes the capability of patterns to create connections between different things through processes of resemblance, memory and transformation. He describes the pattern as “a type of meta-media, an expressive form of thought that robustly moves across forms in time and space”, and highlights “the manner in which, through its inherent logic, pattern can be viewed as a trace of consciousness when it surfaces in the forms and media through which it is incarnated” (Were 2010:3).

Bingata patterns allows communications between craftspeople and consumers as well as between spatial and temporal boundaries, such as past and present or Okinawa and beyond. For instance, most of the interviewees at the Okinawa Prefectural Museum pointed out the modern aspects in Tamanaha’s design by comparing it to the classic Bingata patterns. Kimono fans appreciated the delicate use of colour and creative designs in the work of contemporary craftspeople while they considered that classic pattern was not suitable for their use of kimonos. Two local interviewees who purchased small craftworks expressed their gratitude for the new shapes and functions of these works and supported the creativity of present craftspeople. Local office workers and tourists showed their positive view of the classic Bingata pattern used for kariyushi-wear and souvenirs by highlighting how these products were distinct from ‘tradition’. Bingata patterns lead people to draw comparisons between past and present designs, forms, and functions, as well as to make inferences about their traditional characters. Pattern also mediates the craftsperson’s bodily practice of Bingata, as well as consumers’ experience of his or her work. Likewise, it mediates tourists’ spatial experience of Okinawa and their recollections of their visit. In addition to highlighting the essential part played by consumers in reproducing the social meaning of Bingata, these three case studies testify to the power of the pattern: pattern relates people, space, time and creates the social cognition of Bingata. Therefore, I argue that the social meaning of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Bingata practice is only one aspect of a cultural form that is indexed as ‘tradition’. Supported by Craftspeople’s creativity and the emergence of industry to produce new forms and functions, Bingata has spread throughout society and is dynamically accessed and experienced by consumers. Through myriad social meanings of products and people’s interactions with them therewith, the aspect of ‘tradition’ lives on.

Conclusion

Richard Kurin, an American academic from the Smithsonian Institution, defines the difference between ICH and museum objects as follows:

[ICH is something that] is not preserve[ed] in states' archives or national museums. It is preservation in communities whose members practise and manifest its forms. If the tradition is still alive, vital and sustainable in the community, it is safeguarded. If it exists just as a documentary record of a song, a videotape of a celebration, a multi-volume monographic treatment of folk knowledge, or ritual artefacts in the finest museums in the country, it is not safeguarded (Kurin 2004:12).

This statement, indicating the perspective of heritage or museum studies, mainly questions the ways in which ICH can be safeguarded; this view rests on the *a priori* assumption that cultural forms are the primary means of safeguarding heritage. As described in Chapter 1, there is a disparity between the European and Japanese concepts of heritage as well as their modes of heritage development. The most obvious reason for this is the divergence in the ways in which these two regions deal with their respective histories and the social changes with which these histories are permeated. The European heritage concept was developed with the aim of reconstructing people's image of the past by collecting and storing ancient objects, in order to provide a sense of origin and belonging in response to the anxiety brought about by social change. As Lowenthal suggests, these European monuments and sites are 'the projection of an image of permanence on to a landscape [that] serves to deny the realities of change' (Lowenthal 1985, Rowlands and Tilley 2006:500). By monumentalising the past, Europeans choose one aspect of history to preserve as social memory (Rowlands and Tilley 2006). In contrast, the Japanese heritage concept – the law for Protection of Important Cultural Properties, established in 1950 – was created in response to social change starting with the Westernisation of the Meiji Era and ending with defeat in the war. It was to disconnect the present from a past imbued with the pain of defeat in the Second World War and the ultranationalism that preceded it. Under U.S. control following the war, Japan endeavoured to promote economic development. The new social value, 'tradition', contextualised as Important Intangible Cultural Properties were bestowed on some selective cultural forms and were offered to citizens.

Ever since its establishment, as society entered into an era of economic development, the concept of ‘tradition’ has been an important social institution in people’s daily lives. The example of popularised categorisation of material styles such as ‘Wa’ (Japanese style) or ‘Yo’ (Western style) depicts the society’s standardised material environment brought about by mass production and mass consumption, the outcome of high pitch industrial growth beginning in the mid 70s. These ‘Wa’ style objects and cultural practices were labelled ‘tradition’ and became modern lifestyle choices rather than mnemonic acts for imagining the past or sense of origin, observed in European heritage practice (cf. Lowenthal 1985, 1998). As described in Chapter 1, information about local folk festivals, traditional performing arts, local festive foods, and traditional textiles used in kimono styles are presented to the public through various forms of social media. As commodities that combine Western luxury with the essence of ‘Japaneseness’, they appear in high-end magazines such as *Katei-gahō* and *Fujin-gahō* or other types of mass media that deal with fashion, lifestyle, tourism and cuisine. Combining beautiful footage with rhetorical descriptions and using popular actresses to model kimonos, these various forms of mass media advertise these traditional activities as elements of a ‘desirable lifestyle’ (Moeran 1995). The accessibility of ‘tradition’ is not limited to rich or adult consumers, the prime target of these high-end magazines and mass-media forms; school students experience ‘tradition’ collectively as a mandatory part of school life. Through their daily academic practices, extracurricular activities, and school trips, all such ‘traditional’ lessons and experiences are timetabled equally for all students, in order to encourage their understanding and promote their appreciation of the moral and cultural value of ‘tradition’. Of course, these school activities do not necessarily influence students towards choosing traditional cultural activities as their career; the significant fact here is that, ‘tradition’ is offered as a subject to study in parallel with other disciplines such as mathematics and history. It is obvious that ‘tradition’ exists in multiple socio-economic and cultural contexts in present Japanese society. Half a century on from its inception, the concept of ICH has been firmly established in society not simply as a result of the government’s efforts in supporting practitioners but also due substantially to the general public’s experience of a highly capitalised, industrialised, information society.

Meanwhile, ‘an image of permanence and a sense of origin’ are readily apparent in the symbolic retention of the Japanese Imperial Family, whose bloodline can be traced back to the seventh century B.C..⁴⁶ The permanence of the Japanese nation and the identity of its citizens is assured by such continuity. Japanese people can seek their origin in these two domains: the Emperor, *Amaterasu-Ōmikami*, believed to be the ancestor god of the Imperial Family; and Shikinen-Sengu, the purification ritual conducted in the sanctuary of Ise Shrine every 20 years. Malinowski’s study of myth and its social function is helpful in examining the two different but interrelated concepts: ‘sense of origin’ and ‘tradition’ inventoried as ICH. His approach to consider myth links together a number of different realms of experience, such as social life, economic activity and magical performance might fit both concepts. In the two sites of Ise Shrine, there are several small sanctuaries dedicated to the worship of the guardian gods of various spheres, such as commerce, education and culture, fertility, and good harvest. Visitors stop at each site to pray to each god according to their wish. Local festivals comprising of Shinto or Buddhism ritual practice are also designated as ICH and have a similar function to the prayer rituals observed at Ise Shrine. Some traditional performing arts and crafts involve iconographies of local gods, legends and myths. Malinowski notes:

[M]yth, as a statement of primeval reality which still lives in present-day life and as a justification by precedent, supplies a retrospective pattern of moral values, sociological order, and magical belief. It is, therefore, neither a mere narrative, nor a form of science, nor a branch of art or history, nor an explanatory tale. It fulfils a function *sui generis* closely connected with the nature of tradition, and the continuity of culture with the relation between age and youth, and with the human attitude towards the past. The function of myth, briefly, is to strengthen tradition and endow it with a greater value and prestige by tracing it back to a higher, better, more supernatural reality of initial events. (1954:146)

Both Ise Shrine’s ‘sense of origin’ and ICH’s ‘tradition’ appeal to people’s moral, social and religious values and serve to foster links between the past and the present, bringing continuity to these values. The significant difference between the two is that the concept of ICH is predicated on adaptability of its form and function according to social change and market economy, while people share a solid image of ‘sense of origin’ through the continuity of the ritual Shikinen-sengu that transcends the social institution of ICH. As previously examined, some LNTs who have produced their works for Ise Shrine’s ritual are featured in magazine articles. This openness of

⁴⁶ Since the first emperor, Emperor Jinmu (660-585 BC), there have been 125 imperial rulers of Japan (Imperial Household Agency 2012).

‘tradition’ (meaning, in this context, the concept of ICH or LNTs) to the general public contrasts with the secrecy surrounding the works involved at the rituals in Ise Shrine. Although the efforts and struggles of the LNTs are presented in the mass media, their names and social status do not appear in their works for Ise Shrine. The celestial nature of the landscape of Ise Shrine is emphasised through the presence of many layers of *torii* (sacred gates) and forest paths that effectively hide the inner sanctuary and rituals, which are undergone only by Shinto priests and the Imperial Family members. Mundane details, such as the names of crafts, ICH or LNTs, are considered meaningless and insignificant relative to the absolute value of *kami*. The Vanuatu Cultural Centre provides an example of setting boundaries between secrecy and openness in exposing local culture (Geismar and Tilley 2003); separated from the exhibition for the general public, is a ‘safe room’ set aside for local people’s use. This ‘safe room’ works as a ‘bank’ in which people can archive their family customs or local rituals and to which outsiders can gain access only with special permission. Signage on the displays reads “heritage is mainly things you cannot see or touch”. Geismar and Tilley observe that there are ‘tensions between the material and the immaterial’ that museum technologies must navigate (ibid: 181). These examples suggest that by establishing the social concept of ‘tradition’ or ICH, authorities offer the public access to cultural forms identified as ‘tradition’. At the same time, by limiting public access to certain aspects of the cultural form, the value of the hidden layers of ‘tradition’, open only to limited parties, is asserted.

Regarding this social tendency of access to local cultural forms as ICH, some anthropologists observe that globalisation and homogenised social environments bring about ‘production of locality’ (Appadurai 1996). In such a tendency towards localisation or indigenisation of cultural forms as the repercussion of globalisation, claims of authenticity or identity in that form occur in heritage discussion. As Kurin’s statement suggests, cultural heritage is primarily something that is to be protected and is often at stake when its production becomes industrialised. Sahlins questions such an attitude by underlining the hybrid character of cultural forms, which consists of both domestic and foreign invented contents and supports the perspectives of Hobsbawm and Ranger as well as Giddens that traditions are all invented according to the social demand (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, Giddens 1994, Sahlins 1999). These arguments testify to the benefits of an anthropological

approach to analysing ICH. As I repeat elsewhere, no cultural form originated as ‘tradition’ or ICH to be safeguarded. They are originally socio-cultural or economic activities and by involving outside contents, they gain significant value in society. Backed by modernity and globalisation, the concept of ‘tradition’ and ICH applied to a cultural form increases public awareness of and access to the form, and contributes to a *social milieu* in which the cultural form is constantly evolving, in order to fulfil social demands such as to be traded, studied, or sometimes to be safeguarded as ICH.

My ethnographic research on Bingata highlights the function of ‘tradition’, a *social milieu* in which the four entities – works, techniques, craftspeople and consumers – work actively as a single agent driving production and consumption. From the tribute textiles of the Ryukyu Kingdom to today’s luxury kimonos and kariyushi-wear, Bingata has been metamorphic and adapted its social meaning to contemporary socio-economic conditions. With the memory of their great master, Eiki Shiroma, their struggle to join the Japanese kimono market and their quest for recognition in the art world, craftspeople have sought to popularise their work in modern society, and thereby the reproduction activity of Bingata continues. Heritage critiques tend to ignore the practitioners’ desire to gain social recognition and concerns over matters of ownership. As Brown suggests, so far, ICH concept and management have been discussed in terms of ‘the balance between heritage as a resource for all of humanity and as something that property belongs to, and remains controlled by, its communities of origin.’ He underlines the importance of the public domain for sharing the information and the activity of ICH so that the public can understand and evaluate it. He notes, ‘without better balance of openness and discretion, in other words, the cultural public domain could be reduced to an ideal devoid of content’ (Brown 2005:49). On the contrary, the transformation of Bingata and craftspeople’s efforts to continue the practice indicates the role of ICH in making the cultural form open to the public domain. Leach constructively examines the benefit of IPR in terms of cultural production and its ownership as follows: ‘[f]or once property is granted to the inventor or creator, the invention or creation can circulate. Instead of keeping knowledge secret to prevent others using it, IP law allows others to use knowledge, while at the same time ensuring that its origin is acknowledged each time they do’ (Leach 2007b: 109). Once Bingata became labelled as a ‘traditional craft product of Okinawa’, it gained the freedom to be shared with and appreciated by non-

Okinawans. The sticker tag ‘Den-Mark’, provided by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and attached to each product, certifies the product to the local craft association. The tag attached to the material of Bingata comprises numerous immaterial aspects associated with Bingata practice, such as the landscape of Okinawa that nurtured the Bingata practice, the moral value of Bingata as a ‘tradition’, craftspeople’s technique and the product’s stability to be offered in market. In addition, the contextualisation of Bingata as ‘tradition’ successfully masked its unwanted past and contributed to the creation of a new sense of modernity in Okinawa following the chaos of war and U.S. control. At present Bingata serves the social role of being offered to the general public outside Okinawa as one of the ‘traditional textiles of Okinawa’, together with other local woven textiles. Meanwhile, as examined in the example of Kohama Island, some remote islanders still retain a sense of antagonism towards Bingata, with its original location of Shuri being reminiscent of the past ruler and the exploitation of the local woven textile industry. The transformation of social meaning of Bingata testifies to the function of ‘tradition’ or ICH, that is, to select a certain part of Okinawan’s past and authorise the cultural form to the local space and people; to brand the form as a ‘local product’ to be offered to people from outside the local space; and to mythologise the technique as *sui generis* by broadening its access to the public through mass media, tourism development and education.

The impact of the ‘traditionalisation’ of Bingata can be observed in two intertwining entities – craftspeople and consumers – who share in common a physical and emotional engagement with the material. As I observed in the Tamanaha workshop, the craftspeople’s tireless daily effort in their practice reflects their passion for attaining high levels of technical and artistic skill. Esoteric techniques such as duplex dying attained by Yuko, the LNT, have been fostered through decades of daily repetitive physical work, cooperation and competition with other workers, desire for future independence or fame, market competitiveness and one’s creativity. Leach underlines the positive impact of practitioners’ desire to differentiate their work from that of others, through interdisciplinary practice, and states that ‘differentiation itself provides the possibility for ever-new forms to emerge, all entities are hybrid, and each new hybrid entity provides a new possibility for combination in novel and differentiated form’ (Leach 2007a: 176).

Craftspeople constantly produce new designs by sketching local plants and other local objects and adapting them to their own Bingata style, gained through decades of practice. As the craftspeople make adaptations to the balance between the quantities of natural dyestuffs and chemical dyes, between the classic motifs of the Ryukyu Kingdom and his or her personal design motifs, and between his or her style of Bingata and the taste of customers, the reproduction process of Bingata is continuously evolving, driven by each craftsperson's technical and aesthetic quest and by market competitiveness. It is the exercise of 'enskillment' that Ingold defines as the process of learning that is developed through physical and mental application of experience in the environment (Ingold 2000). Through their daily physical engagement with the work in the workshop, younger practitioners learn the master's technique and artistic representation skills such as design and colour combination. As discussed in the exploration of Warnier's argument of praxeology, the workshop is a lively space in which each craftsperson's bodily movement and emotion are freely expressed. The feeling of tension required to work accurately to within less than one millimetre; the realisation of one's technical achievement; the sense of surprise when a new design emerges from the master's sketchbook; the motivation to continue this job and the ambition for independence or fame – all of these feelings and emotions are experienced in one's daily practice. Therefore, as a form of ICH or 'tradition', Bingata practice is not only transmitted to the younger generation as a skill, but also as a time-space practice driven by the minds and bodies of its practitioners.

The following images are of recent articles featuring Bingata of Okinawa in a kimono magazine, *Utsukushii Kimono*, Winter 2012, and the high-end lifestyle magazine, *Katei-gahō*, September 2012. In the former, under the caption, 'The story of Ryukyu Bingata', the history, technique and production process of Bingata are explored, along with an account of the struggles and experiences of a Bingata craftswoman, Sachiko Yafuso. In the latter, Yuko Tamanaha, the LNT of the Bingata technique and his son, the successor of his workshop, Yusho Tamanaha appear. The article explains Yuko's processes for designing a pattern and making stencil paper and describes how he transmits his skills to his son. These articles serve as examples of the open access to information on 'Bingata tradition'. However, these images and written descriptions are also limited as a form of information transmission because

they rely on the reader’s ability to *imagine* the reality of the practice. Of course, one’s reaction towards this information is determined by one’s interest in the material and one’s socio-cultural background. Meanwhile, as examined in Chapter 1, the signs of ‘tradition’ are ubiquitous in the society, therefore readers might associate these images and explanations with the notion of ‘tradition’ as being something important that they learnt at school and in other cultural and ritual contexts.



Figure x: Captioned as ‘Dyeing the flowers of Ryukyu’, the article describes Yuko’s pattern design drawn in his sketchbook (bottom right); the technique for cutting out the outlines of the motif from the stencil paper and the utensils made by Yuko himself; the technique for transferring the pattern onto the textile; and the process of teaching the cutting out technique to his son. On the following page, his *obi* design, with motifs of local strawberry flowers and lilies, is worn by an actress (Katei Gahō, September 2012, p. 150-151).



Figure xx: Captioned as ‘The production process of Ryukyu Bingata: visiting the workshop of Sachiko Yafuso’, this article introduces the entire production process at Sachiko’s workshop; her contribution to the Bingata craft association; her passion for Bingata making; and the transmission of her skill to junior craftspeople (Utsukushii Kimono, Winter 2012, p. 108-111).

Consumers of Bingata kimonos and other small craft items appreciate the skill and creativity of contemporary craftspeople in ways that conform to individual consumer’s lifestyles, tastes and social relationships. Through actions such as

possessing, wearing or giving the object as a gift, people identify the authenticity of the products with their own images and experiences of other craft products and then value Bingata, the technique and the practitioner as something meaningful in their lives. In other words, production of Bingata draws upon consumers' capacity to understand the moral, historical, aesthetic and technical value of Bingata production. None of the Kimono fans whom I interviewed in Tokyo could explain the production process yet all expressed their respect for the craftspeople, guessing at their decades of commitment to the practice and the technical difficulties encountered, thus underlining the significance of the material. Non-Okinawan interviewees who tried on Bingata garments at the Okinawa Prefectural Museum were unable to explain the production process but they could all tell me about the history of Bingata in relation to the Ryukyu Kingdom, the visual image of Okinawa and the impact on the design, the difference between Bingata work and the kimonos produced in non-Okinawan places, and the significance of the design of the work. They also expressed their imagined uses the product, such as the special occasions for which they would wear it. Most of the Okinawan interviewees could explain both the production process and the historic background accurately and had a clear idea of the cost of the product. They narrate Bingata through their own experience of 'tradition' such as wearing or purchasing kimonos, or attending educational opportunities to learn history, local 'tradition' (not necessarily related to Bingata).

Hanley observes the high level material culture (in this case craft skills and consumer culture of these craft products) has developed in Tokugawa era. A well-developed consumer culture to cherish an aesthetic austerity contributed to Japan's economic growth and stability after the Second World War (Hanley 1997). Through my interviewees and the mass media that focuses on traditional craft products, it is obvious that Bingata isn't the exception in craft products of that consumption is strongly supported by women for domestic and social occasions as studied by anthropologists (Moeran 1997, Goldstein-Gidoni 2001, Daniels 2010). Nonetheless the highly gendered consumer culture, I argue that the capacity of the general public to understand, appreciate and consume Bingata works surely draws upon the *social milieu* of 'tradition' established as ICH concept in 1950 and settled through economic development, advertisement of 'tradition' by mass media and the education system as I examined previously.

Both groups of consumers describe Bingata material in terms of their own bodily experience of it, such as in wearing or purchasing kimonos for themselves or as gifts for others. While the ‘tradition’ of Bingata has come to appear dominantly in the form of kimonos, small Bingata items such as coasters, scrolls and kariyushi-wear (open-neck style shirts), displaying the craftsperson’s personal motif, are also on offer to the public. Although these small craft items are designed for everyday use, most of the interviewees consider them to be impractical for daily occasions, and instead either give them as special gifts for important friends, or use kariyushi-wear for special occasions such as lunch gatherings with friends. As craftspeople continue to produce new designs, consumers adapt the purpose of these products to fit their lifestyles. The invention of ‘pop Bingata’, involving acryl dyes and motifs familiar to the younger generation, asserts the potentiality of creativity in ‘tradition’. Overuse of chemical dyes and the use of cute animals as Bingata motifs are both considered ‘non-traditional’ methods of Bingata production by experienced craftspeople. However, as Ms. Y notes, ‘as long as the products are made by Okinawans and enjoyed by Okinawans, they will be part of mainstream Bingata work’; ‘pop Bingata’ is certainly recognised as a new model of Bingata for younger customers. Therefore, the creativity of craftspeople is an important element in meeting the consumers’ demand for ‘tradition’, a concept that varies and evolves in response to the complexities of modern society, such as the varied financial and social backgrounds of individuals, their social relationships and active interactions with those from outside their habitual space, facilitated by logistics and information, and differences in taste and lifestyle between generations. In fact, when I asked both junior and experienced Bingata craftspeople the question, ‘when are you content with your Bingata practice?’, all of them gave me similar answers: ‘when my works are worn by customers and make them happy’; ‘when my works are sold and used by customers’; ‘when customers appreciate my works’. The emotional drives of individual craftspeople, such as their wish to be successful and competent and to be appreciated by customers, and their pride in their craftsmanship and creativity, are the essential forces involved in mediating the agent-patient interrelationship of the four entities: skill, work, practitioner, and consumer.

The mass-produced, machine-printed Bingata products are not reduced to ‘fake’ products to assert the value of craft-made Bingata products. As revealed in the interviews with tourists who purchased mass-produced souvenir products and local business people who wear kariyushi-wear at their offices, these materials invite the same human actions as do other craft products (e.g. purchasing, using, giving as gifts and wearing). In addition, since the products involve classic Bingata patterns and colours, it is obvious that they are active agents in establishing the visual image of Okinawa. After Okinawa was returned to Japan in 1972, colourful Bingata patterns and motifs were used by the tourism industry to establish a tropical and exotic image of Okinawa to promote tourism (Tada 2004). Ever since, souvenir products abound with classic Bingata patterns and motifs, continuing to offer this visual image of Okinawa to non-Okinawans. Against this socio-economic backdrop, the pattern and colour of Bingata have been reclaimed as the norm for formal dress, in the form of kariyushi-wear.

In 1975 the Okinawa Prefectural Government designated *Okinawa Bingata Dento Hozon-Kai* (The Association for Preservation of Bingata Tradition) as the holder of Important Intangible Cultural Property of Okinawa, and the concept of ‘tradition’ was bestowed upon the Bingata products. Since then, the concept of ‘tradition’ has given a versatility to the material of Bingata, and made it a product that invites numerous kinds of human actions and interactions, such as socio-economic and cultural, as can be seen in the examples of the varieties of Bingata products and consumers. As a result, the circulation system of Bingata technique – the products, craftspeople and consumers, as outlined in Gell’s theory – has been established and empowered by economic and social development. The development of this circulation system inspires questions such as, ‘why and how does such a system work?’, ‘who drives it?’, and ‘for what purpose is it driven?’. From the phenomenological perspective, both practitioners and consumers are subjects of bodily action towards Bingata objects; their subjective minds make the objects meaningful – as a product to sell, a work to present at an art exhibition, a gift, a fashion item – according to one’s time-space relationship with the Bingata object and to one’s social background. One’s personal experience of interaction with ‘tradition’ also draws heavily upon the accepted social meaning of ‘tradition’, established by the Important Intangible Cultural Property Protection Law in 1950. This law has

been influenced by a number of social facts: the inclusion of ‘tradition’ in the educational syllabus; the development of the economy, logistics and tourism industries; the shift in socio-cultural values that is the result of increasing depopulation in rural areas, rural land development, and drastic population shifts from agriculture to heavy and service industries; and the standardisation of lifestyle that is a result of ongoing globalisation. In these social conditions, by increasing the social meaning of Bingata objects and by interacting with others’ values, both practitioners and consumers explore their meaningful or joyful relationship with the product. In this way, a concatenation of the activities of production and consumption of Bingata is facilitated and establishes each individual’s own perception of Bingata, ‘tradition’, Okinawa as a geographical space, and the ‘locality’ attached to Okinawa. Therefore, ‘tradition’ is the ‘method of loci’ (Kuechler 1987) that invites myriad cognitive operations driven by human action and emotion, relating a cultural form to an image, and an image to the space in which the form originates.

Conservation of a cultural form as Intangible Cultural Heritage draws heavily upon holistic human life in modern society. It is simplistic to consider that designating a cultural form as ICH in itself means it is necessarily something that should be conserved or preserved. However, if we examine this issue through a wider lens, it can be argued that UNESCO’s establishment of the ICH Convention has added a new social value to the concept of ‘tradition’ in existing cultural forms, thus influencing the perception of the social benefits of ‘traditional’ cultural forms in a variety of fields, such as politics, economy, education, morality and culture. Even though the initial aim of Japanese ICH was to establish a new social value and to forget certain aspects of the past, the concept of ‘tradition’ has been applied to some cultural forms and became a part of human life and social activity. It is impractical to discuss the authenticity of ICH as a cultural form from a fixed viewpoint, such as one would with historical or archaeological evidence, or to observe it as an object to archive in a museum, as Kurin argues above; practitioners, consumers and others judge and describe the cultural form as ‘tradition’ according to their own experience and perception of it. The policy of ICH can be better understood as one that aims to establish the ‘method of loci’, to involve as many human actors in a cultural form as possible by providing the *social milieu* of ‘tradition’, which functions to allow interaction between the cultural form, the skills and practitioners involved in its

production, and members of the public who experience the form in the context of a modern lifestyle. It is obvious that cultural heritage, either tangible or intangible cannot be sustained solely in the field of culture. By extending its social field to the reaches of economy, policy, education and ecology, heritage policy aims to give social value to a cultural form and to connect its reproduction activity to other social values.

Finally I introduce the potentiality of ICH policy in terms of political and diplomatic benefit. In 2012, the Japanese government announced that it had selected Japanese traditional and local food as a candidate for designation as Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO. So far, UNESCO has designated twenty different cultural practices as ICH of Japan. All are performing arts, crafts and folklores that have already been listed as Important Intangible Cultural Properties or Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties by the Japanese ICH policy. Therefore, choosing food for UNESCO's ICH is an attempt at creating a new form of 'Japanese tradition' on the international stage. In fact, the government's aim is to assert and promote the safety of local food, as well as the images of Japan's rural landscapes, much of which was devastated by the aftermath of the Tohoku Earthquake of 2011 and the subsequent nuclear power plant disasters (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2012). This is the latest example of the ways in which ICH brings about diplomatic advantages, including promotion of inbound tourism and foreign investment. In developed nations such as Japan and the countries of Western Europe, no further drastic social and economic developments are expected in the foreseeable future. The world's leading economies are now the newly developed nations such as China, Russia, India and Brazil. In recognition of this international trend, these developed nations may also find it necessary to consider the important diplomatic role of ICH in the near future. In the case of the UK, though not yet ratified by UNESCO's convention, the introduction of ICH policy could provide a consolidation methodology in the political tensions surrounding issues of Scotland and Northern Ireland. Of course, the British Council has long been promoting a positive image of Britain to the rest of the world. However, I believe that their cultural heritage policy, currently run by the department for culture, media and sport, should expand into the diplomatic and economic fields, as a response to an increasingly uncertain political world atmosphere, beset by fears of terrorism, an ailing economy and ongoing globalisation.

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