

Chapter 8

Events and Intangible Cultural Heritage

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Intangible Cultural Heritage

This chapter sheds light on intangible cultural heritage (hereafter ICH) and its relationships with events. As an area of study, ICH became noticeable in academia during the 1980s (Jimura, 2019). Since then, ICH has been examined in various but often interconnected subject fields, including heritage and cultural studies, history, anthropology, museology and semiotics, and as well in tourism and events studies. This implies that ICH is an interdisciplinary area of study and has been explored by many different approaches. In the real world, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (hereafter UNESCO) has been playing a central role in the recognition and conservation of ICH around the world since the late 1980s. This has also been demonstrated by the Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore (1989), the Director-General's initiative to create a new programme for the ICH (1992), and the Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity (2001) (Aikawa-Faure, 2020). Such a series of interrelated movements, especially the Proclamation, led to the adoption of the Convention for the Safeguarding of ICH (hereafter ICH Convention) in 2003 at the UNESCO General Conference (Jimura, 2019). Thus, it would not be a coincidence that ICH has been investigated more widely and intensely in academia since 2003 (Jimura, 2019). Of these studies, some focus on the ICH Convention (e.g. Kurin, 2004; Bortolotto, 2007), whilst others explore ICH more broadly (e.g. Lenzerini, 2011; Lixinski, 2013).

Regarding the content of the ICH Convention, Article 1 shows its purposes as follows:

- a) to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage;
- b) to ensure respect for the intangible cultural heritage of the communities, groups and individuals concerned;
- c) to raise awareness at the local, national and international levels of the importance of the intangible cultural heritage, and of ensuring mutual appreciation thereof;
- d) to provide for international cooperation and assistance (UNESCO, n.d.).

To achieve the purposes specified in Article 1, Article 2.1 defines what ICH is in the context of ICH Convention as follows:

“the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills - as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith - that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. For the purposes of this Convention,

consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development” (UNESCO, n.d.).

In relation to Article 2.1, Article 2.2 demonstrates typical kinds of ICH protected through the ICH Convention as follows:

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

When considering ICH and events, as Article 2.2 of ICH Convention indicates, ‘events’ is one of the representative examples of ICH. Wise and Jimura (2020) examine the interrelationships between tourism, cultural heritage and urban regeneration. In their book, the power of festivals and events is confirmed in terms of its impacts on tourism and urban regeneration (Jimura and Wise, 2020). Concerning the associations between ICH and events, a variety of ICH has been functioning as main theme(s) of events throughout the history. Such ICH includes religions, foods and drinks, arts, books (literature), dances/performing arts, films/television programmes/theatres and sports (Jimura, in press). These sorts of ICH work as central themes of events and are often related with the lives and interests of people who are connected with certain ICH. This signifies that ICH and events featuring specific ICH would reflect the cultural backgrounds and characteristics of the places where the ICH roots and events are held at least to some extent.

Amongst the events featuring diverse ICH, those highlighting a religion are commonly found throughout the globe. Nevertheless, there are clear differences in the principles and practices of religious events depending on religion and regionality. To cite a case, each of the world’s major religions such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Judaism has its own religious events. A certain degree of commonalities or similarities in the purposes and implementations of religious events are confirmed beyond regionality, but there are also some divergences by country or region. For instance, how to celebrate Easter or Holy Week in Christianity is different—and depends on a country’s cultural and historic backgrounds. Semana Santa is a Christian event that is held in Spain and other Christian (Catholic) countries with Spanish influences, but is not found in other Christian nations. On the other hand, Shintoism is a religion unique to Japan; therefore, Shinto events can be found only in Japan. For example, Aoi Matsuri is a Shinto event held in May annually in Kyoto. Although there are uncountable Shinto events all over Japan, each Shinto event reflects the individuality and locality on its aims and practices. Most of these religious events initially developed as local events whose main participants and audiences were local residents. As time goes by, however, some of the religious events, including Aoi Matsuri, have become tourism resources, attracting visitors from outside local communities.

In addition to religions, sports, particularly traditional or national sports, are appreciated, utilised and conserved as ICH (Niu and Yu, 2008) and have also been acting as key themes of events all over the world. Nowadays, probably the most famous and established sporting events are Olympics and Paralympics. Jimura’s (2020) study on Tokyo 2020 (at current, plans

rescheduled to 2021) reveals how this mega-sporting event has changed the cityscape of its hosting city and could work together with Japan's recent inbound tourism boom to revitalise Tokyo and Japan as a whole, especially their economy. As stated at the beginning, the main topic of this chapter is ICH and its connections with events. The following section focuses on fireworks as a typical example of Japan's traditional ICH and fireworks displays as major events featuring this ICH. The next section also discusses the impacts of fireworks displays on local communities and other stakeholder groups.

Fireworks (*Hanabi*) and Fireworks Displays (*Hanabi-taikai*) in Japan

Japan's fireworks are called '*hanabi*', which literally denote flowery fires. *Hanabi* have been entertaining Japanese people since the 17th century. Gunpowder is an essential element of *hanabi*. It is believed that gunpowder was imported to Japan together with Chinese-style guns and then with European-style guns by the middle of the 16th century. At that time, Japan was full of constant battles amongst many different domains. Due to this unstable social condition, there were a lot of demands for gunpowder, guns and their craftsmen. Considering all of these factors, it could be assumed that the know-how of *hanabi* making arrived at Japan when gunpowder and guns were introduced to Japan.

In the early 17th century, the whole of Japan was unified by Ieyasu Tokugawa and the Edo period (1603-1868) began. The Edo period is known as a very peaceful era without civil conflicts or wars against foreign countries, and gun production was strictly cracked down by the Tokugawa Shogunate (Honda, 2008). Thus, it is considered that gunpowder craftsmen commenced to produce fireworks (*hanabi*) instead of gunpowder (Kamieshu, 2016). This triggered the birth of today's *hanabi* craftsmen (*hanabishi*), companies and stores. It is generally believed that the first Japanese who experienced a firework was the aforementioned Ieyasu Tokugawa who watched the firework brought to Japan by a foreign merchant in 1612 (Honda, 2008; Kamieshu, 2016). In 1659, the Japan's oldest *hanabi* company and store, Kagiya, was established in Edo (today's Tokyo) (Honda, 2008). The *hanabi* Kagiya sold at that time were small fireworks such as Japanese sparklers (*senko-hanabi*) and pinwheels (*nezumi-hanabi*) that were enjoyed by families or amongst neighbours. It is generally agreed that Japan's oldest fireworks display (*hanabi-taikai*) is Sumidagawa Hanabi-taikai whose history can be traced back to Ryogoku Kawabiraki, started in 1733 (Honda, 2008; Kamieshu, 2016). During the Edo period, *hanabi* that bloomed in the night sky during *hanabi-taikai* were not colourful at all, but were just dark yellow because of a low ignition temperature (e.g. 1700 Celsius) and a limited variety of colour substances (Aogaki, 1987). *Hanabi* in *hanabi-taikai* began to be colourful during the Meiji period (1868-1912) and the Taisho period (1912-1926) thanks to the import of new and advanced chemicals from overseas countries (Aogaki, 1987).

Currently, *hanabi* launched during *hanabi-taikai* have still been improving in many senses, including their colours and designs. For instance, Figure 8.1 shows colourful *hanabi* with a sophisticated design launched during Kumano Ohanabi-taikai held in Kumano City, Mie Prefecture. The knowledge and skills required for production, launch and safety of *hanabi* used for *hanabi-taikai* have been conserved and advanced by each *hanabishi*, groups of *hanabishi* and *hanabi* companies from generation to generation. Today, *hanabi* and *hanabi-taikai* have been widely recognised by Japanese people as a seasonal tradition of Japan's summer as well as Japan's ICH. There are some possible reasons why summer has been regarded as a season of *hanabi* and *hanabi-taikai* in Japan. One of the commonly accepted reasons is that *hanabi* was originally launched to console the souls of family's ancestors and people who lost their

lives for various reasons. In Japanese Buddhism, *obon* is a traditional event held in July or August and intends to welcome the spirits of family's ancestors returning to their home during the *obon* period. Therefore, summer has been established as a peak *hanabi* season and currently numerous *hanabi-taikai* are organised in summer across Japan.

[Figure 8.1 about here]

Figure 8.1. Hanabi at Kumano Hanabi-taikai (photograph by Hiromi Morita)

Hanabi-taikai vary in terms of history, the number and variety of *hanabi* launched, the number and type of viewers and venues, and fee policy. Like religious events, initially the majority of *hanabi-taikai* emerged as community events whose main spectators were local residents, including families, children and youngsters. Some *hanabi-taikai* have developed into major regional or even national events usually held in summer that can lure not only local residents but people from around Japan. Of such major *hanabi-taikai*, Omagari no Hanabi (Daisen City, Akita Prefecture), Tsuchiura Zenkoku Hanabi Kyogi-taikai (Tsuchiura City, Ibaraki Prefecture) and Nagaoka Ohanabi-taikai (Nagaoka City, Niigata Prefecture) are generally viewed as the top three *hanabi-taikai* events of Japan (Maruyama, 2016).

As discussed above, varied kinds of ICH can serve as key themes for events, and *hanabi* is one of such ICH of Japan. In social sciences and the subject field of events studies, the impacts of events have been widely researched, and relevant to this chapter is recognising that economic and social impacts have been studied extensively (e.g. Dwyer *et al.*, 2006; Deery and Jago, 2010; Wise and Harris, 2019) followed by environmental impacts (e.g. David, 2009; Maguire, 2020). As for the impacts of fireworks displays, their environmental impacts have been much more examined, especially in the study fields belonging to natural sciences, rather than considering how these events create economic and social impacts. Thus, there is a need to look at various impacts of fireworks displays, particularly their economic and social impacts, and the following discussion will refer to the top three *hanabi-taikai* events of Japan.

First, social impacts of events have been utilised as a key justification for holding events (Richards *et al.*, 2013). These impacts can be understood as changes in people's way of life, or alterations in the quality of key stakeholders of events including local residents and visitors (Sharpley and Stone, 2012). In the case of *hanabi-taikai* in Japan, even the majority of today's main *hanabi-taikai* initially started as local events, often as religious ones. In fact, the root of Omagari is a socialising opportunity and pastime enjoyed amongst local peasants and landlords, and then developed into a fireworks oblation to Suwa Shrine in 1910 (Ishirugi, 2012). The origin of Nagaoka is also a local religious festival commenced in 1892 (Ishirugi, 2012). Nowadays, both Omagari and Nagaoka are arranged annually in August and have been established as important summer traditions of these cities. In contrast, Tsuchiura started in 1925 as a local commemorative event and has been held in autumn annually, because it has also been acknowledged as a significant harvest festival (Ishirugi, 2012).

Over around a century, many of such *hanabi-taikai* originally began as local events have developed into regional or national *hanabi-taikai* as represented by Omagari, Tsuchiura and Nagaoka. In this process, social meanings of these events have also altered. Currently, Omagari and Tsuchiura play a role as major national *hanabi* competitions where *hanabishi* from all over Japan compete each other by demonstrating their great skills and ideas through the displays of their cutting-edge *hanabi* productions. Given these two major *hanabi-taikai* and the fact that the majority of *hanabi-taikai* is held in summer, it could be stated that social impacts of *hanabi-taikai* include not only conservation of Japan's seasonal, typically summer, traditions at local,

regional and national levels but also inheritance of knowledge and skills of *hanabishi* to Japan's future generations. On the other hand, Nagaoka is not organised as a *hanabi* competition. Instead, it has been retaining its commemorative character and has also been praying for revivals from natural disasters (e.g. 2011 Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami) and pandemic diseases (e.g. COVID-19) in recent years. In this sense, social impacts of *hanabi-taikai* like Nagaoka contain raising people's awareness of various important issues for humankind and their society as well as uniting people across Japan emotionally. Through the development of *hanabi-taikai* as popular tourism resources for wider audience; hosting cities of famous *hanabi-taikai* can enhance their recognition amongst people in Japan. However, the ties between *hanabi-taikai* and local community may have weakened and/or locality of each *hanabi-taikai* may have diminished through such a process. Changes in the quality of events are often confirmed in the commoditisation process of events such as evolving into tourism resources (Jimura, in press). Such social impacts can also be comprehended as damage on the authenticity of traditional *hanabi-taikai*. Recently, furthermore, many *hanabi-taikai* whose primary purpose is to work as tourism resources have been newly initiated (e.g. Yokohama Sparkling Twilight since 2012).

When local *hanabi-taikai* have turned into regional and national ones, they would have had more touristy natures as events. As mentioned above, this can cause negative rather than positive social impacts on local communities. Instead, this commoditisation process can bring positive rather than negative economic impacts to local communities. The hosting cities of the top three *hanabi-taikai* are not large municipalities in terms of their populations (around 80,000 in Daisen City, around 140,000 in Tsuchiura City and around 280,000 in Nagaoka City), and do not have major visitor attractions except their *hanabi-taikai*. Moreover, none of them are situated close to Japan's metropolises. Nevertheless, a large number of spectators come to the hosting cities on the day(s) of their *hanabi-taikai* (around 750,000 to Omagari (Daisen City), around 650,000 to Tsuchiura City, and around one million to Nagaoka City) (Walker Plus, 2020). This implies that a vast amount of economic revenues can be brought to the hosting cities and prefectures. In fact, it is estimated that direct spending by the spectators of Omagari 2010 within Akita Prefecture is around five billion Japanese Yen, which is over \$48 million USD (FIDEA, 2010). If such financial revenues surpass the operating costs of *hanabi-taikai*, they are evaluated as financially successful events. When *hanabi-taikai* were annual local events enjoyed only within local communities, their operating costs were not a major issue mainly due to their small sizes. Currently, however, the operating costs of *hanabi-taikai* are a vital issue for their organisers who are typically local governments and chambers of commerce. Traditionally, sponsorship from local enterprises or local branches of large companies, subsidies from local governments, and donations from the general public, including local people, have been the main financial sources of the operating budgets of *hanabi-taikai*, especially major ones'. Lately, however, many local businesses and governments have reduced their financial supports for *hanabi-taikai* due to a long-term recession. Consequently, many *hanabi-taikai* have been struggling with a smaller amount of their operating budgets. To tackle with this difficulty, many major *hanabi-taikai*, including the top three ones, started selling paid seats to the spectators who are happy to pay some money (typically 1,000-4,000 Japanese Yen, or \$9-38, per person) to enjoy *hanabi* comfortably. As the majority of spectators who purchase paid seats would be visitors, paid seats can bring financial benefits from outside of the holding cities. The introduction of paid seats also meets the benefit principle and could ensure a certain level of fairness amongst all the spectators.

Lastly, environmental impacts of *hanabi-taikai* are also discussed in the context of events and tourism studies. The most common environmental impact would be a large amount of rubbish

dropped by the spectators during and after *hanabi-taikai*. It often costs the organisers a lot to clean it up. Sometimes, moreover, the fragments of fireworks balls are not totally collected after *hanabi-taikai* due to collection costs, and it would cause negative impacts on the natural environments, including riverbed or coast soils and river or sea waters (Inaba, 2016).

Research Directions

Considering the key points and discussions presented so far in this chapter, these final paragraphs suggest some ideas of future research on events and ICH. First, as there are a countless number of events featuring the same kind of ICH over the world, it would be worth investigating how the purposes and practices of the events highlighting the same sort of ICH (e.g. fireworks displays) can be different by locality (e.g. Japan and the UK). Such a comparative study would be effective to reveal the factors, particularly social and/or cultural ones that can cause the differences in the purposes and practices of the ICT events amongst varied areas.

Each ICH has associations with certain individuals, communities and/or groups. In light of ICH Convention adopted by UNESCO, however, each ICH should not only be respected by these key stakeholders who have direct links to the ICH, but be appreciated widely by people and organisations that do not have direct relations with the ICH. This signifies that the assistances required for the conservation of the ICH should be provided at local, national and international levels, and this can lead to proper conservation of the ICH for a prolonged period. This is a vital mission for all types of ICH across the world, and future studies on events and ICH should help relevant stakeholders to achieve this aim. To this end, it is crucial in future research to identify similarities and variations amongst stakeholders of certain ICH and ICH event in the levels of their interests in, understanding of, and attachments to the ICH and ICH event. These stakeholders comprise those who have direct associations with the ICH and/or ICH event (e.g. local governments, conservation bodies, and local communities) and those who do not have such links to the ICH and/or ICH event (e.g. visitors, media and researchers). The findings of such research would be helpful for the former, especially policy makers such as local governments, to develop or improve their conservation plans and management practices of the ICH and ICH event, and their awareness-raising activities targeting local people as well as visitors.

Regarding the impacts of events, traditionally their social and economic impacts rather than their environmental impacts have been main study subjects in events and tourism studies generally. Concerning fireworks displays, however, their environmental impacts have been paid more attention than their social or economic impacts, and these environmental impacts have been examined in natural sciences rather than social sciences. This phenomenon can still be confirmed even if the scope of studies is further narrowed down to the impacts of Japan's fireworks displays (*hanabi-taikai*). That is why; there is a need for events studies to examine various impacts of fireworks displays, especially those focusing on their economic and social impacts. In reality, however, economic, social and environmental impacts of events and even other kinds of impacts of events (e.g. political impacts) are often interrelated to each other. For instance, the development of a local *hanabi-taikai* into regional or even national *hanabi-taikai*, which is famous amongst Japanese people as a key summer attraction, implies such interrelations amongst different kinds of events' impacts. As a fireworks display becomes popular amongst outsiders such as tourists, it may begin to detract from their association with a certain locality/regional and local communities (social). This may provoke an increase in

the visitor numbers that can generate additional revenues for the hosting city of the fireworks display (economic), although it can also cause an increase in the amount of rubbish (environmental).

Given these possible ideas of future research on ICH and events whose key theme is a specific ICH, the event organisers will need to re-consider the meanings of the events in diverse contexts, particularly in the local context. Thus, a holistic approach that can explore not only various impacts of an ICH event but interrelationships amongst these impacts should be adopted in future research. This attitude aims to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the impacts of an ICH event and to consider what needs to be maintained and what should be changed for the better future of the ICH event. Such research would be essential to keep conserving the ICH itself and to keep running the ICH event over a long period without losing the original meanings of both the ICH and ICH event.

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