

# Challenges of Heritage Conservation on a High-Density Island Port Hamlet Mitarai town, Hiroshima, Japan

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## Abstract

The legacy of a high-density island port hamlet - Mitarai town has well reflect development process of regional maritime transportation and entertainment sectors for transit passengers. The town is well remained and representing glory of regional maritime legacy and architectural heritages which known as the highest population density of the region. Since the diffusion of new transportation modes, the town faces serious social shrinkage which significantly appeared social ageing and depopulation. Recent hope in Mitarai town where included nation's 36th preservation district in 1994, however, community faces significant social changes which endangered to sustain substance of local living culture. A number of issues are yet to be addressed to secure residents' contemporary living needs, which includes: maintaining sustainable tourism demands; prevention measures for natural disasters; appropriate community engagements; and encourage local entrepreneurs. In this paper, author firstly collect and analyse the periodical development discourse on the Seto Inland Sea region, particularly historic transformation of the Mitarai town and the region. Secondly, to analyses development / preservation discourses in Mitarai town.

## Keywords

Maritime Trade, Shrinking Society, Heritage Conservation

## How to cite

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## INTRODUCTION

### REGION'S HIGHEST DENSITY HAMLET ON A REMOTE ISLAND

High-density built environments have historically been observed in urban areas. The built environment has undergone dramatic changes, including sky-high concrete jungle, chronic traffic congestion, and intensified land use through uncontrolled densification, to accommodate the growing population. However, the challenge of urban planning has evolved to improve a more sustainable urban system due to urban densification. In particular, new physical development and social organization methodologies emerged to prevent urban society's collapse.

Interestingly, high-density phenomenon was also observed in the rural sector under specific circumstances. For example, Mitarai, a port hamlet on a remote island, has historically had the highest population density in the region. Mitarai has developed and thrived as a port of call for major shipping routes since the Edo period. The town's opulent architecture, which is still considered unparalleled in the region, reflected the prosperity of the maritime trades. Furthermore, the town had the region's largest Kagai (Geisha entertainment enclave), which members of the maritime trade frequented. As a result, many women who live in poverty had no choice but to work and serve there. The memories of the light and shadow of the people who came and went to Mitarai village help elucidate the village's high density.

High-density societies have seen both prosperity and decline across all ages and countries. Mitarai is no exception; with the decline of shipping routes and the enforcement of prostitution laws, the population has shrunk, and the community has lost its vitality. Mitarai is one of the region's most rapidly declining areas. The authorities are taking various measures to revitalize the community through heritage conservation practices. For many Japanese provincial societies, heritage conservation represents the last ray of hope for social revitalization.

Social shrinkage affects entire social structures and the nature of local communities. There is an urgent need to develop a new planning methodology to address the social shrinkage observed in Mitarai town and its provincial counterparts. Social shrinkage is dependent on the social context, and future issues are primarily unpredictable.

The social shrinkage phenomenon is not only observed in Japan but also visible in other Asian countries and regions in the future. The concurrent social shrinkage phenomenon and the challenges faced by Japanese local administrators and planners could serve as a seed for a new approach to future urban planning.

### RESEARCH FOCUS AND METHODS

Mitarai town is located middle of the archipelago of Seto Inland Sea in Western Japan, Ohsaki-shimajima Island is an area of blessed natural beauty and rich history. The island's area is only 18km<sup>2</sup>, including a 26km shoreline, and the topography mostly comprises steep mountains, which are home to a number of renowned citrus farms. The six small towns along the island's coast are administratively under Kure City, Hiroshima Prefecture (Fig. 1).

Among those towns is the community of Mitarai, which was selected as the 38th national Important Preservation District for Groups of Traditional Buildings<sup>1</sup> in 1994. Mitarai's harmonious natural scenery and traditional built landscape heritage were highly evaluated along with its history as an old-time transit port town.

However, despite a lengthy community-based effort to preserve its historic built environment and social revitalization, Mitarai's social shrinkage is escalating; the aging rate has been increasing at a constant, such that the population of individuals aged 65 and above was 57% in 2015, and the population decreased by 50% from 1995 to 2015<sup>2</sup>. Statistics recorded only 13 school children under the age of 15 in the town.

Mitarai historically served as the busiest transit port in the region where sailors awaited tailwinds, escaped from pirates, moored and repaired ships, and replenished essentials. Merchants bought and sold goods and sought information, and entertainers provided passing relief for travellers and sailors.

During its golden era, Mitarai's community was highly diverse, and non-permanent dwellers also contributed to forming its vibrant culture. Although the present representation of the island reflects geographic remoteness and marginality from the nation's mainstream developments, port towns historically played important roles as inter-regional interfaces and driving forces toward prosperity.

Mitarai town's glory derived from its status as the country's busiest transit port and a place to find entertainment. During its peak thriving period around the 1750s, over 100 geishas resided in Mitarai, comprising 20% of town's population<sup>3</sup>, and this figure does not include wanderers of them. Geishas are female livelihood those trained of singing, dancing and the art of conversation which generally entertain their male guest.

Research by the Mitarai History Record Group identified the town's entertainment sectors among its most effective magnets for attracting voyaging ships<sup>4</sup>. In fact, most of its transit port counterparts also had well-developed port functions, including Kagai (geisha's entertainment enclave)<sup>5</sup> near harbours.

As enclaves, Kagai were widely formed in Japanese cities, which comprised variety of businesses to entertain guests. Kagai had large population of Geisha which comprised by Geigi (entertainer) and Shogi (harlot). Their definitions and denominations were often varied depend on the region and city. This paper refers these definitions are based on the case of Mitarai town.

After the enactment of the Anti-Prostitution Act in 1956, only Geigis were officially remained and Kagais were functioned for the place of luxury entertainment as well as representing a part of Japanese tradition, but slowly disappeared.

Kagai is widely observed in Japanese cities and helped substantial urban growth. According to the geography study by Masahiro Kato, there were over 600 Kagais in Japan, and he described that even "Kagai bring up the cities in large"<sup>6</sup>. Of course, these Kagais have diverse feature which reflected local social settings and characters.

Needless to say, its large Geisha population has also reflected an unsavoury shadow on the town's history, which unjustly falls most strongly upon the female community. Also, social inferiors were underlying support for town's glory. Even though, it reminds us an important query; as historian Hiroshi Nunokawa clearly pointed out;

*“Extent the thought on the character of maritime world of archipelago of Seto Inland Sea which evolved by essential shipping business those have carried the people, commodities, money; it is inevitable to questioning the mean and form of prostitutions”<sup>7</sup>.*

Considering shadows of history can be burden, particularly as the cope of conducting an official heritage conservation project embodies the process of selecting the preserving property and collecting narratives and memories. Arguably, conservation practice is the reflection of social norm as well as politics. As such, it could be understood that efforts aimed at preserving Mitarai's built heritage would lead to important inquiries that remind us of diverse past varnishing memories, including sorrowful and as yet untold narratives.

In this article, the author portrays the historic built environment of Mitarai as a high-density living environment, captures its social transformations up to the present day, and considers the future role of urban heritage conservation and living heritages under the situation of a shrinking society.

## GLORY OF MITARAI: MARITIME TRADES AND SOCIAL DIVERSITY

### OFF-SHORE NAVIGATION AND THRIVING MITARAI TOWN

The legacy of Ohsaki-shimajima Island is believed to be traceable to the early settlements that archaeological research revealed were established during the Tumulus period<sup>8</sup>.

During the early days of navigation, sailors generally selected Jinori (coast-wise navigation). Later, maritime innovations enabled more rational navigation via Okinori (offshore navigation). With the introduction of Okinori, Mitarai became one of the most popular transit ports. Mitarai is ideally situated in the central position of inland sea and surrounded by smaller islands; it was characterized by a manageable tide flow, escapable from stormy winds and pirates. (Fig. 1)

The Edo Shogunate established a feudalistic social hierarchy that was closely associated with residences and economic roles; generally, landlord farmers were ranked highest, followed by peasants, and then fisherfolk with homes on land. Fisherfolk living on Ebune (boat house) were considered inferior in the hierarchy—among the lowest classified status groups, they lived destitute lives and wandered between coastal hamlets to seek their keep. However, they were adapted to life on the sea and were not always content to reside on land.

These non-permanent communities served as an interface between maritime world and towns, bringing novelties and fashionable accents, supporting the intelligentsia, assisting with local rituals, and even working as handyman. Remarkably, folklorists Kazuteru Okiura described their existence as one of “ambiguity” between holiness and baseness<sup>9</sup>. The nature

of port towns was wildly open; criminals pretending to be Komuso (mendicant priests) often wandered the alleys; however, they were also visited by wealthy and professional people such as medical practitioners, well-educated maritime professions, and ambitious entrepreneurs. Traders in Mitarai had access to extended networks of information brought by sailors and travellers from as far as Kyushu Island.

## PROSPERITY OF PORT TOWN AND GROWING ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS

Okinori (offshore navigation) required travellers to wait for favourable winds and tides at transit ports between voyages, and entertainment sectors catered to travellers and sailors in prominent transit ports. Katsushi Shimizu described Mitarai's population density as being significantly higher than its urban counterparts, and its glory was prized as "matchless in Chu-goku region."<sup>10</sup> In 1724, Wakaebisu House was among four Ochayas (entertainment Geisha house) granted permission from the domain. These entertainment businesses grew further; in 1927, there were 14 Okiyas (agent houses) and 17 accommodations. Mitarai's population totalled 1339 persons in 1950. Yet, there was a higher percentage of females (54.5%), and at 28.9%, the proportion of residents recorded as being part of the "service sector" was significantly high compared with its country district (5.8%) and the wider prefecture (7.9%).

Geishas were generally from poor families and bonded by debt. In 1900, the Meiji government implemented a policy for the Regulation and Control of Prostitution that established supervision over the entertainment business and defined a legal distinction between Geigi (entertainers), and Shogi (harlot). In Mitarai, the former was called Oka geisha (Geishas on land), whereas the latter were called Oki Geisha (Geishas on the offshore). Popular Geishas were wearing gorgeous kimonos, speaking in pert accents, and always attentive; these Geishas represented a port town's prosperity. However, their distinction was sometime ambiguity.

Travelers and sailors eagerly awaited transit stops at Mitarai so that they could return to its gorgeous entertainment houses and see their regular Geisha partners. Dazzling lights were seen from ships along the town's southern neighbourhood near the pier. For offshore ship customers, Ochoro Bunes (lighters) carried Oki Geishas. Each lighter was operated by nine Choro-oshi (lighter oarsman) agents. Sometimes, Oki Geishas were referred Funa-goke (widow on lighter) and played the role of transient spouses for travellers and sailors. During this thriving period, Mitarai's quantity of alcohol consumption was high relative to its population size; in fact, the town had over 12 sake (rice liquor) retailers in 1927.

These entertainment businesses were not highly reputed by the ruling classes; despite their enough wealth and social power; Ochaya owners were unselected as town chiefs by rulers<sup>11</sup>. Nonetheless, the community of Mitarai warmly accepted Geishas as their neighbours. Harumi Kato portrayed that the residents of Mitarai typically referred to the women as Beppin san (belles), thus reflecting social intimacy<sup>12</sup>. Hiroshi Nunokawa remarked that not a small number of local men married former Geishas<sup>13</sup>, and History of Yutaka Town reported that they were always offered freshly drawn hot baths in the town's public baths<sup>14</sup>. When they died, the townspeople buried them reverently in the local cemetery.

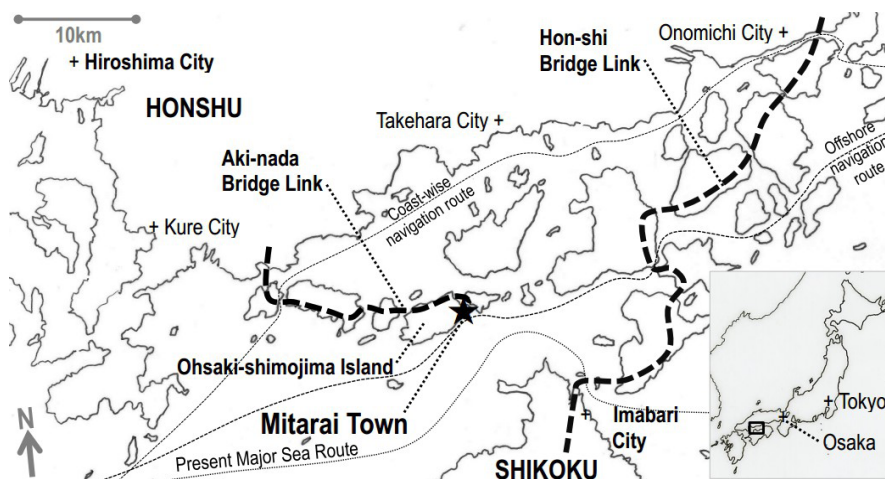


Fig. 1. Map of Mitarai Town, and Seto Inland Sea. Map drawing by author.

Nevertheless, it is important to understand that the Geishas were bonded by money and lived under inhumane rules.

#### CHANGING LANDSCAPES: RECLAIMING LAND, BUILDING HOUSES, FREQUENT DISASTERS

During the Edo period, Mitarai had the highest population density among regional settlements, including the ruler's castle town of Hiroshima<sup>15</sup>. It was continued to the postwar period. According to statistics in 1950, population density in Mitarai was significant at 6695 per square kilometre<sup>16</sup>.

Fig. 2 indicates the map of Mitarai town which overlaid with area's former coastline, current designation of preservation district. Coastal land for residential and commercial use has always been limited; therefore, continuous construction of land reclamation and high-density settlements were inevitable. According to the town's oldest written records, one of the earliest reclamations was on southern hamlet in 1828<sup>17</sup>. Thus, most of present major streets and preserved houses are standing on reclaimed sandy low land. This has been a primary reason that Mitarai has experienced frequent flooding during storms and high tides in recent years.

Settlements were formed and constructed accordingly, including Machiyas (town houses) which are a common building type of historic towns in Japan. The Machiyas along Mitarai's main streets have gabled entrances, finished white plaster walls, and oxidized silver Kikuma roofing tiles. The diverse sizes and specifications of the Machiyas reflect the owners' social status and wealth.

Mitarai's remaining oldest buildings are believed to have been constructed as early as the Edo period<sup>18</sup>. Some buildings were remarked important history, such as the Wakisaka Residence was used as a transit accommodation for members of the Satsuma Domain.



Fig. 2. Picture of Mitarai Town, and Seto Inland Sea. Picture provided by author.

Frequent disasters have hit Mitarai. During its golden age in the 1770s, typhoons destroyed shores and major buildings. A fire in 1759 destroyed Mitarai's central neighbourhood, and epidemics and periods of starvation also claimed resident's lives and affected the town's trade climate.

## HERITAGES AND MEMORIES REMAINED

### DECLINING PORT TOWN: LOSING SEA ROUTES AND PROSPERITY

Since the Meiji period (1868–1912), Japan has urged social industrialization and modernization. Maritime engineering evolved more rational navigation methods. Newly invented navigation methods enabled longer voyages, even under conditions of adverse winds and stormy weather. New sea routes became available and fewer transit ports were required. Moreover, nation's major intercity rail-link reached this region as early as middle of Meiji period, thus providing cost efficient and faster service.

Katsushi Shimizu has pointed out one of the reasons for Mitarai's obsession then; the enactment of the Anti-Prostitution Act in 1956 and subsequent closure of Ochayas (entertainment Geisha houses) and related businesses had a significant downward<sup>19</sup>.

Under the above conditions, people on the island struggled to develop a new business sector, eventually turning to citrus Unshiu farming on the mountain. However, the residents of Mitarai did not have sufficient citrus farms within their island<sup>20</sup>. Although Mitarai faces the sea, the residents have a limited involvement in fisheries, as they have only a small sea zone with fishing rights.

## BRIDGE LINK AND REMOTE ISLANDS DEVELOPMENT ACT

Population declines and social aging has been apparent in the Mitarai since the 1930s. According to statistics, Mitarai's population reached its peak in 1880s with 1730. Despite the islands' social decline, other industrial cities have changed the landscape of the inland sea area due to massive land reclamation and infrastructure projects. The socio-economic declines experienced by Mitarai are similar to those occurring among provincial societies, particularly

remote villages and islands.

Against the downward trend on remote island societies, Japan's government enacted a new legislation, the Remote Islands Development Act in 1953. The law was extended to include Ohsaki-shimajima Island in the ninth batch in 1961.

Since then, the island has obtained relatively cordial development incentives, and successfully upgraded the islanders' living environment.

In 1966, government began revoking the law's applicability for islands connected with the mainland by newly constructed bridges. For Ohsaki-shimajima Island, Remote Islands Development Act applicability was eventually revoked in 2010 after the Aki-nada Bridge link was completed in 2008. (Fig. 1)

## HERITAGE CONSERVATION: DESCRIBED HISTORY AND MEMORY

Mitarai's heritage has been proposed for preservation by professionals and academics. Residents have eagerly taken action toward the area's social revitalization, and they established the Historic Town Tourism Promotion Association in 1990.

Heritage conservation efforts began immediately after Mitarai suffered severe storm damage in 1991, when the Typhoon Mireille destroyed the coastal houses and many others experienced flooding from high tides and severe waves. The ground level of Mitarai subsided significantly after the 1946 earthquake, which has made the town vulnerable to frequent flooding from storm surges<sup>21</sup>.

Aftermath of the typhoon, Mitarai's town authorities urged the implementation of disaster recovery projects and commenced with a heritage inventory survey. When the research was completed, policy implementation was settled at an unprecedented pace; the enactment of the preservation ordinance occurred in 1992, and 6.9ha of Mitarai's town area was designated as a preservation district in 1993. Subsequently, in July 1994, the area was selected for inclusion among the nation's Important Preservation District for Groups of Traditional Buildings by the Agency for Cultural Affairs. 203 buildings, 75 structures and 17 natural properties have been listed as preservation properties, which are subsidized by a relatively coordinial restoration fund.

Subsequently, various measures were taken, including the Urban Living Environment Improvement Project<sup>22</sup> and the Disaster Prevention Plan<sup>23</sup> in 1999. Electric power lines were put underground beneath the main streets in 2000, and a community hall and fire station were also upgraded during this period.

Arguably, there is a limited footprint to document the life of the Geishas in Kagai. During the early stages of heritage conservation in 1990s — only less than 40 years left since enactment of Anti-Prostitution Act in 1956, some residents remained who had witnessed Mitarai's both glorious and shadows. Even today, locals desire visitors to have proper understanding and attitude for the town's long legacy.



However, there has been a limited discourse from the heritage conservation field, particularly on the legacy of Geisha and Kagai. In recent years, architectural researchers have focused more attention and respective academic discourses on Kagais; for example, case studies in Kanazawa City<sup>24</sup> and Kagurazaka, Tokyo<sup>25</sup>. The authors of the former paper pointed out that Kagai incubated essential traditions in Japan, which is reflected in architectural, entertainment, cuisine, and manner. The authors urged to take immediate conservation measure for Kagais and its heritages.

## HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND COMMUNITY RESPONSE

Heritage conservation efforts in Mitarai were initiated and formed by the local community, which the Japanese preservation district system encourages as a means to ensure future continuity.

After the town's selection as a national preservation district in 1994, Mitarai's residents established the Preservation District Residents Association, which initially began with 42 members, and others from off-island have joined as well. However, the group reflects that their initial proposals have not been entirely realized due to insufficient manpower and financial resources. Finding new leaders is also urgent matter.

Residents' expectations and perceptions toward heritage conservation have changed over time. The author and research group carried out series of questionnaire surveys in 1997, 2007, 2013 to gauge secular changes of residents' perceptions of conservation in Mitarai<sup>26</sup>. (Fig.3)

According to the resulting analysis, residents have maintained largely positive views concerning the continuation of heritage conservation. For example, in response to the question regarding the "necessity of heritage conservation" for their town, nearly 70% of residents agreed, and their stance has remained unchanged over 16 years. However, they have a relatively low understanding of the conservation system (e.g., official restoration subsidization and funding procedures), which 60% of residents who participated in the 2013 survey described as "incomprehensible." Notably, their understandings have decreased over time.

Importantly, gender and generation gaps are prime determinate factors of survey responses. Male respondents have expressed increasingly positive attitudes (47.2% in 2013) toward the "necessity of heritage conservation," whereas female respondents have always had lower levels of interest, and those who chose the response of "whatever happens will be fine" reached a peak of nearly 50% in the 2013 survey.

## SHRINKING SOCIETY AND EXPECTATION TOWARD HERITAGE TOURISM

In 2005, Yutaka Town was administratively merged into Kure City under the Law of Comprehensive Regional Decentralization Act. Kure City is located 30km away from Mitarai, which connected by bridge link since 2008. Upon the merger, an official preparation committee emphasized the substantial benefits to be gained by both Yutaka Town and Kure City<sup>27</sup>.

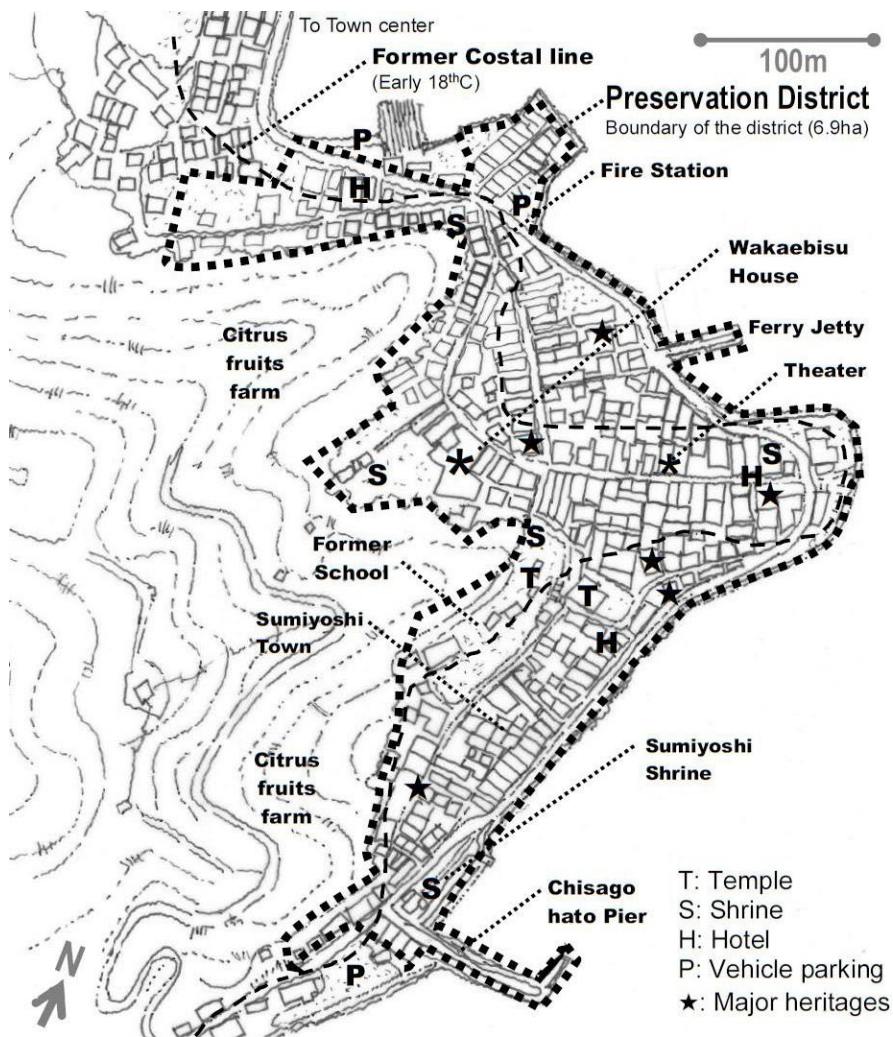


Fig. 3. Map of Mitarai town, Kure City, Hiroshima Prefecture. Former shore line was the town's approximate location in the early 18<sup>th</sup>C. Adapted from Board of Education of Yutaka Town, 2000, History of Yutaka Town: Main Section, Yutaka Town. Map drawing by author.

The bridge link to the mainland is an islander's long year's dream, and the 903-meter-long Toyoshima Bridge was completed in 2008. Ohsaki-shimajima Island is fully connected by the Aki-nada Bridge link comprising eight bridges. (Fig. 1)

Since then, the islanders have experienced changes in their daily life. A report prepared by the National Land Development Council to discuss the revocation of the Remote Islands Development Act confirmed that the new bridge had brought various benefits, including more convenient travel, new marine products and citrus markets, and an increased number of tourists. However, the island has lost retailers, subjected to unlawful dumping of garbage, and passenger ferry service routes were terminated.

The report concluded that the:

*“bridge link was the result of long years of petition by the islanders and a variety of benefits were confirmed. However, there are points to be re-examined to generate more benefit through newly completed bridge link.”*<sup>28</sup>

The lack of any high school along with limited job opportunities are prime reasons that younger generations are leaving from the island. Eventually, not a small number of families rent flats on the mainland near to their children's high schools. Higher educational institution is not existed in the island.

The new bridge has brought more tourists to the town. According to estimated value statistics by local government<sup>29</sup>, the town received approximately 8,000 annual visitors in 2007; which sharply increased to 28,000 annual visitors the year after the bridge link was implemented.

Even though the reality, heritage tourism is not a panacea for town's future. Social shrinkage trends accelerate year by year, and there are increasing the number of empty houses and land plots in the town. According to the results of field research by the author and research group, there were 70 empty houses (39.7% of houses in the preservation district) in 1997, and the number increased to more than 90 empty houses (50.2%) in 2013.

Many of the owners of the empty houses are living away from the island. They are not keen to sell or rent to others for worry of problems with former neighbours, and property taxes for old houses are relatively low. It is said that the town's relatively conservative social atmosphere does not always promise openness to anyone outsiders.

As we observed (Fig.3), population decline and social aging have not been subsided in the area. A population cohort analysis by Aika Kanematsu revealed that Mitarai's population was projected to be reduced to only 208 persons by 2025; that number would nearly equal that of the town's preserved historic properties<sup>30</sup>.

Even though, the town faces silence, but notable changes, former residents' senses of belongings and nostalgia have not been faded. As one resident recalled:

*... Upon the summer festival of Mitarai, often I receive phone call from friend living away from Mitarai. If he cannot manage to come back to Mitarai, he asks me to listen the sound of festival's blasting drum through mobile. Always he expresses this really sincerely from his heart...*

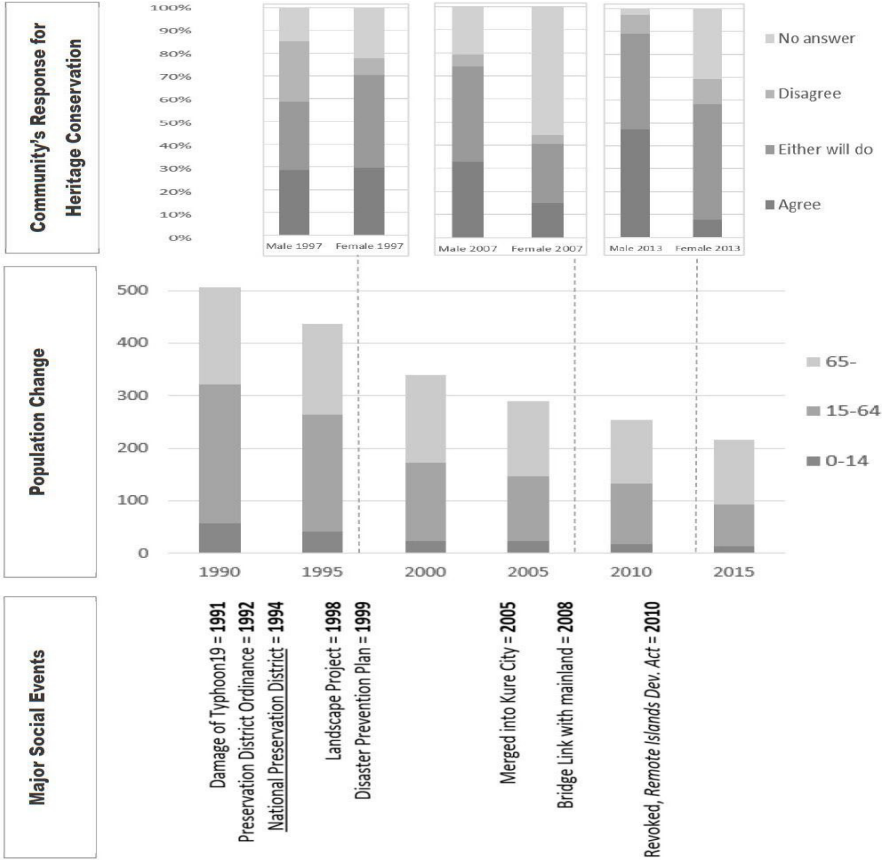


Fig. 4. Mitarai's Major Social Events, Population Change and Community's Response for Heritage Conservation.

Recently, there have been some encouraging signs; some young families from cities have settled in Mitarai, and they have opened heritage-inns or cafes. Other entrepreneurs are also looking for places to start their businesses.

Remaining issues will determine the current and future direction of Mitarai's community. Yet, heritage conservation experts and administrators have identified Mitarai's case as a fortunate example; official recognition as a national preservation district has been a positive factor to enhance its social revitalization and sustainability. Compared with other hamlets on the archipelago, Mitarai has experienced a slower degree of depopulation and aging.

Efforts by long-time residents and the local authority have preserved historic landscape and enriched the local identity, after their catastrophic damage of typhoon in 1991. In the future, Mitarai's experience will be a leading example for other communities that hoping to counter social shrinkage by benefit through heritage tourism.

However, the relationship between tourism popularity and the town's selection as the preservation district should be re-examined; as there are now nearly 130 nation's important preservation districts in Japan, the status is not as rare as it was a few decades ago.

Nonetheless, there are a limited examples of preservation districts that include a historical Kagai. Each preservation district focused representations of its historic significance and uniqueness. As we learned from the history of Mitarai, the town was a product of social diversity, dynamism, and openness for outsiders in the maritime world of archipelago. Those who encountered Mitarai on their transit routes were also invisible actors in the town's legacy. From its initial settlement as a port town, Mitarai revolved its trade and entertainment functions like the wheels of a vehicle, and became popular among travellers and sailors. As a result, Mitarai's "heritages" - luxurious and beautifully designed built heritages were constructed.

To describe the glory of the town, the past existence of Kagai - entertainment sector will be invisible component, even though it is sometimes associated with shadow of memories. In the context of contemporary social norms, the prosperity of Mitarai's entertainment businesses were results of social injustice and misfortune imposed on its female community and social inferiors. However, these people's footprints are relatively limited on the current physical appearance and interpretation of the town.

Recently, wider generations in Japan have expressed more interest the legacy of Kagai and Geisha, which have been documented in several publications and received positive reaction from the public<sup>31</sup>.

Nearly 70 years have passed since the enactment of the Anti-Prostitution Act in 1956 and the subsequent closure of the Ochayas. Gradually, the pain and stigmas of Geisha culture are easing among the public. Masahiro Kato pointed out that Kagais were not situated away from general public; on the contrary, they were existed as an essential contributor of built Japanese cities too.

Historic perspectives and people's memories continuously transforming with the passage of time. It will be a valuable challenge to provide site management and interpretation approaches to revive vanishing memories and untold transient narratives.

## DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTOR

**Yushi Utaka** - research interest is in Asian urbanism with a special focus on built environments and cultural diversity in Asia. Utaka obtained his doctorate in 1997 at Kyoto University, Japan. Utaka has been involved in heritage conservation in Japan and the Asian region under the auspices of the authorities and international organizations. While joining these field projects around the cities in Asia, spend time to think and write following areas past years. (1) Globalizing heritage conservation: place, society and politics, (2) Cultural diversity and multi-ethnic built environment, (3) Reinventing traditional built heritages, cultural landscapes and community.

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2. National census of Japan, 1995 and 2015.
3. Yoichi Goto (ed.). *History of Seto Inland Sea Mitarai port*. Hiroshima: Mitarai History Record Group, 1962. 141-142.
4. Ibid. 140.
5. In Japanese ideogram, the term of *Kagai* comprised by two *kanji* character, *ka* is flower and *gai* means enclave or town. Also often pronounced "*Hana-machi*" with same means.
6. Masahiro Kato. *Kagai: Urban History on Unusual Space*. Tokyo: Asahi Shimbun, 2005. 4, 307-308.
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8. The island's Utsu Shrine from the Nara period (710-794) remains a prominent symbol of the worship of the deity of navigation.
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17. Yutaka Town. *Mitarai: Report on Conservation and Development in Mitarai*, Yutaka Town, Toyota Country, Hiroshima Prefecture. Hiroshima: Yutaka Town, 1992. 22-23.
18. According to an architectural study directed by Mitsuru Suzuki, the town's oldest *munafuda* (ridgepole at construction time stating the building's owner) was erected at the Takada Residence in 1777; Ibid., pp.30-33.
19. Katsushi Shimizu, 2010, op.cit. 65, 76.
20. Board of Education of Yutaka Town, 2000, op.cit. 562.
21. Ibid. 743.
22. Urban Living Environment Improvement Project: Partial subsidize from Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism.
23. Under the subsidize scheme of Preservation Districts for Groups of Traditional Buildings.

24. Misaki Tani, Moyu Sakamoto, Atsuyui Okazaki, "Transition of Distribution on Buildings in 'Kagai': A case of three Chaya-gai in Kanazawa from early Showa period to the present," *Reports of the City Planning Institute of Japan*, 15, (2017): 258-261.
25. Daisuke Matsui, Aya Kubota, "A study on the transformation and planning tasks of historic townscape in Kagurazaka-kagai," *Journal of Architecture and Planning, Architectural Institute of Japan*, 77/680, (2012): 2407-2414.
26. A series of questionnaire surveys were conducted with the valuable support of the residents of Mitarai town and the local authority. It was conducted by the author, Mr. Nobuyuki Uemura, Ms. Noriko Yoshida and students from the University of Hyogo.
27. Preparation Committee of Merger of Kure City and Yutaka Town, Administrative Merger and Development Plan of Kure City and Yutaka Town, 2004.
28. Subcommittee of Remote Islands Development Measurement, National Land Development Council, Subcommittee Resources, *Repeal of adoption of the area of Remote Islands Development*, February 2010, 6.
29. Mitarai, Yutaka Town, Kure City, Kure City, 1.12.2017. This count is based on estimated value provided by city government.
30. Aika Kanematsu, *Secular Changes of Resident's Perceptions for Conservation in Mitarai Preservation District for Groups of Traditional Buildings, Kure City; Questioner Surveys in 1997, 2007, 2013*, Master thesis of the University of Hyogo, 2014.
31. For example, publication appeared as follow; Kokou Sekine, 2018, *Staying Overnight in Former Yukaku*, Shinchosha.

