Continuation of Festivals and Community Resilience during COVID-19: The Case of Nagahama Hikiyama Festival in Shiga Prefecture, Japan

Shunsuke Takeda

Hosei University, Tokyo, Japan

Correspondence
Shunsuke Takeda, Hosei University, Aiharacho 4342, Machida, Tokyo 194-0298, Japan. Email: s_takeda@hosei.ac.jp

Funding information
Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, Grant/Award Number: 20K02113; Kitano Foundation of Lifelong Integrated Education; Suntory Foundation

Abstract
The COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected the way of life of communities in Japan. This study examines the pandemic’s impact by focusing on a popular activity in Japanese townships: participation in traditional festivals with roots dating back to before the Edo period. These festivals display the social customs of each community and their prosperity from the past to the present. Residents participating in local festivals gain a deep understanding of their personal importance within the community. However, many communities were forced to cancel their festivals in 2020 because of the pandemic. In 2021, many communities attempted to reinstate their traditional festivals, and some of them resumed the festivities with infection control measures in place. This case study examines how people resumed festivals in their communities and the conditions needed for them to reengage with their traditions. Focusing on the Nagahama Hikiyama Festival in Shiga Prefecture, Japan, we demonstrate the resilience of traditional communities in Japan. This study analyzes the reasons for and process of reviving and subsequently implementing traditional festivals and clarifies the positive factors contributing to the resumption of festivals in local communities. It examines the sources of resilience that have been cultivated in these communities and explains how their social capital bridges the gaps between local governments, schools, and broadcasters.

KEYWORDS
COVID-19, local community, resilience
INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted people’s lifestyles and their interactions with their local communities. The Japanese government has urged people to slow the spread of COVID-19 by avoiding spending time with non-family members in enclosed spaces, visiting places where many people are crowded together, and talking with others at close range. People lost access to various facilities that had become a necessary part of their daily lives, such as educational institutions, medical facilities, libraries, community centers, supermarkets, and child welfare facilities. Community development and cultural activities were also suspended due to restrictions on holding face-to-face meetings, activities involving meals, and events that attract large numbers of people. For example, in 2020–21, nearly all theater productions, music festivals, and art projects in Japan were canceled due to concerns about COVID-19. While online activities were introduced to supplement such services, the physical enthusiasm and pleasure that people experienced during in-person events have been missing.

Another cultural activity affected by the COVID-19 pandemic has been the traditional festivals called matsuri that have been passed down in local communities throughout Japan. Annual matsuri festivals usually occur in and around a Shinto shrine and are traditional symbols of the ancestral communities that preceded modern society. Here participants recreate the social order of communities and their prosperity from the past to the present (Robertson, 1991: 39, Manzenreiter and Holthus, 2017: 13). Even in areas affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011, many communities have worked tirelessly to resume their festivals because they contribute to the restoration of order in the community and to reconstructing the community itself (Ueda, 2013).

These festivals are also important spectacles and sources of entertainment for communities. Streets and houses are decorated and many people join in the celebration. A great deal of planning goes into orchestrating the variety of activities that take place during the festival. These activities require a considerable amount of money, time, and manpower. They draw large crowds that dress up, eat, drink, participate in, and observe the activities (Ashkenazi, 1993: 4–10). Several matsuri festivals are nationally recognized and attract many tourists. Residents are expected to contribute to their communities by helping prepare for the festivals and are treated as full members of the community only when their participation is recognized by other residents.

As a result of the recent COVID-19 pandemic, many communities canceled their festivals in 2020 because, these festivals unfortunately bring many people together, with endless opportunities for conversing, eating, and drinking. Festivals that include the playing of musical instruments such as shinobue (flutes made of bamboo) are likely to generate aerosol transmission of the disease. In addition, large festivals are crowded because they attract so many participants and spectators. All these factors can lead to the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

In 2021, many communities attempted to reinstate their traditional festivals, and some of them are being resumed with health and safety measures in place. How did they do this and under what conditions could they do so? By answering these questions through a case study of a matsuri festival in a local town, this study examines the resilience of traditional local communities in Japan.

As defined by Walker et al. (2004: 5), “Resilience is a system’s capacity to absorb disturbance and reorganize itself while undergoing change to retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks.” This concept does not always equate with the return of a system to its initial state. Resilient systems may have no baseline to return to and may reconfigure themselves continuously and fluidly to adapt to ever-changing circumstances, while continuing to fulfill their purpose (Zolli and Healy, 2012: 13). Therefore, disaster researchers say community resilience is not simply a matter of restoring the community to its pre-disaster state; it also includes the ability to restore the community’s vitality (Yamamoto, 2015) and to respond
to change (Magis, 2010). Using the above concept of resilience, this study shows how traditional community festivals that were suspended by due to COVID-19 were revived and how their activities changed in the process.

2 | EXAMINING COVID-19’S IMPACT ON THE RESILIENCE OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

This study analyzes the process and reasons for reviving and implementing traditional festivals from using the concept of resilience and clarifies the positive factors that contribute to the resumption of festivals in local communities. It discusses community resilience from two perspectives. First, the term resilience is used in the way that disaster anthropologists do, which is the ability to recover from disruption through cultural techniques that have been historically cultivated within communities. Oliver-Smith and Hoffman (2002: 6) argue:

In the face or threat of disruption, as people attempt to prepare, construct, recover or reconstruct, how they adjust to the actual or potential calamity either recants or reinvents their cultural system. Disaster exposes the way in which people construct or frame their peril (including the denial of it), the way they perceive their environment and their subsistence, and the ways they invent explanation, constitute their morality, and project their continuity and promise into the future.

Using this perspective, the authors show the ties of cooperation and resilience in society through disasters. In a similar vein, Ueda and Torigoe (2012) explain why residents in the fishing villages affected by the tsunami from the Great East Japan Earthquake returned to their homes by the sea to re-establish their communities. This case study explores how local community members in Japan perceive their environment in the disastrous context of the COVID-19 pandemic, how they explain it, what lessons have they learned from it, and how they plan to ensure the survival of their community activities.

The second perspective used in analyzing community resilience explains the value of social capital as a determinant of regional differences in disaster recovery. Aldrich (2012) indicates there is insufficient evidence that factors such as damage, aid, and governance have determined regional differences in recovery. He concludes that instead a community’s social capital plays a more important role in information transmission and access to resources, and ultimately makes a greater contribution to recovery than these other factors (Aldrich, 2012). Local festivals require large-scale community resources. In large local festivals, the necessary resources (money, labor, and tools) are procured not only from within the community but also from the various residents nearby. Local governments and tourism associations subsidize some of these festivals, and volunteers and students participate in them. Because it would not be possible to hold these festivals without the cooperation of these actors, this study analyzes bridging and linking social capital of the community with these participants and bonding social capital within the community.

Section 3 of this study describes the traditional communities in cities founded before the modern era and the festivals these groups have held. It also provides an overview of the festival, explains its importance for the community, and delineates the types of social capital that make it possible.

Section 4 addresses the following questions to demonstrate how community resilience helped the residents overcome the difficulties they faced in reviving the festival. (1) How did residents in the local communities cope with the risk of infection? Why did the local community insist on holding the festival despite the risk? (2) How did residents hold and transform the festival to avoid the risk of infection? Why did they not consider that the festival thus transformed
had become inauthentic? (3) Why did various actors outside the community approve the implementation of the festival? How did the community’s bridging and linking social capital with such actors help achieve this?

The conclusion summarizes the results of the analysis and discusses how changes in the festival due to the COVID-19 pandemic are expected to affect local communities and their social capital in the future.

3 | CASE AND RESEARCH METHOD

This study focuses on local communities in Japanese cities founded during the feudal era: the cities that were founded during the Edo period (1603–1868) or earlier, and not those that developed after modernization following the Meiji Restoration. The communities built during the feudal era and the traditions they represent have continued to effect contemporary cities (Sorensen, 2002: 12). These traditions are unique to these early cities, and many cities that were built after the modern era do not have them.

During the Edo period, there were over 200 castle towns (jōkamachi), which were the administrative centers of the provinces and ranged in population size from 1000 or 2000 to over a 100,000. The lords of the castles ruled each province and arranged the inhabitants of the towns in spatial terms according to their social class. The area immediately surrounding the castle was set aside for the spacious residential compounds of the highest-ranking vassals. These vassals housed their own retainers in long barracks on the compound perimeter, which formed an outer wall. The common area for merchants and artisans, or chō, was normally located in front of the main gates to the castle and along the major roads leading to other parts of the country. Chō districts in virtually all castle towns were laid out in regular grids of square blocks (Sorensen, 2002: 23).

For many lords, the primary strategy for governing the chō district was delegating many responsibilities to the merchants and artisans themselves and encouraging their voluntary compliance with the administrative dictate. Each chō was both a community and an autonomous administrative unit managed by its residents. These groups were responsible for the management of day-to-day activities, such as collecting funds to pay for firefighting equipment and services, festivals, as well as to maintain essential infrastructure (e.g., roads, fire towers, guardhouses, gates, and gatehouses, canals, and ditches) and the neighborhood water supply (Sorensen, 2002: 19).

Each chō was made up of dozens to hundreds of ie, or households of merchants and artisans. An ie is a corporate body that owns household property, runs a family business, and emphasizes the continuity of the family line and family business over generations. It consists of a stem family, in which one of the children continues to live with the parents after marriage. The child who remains in the parental home (typically a son or a son-in-law if the parents do not have a biological son) eventually assumes leadership of the corporate body (Ochiai, 1997: 58–59). Various events in the chō, such as festivals, were carried out with the cooperation of all the ie.

After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, the lords of the castle were forced out of their positions and the chō, as autonomous units, were reorganized into units of in modern administrative structure by the government (Tamano, 1993). While the idea of ie had been in decline since the end of World War II, in the former ancient castle towns, traditional festivals are still managed by chō and ie. By analyzing the modern versions of these festivals, which are not found in the cities established later modernization, this article shows the threat of COVID-19 on traditional communities, and the dynamism of the communities that have transformed their traditions amid this difficult situation.

This case study closely examines the Nagahama Hikiyama Matsuri, a festival that has been held since the 16th century in the chō district of Nagahama City in Shiga Prefecture. Nagahama
was a castle town founded by a famous feudal lord named Hideyoshi Toyotomi in 1575, before the Edo period. Hideyoshi invited a number of wealthy merchants to live in this town and built multiple chō near the castle. These chō functioned as local communities and self-governing organizations until the Edo period and nowadays they have succeeded as communities for holding festivals. In Nagahama, the chō is also called the Yamagumi; the community that manages the floats (Hikiyama) used in the festival.

The festival is an important spectacle and great entertainment for the residents. By holding it, each Yamagumi shows its economic strength and the richness of its inherited culture to other Yamagumi and spectators. The main events of this festival are plays such as Kodomo-Kabuki, performed by boys from various Yamagumi on the floats. It is held from April 13th to 16th every year. Plays are performed several times a day, with the most important performance dedicated to the god at the shrine called Nagahama Hachiman-gū on April 15. The Yamagumi hire a choreographer, a singer called a gidayū, and a performer of the musical instrument called the shamisen for three weeks to train the kabuki actors.

At this festival, four of the twelve Yamagumi perform their plays for spectators every three years. The four Yamagumi participating in the festival are called Deban-Yamagumi. Deban-Yamagumi compete with each other to demonstrate their economic power, high level of culture, and prestige to the spectators through their plays. The kabuki actors are boys aged between 6 and 12. Other children play a piece of music called the Shagiri, which uses traditional bamboo flutes, drums, and small gongs when the floats are in motion. Other events include the Yūwatari (“Evening Parade”), in which the actors present their ornamented selves to the audience, and the Hadakamairi (“Praying Rally”), in which Wakashū (men under 45 years of age) from each Yamagumi go to a shrine to show off their naked vigorous bodies to the audience.

Like the chō, the Yamagumi is a local community comprising about 30–100 ie families. An ie comprises not only the living family but the whole lineage of its paternal relatives excluding female members. At each festival the various positions in the Yamagumi are assigned to members of each ie. Some of these positions are prestigious, some are less so, and the position which an ie member is assigned indicates the status of that ie in the local community. Many residents believe that ie should be given honorable status depending not only on how much each has contributed to the festival in recent years, but also on how many generations of present ie have lived in their community and contributed financially and otherwise to past festivals. However, not everyone in the Yamagumi agrees on how much each ie has contributed to the festival. Some focus on how long each ie has lived in the area, while others focus on their current contribution.

A Yamagumi is open to men only and consists of three generations: boys up to the age of 12, who function as actors, the Wakashū (“young guys”) who run kabuki, and the Chūrō (“middle-aged men”) aged between 45 and 70 who manage the floats and negotiate with other Yamagumi. The Wakashū representative is called the Hittō (“young leader”), and the Chūrō representative is called the Futannin (“person responsible for the festival”), and he represents the entire Yamagumi. Only men from each ie are officially allowed to participate in the festival. Since the 1970s, women have been allowed to participate in the Shagiri, playing a peripheral role in the festival, but they are not given a formal position in the festival events. Although only men are allowed to participate in the festival as bearers, this male-centric way of thinking about ie is now only found in the context of traditional festivals.

In this festival, when a son is chosen as an actor or given a high-status position in a Yamagumi, this demonstrates the honor and prestige of his ie. Among the Wakashū, honorable and prestigious positions are the Hittō, the Kujitorinin (someone who draws lots to determine the order in which the four Deban-Yamagumi perform the children’s kabuki), and the Butai-kōken (the stage assistant who manages the actors on stage). These positions tend to be selected from the ranks of the ie that are considered to have contributed the most to the festival. Residents often quarrel over the extent to which each ie has contributed, which lead to conflicts
about which ie should be given honorable positions. The Hittō makes the final decision on which ie to choose for such positions, after listening to the opinions of the members of the Yamagumi.

The secretariat, called the Sōtōban (a rotating committee of general managers), manages and controls the entire festival from a neutral standpoint among the four competing Deban-Yamagumi. The core members of the Sōtōban are chosen from the eight Yamagumi that do not participate in the festival that year, and they have the authority to decide the festival’s management policies. The Sōtōban obtains funds for the festival and selects volunteers to pull the floats of actors outside the community on behalf of all Yamagumi. In this case the Sōtōban obtained a subsidy of approximately $160,000 from Nagahama City and distributed it to all the Yamagumi. They asked the army, labor unions, and universities in Shiga Prefecture to provide people to pull the floats. Additionally, they asked elementary and junior high schools in Nagahama to exempt certain children from attending school so that they could participate in the festival. As previously mentioned, the festival is supported by many volunteers and funded not only by the Yamagumi but also from various other groups and organizations. The Sōtōban negotiates with these groups and organizations for donations.

The Shagiri practice is held every weekend at a house managed by each Yamagumi, which is also the place where the members of the Yamagumi gather and interact daily. About six months before the festival, the Wakashū and Chūro meet frequently to decide on the budget, actors, roles, and schedule, and on how to proceed with the events. The Hittō decides which ie’s sons will act in the play, and he visit their homes to seek their parents’ approval. Three weeks before the festival, rehearsals for the play begin at the house managed by each Yamagumi.

Hosting the festival costs between $80,000 and $100,000 for one Deban-Yamagumi, one-third of which is funded by all the ie that make up the Yamagumi. Another third is covered by donations from local businesses and stores, and the remaining third of the budget is covered by the subsidy by Nagahama City to the Yamagumi. Nagahama City subsidizes it because many tourists come to Nagahama during the festival. It is therefore a chance to attract many tourists and enrich the town’s economy, and the local government considers it an important cultural event.

This festival was canceled in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, after discussions within and among the 12 Yamagumi, three of the four Deban-Yamagumi who were supposed to participate in 2020 participated in the 2021 festival, which was held on a smaller scale than usual.

I conducted research on this festival through interviews and participant observation from 2010 to the present (Ichikawa and Takeda, 2017; Takeda, 2019). I interviewed the chairperson and vice chairperson of the 2020 Sōtōban and the 2021 festival and the key members of the four Deban-Yamagumi to determine how the festival was held in 2021 and I also collected data on how the festival was conducted in 2021 through participant observation.

4 | COMMUNITY RESILIENCE IN RESUMING THE FESTIVAL

4.1 | Resilience Based on Inherited History and Memory of Yamagumi

The government-ordered temporary closure of schools in March 2020 prompted the Sōtōban and the Yamagumi to cancel the festival. With schools closed to ensure infection control, it was not possible for Yamagumi to gather the children for kabuki and Shagiri practice. Additionally, to prepare for the festival, it was necessary to hold Shagiri and kabuki rehearsals and Wakashū and Chūro meetings in closed rooms. These preparations put the members of the Yamagumi at the risk of infection. The leaders also acknowledged that with many men pulling floats, with the tourists gathered to watch the festival and with the child, Wakashū Chūro participants, the
event would likely spread the disease. For the same reasons, large-scale festivals were canceled throughout Japan in 2020.

After the heartbreak of having to cancel the 2020 festival, each Yamagumi considered whether to resume the festival in 2021. They all consulted with each other and decided to restart practicing Shagiri in the fall of 2020 after receiving advice from medical experts and establishing guidelines that set out the rules for ventilation, the distance required between performers, rules for disinfection and temperature checks, and practice times. Under the advice of medical experts, the Sōtōban decided that kabuki practices for the four Yamagumi could start again. Most Yamagumi meetings were conducted online. In March 2021, at the meeting of the Sōtōban and all Yamagumi, it was confirmed that the festival would be held in a scaled-down format.

Why did the Deban-Yamagumi insist on resuming the festival? As initially explained, the festival is an opportunity for each Yamagumi to show off their economic power and cultural level to the other Yamagumi and spectators. It is also an opportunity for each ie whose sons have been selected as actors or Kujitorinin to demonstrate their honor and prestige as mentioned above. Only boys between the age of 6 and 12 are chosen to be actors, and only one Wakashū in the Yamagumi is chosen to be the Kujitorinin. For each ie, it is a rare chance for their son to earn such a position. If the festival had not taken place for another year, the Yamagumi would have lost the opportunity to show their prestige and the ie elected to the positions would not have earned the honor. In other words, the money and effort that each ie had put in over the generations would have been wasted. This was why Yamagumi insisted on holding the festival in 2021. Each ie of the Yamagumi hopes someday to earn honor from the investment of his ancestors and therefore tries to carry on this tradition into the future. Even if the festival as a community activity and its symbolism is in danger, the motivation to find a way to continue the tradition functions as their source of resilience.

Another reason why the Deban-Yamagumi and Sōtōban decided to hold the festival had to do with the uncertainty about the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic and any similar infections that may arise in the future. Accordingly, to be able to hold the festival in future, they deemed it important to consider and prepare for measures that would allow for it be held in the current situation. Even if the festival may have had to be canceled after the preparations were made, the members of the Yamagumi would have remembered and recorded the process of preparation, so they could continue the festival in the ensuing years. Ever since its origin in the 16th century, the festival has had to be cancelled from time to time due to epidemics, wars, or disasters. The members of the Yamagumi are familiar with past records and oral traditions that record the various ways that their ancestors had devised to carry on with the festival after each crisis, and they believe that they will be able to continue by doing the same during the crisis caused by COVID-19. Their conviction, grounded in history and memory, is a source of the resilience of the festival and community.

4.2  |  Flexibility in Transforming Rituals and Events of the Festival

The Sōtōban and Deban-Yamagumi modified the rituals and events in the festival to prevent an outbreak of COVID-19. The Hadakamairi was canceled to avoid close contact between the participants. The Yūwatari was canceled because it was expected to attract numerous spectators. Instead, each Yamagumi held a smaller version in their own area with only members of the same Yamagumi watching.

Every year on April 14, four floats are pulled to the Nagahama Hachiman-gū Shrine. The Sōtōban asks the army, labor unions, and universities in Shiga Prefecture to provide volunteers every year. However, as the Sōtōban could not confirm that the volunteers were not infected, they decided that Deban-Yamagumi would not move their floats to the shrine. Instead, they only moved within the area of each Yamagumi in the 2021 festival, and the floats were pulled
by members of the Yamagumi. The use of bridging social capital in pulling floats was replaced by bonding social capital.

Kabuki performances on the main stage of the festival attract many tourists every year, generating huge crowds. To make it possible for distant audiences to enjoy kabuki without attending in person, a local online broadcasting station and the Sōtōban cooperated to broadcast live and archived kabuki performances via YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDc2gVLF4hU). During the broadcast, an announcer and the vice chairperson of the Sōtōban gave detailed explanations of the kabuki’s content. This broadcasting station produces programs about this festival every year and has a trusting relationship with each Yamagumi, which is why the broadcast went smoothly. This forms part of the bridging social capital of the Yamagumi.

In this way, changes were made to various events of the festival, but the leader and each Deban-Yamagumi made every effort to ensure that the opportunity to gain honor and prestige through the rituals was not lost. Because the cancelation or change of many events means the loss or reduction of these opportunities, each Yamagumi devised some means to make up for them and add new significance.

One example of this is that each Yamagumi held its own Yūwatari event. The Yūwatari is the official event in which actors appear in front of spectators to demonstrate the honor of the ie and Yamagumi. In 2021, however, it was transformed into an event wherein each member of Yamagumi honored the actors and their ie. As an official event of the festival, Yūwatari is open only to male actors, the Wakashū and Chūrō in the Yamagumi. This time, however, each Yamagumi could decide how to perform Yūwatari based on their own ideas, and two Yamagumi allowed the actors’ mothers to participate in Yūwatari with them. In these Yamagumi, the Yūwatari became an event to honor the family, including the mothers, rather than just the ie.

The way to demonstrate kabuki performances has also changed. There was no need to take the floats to the shrine, so each Yamagumi had more time to spare than they had had in past festivals. Each Yamagumi used this extra time to move their floats to different locations within the area, allowing them to perform kabuki in different places. One Yamagumi moved their floats to perform kabuki in front of a temple called Daitsū-ji, an important Japanese cultural icon. The performance on the float with the magnificent temple in the background was spectacular and gave the Yamagumi members the satisfaction of receiving their honor and prestige.

One might ask whether these changes could reduce the authenticity of the festival, and if so, why the Yamagumi members were prepared to accept such a dramatic change to their tradition. This may be because the Yamagumi have repeatedly overcome the cancelations of the festival due to wars, disasters, and epidemics, and they knew how their ancestors had dealt with such past crises through memories and the records in the form of minutes of Sōtōban and Yamagumi meetings over a hundred years. The Sōtōban referred to records that showed how the Yamagumi coped with the 12-year suspension of the festival due to the Sino-Japanese War and the Pacific War and how the festival was transformed after the war. The vice chairperson of the Sōtōban in 2020 and 2021 drew the following conclusions from these records:

The festival changed a lot before and after the war. The festival we’ve grown accustomed to was created after 1952 and has continued liked this for about 70 years. However, the festival we’ve been following was interrupted by COVID-19. Just like after the war, I wouldn’t be surprised if the festival has changed when it resumes. COVID-19 is such a shocking incident.

We have taken the festival of the previous years for granted. But we need to realize that it was only possible because there were no wars and epidemics, and thanks to the economic growth, there was enough money to spend on the festival. In the
400-year history of the festival, the way we have grown accustomed to it is not set in stone. (Interview conducted on February 4, 2021).

From his remarks, we see the Yamagumi members’ desire to revive the festival and accept its transformation. If they had stuck to the old ways of holding the festival, they would not have been able to continue it and revive the relationships in the Yamagumi through it. We can see the resilience of the community in their flexibility to adapt their customs and to change the festival through historical disruptions.

4.3 | Approval of Various Actors in Nagahama for Yamagumi to Perform the Festival: The Importance of Linking Social Capital

In addition to controlling infection, the Sōtōban needed to obtain the consent of various actors in Nagahama to hold the festival in the midst of the pandemic. The changes in the events described in the previous section were not made merely to control infection; they were also intended to convince the local government and citizens fearing the spread of infection to agree to hold the festival. The Sōtōban negotiated with the municipality, tourism association, board of education, elementary schools, and junior high schools. The consent of the board of education and the schools was essential for this festival to take place. In response to Sōtōban’s inquiry, the schools and the board of education immediately gave the children permission to skip school. The school authorities thought that with the cancelation of many school events in 2020, the loss of the festival as a community activity would harm the children. The Yamagumi members hold classes at these schools several times a year to teach the traditional culture related to the festival, and the teachers have come to trust their insights.

The agreement between the Sōtōban, the municipality, and the tourism association was also important. Since the festival resumed in 1952, the Yamagumi have cooperated with the municipality that uses the festival to attract tourists, and they have received subsidies in return. Additionally, among the core members of Yamagumi is a highly regarded company owner in Nagahama who has had a great deal of influence on the ruling faction of the city council. On April 1, 2021, just before the start of the festival, the mayor of Nagahama City, the head of the tourism association, the head of the Sōtōban, and the chairman of the preservation association of the festival signed the “Nagahama Hikiyama Festival, Declaration for the Future” at the city council meeting, confirming that they would cooperate in reviving the festival. The fact that the municipality supported the implementation of the festival was a demonstration of its right to hold it.

Aldrich (2012) emphasizes the importance of social capital as a determinant of regional differences in community resilience to disasters. In this case, it can be said that the social capital that bridged and linked the Yamagumi and other participants such as the municipality and schools, making it possible for the festival to resume.

5 | CONCLUSION: RESILIENCE OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND THEIR FESTIVALS IN PANDEMIC-LIKE SITUATIONS

This study clarifies how Yamagumi was able to hold the Nagahama Hikiyama Festival during the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, we confirm that the level of resilience in the local community, the Yamagumi, is high. There are two perspectives for assessing the resilience of a local community: the one that examines the historically cultivated resilience of local communities and the one that examines the extent to which the amount of social capital influences recovery.
In Section 4.1, this study showed that the persistence with which the ie and Yamagumi pursued honor serves as a source of resilience to enable the festival continuation to continue as a community activity.

The Yamagumi members recognized that their ancestors overcame many crises to continue with the festival and made many changes in the way the festival was conducted through repeated trial and error. They did not stop preparing for the festival even as the COVID-19 infection was spreading. The preparations gave them the knowledge and experience to carry on with the festival even if the epidemic continues in subsequent years. Furthermore, they knew that their ancestors would have been willing to make great changes to the festival to overcome the crises that each generation faced, and they felt confident in continuing with the festival as their ancestors had done.

For the Yamagumi to resume the festival, linking social capital with participants such as the local government, school board, and schools was essential. To preserve the opportunity to show off their honor and prestige while transforming the festival, live streaming was important, and this was made possible by the bridging social capital of the broadcasters.

COVID-19’s impact on the future of the festival must be investigated in the long term. It will be interesting to research the extent to which the changes in events at the 2021 festival will be carried over to future festivals. It is also necessary to investigate the changes in social capital that make the festival possible in the future. One-third of the budget is covered by donations from local businesses and stores, but business conditions have worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, it may be possible that donations to festivals will decrease significantly after 2021. It may be a challenge for the Yamagumi to use their social capital to acquire financial resources in the future. The online relationship between the audience and Yamagumi could become important not only for the Nagahama Hikiyama Festival, but for other festivals as the popularity of raising funds online has increased in recent years. Further research on how local festivals will utilize online methods of bridging social capital is needed.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
This study was generously supported by the Suntory Foundation, Kitano Foundation of Lifelong Integrated Education and JSPS KAKENHI grant number 20K02113.

REFERENCES
Aldrich, Daniel P. 2012. Building Resilience: Social Capital in Post-Disaster Recovery. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Ashkenazi, Michael. 1993. Matsuri: Festivals of a Japanese Town. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. Ichikawa, Hideyuki and Shunsuke Takeda (eds). 2017. Nagahama Hikiyama matsuri no kako to genzai: sairei to geinou keisho no dainamizumu (The Past and Present of Nagahama Hikiyama Festival: The Dynamism of Ritual and Performing Arts Succession). Hikone: Oumi Gakujutsu Shuppankai (in Japanese.). Magis, Kristen. 2010. “Community Resilience: An Indicator of Social Sustainability.” Society and Natural Resources 23 (5): 401–416. Manzenreiter, Wolfram and Barbara Holthus. 2017. “Happiness in Japan through the Anthropological Lens.” Pp. 1–21 in Happiness and the Good Life in Japan, edited by Wolfram Manzenreiter and Barbara Holthus. London: Routledge. Ochiai, Emiko. 1997. The Japanese Family System in Transition. Tokyo: LTCB International Library Foundation. Oliver-Smith, Anthony and Susanna M. Hoffman. 2002. “Introduction: Why Anthropologists Should Study Disasters.” Pp. 3–22 in Catastrophe and Culture, edited by Susanna M. Hoffman and Anthony Oliver-Smith. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press. Robertson, Jennifer. 1991. Native and Newcomer: Making and Remaking a Japanese City.. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Sorensen, André. 2002. The Making of Urban Japan: Cities and Planning from Edo to the Twenty-First Century. London: Routledge. Takeda, Shunsuke. 2019. Commons to shiteno toshi-sairei: Nagahama Hikiyama matsuri no toshi-shakaitakagu (Sociological Research of Local Festivals Based on Commons Theory: The Case of Nagahama Hikiyama Festival in Japan). Tokyo: Shin-yo sha (in Japanese.).
Tamano, Kazushi. 1993. *Kindai nihon no toshika to chōnaikai no setsuritsu* (Urbanization and the Formation of Neighborhood Associations in Modern Japan). Tokyo: Köjin sha (in Japanese.).

Ueda, Kyoko. 2013. “Naze dai-saigai no hijo-jitaika de sairei ha suikou sarerunoka?: higashi-nihon dai-shinsai-go no ‘Sōmanomaoi’ to Chuetsu jishin-go no ‘ushinotsunotsuki’ (Why do Sufferers of Great Earthquake Conduct Traditional Events?: Lessons from Sōmanomaoi after Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunotsuki Bullfighting after the Niigata Chuetsu Earthquake).” Pp. 43–60 in *Shakaigaku Nenpō*. Sendai: The Tohoku Sociological Society. (in Japanese.).

Ueda, Kyoko and Torigoe Hiroyuki. 2012. “Why Do Victims of the Tsunami Return to the Coast?” *International Journal of Japanese Sociology* 21: 21–29.

Walker, Brian, Crawford Stanley Holling, Stephen R. Carpenter and Ann Kinzig. 2004. “Resilience, Adaptability and Transformability in Social-Ecological Systems.” *Ecology and Society* 9(2): 5.

Yamamoto, Hiroyuki. 2015. “Fukkō no monogatari wo yomikaeru: Sumatora no ‘hyojun no fukko’ ni manabu (Rereading Recovery Story: Learning from “Standard Recovery” in Sumatra).” Pp. 79–106 in *Atarashii ningen atarashii shakai: fukkō no monogatari wo sai-sōzou suru* (New People, New Society: Recreating the Story of Reconstruction), edited by Hiromu Shimizu and Shuhei Kimura. Kyoto: Kyoto Daigaku Gakujutsu Shuppankai (in Japanese.).

Zolli, Andrew and Ann M. Healy, 2012. *Resilience: Why Things Bounce Back*. London: Simon and Schuster.

**SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of the article at the publisher’s website.

**How to cite this article:** Takeda, Shunsuke. 2022. “Continuation of Festivals and Community Resilience during COVID-19: The Case of Nagahama Hikiyama Festival in Shiga Prefecture, Japan.” *Japanese Journal of Sociology* 31(1): 56–66. [https://doi.org/10.1111/ijjs.12132](https://doi.org/10.1111/ijjs.12132)