

Master's Thesis Abstract

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Title

Resource Acquisition in Hirosaki Neputa Procession Groups

The Hirosaki Neputa Festival has been known as a traditional summer event in this castle town since ancient times. In recent years, it has been recognized as an event to confirm the local residents' regional identity. The Neputa Festival is composed of multiple Neputa procession groups (referred to as Neputa groups). This paper focuses on Neputa groups, aiming to elucidate how they procure the necessary resources for the festival and what is required to make the festival sustainable. Through participant observation and interviews, the paper examines the Hirosaki Neputa Aikokai, a voluntary Neputa group, and explores its relationship with a locally rooted Neputa group encountered during the preparation period.

The structure of the paper includes confirming previous studies, and research objectives and research methods in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 covers the historical background of Hirosaki City, featuring local individuals passionate about Neputa and identifying research objectives related to these individuals. Chapter 3 reveals the characteristics of the surveyed Neputa groups and membership issues based on information from participant observation and interviews, considering the framework and factors related to the structure of the groups. Chapter 4 relates how the surveyed groups gather necessary funds and manpower for the festival through member networks (personal networks) and further discusses the "supporters" of these groups. Chapter 5 highlights the way in which, the money in Neputa groups is not just used to purchase material resources or to set up a social gathering place but is grasped by the members as a meaning of "burden of money = responsibility". Chapter 6 focuses on the collaboration between non-local and locally rooted groups participating in "chounai" processions (neighborhood processions), acknowledging the role of geographical connection in resource procurement. Additionally, the paper reflects on the significance of material resources in the social settings of Neputa groups. As a result, the paper clarifies the following points:

1. The Hirosaki Neputa Aikokai procured resources through member networks (personal networks), and the relationship density with "supporters" influenced the type of support (money or material) and amount of support obtained. Smooth resources procurement contributes to the group's continuity.
2. The Hirosaki Neputa Aikokai exhibited a high degree of homogeneity at its core, with the heterogeneous presence on the periphery. The core and the peripheral members have a "peer relationship" in the practice, which changes to a "cooperative relationship" after the practice is over. Due to a failure to establish an educational system that brings the peripheral members closer to the core members, they can only remain on the periphery. Failure to nurture peripheral individuals in order that they may become new core group members limits the organization's sustainability.
3. In the production of Neputa, the potential of women's abilities and strengths remains untapped. Through participant observation and interviews, it was observed that the concept of gender-based division of labor is present in Neputa groups. The traditional educational structure of Neputa groups hinders women from grasping the overall picture of Neputa production. Therefore, it is considered desirable to improve traditional educational structures in order to allow women a place in the center of Neputa production.

【Keywords】 Neputa procession groups, Resources, Educational system, Legitimate Peripheral Participation, Gender.