

Mixed Bathing in Japan - An Outdated Practice Doomed to Disappear?

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<p>Työn aiheena on miesten ja naisten sekakylpeminen Japanissa. Kylpeminen on erottamaton osa japanilaista kulttuuria ja siihen liittyvää tutkimusta on runsaasti. Vaikkakin nyky-Japanissa sukupuolet lähtökohtaisesti kylpevät erikseen, on Japanissa esiintynyt myös sekakylpemistä. Aiheeseen liittyvää tutkimusta on kuitenkin vähän saatavilla niin englannin kuin japanin kielelläkin.</p> <p>Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena on selvittää sekakylpemisen historiallinen tausta, sen nykytilanne sekä tähän johtaneet taustatekijät. Lähteinä on käytetty niin tutkimuskirjallisuutta kuin sekakylpemistä käsitteleviä matkaoppaita ja populaarikirjallisuutta. Tämän lisäksi on hyödynnetty tutkimuskirjallisuutta alastomuuden merkityksistä sekä suomalaisesta yhteissaunomisesta. Aineistoa tukemaan suoritettiin kuusi puolistrukturoitua haastattelua Kyūshūn saarella kenttätutkimuksen ohessa maaliskuussa 2018. Haastateltavat työskentelivät majataloissa, joissa tarjottiin mahdollisuus sekakylpemiseen erillisten kylpyjen lisäksi.</p> <p>Tutkimus osoittaa, että yhteiskylpemistä on esiintynyt Japanissa vähintään 700-luvulta lähtien niin uskonnollisissa, sosiaalisissa kuin seksuaalisissakin yhteyksissä. Tapa on pitkälti nojannut käytännöllisyyteen. Yhteiskylpeminen yleistyi erityisesti Edo-kaudella (1603–1868) kaupungistumisen myötä. Tällöin käytäntö päättyi myös säännöstelyn kohteeksi. Nyky-Japanissa kylpylöiden toimintaa säätelee vuonna 1948 säädetty kylpylälaki, joka ensisijaisesti ajaa sukupuolille erillisiä tiloja ja sallii sekakylvyt vain poikkeustapauksissa.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen datan perusteella sekakylpemisen perinne on katoamassa Japanista. Virallisten lukujen puuttuessa sekakylpyjen määrän on arvioitu olevan nykyään alle 500. Tutkimuksen perusteella syynä on yleinen yhteiskunnallinen kehitys kollektiivisesta yksityiseen sekä muuttunut suhtautuminen alastomuuteen. Tämä näkyy myös sukupuolille erillisiä kylpyjä tarjoavien julkisten kylpylöiden määrän vähenemisenä. Sekakylpemisen tapauksessa suunnan muuttaminen on kuitenkin haastavaa juuri nykyisen lainsäädännön takia. Tämän lisäksi sekakylpemistä koskee ongelmakäyttäytyminen. Voyeurismin ja ekshibitionismin tulkitaan rikkovan kylpemistilanteessa vallitsevat säännöt koskien alastomuuden epäseksuaalisuutta.</p> <p>Haastatteluissa syiksi katoamiseen nousi erityisesti asiakaskäyttäytyminen. Asiakkailta saadun palautteen sekä asiakaskäyttäytymisen perusteella sekakylpemisen alastomuutta rajoitetaan joko pyyhkeiden tai kylpyvaatteiden käytöllä sekä lisärakennelmien keinoin. Tämän lisäksi ilmi nousi vähäinen tietous tai mielenkiinto sekakylpemistä kohtaan.</p>			
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Conventions Used in the Text

Hepburn romanization is used for the transliteration of Japanese terms, unless a commonly used English spelling exists, for example Hokkaido, Tokyo and Oita.

Japanese names are written surname first such as Miyazaki Hayao, not Hayao Miyazaki.

If a specific equivalent English term exists for a Japanese term such as an outdoor bath for *rotenburo* or a Japanese inn for *ryokan*, the English term is preferred.

Unless not mentioned, all the translations from Japanese to English and Finnish to English are by the author.

Japanese characters for Japanese terms (except names) will be provided when the term is mentioned first.

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1. Introduction

As a Finn, going to sauna plays a major role in my national identity. Sauna can be considered as an example how the attitude towards nakedness is more practical and different from other cultures. Asking a non-Finn to join sauna can act as a test to see, how ready the person is to be naked with other people in a hot room without feeling uncomfortable. The situation takes a step further when both genders are present. Since experiencing mixed sauna for the first time at the age of eighteen the practice been a keen part of my private life due to its social and practical nature. However, organizing a mixed sauna always requires negotiation of the parties and whether someone wants a gender-segregated shift. Thus, it is acknowledged as a custom not everyone is content with and sees in a different light. According to the survey by the Finnish daily magazine, *Helsingin Sanomat*, slightly less than half of the population considers mixed sauna as natural (Mykkänen & Mäkinen:2013). The views advocating mixed sauna stress the non-sexuality, naturalness and the traditionality of the practice in the Finnish culture. The opinions against find the shared nakedness uncomfortable, question the non-sexuality of the bathing situation and describe experiences of inappropriate commenting and staring. (Mykkänen & Niemi:2013) The defining line seems to be whether the nudity in the situation is sexual and manners regarding the etiquette. The bad manners revolve around expressing the possible sexual nature of the situation. The unwritten rules and various attitudes towards mixed sauna have fascinated me since then.

Similar to sauna, bathing is an important part of Japanese everyday life. I was aware of the mixed bathing illustrations from the Edo Period but had never encountered a mixed bath in Japan. It was not until I accidently bumped into a historical overview written by Shimokawa Koshi (2013) in a Japanese book store that I realized that the practice still exists. Not only has the number of public facilities providing mixed bathing practice being rapidly declining, the academic literature and discussion on the topic turned out to be scarce as well. This is how the process that lead to this thesis started: mixed bathing was in need of a general overview of the current situation. The aim of this thesis is to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What is the current situation of mixed bathing in Japan?
- 2) What factors have contributed to this situation?

Based on the results, I speculate on the future prospects of the practice. As a detailed analysis of all the questions would expand the length of the thesis to unnecessary levels the focus will be on a general overview, being a case study describing social change utilizing various qualitative methods. Finnish mixed sauna shares the same problem, of lacking academic research. It was interesting to see whether Finnish and Japanese mixed bathing practices shared any similarities.

The first part of the work starts by reviewing the existing literature, defining the key terms regarding bathing, explaining the historical and current overview on the practice based on prior literature. The relation of nudity and sexuality are discussed to understand the problematic nature of the situation. The latter part consists of an analysis of six interviews, conducted with mixed bathing facilities. The aim of the interviews was to see what kind of relation the facilities have in regards to mixed bathing, as well as provide credibility for the lack of prior academic research.

I would like to thank the following people in making this thesis happen: Mizumoto Hideaki, Kalle Karjalainen, Kinjō Naomi and Tomari Seiko for providing valuable material, Kinjō Katsuya for assistance in Japanese language and Bruce Sumner for commenting English.

2. Defining the Key Terms

2.1 Baths Come in Many Forms: Public Bath House, *Furo* and *Onsen*

A public bath house, the Japanese term being *kōshūyokujō* (公衆浴場) is defined by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare as “a facility that utilizes hot water, hot spring water or salt water to provide a public bath” (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare Homepage:2003). One sub-category of a public bath is *sentō* (銭湯), a facility that provides the necessities for maintaining daily hygienic and healthy life and charges the amount of money specified by each prefecture¹ (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare Home:1948). In simpler words, *sentō* is a public bath where customers can bathe for a relatively cheap price. The adult entrance fee ranges from 350 yen to 470 yen (Tokyo Sento Association:2016). *Sentō* became common in the cities during the Edo period (1603–1686) because using fire to boil water was prohibited due to the risk of fire. This led to the introduction of *sentō* in every neighborhood and the public bath soon became a social living room for the people. However, since the Second World War the number of *sentō* has been rapidly declining due to individualization and the spread of private baths. Regarding the theme of this thesis, many (though not all) *sentō* used to be mixed. The installation of separated sites for genders increased gradually during the Edo Period.

Another sub-category of a public bath is *kyōdōyu* (共同湯), sometimes referred to as *kyōdōfuro* (共同風呂) . *Kyōdōyu* comes in different forms (see Figure 1 and 2) and lacks a clear definition². However, the central characteristics are long historical roots and the original purpose of providing a bathing place for the local community and acting as a social gathering place in usually rural areas. Many *kyōdōyu* are located in the vicinity of the hot spring origin and many, but not all, are mixed. Clark (1994:5) discusses that in some communities separated bathing was not thought necessary, however, in the case of an outsider joining the bath genders would be separated. Another important characteristic of *kyōdōyu* is the maintenance form. Whereas *sentō* is maintained as a business model, *kyōdōyu* is maintained by the local community via various form of organizations. This is

¹ Japan is divided by 47 prefectures that form the first juridical and administrative level.

² See *Onsen Hihyō* 2015 pp. 6–9 for discussion of the definition.

a continuance of the traditional maintenance form: a village unit allocating cooperative tasks. The bath was prepared in turns by the community households (Clark 1994:55). Nowadays, some *kyōdōyu* only accept members of the maintaining organization, whereas some are open to the public. This leaves it disputable whether *kyōdōyu* is actually a *public* bath or not.



Figure 1 *Kyōdōyu* Shitanyu (下ん湯) in Yufuin, Oita Prefecture.

(Image Copyright/Johanna Korhonen)

Furo (風呂), often combined with a beautifying prefix in the form of *o-furo*, refers to a bath installed in a private home. Unlike bathtubs in *sentō*, that come in all forms and sizes, *furo* is usually made for one person. One reason for this is the small size of Japanese houses. An important aspect is that the bath room is usually separated from the toilet, unlike the Western concept of shower and toilet in the same room. The earliest form of *furo* was introduced in the latter half of the Heian period (794–1185) by those of the upper-class (Shimokawa 2013:83). Common people visited the public baths, predecessors of *sentō*. However, after the Second World War, along with the economic development, the private bath became the norm. This led to a significant cultural change: bathing together in a public bath transferred into bathing alone at home. Traditionally, the most revered material for the bath tub and its surroundings was *hinoki* wood, a Japanese cypress (Smith & Yamamoto 2001:73). Contemporary baths are generally made of plastic and even come with a digital thermometer which makes the maintaining of the ideal temperature easier.

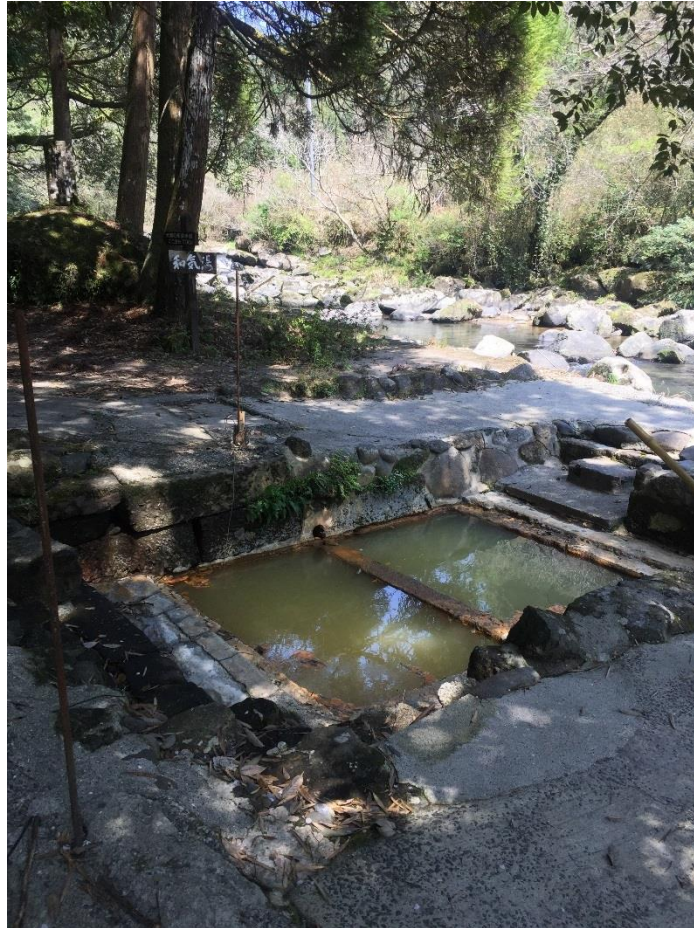


Figure 2 A simple *kyōdōyu*, *Wakeyu* (和気湯) in Kirishima, Kagoshima Prefecture. (Image copyright/Johanna Korhonen)

Onsen (温泉) stands for a hot spring. The character of *onsen* is defined in the Hot Spring Law (温泉法 *onsenhō*) as following: “the water must contain at least one of the specified 19 minerals and have a temperature of at least 25 Celsius degrees at the point of release (e-Gov Japan:1948a). Depending on the situation, tap water is added to either heat up or to cool down the temperature. In Japan, being a volcanic country, hot springs have always been used for bathing. In contemporary Japan, hot spring tourism is a significant business. Many traditional Japanese inns, *ryokan* (旅館)、 provide *onsen* in their facilities. One form of utilizing the mineral content is hot spring therapy. *Tōjiba* (湯治場) is a hot spa that attracts customers based on their baths’ health promoting, pain reducing or illness treating effects (Clark 1994:94). Elder groups and couples are one of the customer groups of the business and some of *tōjiba* are mixed. The separation of baths would become inconvenient for customers who are not able to change clothes, enter or leave the bath without the help of their partner. *Tōjiba* can be a target for a day-trip, but many facilities

provide cheap accommodation with a shared kitchen. The inexpensiveness has attracted students, as well as travelers on motor cycles (Yamazaki 2003:122).

A non-commercial hot spring is called *yatō* (野湯, sometimes read as *noyu*). Not having a clear definition, *yatō* are located in the wilderness, sometimes in hard-to-access areas, such as in the mountains. Due to these factors most *yatō* lack maintenance or bathing equipment. As the hot spring is in its natural state, *yatō* have no entrance fee and are open for anyone to access, resulting in being mixed.



Figure 3 *Yatō* 「Kawa no yu」 (川の湯) in Kirishima, Kagoshima Prefecture.
(Image copyright/Johanna Korhonen)

A classification of mixed baths is provided by Ōguro. In his guide book (2017:115) Ōguro has divided the mixed bathing facilities into three groups: facilities that provide accommodation (*shukuhakusetsubi* 宿泊設備), public baths maintained by an individual or an organization, with or without entrance fee (*kyōdōyokujō* 共同浴場) and hot springs without any maintenance (*yatō* 野湯). The second group, especially, includes a wide variety of baths, ranging from *sentō* to *kyōdōyu*. The most interesting is the emphasis on the complete lack of maintenance in the third group. This indicates that any sign of equipment, even a simple shelter for changing clothes, results in the bath falling outside this category, even though at a first glance the bath would be considered as *yatō*. An example of this is

a hot spring in Yakushima Island, Kagoshima Prefecture (see Figure 4 and 5). *Hirauchi kaichū onsen* (平内海中温泉) becomes accessible only during low tide, being a hot spring in natural state, indeed. However, for having a dressing room, as well as a 100 yen entrance fee, the hot spring can be considered publicly maintained. Apart from Ōguro's classification I did not come across any kind of other listing. The bathing terminology is not clearly defined and many terms are used interchangeably.

Mixed bathing can, of course, be practiced in any of these places. Nevertheless, apart from *yatō*, segregating genders is the norm. However, in this thesis I focus on mixed bathing taking place in the public bathing facilities, mainly public baths. This is due to the fact that a public place is open to anyone and the phenomenon of both genders sharing a bath naked in a public place is globally rare, though not unique to Japan³. *Furo*, on the other hand, is a part of a person's private realm and thus, participants can be regulated. Some public bath houses do provide rentable baths, *kazokuburo* (家族風呂), mostly targeting families and couples.



Figure 4 *Hirauchi kaichū onsen* in Yakushima, Kagoshima Prefecture. Looks like a *yatō*... (Image copyright/Johanna Korhonen)

³ Tabuchi (2015) introduces forms on mixed bathing in German, the Netherlands, the United States, Canada, Australia in her article. Mixed sauna in Finland is discussed later in this thesis.



Figure 5 ... but has a dressing room at the site, a factor that defines the facility being maintained.
(Image copyright/Johanna Korhonen)

2.2 What is Mixed Bathing?

In his historical overview Shimokawa (2013) does not clearly define what he means by mixed bathing (混浴 *kon'yoku*). In his book 混浴と日本史 (*Kon'yoku to Nihonshi*⁴) he seems to cover all kinds of events featuring at least one person of the opposite sex present at the bathing situation as mixed bathing. This even in the case where the person is not actually joining the bath but rather working as a helper.

Different from Shimokawa's view, this thesis will be discussing mixed bathing as an activity where the main purpose of the bathing activity is to clean the body and to socialize. However, two factors are necessary to define: One is whether to include members of your own family; It is common for small children to bathe with the parent of the opposite sex,

⁴ Freely translated as *Mixed Bathing in Japanese History*.

due to the need of parent's observation and teaching the procedure of bathing. Clark (1994:72–73) cites this as an important way of strengthening the bond or personal relations (スキンシップ *skinshipu*). However, bathing together usually ceases when the child reaches puberty, indicating the emergence of a sexual dimension making the practice problematic, even among family members. This is reflected in the public bath facilities, as well. Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare recommends that children around the age of ten should use the site of their own gender (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare:2003). I did not find any study regarding how common it is in Japan to continue bathing with one's parent after reaching puberty but based on my own experience this seems to be in minority, or even nonexistent.

Another factor is whether wearing any kind of clothing during bathing is considered as mixed bathing. Allowing swimsuits would make a public pool included under the definition of mixed bathing. I argue that it is indeed the presence of a naked person of the opposite sex that makes the phenomenon unique, debatable and, therefore, interesting. Thereby, I borrow help from Laaksonen (1994:2) who in his Master Thesis studying mixed sauna in Finland, defines the practice as following: “In this thesis I define mixed bathing as a practice of bathing in sauna together with people of the opposite sex who do not belong in the nuclear family. A crucial aspect is that swim suits are not worn ...but use of a small cloth is accepted.” I will be using this definition as it allows using towels in the bath, a common practise in Japanese mixed bathing. The definition rules out the nuclear family, as well.

Finally, I would like to add that presumably the problematic aspect and debate of the relation between nudity and sexuality in mixed bathing lies heavily on a hetero normative assumption. The presence of homo- or bisexuality certainly provides new aspects and can even be said to place the whole case of sexuality in mixed bathing in a new light. Cover (2003:60) argues that the separation of genders in public shower rooms is founded on the assumption of a culturally binary system of gender. Separating genders and thus making the situation non-sexual lies in the presumption that the object of sexual desire is always the opposite gender. If the gender exclusiveness can no longer be understood as a guard from sexual desire, such as the presence of homosexuality, the situation becomes unstable

as the potential sexual meaning can be present. This reminds me of several occasions where a non-Finnish male friend has interpreted an invitation to sauna by another male as a possibly homosexual act. Although this issue is highly interesting, it will not be discussed further as it falls out of the range of this research question.

3. Methods and Materials

The lack of academic study on mixed bathing is significant. Apart from the historical overview of Shimokawa (2003) I did not find a comprehensive study on the practice. This resulted in a decision to compose an explanatory case study on mixed bathing in Japan, using various sources and methods. The objective of an explanatory case study is to understand why the phenomenon is in its current state and what factors have contributed to this situation (Eriksson & Koistinen 2015:13).

The research questions are approached with several qualitative methods. The first stage was to collect prior research and material and gain an overall picture of the practice. However, as mentioned earlier, I was not able to find academic material on the subject. Due to this, various popular materials such as news, magazines, personal records and guide books are used as a source of information. Especially *The Japan Times* article by Hadfield (2016) describes the overall change in the custom and its current challenges. Additionally, a special issue of *Onsen Hihyō* magazine (2013) dedicated to the disappearing of mixed bathing provided information. Although the academic credibility of these publications is problematic, the sources can be regarded as being part of the custom and be a target of analysis, as well. The phenomenon is analyzed with help of academic studies on the taxonomy of nudity, mainly by ideas of Barcan (2004) and Cover (2003).

Generally due to the lack of prior research, a theme interview survey was conducted with six mixed bathing facility workers. The purpose of the interviews was to gain first-hand information and confirm whether the information was in line with the literature sources. Additionally, the aim was provide “a view from the inside” as the general viewpoint in the sources was those of visiting mixed bathing facilities. The method used in the interviews is semi-structured interview and was chosen for its flexible nature. A typical semi-structured interview consists of a general outline of the questions and the topics but permits freedom in how and when the questions are asked and if necessary, ask further questions in case of new information comes out during the interview (Edwards & Holland 2013:29). This method was suitable as another motive was to scan for new possible factors and unexpected themes not discussed in the prior research. The interview questions were drafted based on the literature sources, covering themes such as reasons

for providing a mixed bath, general overview of the practice, opinion on the legal framework, possible incidents among customers and factors contributing to continuing to provide a mixed bath. The content of the answers was analyzed by using theme analysis method.

Overall thirty facilities were contacted, eighteen via e-mail and twelve by fax machine⁵. Fax was used in a case e-mail or a contact form was not provided on the facility website. Contacting by phone was not considered a suitable method as it requires immediate answer from the respondent. The facilities were chosen from the list generated by *Succhī no kon'yoku rotenburo taikenki*⁶ (スッチーの混浴露天風呂体験記) website. The website provides a nation-wide list of facilities and locations of mixed baths. Eight replies were received, making the response percentage 27%. Two facilities had abolished mixed bath and changed to gender-separated baths. One facility was willing to conduct an e-mail survey. However, an e-mail interview differs significantly from a face-to-face interview, resulting in my declining the offer. In the end, five interviews were carried out. The sixth respondent was introduced by an respondent after one of the interviews.

The interview questions were sent to the interviewees at least two weeks prior to the interview. All communication and interviews were conducted in Japanese. Five of the interviews were recorded⁷, and one was conducted while making notes. The respondents are cited anonymously; however, some of the facilities can be recognized from the attached pictures. The permissions of using the picture was confirmed before publishing the thesis.

The interviews were combined with fieldwork, taking a form of participial observation of touring the facilities and joining mixed baths as a customer. Apart from the interviewed facilities, two *yatō* and three *kyōdōyū* were visited, all mixed. The fieldwork and the interviews took place in various locations in Kyushu during March 2018.

⁵ Fax machine is still a widely used communication method in Japan, especially in the business field.

⁶ Succhī's outdoor mixed bath memoir.

⁷ The length of the interviews varied from thirty minutes to an hour. The overall length of recorded material is approximately 3 hours 37 minutes.

4. Prior Research

The literature on Japanese bathing culture is abundant. Works discussing the historical, cultural, health and even architectural aspects of bathing are numerous (e.g. Smith and Yamamoto 2001, Butler 2005). Despite mixed bathing being a peculiar phenomenon among Japanese bathing culture, it is hardly discussed at least in the English language academic world. One of the rare examples is Scott Clark's *Japan, a View from the Bath* (1994). Clark introduces the general historical overview of bathing, development of bathing tools and bathing in ideas, referring to the social and religious aspects. The case of mixed bathing is discussed in the historical section as a custom that was common until the Edo period but due to several banning attempts disappeared at least from the public bath houses. (1994:33–35) In the contemporary section mixed bathing is described as a rare phenomenon that most Japanese have never experienced. Clark describes his personal experiences as a foreigner joining a mixed bath, the problems concerning manners and differences between genders' opinions on mixed bathing (discussed in detail in 3.1.1). An interesting note by Clark was, that although Japanese bathers did not bring the topic up among themselves, Clark as a foreign researcher was considered as a potential conversation partner on mixed bathing. This was due to the apparent need of the Japanese to correct the known Western perception of mixed bathing as somewhat licentious or sexual. (1994:103–111).

Apart from Clark's research the only English academic literature I managed to find was an article by Nootbaar (2011). The article gathers together records written by foreign visitors on bathing during late 19th century. The observations and comments on mixed bathing, ranging from shock to curiosity, reflect the different views on nudity between the West and Japan at the time. This difference and its impact is also discussed by Tachikawa (1996). Even though the beginning of the Meiji period (1868–1912) heralded several bans on mixed bathing, it is disputable whether Western disdain was the sole factor in mixed bathing becoming problematic. As discussed in the history section, bans on mixed bathing were imposed prior to the Edo period. I argue that although the idealization of Western ideas and custom had a strong influence, other factors, such as the transition into anonymous urban life lacking social regulation, and by this the occurrence of the sexual aspects resulting in the need of regulation.

The academic materials are not abundant in Japanese, either. Apart from Tachikawa's (1996) article analyzing the Western perception on Japanese nudity during the Edo Period and the book by Shimokawa (2013) I did not find any other studies. Shimokawa's work is significant in being the first extensive work on mixed bathing, basing the information on *nikki bungaku* (日記文学)⁸, literature and in later periods, on picture postcards and news. However, in many parts, the information gets lost in superfluous historical anecdotes. The lack of academic studies led me into using various popular literature sources. Yamazaki Mayumi has made a career publishing various books on mixed bathing (e.g. 2003, 2008, 2009), as well as appearing in a television series on the topic bearing her name, produced in co-operation with the Travel Channel, *Tabi Channel*. However, her work is highly personal and emphasizes the communal and social aspects of mixed bathing, a common genre among bathing literature which Merry (2013:6) refers to as "experiential accounts". Some of the topics she covers are anecdotes regarding excitement, tension between the genders, encounters, manners and bathing as an overall experience. Yamazaki's work is valuable for its female point of view. Clark (1994:104) writes that mixed bathing is generally considered more acceptable and thus easier for men, which I argue places the moral responsibility on women. Yamazaki describes that after ten years she still has an uneasy feeling at the time of leaving the female side to enter the unisex side (2008:16). Yamazaki herself started visiting mixed bathing at the age of 27 and discusses her initial uneasiness of joining a mixed bath. However, as time passed, she became fascinated with the custom. One objective of her work is to encourage women to challenge themselves to try mixed bathing. However, the focus of her work is not completely on mixed bathing, as she also reviews the overall experience of the facilities, food, the effects of the hot spring and the nature surrounding the bath.

Another veteran in the field of mixed bathing is Ōguro Keita. He has published numerous mixed bath guide books (see 2015, 2016a, 2016b, 2017), having a career spanning over fifteen years. As a photographer, his guide books focus on visuality and information about the facilities, although he has made comments on the declining number of mixed baths. Due to his abundant knowledge of the facilities and the phenomenon, Ōguro is often

⁸ A Japanese literature genre of private diaries describing daily life.

interviewed in news and articles on the topics (see Onsen Hihyō Shuzaiban 2013 and Hadfield 2016).

Until now I have discussed the research on mixed bathing restricted to Japan. What about research conducted in other countries? As mentioned earlier, mixed bathing is in no way a practice unique to Japan. Although the development and the framework of the custom cannot completely be comparable, particularly due to cultural differences, the research conducted in other countries can provide some useful tools in studying the phenomenon. Furthermore, by adopting ideas from other countries, the features exclusive to Japan might be discovered as well. This is also noted by Palander (2015:9) in her Master's Thesis on public saunas in Helsinki, Finland. Even though not all are mixed, public saunas form one style of mixed bathing in Finland. A Japanese residing in Finland, Palander compares the development of public saunas to that of public *sentō* in Japan. She considers both facilities endangered as the reason of their existence is threatened by urbanization and the installation of private baths. In order to prevent this, both *sentō* and sauna businesses have developed new mechanisms to attract customers, such as architectural innovations to providing a space for locals and tourists to gather. Palander does discuss mixed bathing, albeit briefly as a custom becoming morally questionably during the Edo Period and being prohibited in many prefectures in contemporary Japan (2015:36). This is incorrect as most of the prefectures do allow mixed bathing under special permission (see 4.2.1 for more).

Even though mixed sauna was a common practice in certain countryside regions of Finland until the early 20th century, I managed to find only one academic work dedicated to the custom, a Master's Thesis by Laaksonen (1994). Laaksonen's work is highly detailed and describes the regional differences based on surveys. However, relevant to this study are the reasons explaining the gradual disappearance of the custom, and if they provide any ideas comparable to the case in Japan. The mixed sauna was commonly practised among peasants, a practice resembling that of *kyōdōyu* in Japan. Both relied heavily on practicality: in the case of sauna, not separating genders meant the time and the amount of wood burnt was reduced.

Mixed sauna began to vanish at the end of 19th century as the concept of modesty and honour changed due to the moral education promoted by the Lutheran church (1994:97). In Japan, the lack of Confucian and Judeo-Christian problematism toward nudity might have been a contributor to the acceptability of mixed bathing, as argued by Yamazaki in *The Japan Times* interview (Hadfield 2016). Laaksonen (1994:97) argues that one reason could have been purely architectural: due to renovations saunas became less dark which led to nudity becoming more embarrassing. I associate this with resulting in the idea of exposure, discussed in 4.3. However, the most crucial factor for the disappearance of mixed sauna was urbanization and the disappearance of the village unit in favor of familism. Factories provided saunas for their workers who came from all over the country. However, people not accustomed to mixed sauna started demanding segregated sauna. Furthermore, the newcomers and temporary workers were considered a threat (1994:74).

Similar to Japan, instead of visiting public saunas many modern Finnish houses have a built-in sauna or an opportunity to reserve a private sauna time in their apartment complex. As the sauna culture has disappeared from the public place, so have mixed sauna. However, public saunas in Finland (separate, as well as mixed) have seen a slight revival recently (see Palander 2015). A new form of mixed sauna has emerged in the private life. Laaksonen (1994:84) argues that the current mixed sauna practice which emerged in the 1960s has only a slight connection to the traditional form of mixed sauna practised in the Finnish countryside. This is completely different to Japan, as I argue that the existing form is indeed the remnants of the traditional form. The modern form of Finnish mixed sauna is practiced at events such as private parties, among friend or neighbor groups and in summer cottages. The crucial factor is that participators are all familiar with each other. This remarkably differs from the Japanese case where mixed bathing is provided as a part of a public facility.

4.1 History of Mixed Bathing

In this part I introduce the history of mixed bathing. Shimokawa's work (2013) provides the foundation, supported by Clark (1994). Since a detailed description of the phenomenon would lengthen this work to unnecessary levels I focus on introducing the forms of mixed bathing which have existed in Japan.

The earliest record on mixed bathing is mentioned in *Hitachi no kuni no fudoki* (常陸国風土記) from 721. *Fudoki* is a form of gazetter describing local history, nature, customs and specialties of the region, the one in question being located in the area of current Ibaraki Prefecture. Shimokawa (2013:25) argues that the inclusion of the description of mixed bathing indicates that the practice was considered, to some degree, as a specialty to the area and was thus not practiced nation-wide. More records are from the year 733, from *fudoki* as well. *Izumo no kuni fudoki* (出雲国風土記)⁹ contains several scenes, one describing the use of *tōjiba*, another scene is described as a festival-like atmosphere where people of all ages would gather to socialize in the bath for hours. Shimokawa (2013:24) writes that one early form of mixed bathing was practiced in a form of *utagaki* (歌垣), a ritual to pray for a good rice harvest. The ritual took place at a seashore where men and women sang, bathed and engaged in sexual relationships. This indicates that the early forms of mixed bathing were not completely without a sexual dimension.

A form of mixed bathing emerged in the Buddhist temples of Nara during the Nara Period (710–797). The importance and the purifying element of hot water is stressed in Buddhist sutras (Shimokawa 2013:57). This manifested as emphasizing the private hygiene among Buddhist monks and in constructing bathing facilities in the most significant temples. One way of spreading Buddhist ideas among the common people was to introduce the concept of *kudokuyu* (功德湯). People were allowed to use the bathing facilities in exchange for attending Buddhist rituals. This was the first time in the history of Japan that bathing took place indoors, and not in a hot spring or in a cave-like bath¹⁰. However, whether *kudokuyu*

⁹ Current Shimane Prefecture.

¹⁰ The earliest man-made baths resembled a sauna more than a bath tub. One bath type was *iwaburo* (岩風呂), either a carved cavern into a rock, or a structure made of rocks covered with earth. Burning wood inside the cave heated the space and pouring seawater on the hot rocks resulted in a steam bath (Clark

were mixed or not, has not been confirmed. Shimokawa (2013:62) argues that temples only had one pot boiling the bath water, making preparing water for separate baths ineffective and time-consuming. However, this does not rule out the possibility of organizing bathing in shifts. This element makes historical research on mixed bathing challenging as assumingly self-evident practices are not always mentioned in the historical records.

Bans on mixed bathing have been imposed numerous times in the history of Japan, the earliest being from the year 797. After the capital was relocated to Nagaoka from Naga in 784 the monks and nuns were left without an observance, resulting in corruption of morals. The striking factor was that monks and nuns started to have children, thus breaking the vow of celibacy (Shimokawa 2013:72). The mixed bathing facilities were condemned as a contributing factor and therefore, the first ban on mixed bathing was enacted. Shimokawa (Ibid.) argues that this is the starting point of the suspicious reputation mixed bathing has carried until this day.

In the Heian period (794–1185) an important stage of bathing culture took place. This was the development of private bathing. Shimokawa (2013:83) writes that the first private bath was installed in the imperial palace. At first, private baths were only used by the upper-class and this is the setting in which the profession of a bath servant, *yuna* (湯女) was born. The servant(s), generally a young girl, helped the bather with undressing, scrubbing and washing. Although not always the case, sexual services were also provided. Entertaining a guest by presenting young *yuna* to “help” with bathing was not an uncommon act among the samurai class (Shimokawa 2013:82). Hiring *yuna* for a public bath was also a method to attract more customers which indicates a level of sexuality, although some places kept *yuna* strictly non-sexual. Shimokawa gives *yuna* a big part in his historical overview. However, I argue that the significance of *yuna* was more in the context of sexual foreplay than cleaning the body. Yet the concept of *yuna* did have a significant influence on mixed bathing, especially during the Edo Period.

1994:22).

Before moving on to the Edo Period I briefly discuss the relation of clothes and bathing in mixed bathing. Ishikawa (2013:18) states that one of the misconceptions regarding mixed bathing has been that it has always been practised naked. The use of clothing varies between periods. Bathing naked became more common as late as during the Edo Period and prior to that at least covering genitalia with a cloth was the norm, though the earliest timing for this has not been traced. Clark argues that the use of bathing clothing does indicate a potential concern of sexuality in the situation (1994:33). It was during the Nara Period that clothing became the norm in the Buddhist baths (Clark 1994:24). The cloth was called *yukatabira* (湯帷子) which later involved into *yukata* (浴衣), the summer equivalent of *kimono* worn at the festivals. During the Kamakura period (1185–1333) the use of *yukatabira* was limited to religious purposes. Bathers still covered genitals, men with a loincloth *fundoshi* (褌) and women with a skirt-like *koshimaki* (腰巻) (Clark 1994:25). Especially *fundoshi* is still used today during *matsuri* (祭り), seasonal festivals.

3.1.1 Mixed Bathing During the Edo Period

During the Edo period, Japan went through an urbanization. This was reflected in the mixed bathing and many paintings and sketches from the period show both genders bathing together (Clark 1994:43). Shimokawa discusses almost exclusively the situation in Edo¹¹, however, similar tendencies were observed at least in Osaka and Kyoto (2013:155–156). As Edo became the new capital, the city became a target for new workers. As mentioned earlier, the risk of fire led to the prohibition of using fire at private homes. The solution for maintaining hygiene was to provide public baths and this was how *sentō* was born. *Sentō* were mostly mixed. This was due to practical reasons: instead of heating a separate bath for each sex, providing one bath for all was simply wise in the economic sense. At first, the number of men in Edo exceeded those of women and thus providing a female-only bath meant only a few customers. As the number of women increased in the city, a new form of mixed bathing, called *irikomiyu* (入りこみ湯) emerged. The lack of female baths was solved by some women simply starting to use the male-only baths. Especially women from the countryside considered mixed bathing natural (Shimokawa 2013:140–141). However, during the Edo period the line between bath houses and brothels had started to blur, this resulted in sexual harassment in

¹¹ The preceding name of Tokyo.

irikomiyu and reflected the growing cultural gap between the traditional countryside and the bustling city life.

Due to these factors, from the 18th century onwards, several bans on mixed bathing were imposed by the government. The first order was introduced in 1791 with the reasoning that mixed bathing worked only for a small number of people due to economic restraints; however, the rising number of people led to problems and thus separation of genders was required (Shimokawa 2013:146). As the number of women had increased in Edo, the separation became economically viable as well. This was the first of numerous banning attempts on mixed bathing; however, the banning attempts were mostly to little avail. In some *sentō* dressing rooms and entrances were separated but the bath was divided by a mere stick that did not provide any visual protection in the least.

So, what exactly led to the ban of mixed bathing? Apart from the economic reason I argue that there were two additional factors that played crucial roles. The first factor was the *yuna* industry. The development of *yuna*, a helper girl, was briefly discussed earlier. The sexual element of *yuna* developed gradually into a more organized way of prostitution. Due to the wide gender disparity in Edo the brothel industry prospered and *yunaburo* (湯女風呂), a combination of a bath and a brothel became popular. *Yunaburo* became even more prominent as a new law on regulating the business hours of brothels was implemented in 1640. This placed brothels and *yunaburo* in a clearly competitive relationship. This resulted in pressure by the brothels and the military government (*bakufu* 幕府) ordering the merge of *yunaburo* into brothels. In becoming associated with prostitution, I argue that *yuna* was a significant factor in the banning of the mixed bathing, as well as making its reputation questionable. The descendant of the *yuna* industry still exists today in the form of soap land (ソープランド *sōpu rando*), a shop where a naked female worker washes the customer with her hands and body.

The second factor was the arrival of foreigners. Japan abolished its over two-hundred-year lasting isolationist foreign policy (鎖国 *sakoku*) in 1853 and started allowing

foreigners into the country. Nootbaar (2011) introduces several observations on mixed bathing by Euro-American visitors from the late 19th century. Although most of the observers were shocked by the view of both sexes bathing in the same tub and considered this a primitive custom, there were people, such as Frenchman Maurice Dubard that were able to trace the shock back to their European upbringing (2011:81). Chamberlain (1905:61) made a similar notion stating that the importance and personal satisfaction of purity prevails over the Western prudery. He cites the editor of *The Japan Times* that the nude is seen in Japan, but not looked at. The amount of records concerning nudity indicate that the visitors considered the custom worth writing about. Foreign visitors themselves did not strongly advocate for the ban of mixed bathing but the criticism and introduction of Western ideas in order to modernize Japan, including modesty on nudity, undoubtedly had an influence on the Japanese government.

After entering the Meiji Period, the first ban on mixed bathing was imposed in 1868 in Tokyo, and afterwards in other regions as well (2013:173–174). The ban was enforced several times. In 1870 *sentō* were ordered to install window bars to block the view of half-naked bathers. In 1872, the Minor Offenses Act (*ishikikaiijōrei* 違式誥違条例) prohibited mixed bathing, nudity, walking half-naked and urinating on the streets. Law offenders would be fined. Still, as the laws continued to be ignored the police began to implement stronger measures to enforce the law. However, mixed bathing never completely disappeared. This indicates the difference in the attitude between the common people and the elite. Mixed bathing had been practiced for centuries and the foundational character of the practice does not change whether those in power condemn it or not. However, prohibiting a custom does send a signal, striving to make the custom invisible and punishable. The ban sought to impose the idea of nudity being shameful (Tachikawa 1996:93).

I emphasize that everything discussed up to this point took place in the cities and mixed bathing in the countryside continued to exist free of any city control. The problems occurring in the cities led to regulating mixed bathing and a gradual decline, therein similar to the Finnish public sauna. In the countryside, instead of the sexual dimension, the social aspect was given priority. Shimokawa (2013:164) does introduce cases in which mixed bathing in small villages was attempted to be suppressed but, eventually,

the ban was abolished as many villages had only one bath house or the bans were largely ignored as the observance of law was hardly enforced in remote areas: I argue that these are the remnants of the current mixed baths of Japan.

4.2 The Current Situation

There are no official records on the amount of mixed bathing facilities in Japan, but estimations exist. Ōguro's newest guide book *ニッポンの混浴温泉100 (Nippon no kon'yoku onsen, 2017)*¹² states the total number as being 470 baths. The number has been declining rapidly. In the *Onsen Hihyō* (2013:10) interview Ōguro states that the number was 1200 in 1993 but had declined to 700 in 2013. This indicates on average 25 places a year are being shut down or abolishing mixed bathing. Another source of information is a travel site *Succhī no kon'yoku rotenburo taikenki* listing mixed baths location around Japan: In March 2017, *Succhī* listed 477 spots; however, the list is not completely up-to-date. Additionally, *Succhī* lists facilities that have previously provided a mixed bath but have either shut down for various reasons or abolished mixed bathing. At the time of writing this, the list encompasses over 170 facilities or baths (*Succhī* 2018b). *Yatō* can be shut down as well, due to an accident or safety reasons (see Figure 6).

There are various factors contributing to the declining number of mixed baths. First is the general tendency in the *sentō* business. The number of *sentō* has been declining during the post-war area. In Tokyo alone, the decline has been from 2,641 in 1965 to 628 in 2015 (Tokyo Sento Association:2015). The reasons are the ageing of the owners, the lack of successors and old buildings needing expensive renovations that, due to the lack of customers, are not affordable. *Kyōdōyū* has faced similar challenges. Originally built to provide a bathing facility for the local community, the disappearance of customers results in neglect of maintenance. The decline in customer numbers has roots in the spreading of private baths, and the general social development from communality to individuality. In Japan, this has profoundly changed the bathing culture by transferring bathing in public to bathing alone in private. Clark (1994:65) describes bathing as a custom embedded in the lives of Japanese people; a custom that reflects values, attitudes and beliefs, thus changes in the society are reflected in the bath.

¹² "One hundred mixed baths of Japan".



Figure 6 An example of a shut-down *yatō*. *Hirauchi onsen* (平落温泉, bottom left) in Kirishima, Kagoshima Prefecture. The reason for the shut-down is unknown, however one respondent recalls the reason being an earthquake. The bath is now off-limits. (Image copyright/Johanna Korhonen)

However, reasons exclusive to mixed bathing exist as well. One factor relates to the change in demand in the tourism industry. An article in *Onsen Hihyō* (2013:12–13) discusses a peak in the demand for private rentable baths (貸切ブーム *kashikiri būmu*) as one reason for the disappearance of mixed baths. The rentable baths in Japanese inns became popular in the early 21st century. Due to complaints by customers on mixed bathing numerous owners renovated their mixed bathing facilities into segregated ones, providing a private bath for families and couples with a charge instead. However, the boom died out fast and, as the legal framework makes reintroducing mixed bath tubs difficult, the owners were stuck with empty rentable baths making no profit. Because of the expensive renovation many of the inns went bankrupt, together with numerous old mixed bathing facilities being lost.

4.2.1 Legal Framework

The law regulating public baths in Japan is the Public Bath Law (公衆浴場法 *kōshūyokujōhō*), enacted in 1948. As the name suggests, only public baths fall under the regulation. The law defines the legal terms with regard to business license, hygiene and inheritance matters. Failing to meet the conditions can result in losing permission to run a facility. The permission must be filed through the juridical unit responsible for sanitation issues of the prefecture, generally being the health department (保健所 *hokenjo*).

The Public Bath Law does not directly prohibit mixed bathing. In article three it is stated “that the owner must take measures in securing adequate ventilation, lighting, sanitation or necessities for bathers, as well as enforce public morals” (e-Gov Japan:1948b). The Japanese word used in context is *fūki* (風紀), defined as “moderation and rules on manners, customs and everyday life, especially the relationship between genders” (Kōjien Electronic Dictionary). The law continues by stating that “the criteria for these are defined by prefectures themselves” (e-Gov Japan:1948b), leaving the interpretation whether mixed bathing threatens public morals for each prefecture. All prefectures primarily advocate the separation of baths, dressing rooms, toilet and entrance, however some prefectures have a special notation for mixed bathing. For instance, in Saitama, Yokohama and Tochigi, the public bath law of the prefecture states that shared spaces are allowed in case “there is no danger to public morals”¹³¹⁴¹⁵. In some prefectures, mixed bathing is only allowed for children under a certain age and is otherwise prohibited, such as Hyōgo Prefecture (Kobe City Homepage). The age limit varies as well. The youngest age limit is in the Kyoto Prefecture, being seven years old¹⁶. Nagoya’s limit is eight years old¹⁷. Special permission is possible, in the case when the bather is in need of assistance. Tokyo sets the limit at 10 years old as, stating the reason being the sexual physical

¹³ Saitama Prefecture:2008

¹⁴ City of Yokohama:2012

¹⁵ Tochigi Prefecture:1969

¹⁶ Kyoto Prefecture Web Site:1988

¹⁷ Reiki-Base Intānettoban:2012

development and independent ability to bath alone¹⁸. In short, if special mention of accepting shared spaces is not present, mixed bathing is prohibited¹⁹.

However, the Public Bath Law was not applied retroactively, meaning that the already existing mixed baths were able to continue their business as usual. Still, opening a new mixed bathing facility can be challenging as the segregated baths are prioritized in the law; due to this, the natural course of the number of facilities is to gradually decline. Thus, the biggest challenge for mixed bathing is the continuance of its very existence. The special number of *Onsen Hihyō* (2013) magazine dedicated to mixed bathing illustrates this accurately as almost all the articles discuss the problems concerning mixed bathing and whether the practice is on its way to extinction.

4.3.2 Manners and Mixed Bathing

The current legal framework allows mixed bathing to exist at least on a small-scale form but why are many facilities abolishing the mixed bath while continuing business? In *The Japan Times* interview, Mina (the webmaster of *Succhī kon'yoku rotenburo taikenki*), states the main reason for the decline as being the bad manners of the customers (Hadfield 2016). One article in *Onsen Hihyō* (2013:24–33) covers hot spring enthusiasts talking anonymously on bad manner issues. I place emphasis on the fact that the commentators wanted to remain anonymous which reflects the possible sensitivity of the topic. Next, I introduce the problems, referring to the *Onsen Hihyō* article, as well as issues discussed by Clark (1994).

The first problem is voyeurism²⁰: this refers to, that instead of bathing the aim of the visit is to observe other bathers naked and gain sexual pleasure from this. Voyeurism could remain on a level of watching, but cases of physical harassment or even masturbation

¹⁸ Bureau of Social Welfare and Public Health(n.d.)

¹⁹ Some prefectures apply the age limit to rentable private baths, as well. This is interesting as couples would be considered to be the target group. Hyōgo Prefecture Public Bath Law clearly states that mixed bathing for over 10-year-olds in a rentable bath is only permitted in need of assistance or in case of married couples (Kobe City Homepage). See Tokugane program for more discussion.

²⁰ Defined in English Oxford Living Dictionary as "the practice of gaining sexual pleasure from watching others when they are naked or engaged in sexual activity".

have been reported. A term *wani* (ワニ, translated as crocodile) is used to describe bathers who spend hours in the bath waiting for women, to catch a glimpse of nude beauty. *Wani* can work alone or even in bigger groups. Even though most of the voyeurs are men, older women harass young men, as well. Voyeurism is difficult to control as crossing the line of staring too much differs from one bather to another. Additionally, a complete avoidance of looking complicates the social aspect of bathing. Clark (1994:108) uses the description "seeing but not looking". The technique and the intuition behind this reflects a complex set of rules in being considerate to other bathers. Regulation of *wani* is challenging as just staying for a long period time in the bath is not sufficient reason for accusing a person. Some facilities have responded to *wani* issues by installing a sign prohibiting sitting near the women's entrance. Wider baths can also offer protection from gazes and maintain distance from others. Yamazaki (2009:30) states that personally she has found the distance between one-to-two people to be the most suitable for keeping up a conversation. Being too close makes controlling the eye contact awkward. Cover (2003:59) discusses the role of gazing in a public shower room, describing it as a disciplined gaze. This gaze is supposedly without sexual interest, a peek or a non-prying glance. Gaze with a sexual intent is condemned to be breaking the social code.

The second problem is exhibitionism. This can occur in various forms, from indecent exposure to engaging in indecent acts. Indecent exposure refers to showing too much of the body or bathing in a position that reveals too much. *Onsen Hihyō* (Iitsuka 2015) and *The Japan Times* (Kodera 2015) reported on the case of *Fudō no yu* in Tochigi Prefecture. The under supervised *kyōdōyu* was suspended due to complaints on exhibitionist gathering and of public sex taking place, some of which were even published in a pornographic film. The *kyōdōburo* was reopened due to public demand and with the help of subsidies for the management. However, new rules were imposed: women were required to wear towels or *yuami* (湯浴み), a type of bath robe. Additionally, staff are present during limited opening hours. Mixed bathing being a setting for an adult film is indeed not a farfetched idea, however, sexualizing the bathing situation does pose a danger and might invite spectators onto the scene (see *Onsen Hihyō Shuzaihan* 2015 for more discussion).

Other exhibitionism is less grave. Clark (1994:107) gives an example of an elder woman sleeping on the side of the bath in the form of the Chinese character 大 (*dai*). Even though

wetting a towel in the water is prohibited due to hygienic reasons in many facilities, small towels to cover parts of body while moving in and out of the bath are widely used. The use of the towel in the bath is learned in childhood and the etiquette depends on the gender. Women tend to take postures that cover more whereas men tend to be more casual.

The third problem concerns inappropriate commenting. Engaging in conversation is common. The timing of starting the conversation and choosing the topics require a good understanding of the situation. Yamazaki (2008:16) also points out the importance of releasing the potentially uncomfortable tension by starting a conversation. Clark (1994:109) writes that commenting on other people's bodies (especially in a familiar situation) is acceptable but the line between inoffensive observation and inappropriate commenting differs among people. However, crossing the line is immediately noticed by other bathers. Rather than solving the matter by an open conflict the rule-breakers is punished by avoidance or asked to leave by the staff. Observing the reaction and the non-verbal communication is crucial. Successful conversation might lead to socializing with the new acquaintances after bath. This reflects the communality of mixed bathing. Yamazaki (2008:17) states that it is indeed the social aspect that keeps her visiting mixed baths, describing the encounters in the bath as "naked friendship" (裸の付き合い *hadaka no tsukiai*), and a mixed bath as a place where "love starts" (そこは恋が始まる場 *soko wa koi ga hajimaru ba*) (2008:15), or as "mixed bathing therapy" (混浴セラピー *kon'yoku serapī*) (2009:116).

The common factor among these problems is that they involve unwritten social codes. Thus, it is no surprise that guide books (Ōguro 2017:8–9) and Yamazaki's work stress the social rules and the educational aspect of mixed bathing. I argue that the common rules that could be unified and maintained in a village unit have been destabilized since the mixed bathing has become a public place for anyone to enter. Hadfield (2016) makes a similar notion. These rules can be considered as social structure which keep the nudity in a mixed bathing situation non-sexual. Cover (2003) has analyzed the structures in a social context featuring nudity and this will be discussed in the next section.

Laaksonen (1994:100) discusses that entering sauna has been considered a ritual that emphasizes equality among bathers, spirituality, purity and importance of manners

compared to the outside world. Similarities are seen in Japanese bathing culture. Barcan (2004:151) names these sites in a modern society as ritual exceptions. He takes nudism as an example. Although the key foundations of nudism lie on “naturalness” and “innocence” of the body, it paradoxically is a target of regulation (segregated beaches) and is perceived by some as deviant. The reported incidents in the media strengthen this perception. The public mixed sauna in Finland have not been free of incidents regarding improper commenting, and exhibitionism has been reported as well (e.g. *Helsingin Sanomat* 26.7.2017).

Although anyone can be a target of sexual harassment, generally women are the victims. If mixed bathing is considered unpleasant or even as a threatening situation, women bathers will stop attending. I argue that women, indeed, have the initiative in the future of mixed bathing. Women in mixed bathing can act as guarantors that the practice is not only about sex, an idea similar to the need of women participation in the nudist philosophy, noted by Barcan (2004:172). The female-friendliness has been noted in guide books by Yamazaki (2003), Ōguro (2015) and in *Succhi*'s facility introductions, including a star-based evaluation on how challenging the mixed bath is for female bathers. The requirements vary slightly between guide books but are based on factors such provision of dressing rooms (separate gender rooms being the best and the complete lack of a dressing room the most difficult), the gender balance of bathers, allowance of towels, water transparency and providing a female-only time. Although the purpose is to encourage women to challenge themselves in trying mixed bathing in a comfortable pace, the charts indicate how men and women have different requirements for a pleasurable mixed bathing experience. I argue this relates to greatly differing attitude towards male and female nudity. Barcan writes (2004:110) that female nudity is regarded as morally dangerous (seductive or tempting) but, simultaneously, being more in danger than threatening. The possible social consequences for public female nudity are still far more serious than those of male nudity and thus, it is no wonder that female nudity is considered to be in need of control, either by women or men²¹ (Barcan 2004:267). Another aspect of female nudity is the aesthetic discourse. All the guide books by Ōguro cited in this thesis feature a female model in her 20s and he is recruiting new models as well. When I inquired about this decision via private message Ōguro replied that after experimenting with photoshoots

²¹ Barcan (2004:115) writes that among teenage girls the confidence with own nudity can be labeled negatively as sluttishness.

of various ages and genders, he came to the conclusion that women between the ages of 20 and 30 are the most suitable in bringing out the best of natural hot springs (personal inquiry June 1, 2018). Public female nudity is surrounded by paradoxes, but one justifiable factor is the aesthetic discourse that is systemically commodified, as noted by Barcan (2004:197).

One factor not discussed in this thesis is answering to the needs of the growing number of foreign tourists. As the attitude towards nudity varies among cultures, the consideration for tourists becomes a relevant topic. A *Traveller* news article introduces a facility in Nagano Prefecture that requires wearing a garment in the bath, mostly due to the fact that customers consist of mostly foreign tourists (Yako 2017).

4.3 Taxonomy of Nudity

To understand the role of nudity in mixed bathing I use studies on taxonomy of nudity as a tool, mainly referring to works by Barcan (2004) and Cover (2003). Although both have studied the taxonomy of nudity from a western viewpoint I argue that this is applicable to Japan as well. As discussed in the history section, mixed bathing changed significantly during the urbanization of the Edo Period and was the target of several banning attempts thereafter. This goes hand in hand with introducing Western and modern ideas into Japan; one of these ideas is how nakedness is perceived. Barcan (2004:110) writes that the perceived moral, social and psychological power of nudity has led to universal regulations either by laws or considering them as social taboos. I argue that the frames and context surrounding nakedness started to destabilize during urbanization and was enhanced by the importance of privacy after the war.

The meaning of nakedness varies among cultures and is constructed via religious symbolic and visual traditions. According to Barcan (2004:3) the Western idea of nakedness is a mix of Jewish and Platonic traditions, providing a complex and paradoxical approach. As in Greek culture the ideal human is represented as naked, the Judeo-Christian tradition associates nakedness with sexuality, obscenity and immorality. This automatic association between sex and nudity can itself be treated as a phenomenon (Barcan 2004:2). Even though nudity is natural, by clothing it has become a paradoxically unnatural and temporary state. The dichotomy of nudity revolves around non-human and human, civilized

from savage, insane from sane. This perception has also played a major role in how Western colonialists perceived the nakedness in other cultures as barbaric or even as a sign of innocence. Western ideas also have a strong tradition of linking nudity with sexuality. The gap between the West and Japan in interpreting nudity explains the factors behind the reaction of Westerners towards mixed bathing (see Nootbaar 2011). Tachikawa writes (1996:90–91) that the exposure to nudity shook the core idea of Christian ideas towards sexuality and nudity. The western concept of being naked signifies a possible sexual stimulus, especially regarding female nudity. In Japan, nudity and ethics did not have a similar connection and being naked was not considered as an exposure. On this, Barcan (2004:23) states that, instead of a physical state, nudity is best defined as a psychological state, as feeling exposed exists only in relation to others. However, this does not mean that nudity and sexuality were completely unlinked in Japan, as can be seen in cases of *shunga* (春画 erotic pictures), peeping or getting aroused while looking at a female body in a bath. Still, the western influence made an intervention in the Japanese interpretation of the role of nudity in a bathing situation. The discussion whether mixed bathing or mixed sauna has a sexual meaning continues today. For instance, the opinions cited in the mixed sauna survey by Finnish daily newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* either condemn the practice as obscene or defend the practice as natural and having no sexual meaning (Mykkänen & Mäkinen 2013). Yamazaki also emphasizes the social aspect of mixed bathing although she does not deny the sexual aspect of the situation. She describes (2008:24) having a brief sexual tension in a bath with a male owner in Shiretoko Peninsula. Yamazaki also uses the word *sekushī* (セクシー), "sexy" to describe the men of all ages she has encountered while bathing and on another occasion, wonders whether she has fallen in love with his bathing company after recording footage at a bath for a program (2009:24).

Cover (2003) discusses nudity and relation to the context. Being naked alone is a solo affair but becomes possibly sexual when being *gazed upon*. This, however varies among cultures. Tachikawa (1996:85) describes a situation from the year 1866 where a Danish visitor in Japan was puzzled how bathers were not embarrassed to be looked at. How being naked in front of others is experienced according to the the situations and even among generations. Cover argues (2003:54) that the rise of private housing providing privacy has affected this. Likewise, rural areas commonly have more rituals and traditions

relating to nudity that strive to separate the nakedness from sexual meaning. The statement by an-80-year-old man interviewed by Yamazaki is an example of this idea:

“The idea of mixed bathing being indecent or shameful was brought from the city. We did not feel it that way when we were kids.” (Yamazaki 2009:115).

Cover (2003:56) introduces the categorization for legitimate nakedness under the gaze of others by Elisabeth Grosz. The frames and context in which nakedness is considered appropriate in the modern western society are as follows:

- 1) A context of power relationship such as parent/child or doctor/patient in which the inferior permits his or her body to be gazed upon
- 2) Nakedness between lovers or in a form of intimate, sexual context
- 3) Nudity through representations such as media, pornography, advertising and so on

Mixed bathing falls under none of these however; Cover suggests a fourth category in which nakedness is shared for practical or pleasurable purposes in *ostensibly* non-sexual physical places: such places are locker rooms, communal showers or clothing-optional beaches. I propose including mixed bathing, as cleaning the body requires being naked for practical purposes and socializing with other bathers can be pleasurable as well. Barcan (2004:97) adds that what somebody can or will do in a certain culture is influenced by the repeated mundane tasks they have to perform. I argue that a volcanic country providing natural hot springs has made a bathing a mundane task. Cover continues (2003:57) that the fourth category is distinguished from other categories by carefully constructed rules regarding behavior that prevent that neither the expression of nakedness nor the gaze upon on is interpreted as sexual. Sexual conduct is not legitimate or appropriate in the situation. However, the non-sexual nature is not stable and is open to new meanings. Applying Cover’s idea, I propose that the bad manners present in mixed bathing have broken the social structure that kept the situation strictly non-sexual and thus have changed the nature of the practice. The situation stays non-sexual only if participators maintain the social code. This becomes challenging when there are no shared common rules and if interpretation of the sexuality of the situation differs among bathers.

However, why has the sexual aspect in mixed bathing become problematic? Both Barcan and Cover state postmodernism as a crucial factor. Barcan (2004:32) writes that postmodernism has stripped nudity and clothing from its imposed meaning. This is because of the strong awareness of the meanings being culturally and historically produced. The questioning of practices and values has resulted in high cultural awareness of the instability of the situation and has thus blurred the line between sexuality and nakedness. This has restored the view of nudity back into biblical, sexual level. Moreover, the sexualization of the public sphere in contemporary western culture and the consequential presence of sex and sexuality in advertising, art and entertainment have brought sexuality into situations that previously did not have sexual connotation. Various kinds of nudity exist, however Barcan (2004:244) writes that the most used nakedness in the modern consumer culture uses the relationship between nakedness and sex. I suggest that mixed bathing has gone through a similar cultural change that has led to reluctance of and thus, decline of the practice. The custom is also sexualized through media, such as adult movies, inviting the wrong kind of interpretation of the situation (Iitsuka 2015). Also, Barcan interprets (2004:130) the current changes regarding nudity to be a product of contemporary consumer culture. The increased presence of nudity has made people aware and unhappy with their own body. Another is the obsession with privacy and individualism: this has led to communal showers changing into separate shower rooms and people preferring their own bath over the communal one.

As nakedness is considered a highly personal matter, it is no wonder that the lack of control when one's body becomes sexually gazed upon leads into social hysteria and avoidance of the situation, whether being lack of bathers in mixed bathing or junior high schoolers skipping shower after gym class²². As an example of public hysteria, Cover discusses bath-time pictures of children (2003:54–55). The fear of harmless family pictures being read in an illegitimate sexual connotation have led to discussion whether naked pictures of children can be considered as child pornography. The photo itself does not have a meaning but is influenced by the viewer via the act of reading. The reason for the hysteria is the need to protect society from something that could possibly be harmful or exploitative. In the case of mixed bathing, prioritizing separate bathing over mixed on a legal level can be interpreted as a way of protecting society from the corruption of

²² One factor is also the limited body image provided in media that can lead to shame and avoidance revealing one's body to others.

morals.

I found it interesting that although the bathers in the bathing situation are naked the guide books always make a note whether a dressing room is provided or not. If participants are naked, why is undressing considered problematic? Perniola (1989:237) writes that being clothed or naked is not erotic as an absolute value. Eroticism lies in the idea of concealment and the movement between the stages of concealment and naked. This demonstrates the eroticism behind underwear and erotic clothing, as well as striptease that prolongs this transition. Providing a dressing room, or even better a separate changing room for genders conceals the transition and eroticism from the bathing situation. Barcan (2004:18) writes that this idea lies behind the argument by nudists that swimsuits are more suggestive than being naked.

Summarizing this chapter, nudity in public and private is a rich affair, with a variety of meanings. Some of the meanings are not related to sexuality, however the distinction between the meanings has been blurred in the modern contemporary world. This has resulted in an ambivalence of how to perceive nudity in a previously non-sexual situation.

5. Interview Survey and Fieldwork

The six facilities interviewed in the surveys consisted of *tōjba*, a hotel and four Japanese inns. These are definitions mentioned on the facilities' own websites. The size of the facilities varied greatly, from a small nine-room Japanese inn to a hotel providing 95 rooms. The facilities were located in different parts of Kyushu, the most southern main island of Japan. All the facilities provided at least one mixed bath, in five cases being the outdoor bath (露天風呂 *rotenburo*). The tendency for an outdoor bath to be mixed is common. This is due to historical reasons as the bath was built in a place with a beautiful view or in the vicinity of the origin of the hot spring. However, nowadays many facilities provide female-only outdoor baths, and they were provided in this form or as a women-only time at four out of the six places. A male-only outdoor bath or men-only shift was provided at three of the facilities. The lack of male-only outdoor bath naturally results in men being more numerous in the mixed bath.

The facilities were founded between 1878 and 1989²³. I found it interesting as, from the legal viewpoint, five of the facilities were founded after the enactment of the Public Bath Law in 1948. However, all three prefectures the facilities were located in approved mixed bathing in special cases.²⁴ The titles of the respondents' varied from manager and director to member of the board of directors, the length of career spanning from six years to thirty-three years. None of the respondents were the original founder nor worked at the facility at the time of foundation, but in five cases the respondent was a close relative. Out of the six respondents, five were men, one was a woman.

Based on the answers, most of the customers were Japanese tourists in groups, of all ages, regulars being numerous. A growing number of tourists from other Asian countries was mentioned by four facilities. Western tourists were clearly in the minority, in all but two cases. As local visitors were few, the factor of tourism and bad manners could have a correlation and thus, an impact on mixed bathing. This is not the focus of this thesis and

²³ However, the original foundation year of one facility was 1866 but was relocated after this, the current facility being in operation since 1975. Whether the original facility provided mixed bathing, could not be confirmed.

²⁴ Kagoshima Prefecture:1969, Kumamoto Reikishū:1989, Oita Prefecture's Official Sightseeing Information Site:1948

requires for further research. Before entering the themes of the interviews, I emphasize that the viewpoint is that of the facility owner and how the facility perceives the custom of mixed bathing. Thus, what happens in the mind of bathers, requires a different survey.

5.1 Results of the Interviews

5.1.1 Mixed Bathing as a Custom

When inquiring about what kind of position mixed bathing has in Japanese culture, only one respondent described mixed bathing as being an old, somewhat traditional custom. Five of the respondents did not label the practice as traditional nor considered it peculiar to the Japanese culture. One respondent even stressed that for most Japanese, the custom is somewhat distant: another described mixed bathing as a rare way of bathing, although mixed bathing practices in other countries were familiar as well. Two had never consciously thought about the custom. One respondent mentioned that the religious framework in Japan may have been more forgiving in allowing shared nudity compared to those of monotheistic faith. All respondents considered mixed bathing originating simply out of the surrounding factors and technical limitations.

The answers are not surprising. As discussed in the history section, mixed bathing was only practiced in certain regions. In contemporary guide books, some prefectures lack mixed bathing facilities whereas the facilities are abundant in Hokkaido, Tohoku and Kyushu, as well as adjacent Tochigi, Nagano and Gunma Prefectures, all rural areas also having volcanic activities (Ōguro:2015).

However, all respondents admitted noticing that mixed bathing had experienced changes during the time they had been working in their current positions: These were the changes in society that are also reflected in the custom. Two respondents mentioned the rising popularity of private rentable baths for couples and families, instead of using the mixed bath; one respondent regarded this tendency as being the most challenging factor for mixed bathing; another respondent said that young couples especially experience jealousy in a mixed bathing situation, thus preferring a rentable bath. This was interpreted

as the increasing emphasis on privacy and individualism in society, as well as the importance of the nuclear family structure. Another respondent noticed the disappearance of drinking parties of companies²⁵. In the 1980s and 1990s, group reservations, mainly for the workers of the same office, were a common sight at the inn. The workers would feast, drink and bathe together to strengthen the group spirit. However, this customer group had disappeared completely and had been replaced by couples, families or lone travelers. These answers confirm the process of the bathing situation becoming more private than public.

Four respondents mentioned the increase of modest or shy behavior during mixed bathing, or reluctance to enter the mixed bath. This applies to both genders, but especially women give feedback reporting mixed bathing as being embarrassing. In one of the facilities, the bashfulness resulted in structural changes to the bath. The respondent recalls that in the late 1990s customers began to move about less in the two outdoor mud baths (see Figure 7 for reference). This led to the mineral-rich coal in the water not spreading evenly around the baths. The facility solved the problem by installing a bamboo stick to separate gender sides. Although the visual contact was retained, defining the borders did result in bathers moving around the bath more. This structural change also led to separating entrances, building a separate wooden tunnel for women. The tunnel would block the view from the male side and provide a safe space for women that did not want to be seen. These structural changes affected the overall view and the atmosphere of the outdoor baths and were considered somewhat regrettable by the respondent. Separating the gender sides was also considered necessary due to the increase of tourists and, simultaneously, bad behavior such as men sitting near the women entrance.

A similar case was in the hotel with a grand mixed bath. The feedback gathered from the customers had resulted in limiting a certain part for female use only. The area was expanded recently, though the exact timing could not be pinpointed by the respondent. Additionally, a female-only time was provided, being in the evening between 7.30 and 10 p.m. Being during the prime time, the female-time was a target of continuous discussion and generated complaints from male customers.

²⁵ Spending time with the company even outside official working time has been traditionally highly regarded in the Japanese society.

These examples show that providing a mixed bath has become increasingly difficult. Thus, it is no wonder that many facilities abolish the system, either introducing a shift-based system or designating the bath only for one gender.



Figure 7 A guide map of the interviewed facility. The red lines stand for bamboo sticks, separating outdoor mud baths. Even though the bath on the upper left is marked as mixed, the bath is men-only. (Image copyright: Johanna Korhonen)

5.1.2 Why Mixed Bathing?

When inquiring about the reason for building a mixed bath and not a separate one, all answers revolved around practicality or reflecting the general attitude at the time. However, none of the respondents were working at their current positions at the time of installing the bath so the comments are based on second-hand information.

Four respondents described the choice as unintentional or as a natural choice²⁶ due to the surrounding factors. Surrounding factors were the location of the hot spring. In one case, as the hot spring naturally gushed out inside a cave and had been there for as long as anyone could remember, changing the location was not even considered. Another respondent described that the bath was built around the gushing point without the awareness of whether a mixed or a separate bath was being constructed. As mentioned earlier, many still existing mixed baths are outdoor baths, built around naturally occurring hot springs. In many cases, altering the location was structurally impossible. However, in some cases the bath has simply been separated by a fence, such as Yudomari Onsen in Yakushima (Figure 8 and Figure 9). One respondent pointed out that it was possible to change the location of the mixed bath by installing a pipe. However, the further away the water is carried from the origin the more the quality of the water deteriorates due to the contact with the air. In this facility, to provide the best possible setting for a quality bath was to leave the bath as close to the source as possible. Providing a mixed bath among others was considered an option among the others as well. One respondent mentioned that at the time of building the bath the idea of a rentable family bath did not exist so the mixed bath was considered a way to provide a bath for families.

Only one respondent could not name the exact reason for the choice; the respondent suggested that the reason was probably the idea of providing a unique bathing experience and excluding one gender would spoil this experience.

All the respondents considered the mixed bath as being the primary factor attracting customers was for only a tiny, or even non-existent portion of the visitors. Instead, other factors such as the healing effects of the hot spring, the overall experience, the quality of

²⁶ “当たり前” *atarimae*

water or the unique experience were considered to be determining factors in deciding to visit the facility. One respondent compared the mixed bath to a dessert, something extra but never being the main dish. The reasons for entering the mixed bath were considered to be the rarity of the custom (one respondent) or curiosity (one respondent). Another respondent pointed out the number of visitors being surprised at the time of hearing about the mixed bath, even though the information is provided on pamphlets and facilities' web pages. One respondent pointed out that only suspicious people would visit because of mixed bathing.



Figure 8 Yudomari Onsen (湯泊まり温泉) in Yakushima, Kagoshima Prefecture. An outdoor bath divided with a wall. (Image copyright/Johanna Korhonen)



Figure 9 Yudomari Onsen. (Image copyright/Johanna Korhonen)

5.1.3 Identity as a Mixed Bathing Facility

As the facilities providing mixed bathing are rapidly declining, one aim of the interview was to examine what kind of role mixed bathing played for the facility. Based on the interviews, the identity was weak. The lack of identity was reflected in the answers for the interview request by doubting whether the respondents were qualified to take the interview or not (three respondents).

Four of the respondents responded that a mixed bath did not play a major role in their business or advertisement. One respondent mentioned that mixed bathing was part of the hotel image due to their concept of providing a unique grand bath. Three of the respondents did not consciously search for information on mixed bathing or were uninterested in the custom. However, four of the respondents could pinpoint another facility with a mixed bath in the area. Three of the respondents did mention reading news or articles on mixed bathing if they happened to come across it. One of the respondents mentioned doing so due to being interested in how the mixed bath was utilized in the marketing. The facility regarded the mixed bath as bringing additional value. Rather than a facility providing a mixed bath, the facilities profiled themselves as a hot spring spot,

tōjiba or as a Japanese Inn and engaged in activities to provide themselves with information for improving the overall service. This was done by keeping in contact with colleagues or attending association meetings. One respondent discussed that rather than mixed bathing, other issues in the field were considered more important, such as the case of allowing tattooed customers into the facilities²⁷. All the facilities had been featured in the media, such as magazines and television programs, but not primarily as a mixed bath facility.

Among the interviewees, only one respondent admitted that the mixed bath played a major role. The respondent considered mixed bathing as one part of traditional bathing culture and engaged in association activities to preserve such traditional bathing culture. However, mixed bathing was only considered as one form of traditional bathing, this having other features as well. The respondent was especially interested in preserving natural hot springs, whether mixed or not.

5.1.4 On Public Bath Law

The interesting factor with the facilities was that apart from one, all were founded after the enactment of the Public Bath Law. This indicates that regardless regulation, it is possible to open new facilities with a mixed bath. However, three of the respondents heard about the law for the first time in the interview questions, indicating that it is not rigorously enforced.

Three of the respondents were aware of the law, two due to having personal experiences. One respondent mentioned that instead of focusing on mixed bathing, hygienic regulations were emphasized. Another respondent was familiar with the law and with the procedure for obtaining it. The same respondent told me that the Health Department had inquired about the current state of the mixed bath but recalls this as a rare occasion. The respondent believed that the permission had been granted due to the mixed bath being approved by the locals and having historical roots. The same respondent told me about a

²⁷ Tattoos in Japan are strongly associated with organized criminality and numerous bath houses, gyms and pools do not allow customers with tattoos. However, due to the rise of foreign tourists with tattoos the facilities are facing a new challenge how to deal with a new, potentially big customer group.

nearby facility that was reopened after a change in ownership. However, in this case new permission for the mixed bath was not granted. The facility built a wall to separate the sexes. This case demonstrates that a break in the running of the facility can indeed have consequences on mixed bathing due to the legal regulation.

When inquiring about the role of the Public Bath Law in the framework of mixed bathing, three respondents interpreted the law as preventing incidents. One respondent stated that preventing mixed bathing on a legal level might have been taken too far. Two respondents stated that the legal framework does make the continuance of mixed bathing difficult. One respondent saw the law as preventing using mixed bathing as a setting for prostitution. This explains using the phrase “maintaining the public morals” in the law.

Three of the respondents considered the law as reflecting the values and norms of the contemporary society. One respondent stated that Japanese culture went through a significant cultural change after the war and the law is one outcome of this. One respondent stated that the law is a product of natural progress. Interestingly, three respondents believed that law plays a role in protecting women from sexual harassment and has a connection to the rise of gender equality in society. Protecting grown-up women from possible harassment by emphasizing crime prevention is an interesting view on the matter, however not uncommon in Japan²⁸.

5.1.5 On Nudity and Sexuality

As discussed in section 4.3 mixed bathing is an accepted form of public nudity that is controlled by a set of social rules. However, the breaking of these social rules, considered as bad manners, have become a challenge for mixed bathing.

Five of the respondents considered that mixed bathing does have a sexual element. One respondent stated this as varying between individuals. However, the presence of a sexual element is not necessarily negative and can even spice up the situation. Two respondents

²⁸ Molesting in trains, *chikan* (痴漢) is prevented by designating women-only train cars during rush hours. It is disputable whether this strategy actually solves the original problem leading to molesting. I argue one reason for this is being the conflict-avoiding Japanese culture, thus placing emphasis on preventing crimes.

considered that the general atmosphere during a mixed bathing situation was more interesting or fascinating compared to separate bathing because of the presence of the other gender. However, two respondents noted that the existing sexual factor playing an excessively central role could lead to problems. I interpreted this to mean that it is considered to be the social code to act as the situation being non-sexual.

One respondent pointed out that the possible sexual factor must be taken into account by the bather. The facility provided mixed bathing as an option and trying mixed bathing requires a sense of self-responsibility. The respondent elaborated this by saying that bathers who find all kind of contact, such as eye contact in the mixed bath uncomfortable, should abstain from joining the bath.

Next, I inquired about what the respondents thought the attitude was towards nudity. Two respondents mentioned that elder people were more relaxed on the topic. One respondent thought that younger people were more reluctant to do mixed bathing due to a lack of experience. Three did not mention any differences, however, one believed the attitude more likely varied among nationalities.

The growing reluctance towards nudity in mixed bathing had been taken into account in all of the facilities, in various ways. One way was doing structural alteration as discussed earlier. In general, bathing with a towel is prohibited due to either hygienic or traditional reasons. One facility did not allow towels or clothes in the bath, due to the therapeutical effect becoming ineffective. However, the rest the facilities did either allow towels (three facilities) or a women-only bath robe, *yuami* (two facilities, see Figure 11) in the bath, the latter being a relatively new convention. One facility was planning to introduce a bath robe. The bath robes were only allowed in the mixed bath. Providing a bath robe instead of towels has hygienic reasons, as the main use of the towel is to wipe dirt of the body.

The reason for allowing the use of a towel or bath robe was the awareness that especially women wanted to cover their body during mixed bathing. Two respondents mentioned that it provided a way to encourage women to enter the mixed bath. One respondent explained that the water in the bath is completely transparent, resulting in embarrassing bathers. Two respondents noted that *yuami* was a way of making the bathing situation more comfortable for the growing number of foreign tourists that did not have a similar

bathing culture. One respondent even stated that limiting the nudity in the mixed bath might play a major factor in preserving mixed bathing.

There was one exception among the facilities that had designated noon as men-only time in the outdoor mixed bath. The reason for this was the bath being in a completely open space that could even be seen easily by passer-bys. Due to the men-only time, the facility only allowed the use of the mixed bath for lodgers, excluding day-trip visitors.

The answers regarding the sexual element were predictable. Barcan (2004:175) makes a similar note on nudism that sexual curiosity is normal. However, based on the literature and the answers the nudity seems to be a problematic factor. As discussed earlier, guide books evaluates how female-friendly the mixed bath is depending on the transparency of the water and whether the use of a towel is allowed. Thus, it is no surprise that the facilities also take this into account. However, in contrast to the article in *Onsen Hihyō* (2013) where an anonymous group talked about manners, none of the respondents thought mixed bathing was a particularly sensitive topic.



Figure 11 Yuami. (Image copyright/Johanna Korhonen)

5.1.6 On Bad Manners

In the literature sources, the problem of manners was mentioned as playing a major role in the disappearance of mixed bathing. Five respondents reported having experienced a manners related incident, although they were rare: a few incidents maximum per year. These were based on customers reports (four respondents). Four respondents mentioned the troublemaker being generally a male, the age being from twenties to fifties. One facility reported zero incidents. The reason stated was the high-quality of the inn and the awareness of the customers of their high social status.

A general incident revolved around manners. One respondent mentioned couples kissing and hugging in the bath in the presence of other bathers, regarded as inconsiderate behaviour. Two respondents mentioned someone gazing at other bathers. However, similar to Clark's note, the bad behaviour is rarely directly confronted. The incidents being reported afterwards confirm this as well.

New technology has resulted in problems ensuring the privacy of the customers. Three respondents reported that smart phones and social media were becoming more present. Filming or taking pictures can take place inside or outside the changing room, or during bathing. One mentioned that in order to prevent incidents, separate changing rooms have become somewhat of a norm. Cover (2003:66) writes that recording using media is a significant factor in sexualizing an otherwise non-sexual event. However, the purpose of this is not always sexual; other reasons were the wish to commemorate the moment with friends or with a selfie. However, the risk of outsiders ending up in the picture still exists. The rule breaker was first given a notice (three respondents) and one respondent mentioned installing of a sign prohibiting photography. One respondent mentioned staff patrolling the bath area.

The word *wani* was mentioned by five respondents, and two respondents told about encountering one. The first respondent separated the genders by using a bath diving stick to prevent *wani* incidents. One interviewee had a personal experience and a unique countermeasure for *wani*. If a lone man was staying in the bath for suspiciously long (stated from one to two hours) a staff member, in the story the respondent himself, would join the bath to determine if the person was a *wani* or not. The interviewee would stay for

a long time and even chat with the suspect. Usually this made the suspect leave. These incidents happened at least once a year, and according to the interviewee was a result of the fact that day visitors were not required to register their private information at the counter.

Serious crimes mentioned were peeking into the female changing room (one respondent) or intruding in the ladies' side (one respondent). However, these kinds of incidents are not directly connected to mixed bathing. Serious crimes required calling the police (two respondents). One respondent emphasized that incidents are present in separated baths as well and that general manners are important, whether mixed or not. Another respondent felt it is actually the separation of genders that leads to curiosity and incidents. Thus, mixed bathing has the power of normalizing nudity.

5.1.7 Thoughts on Disappearing of the Custom

The last theme revolved around the future of mixed bathing. First, I enquired what were considered to be the reasons for the decline of the facilities. Four respondents considered that due to the incidents and the legal framework, maintaining a mixed bath requires more effort. Abolishing mixed bath removes the possible responsibility in the event of an incident. Four respondents mentioned customer behavior, as well. Bathers, especially women being more reluctant to enter the bath, resulted in fewer customers. One facility had changed one previously mixed bath to men-only due to no women entering the bath. However, in contrast to Clark, the lack of successors to run the business was regarded as a factor only by one respondent, four respondents considering it irrelevant.

The following ideas were reflected in the answers to the question whether the facility had an interest in maintaining a mixed bath. Two respondents said that any other choice would be structurally impossible and a shift-based system would be very impractical. This referred especially to customers arriving from afar (one respondent). One respondent wanted to keep providing a mixed bath for the time being, as long as no serious incidents occurred; the reason was the irreversibility of the act. However, the respondent did not regard abolishing a mixed bath as a significant loss for the facility. Three respondents expressed a will to keep providing a mixed bath. One respondent mentioned this

especially as a wish to preserve old bathing culture, two respondents wanted to keep a mixed bath as an option, and thus preserve diversity. One of the respondents wanted to question the whole concept of segregated bathing and consciously ignored feedback on mixed bathing. In contrast to this, one respondent was more sensitive to the customer feedback and behaviour: in the facility, customer feedback was actively collected and acted upon, resulting in modification of the bath space. Thus, the mixed bath will change if customers keep demanding for such changes.

Finally, the opinions on the future of mixed bathing were pessimistic among the respondents. Three respondents mentioned that mixed bathing will probably keep declining but keep existing on a small-scale. Two respondents mentioned that the current times were not favourable to mixed bathing and that there is hardly anything that would reverse the current trend. One respondent said that if mixed bathing became economically profitable, a reverse trend could be probable. One case of commodification of *kyōdōburo* has been taken place in Beppu, where a stamp rally was organized, this resulting in the increase of visitors (Onsen Hihyō 2015 : 8–9). Another way is the increased use of bath robes, towels or the acceptance of swimsuits (two respondents). This would change the foundational character of bathing and in the case of a swimsuit, even cause falling out of the definition of mixed bathing in this thesis. One respondent noted that this reflects the current, changed attitude towards nudity. Another respondent felt the bathing culture would change if foreign tourists keep arriving.

Why is mixed bathing not being preserved? Two respondents said that the media concentrates only on negative incidents at the cost of positive effects. Two respondents stated that mixed bathing is not considered important; it is not considered as a tradition or as a part of Japanese culture. This contrasts heavily with the opinions on Finnish mixed sauna. Instead, the disappearance is more about losing one option, an option not many pay attention to. The mixed bathing lies in a cultural blind spot and one respondent mentions that it is foreigners like the author who have the ability to make mixed bathing visible. This reminded me of what the editor of *Onsen Hihyō*, Ninomiya Takashi, said was the motivator to feature a special issue on mixed bathing: that the custom is disappearing, but no one is doing anything in order to prevent it (Hadfield 2016). This appeals to the need of activism in creating of awareness. Activists, such as journalists Ōguro and Yamazaki can also be regarded as influencers. However, the mixed bathing is

running out of time.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to provide a general outline of the mixed bathing in Japan utilizing various literature sources and interviews. Based on historical records, mixed bathing has existed at least in some regions of Japan since the eighth century. Mixed bathing has been practised in various occasions, ranging from religious and social gatherings to forming sexual relationships. Sharing a bath between both genders relied on practicality. By sharing a bath, the amount of burnt wood was reduced. In the Edo Period, the gender disparity made providing female baths economically unprofitable. In the case of a natural hot spring the bath was utilized in its natural state.

However, the presence of sexual dimension within mixed bathing has existed to this day and has been a target of legal regulation since the Nara Period. The banning attempts were numerous especially during the early Meiji Period. The regulation was part of the government policy to eradicate practices considered uncivilized. Another factor was the using of mixed bathing as a setting for prostitution. A female bathing assistant, *yuna*, was introduced in the Heian Period and developed into a prostitution industry during the Edo Period. However, the bans of mixed bathing never resulted in the complete disappearance of the custom. Especially in rural areas, the mixed bathing continued its existence, arriving to the present day.

The legal regulation of mixed bathing still exists in contemporary Japan. The Public Bath Law, enacted in 1948, defines that the facility owner has to take measures in “ensuring public morals”. The mixed bathing is not clearly stated, however on the prefectural legal level mixed bathing is either prohibited or only allowed on special cases. This means that opening new facilities with a mixed bath is in principle prohibited. However, five of the facilities interviewed for this thesis were founded after the enactment of the law. As the post-war economic prosperity introduced private baths, the bathing became more of private than a shared task. This has resulted in the decline of public bath houses including mixed baths. This is accelerated even more by the customer behaviour on mixed bathing facilities. Bad manners regarding using the bath, voyeurism and exhibitionism has resulted in regulation, as well as especially women avoiding mixed bathing and giving

negative feedback. Countermeasures by the facility runners, such as abolishing the mixed bath, are irreversible due to the legal framework. Official records do not exist, but the current number of mixed baths in Japan is estimated to be under 500 based on guide books. Mixed baths can be divided into three groups: those attached to an accommodation facility, various types of public baths maintained by groups or individuals, and *yatō*, hot springs located in their natural state in the wilderness.

The transition of mixed bathing is analysed by focusing on the role of nudity. Mixed bathing is one form of situation where being naked under the gaze of other is accepted. The situations vary between cultures and the unwritten social rules keep the situation non-sexual. However, according to Cover (2003) and Barcan (2004) postmodernism has resulted in the strong awareness of the instability of these social rules regarding nudity and sexuality. Bad manners in mixed bathing, such as *wani* and exhibitionists, change the nature of the situation by aiming to gain sexual pleasure. Followed by the advertising industry strengthening the connection between nudity and sexuality the interpretation of nudity in the mixed bathing has become problematic. This results in bathers avoiding mixed bathing or giving feedback. This customer behavior leads to gender-segregated times, dividing the gender into separate sites or introducing bath robes, or in the extreme case, abolishing mixed bath. The allowance of towel, separate changing and the level of transparency of water connects to “female-friendliness” of the mixed bath. This indicates that the rules during mixed bathing have changed to prefer covering the nudity, especially by women. Whether this is a result of incidents, the individualization of the society or emphasis of the privacy is difficult to point out. The case of mixed bathing is complex, and this thesis has only scratched the surface.

Is mixed bathing on its way to extinction? The legal and social factors considered, the future does not look bright. The progress of mixed bathing shares similarities to that of public sauna in Finland. In Finland the public mixed sauna has almost disappeared and is mostly practised in private events. Palander (2015) writes that public saunas in Finland have seen a slightly revival by developing their concept. Could mixed bathing be rebranded as well? Some examples do exist; however, the legal framework makes a revival even more challenging. Still, the Public Bath Law only applies to public facilities,

making *yatō* one possible setting for the continuation of mixed bathing.

The main reason for conducting the interviews with facilities providing a mixed bath was to gain an insider view on the situation. However, I found the results not providing much of an added value to the research. Perhaps another method would have been more suitable for the research. Still, some interesting points were discovered. One was the lack of awareness and interest of the facilities regarding mixed bathing. This indicates that the disappearing of mixed bathing is not known among those who could play a major role in saving it. Nevertheless, providing bathing facility is customer service and if customers complain of the service, answering that need is what can be expected. Mixed bathing is widely ignored in the academic world as well. However, concerning the work by Ōguro and Yamazaki a small-scale level activism on mixed bathing does exist. Still, considering the acute nature of the situation, a lot more is left to be desired.

The bathing culture in Japan is facing new challenges. Bathing plays a major part in the country's tourism industry on the national and on the international level. In the interview survey, two respondents mentioned the increase of foreign tourists and the necessary to provide a comfortable setting for bathing even for visitors from cultures that emphasize covering one's nudity. The 2020 Tokyo Olympics approaching, providing *yuami* and accepting swimsuits can be expected to increase. I argued that the rise of tourism has affected mixed bathing as a growing number of unknown people from various backgrounds are gathering in the bath. This could be observed at one of the interviewed facilities. The facility had renovated the outdoor bath due to incidents resulted by the growing number of visiting tourists. Considering the future research, topics on how the tourism has affected hot spring tourism in general could be beneficial.

As a Finn enjoying mixed sauna with my friends I advocate the naturality discourse of nudity and wish that nudity could have other meanings besides sexual. However, this opinion is in a minority as nudity is considered a highly private matter, regulated by unconscious social rules. I understand people wanting to protect their privacy, however the future of rentable baths, swimsuits and individualized shower rooms sure seem lonely.

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Appendix

Appendix – An e-mail request to the facilities

件名： 混浴に関するインタビューの依頼

(施設の名前)の担当者様

初めてご連絡させていただきます。

フィンランドのヘルシンキ大学の大学院生、ヨハンナ・コルホネンと申します。

現在、『日本の混浴の現状と将来』を主題とする修士論文を書いております。日本では、混浴という風習がどれほど残っているのか、また、将来に消滅するかということを明らかにしたいと考えております。研究の動機は、フィンランドはサウナ文化が日常生活の一部となっており、昔から混浴の風習もあったということから、日本の混浴に対する興味を持つようになりました。

2017年の9月から、琉球大学に日本語・日本文化研究留学生として1年間留学しており、修士論文のための資料収集をしようと考えております。そのため、2018年3月に混浴施設の営業者様にインタビューさせていただきたいと思い、ご連絡をさし上げた次第です。宜しければ、ご協力いただけませんか。ご検討のほどよろしくお願い申し上げます。

インタビューでは、主に混浴施設、お客様の年齢層、意識の変化、混浴におけるマナーと問題等についてお聞きしたいと考えております。インタビューは日本語で行われ、1時間程度を見込んでおります。また、インタビューの質問は、あらかじめメールでお送りします。

修士論文は英語で書いておりますが、20ページ位の日本語版も作成したいと考えております。インタビュー内容は、匿名で引用させていただきます。

担当者様には、ご多忙中とは存じますが、取材にご協力いただければ幸甚に存じます。

お手数をおかけして申し訳ございませんが、ご返事いただければ幸いです。なお、本調査に関してご不明な点またはご質問等ありましたら何なりと私にお問合せくだささい。

どうぞよろしくお願い申し上げます。

ヨハンナ・コルホネン