The Social Structure and the *Gion-Yamakasa* Management of a *Chou* in Hakata During the Modern Period: The Case of Kokei-machi

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This paper describes in detail the social structure of Kokei-machi, one of the *chou* allowed to participate in the *Gion-Yamakasa* festival in Hakata during the Modern period, and its management of the festival. Due to the existence of an abundance of historical materials dating from 1935 to 1945, the primary focus of this paper is on this period.

There existed huge social disparity in Kokei-machi between the households that lived on the *omote-dana* facing the roads and the quasi-households that lived elsewhere, that is, on the *ura-dana* or in rented accommodations. Only *omote-dana* households were able to take part in *chou* meetings and in the election of *chou* officials. Also, it was only the *omote-dana* households that paid charges, such as *chou* rates, charges for putting on festivals and sanitation charges. They alone were regarded as official members of the *chou*.

In 1940, during the prolongation of the Sino-Japanese War, *chou-nai-kai* and *tonari-gumi* were established in Kokei-machi. At that time, quasi-households were added to both organizations in accordance with the policy of the Interior Ministry. However, with heads of quasi-households unable to participate in the election of officials for both organizations, the dominance of the *omote-dana* remained intact.

The dominance of the *omote-dana* was clearly illustrated when, in 1943, Kokei-machi took on the role of being responsible for the *yamakasa* for the *Gion-Yamakasa* festival. *Chou* members involved in organizing the festival that year were either *omote-dana* household heads or their sons. Moreover, those who assumed the role of *dai-agari*, considered the highest honor in the festival, were also either only *omote-dana* household heads or their sons.

The staging of the *Gion-Yamakasa* had become difficult due to the continuation of a chronic depression in Japan that had begun at the end of the Meiji period (1868–1912), causing a decline in the economic strength of *chou* in Hakata as in the rest of the country. By the early Shouwa period (1926–1945), the *chou* of Hakata had got Fukuoka City and local financial circles to offer grants for the *Gion-Yamakasa*. However, the escalation of the Pacific War caused a shortage in both commodities and manpower, making the holding of the *Gion-Yamakasa* even more difficult. It was at such a time that it became the turn of Kokei-machi to take charge of the *yamakasa*. 