POPULATION CONTROL AND THE FAMILY

IN

FEUDAL AND POST-RESTORATION JAPAN

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The analysis of population statistics from the standpoint of social anthropology promises to become an increasingly significant field of study especially in regions where economic pressures have been the greatest. It is also clear that in the long run any change in society, either structurally or functionally, which reveals itself in population statistics must necessarily affect the genetic inheritance of that society. The following is a partial analysis of some of the available statistical data on the population of Japan during and after the feudal period and implications with respect to population trends in Japan today.

Population increase has always been a matter of grave concern to the Japanese but it reached alarming proportions in the immediate postwar period as the returning flood of demobilized soldiers and repatriated civilians, aided by a sharp rise in the birth rate, raised the natural increase to the highest level ever reached in Japanese history. Realizing the acuteness of the situation, the Japanese government in 1948 passed a Eugenic Protection Act that permitted the establishment of birth control clinics in the local Health Centers and legalized abortions to protect the mother's health, interpretation of the latter including among its provisions economic as well as the more narrowly conceived medical reasons. These measures resulted in a sharp decline in the birth rate and in 1950 the population figure stood exactly at the point anticipated by the pre-war trend line. By 1952, the line had dropped even further and in fact the past five year period from 1947 to 1952 has witnessed one of the most spectacular birth rate declines in all history.

The declining birth rate has been so remarkable as to have become the subject of much debate and study by students of Japan's postwar problems. Birth control by contraception has undoubtedly been a contributing factor, but conservative estimates indicate that more than a million abortions are being performed each year. In spite of these measures, the annual natural increase remains substantial, the death rate having been reduced to a level comparable with that of the most complex industrial nations by the introduction of modern public health measures. To the Government and the people of Japan alike it has become clear that population increase remains the greatest single national problem and that unless radical and as yet undiscovered agricultural methods can be devised to achieve food sufficiency, or the extremely difficult task of rationalizing industry and extending trade can be realized, the problem of achieving a stabilized economy will not reach a solution. Countless studies have been directed toward these

issues and several have dealt with various aspects of the feudal period when Japan was faced with many of the same problems that confront the nation today.

Of special interest is an article on abortion and infanticide by Bonsen Takahashi which appeared in the November and December 1952 issues of the periodical Shizen. In the following pages I have drawn freely from this article which is a composite analysis of more than thirty separate sources; unless otherwise indicated, the illustrations used are from Mr. Takahashi's article. I have also referred to the Encyclopedia of Folklore (Minzokugaku Jiten) which likewise appeared in 1952 and to various older publications. As explanatory and contrasting data, I have had recourse to my notes on modern Japan and to the data gathered on field trips with or by my student assistants, Mr. Chikasato Ogyu and Mr. Yasuhiro Haraguchi in a mountain village in Nagano prefecture. The village is among the more conservative of those classed as mountain villages by Japanese ethnographers and many features which developed in the feudal period still survive either in actual practice or in the memories of the older inhabitants.

Japanese feudalism was characterized by a number of unusual features not duplicated with such intensity in other feudal systems. Among the most significant of these were: 1) political and geographic isolation; 2) xenophobic cultural exclusion; 3) rigid social class dichotomy and 4) almost complete economic self-sufficiency. They were not all present in the earlier period, but with the establishment of the military dictatorship in Yedo under the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1603, they became part of national policy and persisted as such until the close of the period in 1867, or 260 years later. The threat of foreign domination was removed by the expulsion of all foreigners with the exception of a closely guarded Dutch trading post in Nagasaki and by the virtual elimination of the Christian Church. Coinage was scarce and foreign commerce was very limited but the Shogunate or Bakufu government sought to achieve self-sufficiency by assuring a constant supply of rice. Rice was made the basis of national economy and the tribute of vassals as well as the taxes of farmers were fixed on the basis of this single commodity, the latter being determined according to local conditions in amounts ranging from 50%-80% of the annual crops.

Held aloof from the commoners by a strict code of ethics, the non-taxed Bushi or ruling classes which constituted from 6%-8% of the total population depended for their welfare upon the labor of the farmers. There was virtually no middle class in the early period: the peasants and artisans comprised over 90% of the population, with the Eta or outcastes accounting for the remaining small percentage.

The government tried to follow a policy of allowing the farmer just enough to maintain existence without impairing production. Cultivated lands were technically owned by the lords but the farmers held the right of tenure and in theory the transfer of land rights was prohibited. Unable to sell or leave their lands and forced to maintain normal production, the farmers' only hope of improving their lot was to increase the area

under cultivation, to seek part-time employment as laborers, or to engage in handicraft industries as sidelines. All of these they did, especially the developing of upland fields where non-taxable dry farming crops could be raised.

At first the system seemed to be reasonably successful. There was an increase in the population but it was largely offset as the cultivated area increased; in normal times, at least, the lot of the farmer was bearable. Only in periods of famine was there serious economic distress. Not until about the middle of the period, about 1750, after new lands immediately surrounding the farms had been exhausted and the rice lands had become increasingly encumbered by mortgages and debts, did the fundamental weakness of the system become apparent. In order to meet their tax payments, farmers gradually lost the rights to their lands as the ever-growing class of merchants found ways of evading the anti-alienation laws. Thus, the merchant class grew in numbers and in wealth and the farmers became more and more impoverished. This in turn reduced the income of the lords and both classes accordingly suffered.

Under such conditions, it is scarcely surprising that the people should have been driven to extreme measures to ensure their survival. As their incomes continued to decrease, farmers and warriors forced to extremes by their dire economic plight sought relief by limiting the number of children through abortion and infanticide to a minimum necessary for survival. Both practices were old in Japan but they assumed new significance in the feudal period which they seem not to have assumed before.

As early as the ninth century there is specific reference to the necessity "to reduce the number of mouths" during periods of famine and general economic distress. A particularly striking statement is recorded in a letter dating from 1571 which illustrates how widespread the practice was and how intensive it could become: "Japan is a mountainous country and as children are abundant many of these must be killed in order that the others may live. The woman is known to have killed from ten to twenty infants." Another report states that "throughout Japan whenever there are too many children, all that are in excess are destroyed." A letter written about the Japanese by a Christian for despatch abroad reads in part: "They mistreat their women. Households need only one or two children and if more are born they are destroyed. The devil has deceitful ways of causing a woman to bear female children and she will consequently be damned to hell. Women are consequently fearful and some drink medicine in order to avoid having children."

As a world phenomenon, the resort to abortion and infanticide as a means of population control are as old as the memory of man and their occurrence has been virtually universal, but their significance in Japan lies in the extent of the practices, the relatively abundant documentation and the relationship they have borne to the social structure and in particular to the family.

In considering population control, especially in the context of the family, it is essential to distinguish between the selective methods which involve preferential discrimination between the offspring to be preserved and those to be destroyed, and the aselective methods which are concerned merely with the limitation of numbers. The latter may include any form of pre- or postconceptive control or indiscriminate infanticide, but preferential discriminatory control based upon physical factors rather than upon magical properties is necessarily postnatally administered. Infanticide is then a means of achieving either discriminate or indiscriminate control and it is usually difficult to distinguish between the two from general population figures except through an imbalance in the sex ratio in the infant categories. The deliberate destruction of only males or only females, or more of one sex than another, tends to skew population figures noticeably outside of the normal range of expectancy. The sex ratio may be affected if there is an attempt to achieve a desirable sexual alternation in birth sequence but it would not normally be affected by the elimination of children of multiple progeny births or of those afflicted with physical abnormalities or of those who fail to resemble either parent sufficiently.

Population figures first became available for Japan on a national basis when in 1721 the Tokugawa Shogunate ordered a report on the number of commoners in the realm. Prior to this time, various reports or compilations and register data had been made every six years for periodic intervals from the year 645 onward but these were generally based on the number of households or on grain consumed. Even the report of 1721 was incomplete as it excluded some of the nobles, the daimyo, the samurai, and the retainers as well as the outcastes who may collectively have accounted for as much as eight percent of the total. In Table I are given the total population figures for various years from 1750-1935.

TABLE I

Population increase in Japan based upon the total for 1750 and the sex ratios (females per 1000 males) for corresponding period (modified from Takahashi, Pt. I, p. 53).

Year	Total Population	Percentage Increase	Females per 1000 Males
1750	25,922,288	100.0	876
1756	26,070,712	100.6	891
1786	25,073,046	96.7	894
1804	25,527,229	98.5	917
1834	27,058,910	104.4	929
1846	26,907,625	103.8	942
1852	27,210,939	105.0	923
1872	33,109,826	127.7	970
1916	53,461,000	206.2	993
1935	69,254,148	267.2	994

The most significant feature of the table is undoubtedly the steady maintenance of the total population at practically the same level for over a century. That this was accomplished by means of wholesale resort to abortion and infanticide is clear from numerous accounts. There is no way of telling exact figures but the destruction of infants before or immediately after birth must have been sufficient to reduce the birth rate of the farmers to the level of the death rate over any considerable number of years. But this may have been above deaths in good years, for famine and pestilence took their toll and young and old alike suffered. The heaviest mortalities occurred during the six year period from 1780-1786 during which there was a reduction of over one million in the total population (1).

A second significant feature of the table is the rise in the sex ratio from a low of 877 to virtual parity by 1916. It is difficult to assess the relative roles of spurious reporting and actual differences in this changing ratio. There was nothing inherent in the structure of Japanese society which demanded an automatically fixed sex ratio. It tended to fluctuate widely and favored first one sex and then the other. In the earliest periods during the millenium preceding the Tokugawa period, roughly from 600-1600, almost all figures available contain an unusual feature which is difficult to explain in full although the flight of men from tax in kind and labor service was doubtless involved. Females always considerably exceed males; the ratios ranging from 120-150%. But the proportion of males steadily increased and by the seventeenth century or thereabouts it had overtaken the female. The ratio continued its downward course until it reached a low of 877 in 1750. About this time, a reversal set in and the figure steadily rose thereafter as already indicated above.

Whatever the degree of validity in the reported sex ratios, the changes in such ratios are contrasted with the economic and cultural changes known to have occurred in Japanese society. Early in the Tokugawa period, the destruction of girls was greater than that of boys. One account states that "after villagers have one or two children, they will kill the remainder, especially the girls." The best explanation which has thus far been given is that girls were an economic asset in the earlier periods when the agricultural methods tended to employ more female than male labor, but, as the methods changed and as women came to be employed less and less in direct productive labor, they lost their economic value and consequently were less likely to be retained than males. The economic argument is adduced to account for all sex ratio fluctuations which would thus be based on the worth of the individual to the economy and more particularly to the individual family household.

In Table II are shown the sex ratio figures based on geographical distribution as given by Naotaro Sekiyama in a book entitled Kinsei Nihon Jinko no Kenkyu (Study of the Population of Japan in Modern Times). These also show a steady change from the mid-Tokugawa period to the present. In 1750, in the central Tokai area (Mie, Aichi, and Shizuoka prefectures) and on the island of Shikoku, virtual parity existed between the sexes.

From this central area the ratio diminished in both directions and reached its lowest point in northern Honshu with a figure of only 784 females per 1000 males. In the southwest it dropped to 832 in Kyushu. A hundred years later the same general distribution occurred but in less acute form and with a marked increase of nearly seven units in the figure for the entire country. The most notable changes occurred in the south especially in Shikoku where there was a drop to a level comparable with that of the neighboring prefectures. By 1916, the high statistical plateau in the center had wholly disappeared and was replaced by an irregular pattern but the national average was increased by three units reaching a high of 972.

TABLE II

Ratio of Japanese Females to Males per 1000 at Selected Periods
(Modified from Sekiyama, p. 112)

Location	Region	1750	1846	1916
Northeast	Tohoku	784	925	943
	Kanto	824	943	986
	Hokuriku	932	983	993
	Tosan	940	959	978
Central	Tokai	996	989	931
	Kinki	935	967	990
	Sanin	926	933	947
	Sanyo	934	908	942
	Shikoku	985	911	938
Southwest	Kyushu	832	909	971
National Average		876	942	971

If it can be assumed that the sex ratios for the regions bear some relationship to the actual number of males and females born and reared in the various regions, two aspects of internal migration must be considered. As living conditions continued to deteriorate in the country districts and wealth accumulated more and more in the urban areas, there was considerable movement of mature males to the town and city to seek their fortunes as apprentices and domestics. Meantime, the ranks of the ruling classes grew thinner as the impoverished Bushi turned from their traditional occupations as warriors and officials and joined the despised but ever swelling ranks of the merchants. The number of male migrants far outnumbered that of females but many of the latter were forced to leave their homes in the remote rural areas and were sold into virtual slavery as domestics, entertainers and prostitutes. The Tohoku area has always furnished a relatively high percentage of girls in these categories; even today, more prostitutes in the Tokyo area come from northern Honshu than from any other part of Japan. In connection with migration, the population figures for a district in the city of Osaka in the year 1868, as shown in Table III are most revealing.

TABLE III

The Population of Minamigumi District, Jikeicho Mura, in Osaka City for the year 1868 (Modified from Sekiyama, p. 116)

Ages	No. of Males	No. of Females	Males per 1000 Population	Females per 1000 Population	Sex Ratio (Females per 1000 Males)
1-10	64	42	79	90	1135
11-20	64	51	136	108	797
21-30	32	32	68	68	1000
31-40	40	39	85	83	975
41-50	31	25	75	53	806
51-60	29	9	62	19	310
61-70	11	16	23	34	1455
71-80	1	7	2	15	7000
Total	245	221	530	470	

Clearly the numbers are small but the figures are most irregular in these data for Osaka in 1868. The totals in the 1-10 category should be the highest if the population were uninfluenced by aritificial controls and the sexes should be approximately equal. Actually, the 11-20 age category is larger and the number of male infants is disproportionately high and quite beyond the range of normal expectancy. Abortion and possibly infanticide appear to be the major causes of both irregularities.

In the next category, the 11-20 year olds, the greatly increased number of males and slight female increases are probably both due in part to temporary migrant labor. These migrants returned to their towns or rural homes as husbands and wives after a few years in the city and the figures drop accordingly for the decade aged 21-30. In the 31-40 age group, there is another influx of workers. Those who came at this stage tended to remain the rest of their lives, a fact which is generally corroborated by a steady decline in the old age categories.

The shift in the proportion of urban to rural dwellers is a second factor of importance in the interpretation of regional differences in the sex ratios. When Yodo was first selected in 1603 as the capital of the Bakufu government, it was a country village with only a few hundred inhabitants. By 1723, it was a city of over half a million and by 1800 the inhabitants exceeded a million. The total number of town inhabitants throughout the country had risen from 7% to 10% between 1710 and 1850 while the farming population had remained practically stationary at 82%. These figures did not include the Bushi or warrior classes who lived in the castle strongholds. Their number first rose from 7% in 1710 to 8.5% in 1755 and then dropped to about 7% by 1850.

Another element of significance was the fluctuating character of the outcaste or "unclean" population, the Eta or Hinin, who are sometimes

collectively referred to as the Senmin. In 1750, they totalled nearly 4% of the population. During the ensuing hundred years their numbers steadily dwindled to less than half their previous strength but suddenly about 1850 a reverse tendency set in so that when their outcaste status was officially abolished and they were accorded full citizenship they had increased to about 2.5%. In 1945, their numbers had increased to well over 3% and all distinctions between them and the rest of the population were officially banned. They were renamed Shinheimin or "new commoners," a title which seems to be of dubious worth as a distinction is thus perpetuated which tends to delay the complete eradication of segregation. An interesting feature of the Eta was that they alone appear to have been free in general from the practices of population limitation, the reasons for which will be noted later. That this fact was of social and, to a limited extent, genetic significance cannot be denied but the influence on the total number of people was unquestionably slight.

Statistics vary in their references to the Eta or Hinin, some distinguishing between the Eta whose characteristic occupations were butchering, skinning, and leatherworking, and the 'Hinin' (literally poor people but connoting subhuman status) who included among their ranks travelling showmen and musicians, watchmen, midwives, and executioners. Being exempt from the rules affecting commoners, Eta parents were generally not permitted the right to disown their children, a condition encouraged by the Bakufu government which feared that disownment of Eta children would be an encouragement to the victims to seek or find refuge among the common people. This actually seems to have happened in many cases and probably accounts for the noticeable drop in the percentage after 1723. The trend to escape from Eta status seems to have gained such momentum that as a final measure to prevent its continuance the government began to permit disownment, but only in instances where it was accompanied by arrangements for transfer and adoption into another Eta village. Many Eta also served as midwives and pregnant women from among the commoners frequently called the women to their homes, or if they wished to accomplish delivery undetected they went to Eta hamlets at the time of parturition.

There is also reason to believe that the Eta suffered less in times of famine. Being unclean, they were not bound by the general repugnance to the eating of the meat of four-footed animals which characterized the Bushi or even the Heimin. Domestic quadrupeds were raised for their labor and leather, the carcasses being considered unfit for normal human consumption. As the shortage of food increased, animals could be slaughtered and eaten as food. All economic writers of the times stress this point and attribute to it the fact that they did not resort to abortion or infanticide, presumably because there was no necessity to do so.

In the early part of the seventeenth century the Bakufu government attempted to prevent both abortion and infanticide. The first effort was an edict issued against their practice in Yedo, the capital, and their practitioners were expelled from the city. Despite the threat of severe penalties this effort was a signal failure. About 1660 a second attempt was made and by 1750 the prohibition was extended throughout the entire

nation. But even these measures met with little success and both practices continued to increase in intensity. It is not surprising then that because of their interdiction by the government, direct reference to either act was generally avoided. In fact, not only the act but the victim as well were generally referred to in such ways as to make clear the meaning without resorting to specific terms. That these circumlocutions and substitutions may have been employed in part or possibly even primarily to avoid incrimination cannot be denied, but such actions are also in keeping with Japanese culture. As has been pointed out by numerous observers, it is characteristic when discussing unpleasant subjects to employ euphemisms and evasions.

The technical term for abortion was "datai," a combinations of the characters "throw" and pregnancy," but the word usually used was "orosu" meaning "to lower." Similarly, a technical term for infanticide existed, but it was popularly referred to as "mabiki" which literally means "thinning" (as used in cultivating a row of seedlings). But in referring to a specific instance of infanticide even the indirect term of "thinning" was not employed. Instead, a phrase was generally used which meant "to return" or "to send back"—to the place from whence the baby came. Along the coast this was often altered to "sending or returning to the sea." In Nagano prefecture, an infant was usually "prevented from crying" or it was sometimes "turned into a mole" and in Kyushu it was frequently "sent digging after mountain potatoes." In the north it was sometimes said that the infant had "gone to the mountains to work" or that it had been "sent to fetch a hoe." Even the most direct expressions were likely to convey the impression of accidental destruction; and an infant was sometimes "compressed," "crushed," "twisted," or "clawed," (presumably in the process of birth) or it might have "become smaller."

One observer of the times writes that "everywhere are poverty stricken farmers and so even if women conceive they can't rear their children; therefore they resort to "lowering" and "thinning." In Sendai, a Confucian scholar of the period wrote: "In the Genroku era (1688-1703) couples used to have five or six children but in the Horeki era 1751-1763) all resorted to "thinning" and seldom had more than one or two."

The extent of population control varied both regionally and periodically and there was a contrast between the practices of the city and those of the country. Abortion was limited primarily to the urban areas and infanticide to the rural districts and in particular to the mountain villages. In the urban areas abortion methods were better known, the tools were superior and medicines and the services of practitioners were readily available. A very practical consideration against infanticide in the urban areas was doubtless the greater difficulty of disposing of infants undetected. If, through timidity or considerations of health, an unwanted foetus was carried to its full time, the mother was likely to go to the hut of a midwife in the outskirts of the town, thus avoiding any serious issue, either with her conscience or with the authorities. Otherwise, if the delivery could be accomplished in secret the infant was more than likely

abandoned, a practice more frequently resorted to in the towns than in the country.

In the courts of nobles and even in the household of the Shogun abortions occurred. There is an account of an heir to the Shogunate who became enamored of one of the court ladies. She was an extremely beautiful lady who at the age of sixteen had been put under the care of nuns. Later, when called to court by the Shogun, she had changed her name and let her hair grow. As a result of her encounters with the heir she conceived but inasmuch as the Bakufu government expressly forbid heirs to the highest offices from having natural children, because of the fear of pretenders, her child was "returned to water."

In the rural areas, economic conditions were more stringent, the cost of medicines was prohibitive, the services of practitioners were exorbitant or unattainable and detection by officials less likely. For these reasons, infanticide was generally preferred to abortion and, as the having of children was in a sense a village as well as a family affair, there seems to have been less tendency to draw a distinction between a born and an unborn child; both were potentially mouths to feed. Under these circumstances also the concealment of an impending birth would neither be practicable nor necessary and it is more than likely that the question of what to do with the infant would have been a matter of common discussion with neighbors and their advice would have been sought. Generally also neighbor women assisted in the delivery and even served as midwives.

A mother generally went back to her parents' home for the first delivery, a custom which still prevails in many mountain villages. Thereafter she was likely to have the services of a midwife or, if she lived in a mountain village, parturition might even be alone. If a midwife was called, it was customary for her to ask if the child was "to be left" or "to be returned" and the child would accordingly be retained or disposed of by the midwife. The mother might even specifically request that it be "squeezed" or "twisted." Babies so destroyed were generally buried near a shrine or temple. In Sendai, many hundreds were thus buried in the grounds of the Yatsuzaka temple. Occasionally, parents might destroy the baby themselves and in such instances the simplest methods were to throw the child into the river or to place a moistened sheet of soft paper over the child's face. Another method was to suffocate with a bed quilt or press with the knees until breathing ceased. Still another was to place the baby under a stone mortar. In these cases, burial was usually in the "mortar yard" and the child was referred to as a "mortar child" (2). "Twisting" was done by strangling or pressing down on the throat and chest with one hand and on the genitals with the other. Posters were exhibited by the Government in an effort to discourage the killing of babies and on them this particular method was illustrated. In the scene a woman is shown suffocating a child and emanating from her heart is a second illustration showing a devil in the same position as that assumed by the woman. The accompanying text reads: "This woman thinks nothing of killing her own child. Because she is this kind of a woman she must be a horrible person. If you want to see the face of one

who would kill a child take a good look at this picture. If you look at the picture you will see that although a person who commits infanticide may have an innocent face it is in reality horrible. Even the man who has such a woman as a wife must also have a terrible heart" (3).

The economic plight of the farmer was so grave that sometimes families would merely dispose of all or most of their children at birth and, if at some later time a death occurred or for some other reason another child was needed, they might adopt a partly grown one and thus save the cost of raising it through its expensive infancy. In case a child was not to be had in the country, as was sometimes the case, the couple might buy one which had been kidnapped from the city. The kidnapping of town children for sale in the country became in fact a regular business.

Abortion was often associated with illegitimacy, especially in the towns and castle cities. In the latter, court intrigues were quite fashionable and the fashion spread to the merchant classes and the artisans. These intrigues not infrequently ended in conceptions and the problems thus created were usually solved by abortion. In the rural areas, however, while the bearing of illegitimate offspring was never condoned, there was more of a sense of community responsibility and various social devices were employed to obscure irregularity of parentage. Today, in remote areas, an illegitimate child is not infrequently registered as the mother's brother or sister. The problem of social absorption is thus accomodated but the practice tends to play havoc with vital statistics and caution must be exercised in their interpretation.

There was indeed less cause or opportunity in the rural areas to prevent disclosure of a disgrace. In Iwate Prefecture there is an account of a village in which abortions were resorted to at times to prevent illegitimacy. If, however, the child was actually born then it was necessary to perform what was known as a "Tetenashi" festival. The word itself is a euphemism which combines the childish form of father ("toto" or "tete") and absent. At the time of the festival, three four-foot straw dolls would be made and from dusk to dawn the village young people would sing the following song to the tune of drums and fifes: "Nani wo matsuru no kai? Tetenashi matsuri wo matsuru no dai" (What is being celebrated? The festival of the fatherless is being celebrated.) When they reached the mother's home, she was obliged to bind her buttocks and, while striking them, circumambulate her house three times. No blame was attached to the father, but unless the ceremony was performed the village would become impoverished and all would suffer.

Infants to be abandoned were generally taken to a neighboring village and left under conditions likely to guarantee discovery. Formerly abandonment was a common practice and for various reasons, especially in cases of physical malformations or because of failure to resemble either parent satisfactorily. It was believed that the latter children (known as onigo or "demon" children) would grow up to be spendthrifts. Only by their adoption by other families could this fate be avoided.

There was also a rather unusual form of false abandonment. If a child was born with an erupted tooth, it was believed to possess a demon which had to be exorcised. This could be accomplished by carrying the child to a fork in the road and "abandoning" it. By prearrangement the child's godmother would discover it and bring it back safely to its home. The demon would believe that he had accomplished his purpose of separating the child from its parents and would promptly forsake the child. It is said that this form of false abandonment is still practised but that nowadays a towel is sufficient to decoy a demon and can be used in place of the real baby.

Villages tended to develop local patterns for disposing of their unwanted offspring. This was particularly true of those which were the most hard pressed. Commenting a few years ago upon the economic history of a village in Iwate prefecture in northern Hunshu which even today has a relatively low standard of living, a local historian wrote that formerly only five persons were permitted to each household and the sizes of the fields were fixed accordingly. In reply to the question "What would happen if you had more children?," the answer was "Oh, this would never happen; there could never be an increase. It is a custom of the village to keep things this way as we cannot increase the size of our fields." In Kyushu, it was almost universally the custom to limit the number of children per household to three and in Kagoshima this was referred to as "heshigo" which might be translated "complement of children." While control methods were thus widely practised, many reports appear to have been exaggerated. An observer records that in Chiba prefecture, adjacent to Tokyo, among 100,000 farming households as many as 30,000 children were killed annually. Another report states that in Tohoku alone in northern Honshu, 60-70,000 infants were destroyed in one year.

Abortions were induced both medicinally and mechanically depending upon the state of the mother and the stage of the foetus. Generally the latter method was employed more frequently after the child had assumed recognizable shape at about the fourth month, while medicinal means were employed in the earlier stages. In medicinally induced abortions "suigingan" or mercury tablets were employed. Although the medicine was quite powerful and sometimes fatal to the mother, it was widely sold during the Tokugawa period and advertised openly on bill boards in front of pharmacies. There was an accompanying label stating the purpose for which it was to be used. Sato Nobuyoshi in Tosui Hiroku writes: "If a woman wishes to control birth she almost always uses poison to induce abortion." Again he writes: "If a lover should cause a woman to conceive during her husband's absence, she may avoid carrying the child by drinking 'suigingan'." In the third year of Kammon (1664) the open advertising of abortion medicines was prohibited but in the Mita Kyo Monogatari there is an account of a pharmacist's sign advertising "Liberty Medicine" and nearby was a notice reminding the reader that "it is strange that children are born and still stranger that they are not born," presumably a subtle way of indicating that the answer to the riddle could be found in the medicine.

No statistics are available as to the number of fatalities in abortion cases, but in recovery the usual estimate was seven days if the operation was performed prior to the fourth month of gestation and thirty days for any stage thereafter.

The mechanical means consisted of kneading or pressing the abdomen with the knee or of inserting and twisting an object in the vaginal passage until the foetus was destroyed. The objects most commonly used were the branch of a "nanten" bush; cedarwood chopsticks from Yoshino; or the root of the mountain burdock. Women were trained in the art as specialists and were known sometimes as "blood passage repairers" or in later periods as "those who engage in 'chujoryu'" (4). The "chujo" acquired an unsavory reputation for charging exhorbitant rates and engaging in blackmail. An indication of this reputation is contained in the following poem:

"Is there no way but to go to the 'chujo'?
Children die by her hand;
The 'chujo' destroys the mother's organs.
Nefariously she fills her own warehouse,
Fearful is her profit."

The downfall of the Shogunate and the commencement of the Meiji era in 1868 marked the beginning of a new population policy. The government sought to create a large standing army and, as the country became more and more industrialized, there was need for labor in the factories. Expanding foreign trade made rapid population increase feasible and the people were urged to have more babies. As inducements, the government offered various prizes. To households having more than three children, several saplings were given to be planted in the garden; households having six or more children were given one hyo of rice per child per year, money for assistance in nursing ("nyuryo") and an additional bonus of rice per head ("yōikuryo"). As a result of favorable economic conditions and these added inducements, the population began to increase rapidly, first in the industrial urban areas and eventually, as the stimulus spread, in the rural areas. Figures are probably not available as to the speed with which the latter movement took place but there was considerable lag in the country villages and it is significant that there are persons alive today in the remoter parts of the country and in particular in the mountain villages who recall the practice of infanticide in their younger days.

Last year there appeared in a local Tokyo paper an account of the reminiscences of a sixty-five year old woman from northern Japan. The old lady recalled that early one cold morning in her youth as she was engaged in a roadside privy she was startled to hear the wail of a baby from the road. Upon inquiry as to who was there and why the baby was crying, she learned that the passerby was a hired hand of one of the neighbors. He explained that he and his wife had decided that they could not afford to keep the baby and consequently he was on his way down to the river to throw it in. Upon further inquiry, he also revealed that the baby was a boy but that, as they already had a son, they didn't need

another. The girl engaged the father in discussion, prevailed on him to keep the boy and so that child was spared. She commented further, however, that she knew of several instances of babies being thrown into the river (5) and recalled once hearing a baby crying in a shallow by the riverbank. In some instances, midwives were asked to dispose of babies by choking them with rice chaff and in one instance, a father had masked himself and, after suffocating the child, buried it in a deep hole. Judging from presumed time factors, these events must have occurred about 1900 and attest to the continued occurrence of infanticide, at least in certain rural areas, up to half a century ago.

There is then a fairly clear and continous tradition of population limitation throughout Japanese history from its earliest days to the end of the feudal period and even into the post-Restoration period. In the face of this long and continued tradition it may be well to consider just what relationship these practices bore to the structure of society and in particular to the institution of the family.

Almost all studies of modern Japanese society stress particularly the traditional love of parents for their children and the desire to have as many children as possible. Both of these concepts are traced to the influence of Confucian ethics. The love of the emperor for his subjects and the classical references to the comfort of many children to their aging parents are particular parallels cited.

In the light of the extensive history of infant disposal, the question might be raised as to the validity of the tradition or why daily practice differed so much from the traditional ideal. To find the answer, it will be necessary to review more closely the structure of society in the feudal period.

Mention has already been made of the great social gap between the Bushi or ruling classes and the Heimin or commoners, including merchants and artisans as well as farmers. The gap was more than one merely of ruler and ruled; it penetrated every institution of society and every aspect of behavior. The Bushi were guided by a strict code of ethics, the outlines of which have been detailed by many writers (6). This was a code steeped in Confucian philosophy and geared to the concepts of preserving the strictest etiquette in all human relationships: unbending loyalty to one's lord, extreme self-discipline, sincere filial piety, and the preservation of class consciousness. Duty to one's conscience was always to be within the framework of a series of other graded duties.

To the commoner, these were not unknown "virtues" and, in fact, commoners were expected to observe the code within the limits of their lowly station in life but in such a manner as not to obviously imitate their betters. For the commoner, and especially for the farmer, obedience to command rather than conflicting duties was the keynote of existence. Unquestioning obedience was the highest form of loyalty to be rendered. Bound as they were to this overriding emphasis on obedience, commoners were seldom caught in the never ending cycle of conflicting

loyalties between love of family and duty to one's lord so characteristic of the life in the upper classes. The various layers or strata of society were thus sharply differentiated and the meaning and place of the family in the two major strata, warriors and farmers, assumed widely differing characteristics.

At the time of the Restoration, there was a change in the socio-political structure paralleling that in economic policy. Distinctions between the Bushi and the Commoners were abolished under a constitutional form of government and the strict code of ethics practiced by the Bushi and reflected limitedly by the Commoners became the standard for all Japanese. But the transfer was never complete. Commoners failed to achieve an economic status which would permit them to exercise the privileges of their newly acquired standard and the Bushi lost their distinctive identity only nominally. The result has been a removal of the outward manifestations of class distinctions but an inward retention of their significance. This is one of the characteristic features of Japanese society even today and is particularly true in the realm of the family.

Among the Bushi the family and more particularly the clan and its lineage and ranking in society were all important and immediate loyalties were fixed within this framework. The formation of the immediate or nuclear family group was not a matter of decision solely for the clan or the extended family; all marriages had to be approved by the lord and any changes in stipends also required his approval. There existed an ideal of many children in a family which in the early days was often realized. It was only as social and economic controls were tightened that there was a tendency to limit the number of children at this level of society.

Among the farmers, there was increasingly even less inducement to have children. Until the end of the feudal period, farmers possessed no surnames and therefore had no clan to perpetuate; they were not permitted to leave their lands, change their social rank, or marry without express approval of their lords.

In the earlier days, it was common for the householder to divide his land among his sons, each son establishing a branch family in order of rank or seniority but such a process had its limits as lands were exhausted; in the latter part of the Tokugawa period, the establishing of a new household became increasingly difficult, if not prohibitive, and was a matter of concern to the entire village. A farmer's attention came thus to be focused increasingly upon the House as the social unit of the village through which he expressed his loyalty. His perspectives were localized not so much upon his immediate family or household as upon the family in relation to the specific house and lands which it possessed and with which it was traditionally associated. The Japanese word "Ie" incorporates both concepts: the physical house and the household. Each house had a specific name and, among the farmers, the family associated with it was identified by the house name. The association of a family was thus fixed from generation to generation by the house and its lands as part of a village complex.

In the case of the Bushi, the association was far less localized. It is true that the lords possessed landed estates with castle strongholds and lands with which the nobles and warriors were associated but loyalty was to the lord's family and clan more than to any specific house. Loyalty and clan allegiance among the Bushi were spiritual matters and found their expression no matter where the locality. They had in this sense a national rather than a localized focus and the concept of the "Ie" found its identity more with its intangible than its tangible interpretation. The Bushi tended to look away from their castles and estates to the original source of a family name and fortune; while the farmers, riveted to the soil, found their sense of security and solidarity in immediate local village communities, and specifically in the House.

There was a family duty to preserve the integrity of the House and to ensure fulfillment of its continuing responsibilty to the extended family, to the departed ancestors, and to the village. Without a male heir these responsibilities could not be accomplished, since the head of the family, by law, must be a male. If, therefore, a wife failed to produce a son, the defect had to be remedied in some fashion, either by securing a wife who would fulfill this requirement or by the less desirable means of adoption.

The success of a marriage often hinged upon the birth of a boy as the first child. Until the first birth a bride remained on trial, and delivery of a girl was only partial fulfillment of her obligation. Some strict families were even inclined to view such an event as a forewarning of ultimate incapacity to meet the requirements of a good wife. If a wife continued to bear only girls but in other respects had proven satisfactory, the problem might be solved by adoption of a "gift child" "moraiko", to be raised in the family as an own child, or by legally adopting the eldest daughter's husband as a son, having him thus assume the family name and inherit the title of householder. These practices are still common in country districts today.

There were then many reasons why the control of how and what children should be born were of immediate concern to society and that they differed according to social strata. To the Bushi, elimination or limitation were often considered necessary but such control was general without selection. The Bushi could often arrange advantageous betrothals for their daughters so that sons were not necessarily greater economic assets than their sisters. Abortion was thus quite a satisfactory method of control. In the rural areas, on the other hand, where women could be used only limitedly for farm or other labor, any increase in numbers beyond the minimum requirements of the home and perpetuation of the House line generally proved to be more of a liability than an asset even in periods of good harvest and satisfactory prices. Selective limitation was therefore the answer to the farmer's problem.

Among the farmers, an ideal sequence was developed of having first a boy, who would be reared to take over the House and family line; next a girl, who would ultimately provide a basis of exchange for the eldest

son's wife; and finally a second son to help support the family or, in the event of the elder son's demise, to assume his role. Thus it was generally the first and last born girls who were most likely to be eliminated. This was the most economical pattern for preserving the welfare of the family and at the same time ensuring its solidarity and that of the village. Such a pattern also fitted into the concept of psychologically preparing the eldest son for his future responsibilities; it was considered undesirable to place the future head of the household in a position of juniority to an elder sister.

To this day, the favored sequence is to start with a boy and to have the sexes alternate thereafter. It is interesting in this connection that, in one mountain village of over one hundred families, a recent survey shows that the eldest child is a boy in nearly two-thirds of the families with a sex ratio for the first born of 709 girls per 1000 boys. Throughout Japan, the areas with the lowest sex ratios tend to be in the country districts where the social structure has retained many of the features which characterized it during the feudal period.

To understand the significance of population control during the feudal days, it is also necessary to examine the moral issues involved. The Bushi were inclined to draw a distinction between abortion and infanticide. They viewed the former as a private concern of the parents to be neither condoned nor considered necessarily reprehensible; whereas infanticide, involving the destruction of a separate being, was morally objectionable and a legitimate concern of the authorities. That abortion was considered in some instances even a social duty is illustrated by the fact that priests often served as advisers in abortion cases and dealt in abortion producing drugs. The greatest moral abuse in the upper classes lay in disturbing the tranquility of the family and, since an illegitimate child posed the problem of potential disgrace, it was a threat to that tranquility. Among the farmers, on the other hand, the threat to tranquility lay in any increase, potential or otherwise, of the number of mouths to feed. The birth or retention of a child was undesirable if it tended to upset the social and economic equilibrium of the family and the community. This potential source of disturbance was in itself a moral issue which overshadowed the mere elimination of human life. Population control might even be demanded in the name of social obligation.

There was thus a graded concept of moral issues differing characteristically from class to class, the rationalizations for population control varying within a changing framework of a series of stratified loyalties. As to Bakufu government policy, the fundamental objection to population control in any form was not based so much on grounds of personal or even family or social morality as upon the even higher obligation to the state. The national state policy was to increase the population and any countermeasures constituted a sin against the state. The weight of ethical training placed primary emphasis upon duty to the household at the expense of any single individual. This was the supreme obligation and any sacrifice should be made to fulfill it.

ENDNOTES

(1) Sansom, George B., Japan, A Short Cultural History, p. 518.

(2) The mortar yard (usu niwa) was actually in the house or at least under the main roof although it was probably originally a part of the courtyard. There is apparently some symbolism involved in the use of the mortar. Even today in some mountain villages at the time of birth a candle is lit and placed on the rim of the mortar. A string is run from this to the rope on which the mother leans at the time of delivery. At funerals the mortar again assumes significance. Upon returning from the grave of a newly buried person the mortar is overturned. While the mortar is a symbol of the source of food and especially of "mochi" (pounded rice dough) it is used on many ceremonial occasions with apparently deeper psychological significance in which as a sex symbol it is associated or identified with maternity and possibly fertility.

(3) From "Shisson Hanjo Tebikigusa" quoted by Takahashi.

(4) Literally, "chujoryu" meant the way or means of delivery but the word came later to be used commonly in place of the usual word for abortion. Today the term is used for the medicated bath of lying-in patients (from the Encyclopedia of Folklore).

(5) In a certain village in Nagano prefecture, the tale is today related of an old woman who died only a year or two ago: when just born, she was thrown into a mountain stream. She survived a tortuous trip of nearly twenty miles to the junction of the stream with the main river, was picked up, and adopted by a family living nearby.

(6) Notably by George B. Sansom in Japan, A Short Cultural History and Ruth Benedict in The Chrysanthemum and the Sword.

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