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## The Study of the Family in Japan: Integrating Anthropological and Demographic Approaches

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### Anthropology and Demography

As Kertzer and Fricke note in their introduction to *Anthropological Demography: Toward a New Synthesis*, the relationship between sociocultural anthropology and demography has been less than harmonious—spanning a spectrum ranging from ambivalence to mutual distaste and distrust (Kertzer and Fricke 1997, 1). The emphasis in anthropology on small samples, long-term fieldwork, and qualitative analysis of ethnographic data often seems at odds with the aggregate data and quantitative approach commonly used by demographers. However, the two disciplines are, in many ways, two sides of the same coin. Demographers and anthropologists are concerned with similar themes and research problems, although their approaches may differ considerably. The institution of the family is a prime illustration of this. For both demographers and anthropologists, family organization and behavior has been a central research topic that has shaped the historical development of the disciplines.

In this book, we are interested in examining the relationship between the Japanese family and one of the most problematic demographic trends in contemporary Japanese society—population aging. Bringing together anthropologists and demographers working on Japan, we present the respective contributions of the two disciplines to the analysis of the Japanese family, with an emphasis on issues relating to aged individuals. The chapters in this book illustrate the potential for synthesizing the approaches of the two

disciplines, at the same time raising questions related to the limits of such a synthesis. Different disciplines begin and develop research methods and ideas from different sets of assumptions about the aims of research and the nature of empirical data, and this is obvious from the chapters of this book. In general, demography is more comfortable with the assumptions of the positivistic tradition than is contemporary anthropology. Anthropologists have called into question the idea of the detached observer distanced from those being studied, and have reflected at length on the relationship between knowledge and power in their discipline, especially in relation to the control over data and its interpretation. No such debate over the role and power of the researcher has arisen in demography (Rosenau 1992, 27). Nonetheless, both demography and anthropology are empirical traditions, grounded in the assumption that detailed data collection (even if the natures of the data are different) is the basis of intelligent and accurate interpretation.

It is important to recognize that the two fields have, on occasion, overlapped. Local level community studies, in the form of extensive fieldwork, have been introduced into demography in recent years. Some demographers have employed long-term fieldwork in an attempt to move demography away from an exclusive focus on the “measurable [quantitative] features of individuals (age at marriage, desired family size, etc.)”, instead focusing on the relationships that link people together and affect the demographic features of the groups to which they belong (Jeffery and Jeffery 1997, 35). This trend has been viewed as part of “a new era in demographic research” that “will allow demographers to incorporate cultural meanings into their explanations of demographic processes” (Fricke 1997b, 825). There is a growing recognition among demographers of the need for a greater sensitivity to cultural variation in order to interpret the meanings of demographic data. Micro-approaches to collecting and analyzing demographic data in locales such as India, have brought anthropological or anthropologically informed research into the realm of demography (Caldwell, Hill, and Hull 1988; Caldwell, Reddy, and Caldwell 1988). However, as Fricke notes, even amidst considerable “methodological and conceptual borrowing” from anthropology, the conceptualization of culture in demography has largely ignored the importance of micro-variation in relation to cultural meanings (Fricke 1997a, 251). Demography has tended to make use of ideas of culture from an earlier era that essentialize others by placing them into broad categories, and neglected more recent theories of culture that emphasize human agency—that is, the improvisation, contestation,

and negotiation through which culture is generated and constantly changing.

Conversely, anthropologists have been considerably less interested in the ways in which demographic data and methods can inform their own analyses. “Hard,” quantitative demographic data have tended to be at odds with the so-called interpretive turn in cultural anthropology of the 1960s and 1970s—spearheaded by Clifford Geertz—according to which the discipline switched its focus from social structure and behavior to meanings and symbols. The statistical exploration and manipulation of quantitative data that characterizes much of demography has at times been viewed with suspicion due to its inability to answer questions about why particular social trends exist and occur. Yet, prior to the rise of interpretive or symbolic anthropology, demographic data were routinely used in anthropology. Anthropologists have had a longstanding interest in population, in relation to variables such as household size, village population, and population movement. From a methodological perspective, anthropologists have historically employed census taking as an initial means of data collection within the communities they study, and the study of population was important in the ethnographic research associated with the cultural ecology that was in vogue during the 1960s and 1970s—Rappaport’s (1968) classic ethnography of the balance maintained among “people, pigs, and natural resources” through a Melanesian ritual is but one example (Kertzer and Fricke 1997, 9). From the perspective of cultural ecology, culturally ordered population limitation or regulation represents a key aspect of human adaptation to a given natural environment. These studies did not involve a direct borrowing from the works of demographers, but instead incorporated population as an aspect of the ethnographic study. Although an interest in population has been part of anthropology throughout much of its history, unlike demographers, anthropologists have generally not shown much interest in borrowing methods and concepts from the other side.

This is in part related to perceptions of need. Much of the borrowing of anthropological methods and ideas in demography stems from concerns among demographers about the inadequacies of purely quantitative research and the imperative of incorporating qualitative research in order to explain and interpret the results of quantitative data analysis. Some demographers view qualitative techniques, such as focus group interviews, as a solution to this problem, although this sort of approach is often far removed from the detailed qualitative data collection characteristic of ethnographic fieldwork (Fricke 1997a, 251). Although anthropologists have not

been without their own paradigm crises, the rise of postmodern critiques of anthropology has not suggested a need to adopt quantitative techniques from other social sciences that purport to provide objective data. Instead, the crisis in anthropology (if it, indeed, can be viewed as a “crisis”) is largely centered around a challenge to Enlightenment notions of reason and objectivity, a theoretical trend that is inherently at odds with the kind of social science that characterizes much of demography (Harris 1999; Marcus and Fischer 1986). The contributors to this book share the view that qualitative/quantitative or micro/macro approaches to data collection and analysis can be complementary rather than necessarily at odds, and used to mutually inform interpretation and explanation.

## Demography in the Japanese Context

Anthropologists have been particularly critical of demography on account of the “lingering influence [on it] of the Eurocentric theory of modernization” (Greenhalgh 1995, 8). Modernization assumptions are especially evident in demographic transition theory, according to which societies are held to move from “traditional” states of high fertility and high mortality to “modern” states of low fertility and low mortality. Anthropology offers an alternative approach to making sense of demographic behavior: by placing such behavior in its social, cultural and political contexts, the full range of its variation is revealed. An obvious parallel to such a demographic anthropology would be the sub-field of economic anthropology in which economic behavior, by being viewed in its social and cultural context, is shown to be more diverse than the tradition of neoclassical economic theory based on the idea of *Homo Economicus* allowed. A demographic anthropology would similarly aim to explore the cultural denominations of demographic behavior, and consider how these denominations vary and overlap.

Much of the study of modern Japan has taken place in the shadow of modernization theory—what is known as the “convergence thesis” or Westernization, according to which Japanese society is seen to be socially, economically, and culturally “converging” with Western societies, while losing much that is perceived as traditionally Japanese. It has been against this background that the anthropology of Japan has tended to emphasize Japanese difference—Japan is modern but retains distinctive characteristics. However, this emphasis has laid Japan specialists open to the charge of exceptionalism—of exaggerating the

distinctive or unique character of Japanese culture and society. In this connection, demographic theory offers a challenge to the anthropology of Japan. In a remarkably short period of time Japan has undergone (to use the language of transition theory) a demographic transition from high fertility and high mortality to low fertility and low mortality. In this respect, Japan would appear to show a demographic “convergence” with other urban-industrial societies, as well as indicating the direction in which developing societies (including those in southeast Asia, such as Thailand) are moving (Knodel, Chamrathirong, Debavalya 1987). One of the tasks of this book is to show that this degree of formal demographic “convergence” does not necessarily result in a corresponding social and cultural convergence. These new conditions of low fertility or of extended elderly lifespans can have varied and unpredictable effects on the Japanese family and on society more generally.

In order to set the stage for the chapters that follow, in the remainder of this introduction we will focus in turn on three overlapping areas that bring together demography and anthropology in the Japanese context: the Japanese family, population trends (national and regional), and aging. These areas are important not only from the scholarly (or “etic”) perspective of Japan studies, but also as aspects of culture and society that have been problematized by the Japanese government and the mass media. As will become evident throughout this book, family, population, and aging each form part of a public discourse that presents demographic behavior and trends as a central concern and a source of social problems within Japanese society.

## The Family in Japan

The family system has been one of the key areas of debate in the sociology and anthropology of Japan. One question concerns the extent to which the *ie* or stem family has survived in post-war Japan, despite its legal disestablishment in the Occupation period and the impact on it of the forces of urbanization and modernization (e.g., Kawabe and Shimizu 1994). Although this debate remains open, there are reasons to believe that, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the stem family remains relevant to Japanese self-understandings (Traphagan 2000). Intergenerational ties in Japan remain strong, and compared to other industrial societies, a large percentage of elderly people reside with or near their

children. As recently as 1995, around half of Japan's elderly population were coresiding with their children (see chapter 2). In this key respect, Japanese modernity appears different from modernity elsewhere, and raises important questions, such as the degree to which the extended family persists in post-industrial Japan (Kurosui 1994, 180) and the implications that this might have for elderly welfare provision in what is an increasingly aged society.

The stem family also appears to be undergoing change in contemporary Japan. A critical aspect of the stem family is marriage, and, typically, in a marriage involving the male heir the bride moves into the husband's family. The Japanese term for bride is *yome* and is used in conjunction with the verb "enter" or "receive," indicating a view of marriage in which the bride "enters" the family to become the "family wife" (*ie no yome*), and as such recognizes the authority structure of the husband's family. Although this notion of marriage is found, to some extent, in the marriages of other, non-succeeding sons who form new (branch) families, it is most pronounced with the wife of the succeeding son because succession often involves coresidence with the husband's parents and direct submission to their authority. But, as Traphagan points out in chapter 10, the *yome* role is being renegotiated by Japanese women who either refuse to accept the traditional responsibilities of the *yome* or set new conditions for fulfilling this role.

Several chapters in this book examine intergenerational conflict, especially with regard to elderly welfare. One response to this problem of friction between the generations is, of course, for the younger couple to opt for a wholly separate residence upon marriage and live physically apart from the parental couple. There has been a major trend towards such separate residence in recent decades, to the point where many Japanese brides insist on it as a condition of marriage. But in recent years there has emerged another alternative to old-style joint residence. Enterprising housing companies have established what is known as *nisetai jūtaku* or "three generation housing" (literally, "two-household housing")—specially designed housing units that permit joint residence with a degree of separation of actual living quarters, allowing families to live under one roof but retaining a high degree of domestic independence. In chapter 3, Naomi Brown examines this new form of housing by describing the initial idea of the housing companies and the reality of the new housing arrangements in terms of intergenerational relations. She presents case studies that show how, in practice, daily life in the new housing units can fall far short of the ideal of intergenerational harmony promised by the

housing companies. The phenomenon of “two-household housing” is a striking expression of the continued relevance of the stem family in contemporary Japan.

Another indication of the resilience of the stem family in Japan is the persistence of the practice of adopting adults to ensure patrilineal succession and the continuation of the family line. In this form of marriage arrangement the husband, known as the *mukoyōshi*, marries into the wife’s natal family and takes on her family name. The practice of husband adoption tends to be seen as a vestige of premodern times which is disappearing in the present day. But, as Keith Brown has noted, *mukoyōshi* marriages have actually increased among rural populations in recent years (Brown 1998). The percentages of husband adoption in the northern city of Mizusawa have actually surpassed levels found nationally in the 1920s. Although husband adoptions dropped for several years following World War II, they have recently begun climbing again as family size has decreased (Ochiai 1997, 153–54; Traphagan 2000, 54). Adoption of adults has historically been one way in which the Japanese family responds to infertility or infant mortality. Family succession is not dependent on giving birth to a male heir, but on having a male available, either through birth or adoption, to succeed. In times like the present, when, due to low fertility there are more “son-less” families, or families in which a son is unwilling or unable to take on the responsibility of succession that existed in the past, the practice of adopting male heirs may be one means by which families adjust to demographic realities.

The stem family is an institution that includes not only the living members of the family, but also those who have died. This is clearly evident in the practice of ancestor veneration, according to which families routinely memorialize deceased family members (including those from the distant past) at the domestic altar and at the family grave. According to the Japanese notion of *jōbutsu*, the posthumous repose of the dead depends on the living family members regularly carrying out their memorial duties. However, in a society that no longer neatly fits into so many different *ie* family units, memorialism of the dead becomes problematic. In chapter 7, Satsuki Kawano examines the growing problem of “getting buried” in contemporary Japan. She focuses on those people (such as childless couples or the unmarried) who, by leaving no descendants behind, find themselves condemned to the prospective status of *muenbotoke* or restless ghosts. She shows how such people attempt to redress this problem, and ensure their posthumous well-being, by collectivizing memorialism in conjunction with Buddhist temples

and therefore, in effect, establishing alternative relations of memorialism to those of the *ie*. Kawano's chapter illustrates a more general theme that runs through the following chapters: the way in which Japanese people, rather than simply adopt a Westernized model of the family, reinterpret, adapt, and extend the sentiments and responsibilities associated with the traditional stem family in response to contemporary demographic, economic, and social conditions.

## Population in Japan

Population growth has been a central feature of modern Japan. At the start of the modern period in 1868, Japan had approximately 30 million people; in 1945, the year of Japan's wartime defeat, it had 72 million people; by the end of 1990 the population had reached 123 million, and by about 2010 it is projected to peak at 130 million. Thereafter, the population of Japan is expected to fall, with a projected decline that may fall below 80 million by 2050. Although such population trends are dramatic, it is important to recognize that both population growth and decline in Japan, as elsewhere, take place in a political context through which people interpret and ascribe meanings to demographic change. Population size and rate of growth have been the object of political concern throughout modern Japanese history. Japan has long seen itself as having too many people and too little land, a sentiment that is manifested in a wide variety of ways. Japanese people readily contrast their country unfavourably with the expanses of North America or Australia. The shortage of land is an abiding preoccupation in Japan (e.g., small farm size, limited cemetery space, the creation of artificial islands). Every Japanese knows of the reference to Japanese dwellings as "rabbit hutches" made in a European Common Market report in the late 1970s, a remark which only reinforced the Japanese self-perception of land scarcity and overpopulation.

In particular, Japan's mountainous archipelago has long raised concerns with the shortage of arable land and doubts about the ability to grow enough food for the population. In pre-war Japan, especially in the 1920s and 1930s, there was a national fixation with excessive fertility. Rural poverty was attributed to population surplus and insufficient land. In 1927, the Minister of Finance declared that "[t]he fundamental solution of the Food versus Population Problem is the one grand aim of the present government's economic policy" (in Crocker 1931, 53). But with the rise of militarism, the concern shifted from controlling population to boosting it.

In 1941, the pronatalist wartime state issued a mandate in which a target was set for increasing the national population over the next twenty years from 73 million to 100 million people (Miyake 1991, 278–79). In the post-war period the preoccupation of the Japanese government was again with overpopulation—and the problem of excess population growth. This has been avoided primarily through the use of induced abortion rather than contraception, although increased contraceptive use has also contributed (Hardacre 1997, 60). Between 1947 and 1957, Japan more than halved its birth rate: the total fertility rate fell from 4.5 in 1947 to 2.0 ten years later, where it remained relatively stable at replacement level until the early 1970s (Coleman 1983, 34). Since the 1970s total fertility has continued to decline. In 1980 it fell to 1.75 and in 1990 it declined to 1.54. By 2000, the total fertility rate in Japan stood at approximately 1.35 children per woman over the lifecycle, a drop from 2.14 in 1973 and well below the 2.10 required to maintain a stable population when transnational migration does not account for significant population increases (Raymo 1998; Sōmuchō 2000, 37).

As a result of this decline, late twentieth and early twenty-first century Japan is again preoccupied with boosting fertility. In the 1980s and 1990s the declining national birth rate became problematized as a significant social issue both by the government and in the media. There is particular concern over the changing role of women in society, whereby women become less and less likely to follow the traditional paths of marriage and childrearing; indeed, this has been elevated to the level of a moral discourse in which women are criticized for not carrying out their roles in society properly (Traphagan 2000, 34). The falling birth rate is the object of nationalistic fears, and the trend is even seen as threatening the future existence of the nation. In 1990, the director-general of the Economic Planning Agency expressed the fear that the increase in the number of women taking up careers and postponing marriage could eventually lead to the disappearance of the Japanese people: “if this excellent Japanese tribe is on its way to becoming extinct, then I cannot die easily” (Uno 1993, 321).

## Rural Depopulation

Population decline is a particular concern in rural Japan. Japanese urbanization in the pre-war period has long been seen as a smooth and harmonious process in which the large-scale

displacement of population was relatively free of the anomic disruptions that marked Western urbanization (Vogel 1971; De Vos 1973, 204–8). In the post-war period, this image of harmonious, orderly urbanization gave way to one of imbalance and distortion. The large-scale transfer of population to urban areas brought about a situation of simultaneous urban overpopulation and rural depopulation—or *kamitsu* and *kaso*, in Japanese (Yūki 1970). The effect of depopulation has been to deplete villages of their fertile age-band, thus causing a secondary effect on the next generation. Depopulated villages have seen a collapse of their birth rates, to the extent that some remote villages have virtually no residents of normal childbearing age.

Many of the chapters in this book deal with rural Japan. The municipalities of Tōwa-chō (chapter 5), Hongū-chō (chapter 6), and Kanegasaki-chō (chapter 10) have all undergone large scale depopulation in the postwar decades. One of the features of depopulated areas in Japan is the way that population maintenance has become problematized as the central, overriding task of local governments. The chapters by Chris Thompson and John Knight both examine the efforts of municipal governments to tackle the depopulation problem. On the one hand, these efforts are directed to encouraging local people to live and work locally rather than to outmigrate for work in the large cities. On the other hand, a variety of pronatalist policies are evident, albeit with seemingly little effect. In response to depopulation and its debilitating effect on local communities, municipal governments attempt to promote fertility in a variety of ways. They encourage births by providing one-time payments to cover the costs of pre-natal care, childbirth itself, as well as post-natal payments to contribute to the costs of infant care. Marriage has become a major concern in rural areas of Japan. Rural bachelorhood, in particular, is a serious problem; it is not at all unusual to find villages where half of all men in their thirties are unmarried. What the Japanese mass media calls the rural “bride drought” (*yomehideri*) or “bride famine” (*yome kikin*) is commonly characterized as the “farm successors’ marriage problem,” but extends to upland forestry villages and coastal fishing villages as well. The difficulty that rural men have in finding brides can become yet another reason for leaving the village in search of better prospects elsewhere. In response, many municipal governments have become directly involved in marriage brokerage (Knight 1995).

The preoccupation with depopulation is not confined to the rural town hall but is evident at a popular level as well. Depopulation or

*kaso* has even become a kind of stock popular explanation of decline, one that is invoked in local communities to account for all manner of specific problems. Examples include:

‘Because of *kaso* lone-dwelling old people die without anybody noticing.’ ‘Because of *kaso* work is not going well.’ ‘Because of *kaso* I can’t find a bride,’ and so on. . . . [T]he problems of S village are not examined one-by-one, but are treated as all caused by *kaso*. (Yasui 1997, 67–68)

The diffusion of this “depopulation consciousness” can be understood as an example of a “folk demography” or “demographic consciousness,” to use Ardener’s terms (Ardener 1989, 110, 117). Evidence of this demographic consciousness is visible in the entryway of almost any town hall in rural Japan, where the current population total, including losses and gains, is presented on a large sign for all to see and contemplate. In short, demographic behavior—both actual behavior to date and prospective behavior in the future—becomes a major subjective theme in rural Japanese society, as well as an objective characteristic of rural populations.

The chapters in this book illustrate the way in which demographic trends in contemporary Japan are unevenly spatially distributed. In the later decades of the twentieth century Japan’s youth migrated en masse to the cities, leaving behind them elderly regions, unable to reproduce themselves. Migration trends appear to have brought about a fundamental transformation of the social character of rural space in Japan—to the point where, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the very idea of a discrete “rural society” hardly seems to apply. In other words, as Knight puts it in his chapter, Japan’s rural regions have increasingly ceased to be *lifecourse* spaces, in which people live out their lives following established local occupations, and have become instead *lifephase* spaces, in which only one or two parts of the lifecourse are lived locally, the rest being spent in the city that becomes the site of their working lives.

## Aging in Japan

Population aging has become a major problem to societies throughout the world. One of the major challenges it poses is in the area of welfare provision. Up until the 1970s much of the Japanese

political establishment took the welfare states of Western Europe as its welfare model. But since the 1970s this has been largely replaced by an alternative welfare model, known as the “Japanese-style welfare society” (*Nihongata fukushi shakai*), that ostensibly draws on traditional Confucian values such as filial piety, obligation, and respect for seniority, and that posits the family as the basic provider of elder care (Goodman 1998, 150). A key element of this claim is Japan’s persistently high level of intergenerational coresidence, something that the government proclaims to be a “unique asset that can be tapped to offset the adverse consequences of population aging” (Ogawa and Retherford 1997, 76). In addition to its claimed compatibility with Japanese cultural values, the “Japanese-style welfare society” model also promised economic benefits to the state in the form of lower welfare spending, and therefore lower taxation, than would be the case with the Western welfare state model. Despite the above emphasis on its social and cultural specificity, this Japanese welfare model has acquired a wider appeal in recent years. In the area of welfare for the elderly, as in the area of economic performance, Japan has become something of a model, with both Japanese and Western commentators lauding its family-based system of welfare provision. Japan has come to exemplify an East Asian “welfare model” that offers one way of dealing with the problem of population aging faced in many advanced industrial societies (White and Goodman 1998, 10–13).

These discussions of Confucian-based welfare models are apt to give the impression of a traditional intergenerational solidarity and harmony in Japan and other East Asian societies. Yet in Japan this supposed solidarity between the generations should not necessarily be taken at face value. At times the elderly have been viewed as a potential burden on the family. One recalls the well-known *obasuteyama* legend in which the elderly grandmother, whom the family can no longer feed, is abandoned in the mountains by her son.<sup>1</sup> Many anthropologists and folklorists who have worked in remote areas of Japan will be familiar with tales of local spots in the mountains—often referred to as “Hell Valley” or *Jigokudani*—where in earlier times the old (and the sick) are said to have been discarded and which today are considered inauspicious, haunted places to be avoided. Whether this kind of “geronticide” ever existed on any appreciable scale is open to question, but every Japanese person knows of the tale and it looms over many a discussion of elderly welfare in Japan. More generally, the motif finds expression in the expectation, still widely found in rural Japan, that the

old should, as much as they are able to, continue to contribute to the household, whether this be through babysitting grandchildren, house-minding, or cultivating vegetables for the kitchen table.

This problem of social disconnection among the elderly is set to become all the more pronounced under the demographic conditions of twenty-first century Japan. Japan presents one of the most striking examples of societal aging in the world, having the longest life expectancy in the world—76.4 years for men and 82.9 years for women in 1995 (see chapter 2). This increase in longevity, combined with the decrease in fertility, has meant that the Japanese population as a whole has aged at a remarkably rapid pace. In 1950 people over 65 accounted for less than 5 percent of the national population, but in 2000 they made up 17 percent, and by 2025 they are projected to exceed 27 percent (Sōmuchō 2000, 41). In conjunction with the decline in national birth rates, this trend has profound implications for the Japanese family in the future. The rapid increase in the elderly population also poses a major challenge to municipal and national government agencies in developing social services and facilities that can effectively address the medical and other needs of an aged population.

Growth in the number of elderly people is invariably accompanied by growth in the number of people in need of some form of health care. In the case of Japan, within the over-65 population there has been a dramatic increase in the number of people aged 75 and over—what are sometimes referred to as the “old old.” The ratio of the population aged 75-plus to the population aged 65-plus is projected to increase from 40 to 57 percent between 1995 and 2025 . . . higher than projected for any other country” (Ogawa and Retherford 1997, 62–63). This creates a welfare burden both for the elderly themselves, who must find ways to cope with their declining physical and mental condition, and for their children (in many cases themselves advanced in years), who are often the ones to provide financial assistance and/or assistance in the activities of daily living (ADL). In Japan the burden of care primarily falls upon women—either a daughter-in-law or, increasingly, a daughter. In chapter 9 Brenda Robb Jenike presents ethnographic examples of just such a situation that focus the spotlight on the continued salience of an “intergenerational contract” in present-day Japan and the pressures to which it is subject. In particular, she shows how daughters-in-law, who find themselves obligated to care for elderly parents with advanced dementia, attempt to cope in the face of social tensions with husband and in-laws and bureaucratic obstacles to the provision of care services.

Japan's "aging society" or *kōreika shakai* has been the object of much governmental, academic, and media concern since the 1970s (see Campbell 1992). There has been a wide range of plans and programs developed or supported by the government via subsidies since the 1950s. One major initiative was the Gold Plan (proposed in 1989), a ten-year plan that set a range of targets, including dramatic increases in home helpers and nursing home beds, and called for an increase in senior centers for less populated areas, more short stay beds, and centers to coordinate in-home care of the frail elderly (Campbell 1992, 246). Throughout most of the history of government elder care programs in Japan the emphasis has been placed on those without traditional, family-centered forms of support (including single-dwellers, childless people, and older couples without nearby family). Facilities such as nursing homes were largely viewed as welfare for the needy and tended to carry a stigma in the eyes of many Japanese. But, as Campbell argues, the Gold Plan initiated a shift in attitudes about government-provided care. The Gold Plan reduced or eliminated means-tests for using services and facilities, greatly expanded the types of services and facilities available, and contributed to a growing demand that the government should provide some degree of care to older people even when there are family caregivers at home (Campbell 2000, 90). Nonetheless, the services and facilities provided by the Gold Plan were largely a supplement to in-home, family-provided care rather than an institutionalized system that met the needs of the frail elderly and their family members. It lacked the scale needed to actually affect a shift in responsibility from families to government in terms of providing care for the frail elderly and was insufficient to meet the demands of a rapidly expanding elderly population.

Rather than simply expanding the Gold Plan, an approach that faced financial and administrative problems due to its limited infrastructure, the Japanese government proposed and initiated, beginning in 2000, a long-term care insurance program (LTCI) (*kaigo hoken*) as a means of coping with the rise in bedridden elders and others in need of assistance with ADL. LTCI is a social insurance program that has been designed along lines similar to the German program, which was enacted in 1994 and is the only other LTCI program to have been initiated in an industrial or post-industrial nation. This program requires the participation of those over the age of 40 and involves mandatory premiums for the purpose of supporting long-term care for those in need. In addition to the premiums, recipients of long-term care are required to pay 10 per-

cent of the cost of care. Services that the insurance program supports include in-home care, home-visiting by healthcare professionals such as nurses, home-helpers, and physical therapists, as well as in-home counseling by public health workers, doctors, dentists, and others. The program also supports in-home bathing services for the elderly, day-care service at elder day-care centers, short-stay programs at nursing homes, subsidies for the purchase or rental of equipment and for home renovations to help with ADL (e.g., handrails or Western-style toilets rather than the squat-toilets typical of older Japanese houses), and long-term institutional care (Mizu sōgō kikaku 1999).

It remains to be seen what consequences the LTCI program will have for the provision of care in Japan, or for the Japanese economy. Official estimates of the costs for LTCI expect more than \$50 billion in spending by 2010—an estimate that appears to be rather optimistic (Campbell 2000, 96). Given the size of the program, underestimating the costs involved with LTCI may mean that serious problems loom for Japanese fiscal policy and the health care system. It is interesting that, undoubtedly cognizant of this potential for serious problems, along with the advent of the long-term care insurance program, a rhetoric of non-use has emerged in which government officials talk of new and pre-existing senior centers, elder day-care facilities, and other institutional settings as being aimed at providing a context in which elders can sustain good health and so avoid using the long-term care insurance. It will also be interesting to see how the advent of the LTCI era affects population movement among the elderly. In recent years, a trend seems to be emerging whereby the nation's elderly are moving to rural regions—something permitted by the recent phenomenon of *kaigo ijūsha* or “care migrants” in which older people migrate to rural localities on account of their superior welfare provision (see chapter 6). Across Japan, rural municipalities have established what are variously known as “Silver Areas” and “Welfare Villages”—special zones consisting of advanced welfare provision (including home helpers, visiting nurses, special housing, customized medical facilities, and integrated shopping facilities) aimed at attracting elderly migrants to their areas. It is distinctly possible that in the future places like Hongū-chō, Tōwachō, Kanegasaki-chō, and Mizusawa-shi could become primary sites of welfare provision for the nation's elderly.

In this way, elderly welfare provision in Japan has been focused on the family as the principal source of care. As Akiko Hashimoto notes, the system of social support for the elderly in Japan is based upon a notion of security structured around the

idea of protection. There is a strong emphasis among older Japanese on a support system that protects and guarantees care, rather than one that promotes independence and autonomy. Hashimoto argues that the comparatively “high rate of filial co-residence in Japan is one obvious example that attests to this fundamental ideal of long-term security” (Hashimoto 2000, 20). The family, rather than social institutions such as nursing homes, is viewed as the primary locus of a secure old age. However, many old people end up living (and dying) in old people’s homes (*rōjin hōmu*) or other institutional settings such as hospitals for the elderly. In Japan the old people’s home has long been tainted with *obasuteyama* imagery and viewed as a site for the disposal of the elderly (Bethel 1992, 130–31). One of the issues this raises is that of giving institutional care in Japan a more human face. In chapter 4, Leng Leng Thang offers a case study of an age-integrated facility, Kotoen, which consists of both an old people’s home (and a day-care center) and a nursery for children. Kotoen explicitly promotes “intergenerational contact” with the children in an attempt to counter the sense of social estrangement associated with institutions for the elderly. The existence of an ancestral altar in Kotoen, recalling the ancestral altars found in Japanese homes, suggests that the institution strives to recreate a family atmosphere for its residents. Kotoen represents a fascinating example of the way in which the trappings of the Japanese *ie* are extended to institutions beyond it.

## Anthropology and Demography in the Future

Population aging is one of the most pressing problems facing policy makers in advanced industrial societies and a problem that many developing societies will face in the future. It poses a major challenge to those who study such societies. Population aging represents a transformation in the demographic shape of a society, along with a new set of conditions in which the relationship between the family (in its varied forms) and the wider population develops and changes. Both the process of population aging (along with its social ramifications) and, more generally, the relationship between demographic and cultural change, are areas that need more social science research. Population aging should be studied in ways that cross disciplinary boundaries, because insights from one discipline can inform and influence the formulation of research questions in other disciplines. Yet only recently has population aging begun to be addressed in a truly cross-disciplinary way. Susan O. Long’s

(2000) edited volume is one notable example of an attempt to bring together researchers from a variety of fields—sociology, anthropology, economics, medicine, political science, and social work—to consider the practical implications of cultural variation in relation to provision of elder care. There remains considerable room for further collaboration among researchers from different disciplines.

However, combining disciplines as methodologically and epistemologically distinct as anthropology and demography within the confines of a single edited volume can present difficulties, particularly in relation to the technical terminology and jargon associated with each discipline. Throughout the meetings and other exchanges that led to this volume, difficulties in translating discipline-specific terminology frequently arose. Terms such as “decomposition” on the part of the demographers or “liminality” on the part of anthropologists are routinely used in the respective disciplines, without being specifically defined or problematized. This tendency often inhibits scholars from reading extensively outside of their own disciplines, particularly in areas that approach research from perspectives that seem fundamentally at odds with their own.

As will become clear in the pages that follow, there is much to be gained from persisting with the language and the methods of other disciplines, whether it is narrative-rich ethnographic interpretation or number-rich demographic analysis, to get at underlying insights that challenge our own assumptions and ideas. In many respects, this volume represents a first step. Although the chapters here clearly inform and connect to each other, they remain distinctly anthropological and demographic entries into the literature on the family and aging in Japan. The next step is to begin research projects that, from the inception of grant-writing through the process of data collection and publication, involve anthropologists and demographers in collaborative research teams. A true synthesis will involve scholars from both disciplines working together on specific projects that direct their respective approaches to the study of common research questions.

The policies that are developed over the coming years to cope with population aging should be informed both by the macro-level quantitative data and analysis that demographers can provide and by the micro-level ethnographic data and analysis in which anthropologists specialize. Conclusions developed through processes of social scientific inquiry are inherently limited because human vocabularies reflect particular perspectives on the world. Ethnography, demography, positivism, and subjectivism are all cultural products of human beings. Although social scientists may begin at

different epistemological starting points, they are inevitably faced with the limitations of their own science. In this volume, we offer a tether between two disciplines.

## Notes

1. The *obasuteyama* tale is ubiquitous in Japanese folklore, and is the subject of *noh* plays, literature, and films.

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