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Family Issues on Marriage, Divorce, and Older Adults in Japan

With Special Attention to Regional Variations

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Preface

Having lived in the United States for nearly 15 years, my return to the native land of Japan was a shock. I realized that Japan was a small country, but not so small that the institution of the family could be analyzed uniformly. I had come to the point where I could view my own country with the objectivity gained from valuable comparative insight. Following my extended stay overseas, I lived in rural Niigata for a few years teaching at a graduate school for international relations. It was my first experience living in rural surroundings in Japan. My encounter with the region was a total surprise.

"Coming out of the long tunnel I saw snow country," writes Yasunari Kawabata, a Nobel Prize–winning Japanese author, when he begins his tale of *Yukiguni* (The Snow Country) (1937). He had just passed through the 9.7-km-long Shimizu Railroad Tunnel that connects the two sides (the Pacific Ocean and the Japan Sea) of Japan. The snow-covered land at the tunnel's end was in contrast to the sunny winter day the narrator had left behind in Tokyo. The contrast that Kawabata describes is one that also permeates the fabric of the Japanese society and the institution of the family as well. What I saw in the family and households in the rural farming area of Niigata truly reflected the coexistence of modern living based on the traditional nature of Japan. This realization inspired me to look at Japanese families through these two visions of the dual structure perspective and regional variations.

Today we live in the Information Age, and the world moves toward a global society. When news of Japan floods the media, events are not necessarily reported correctly. Part of this problem comes from the inability of Japan to clearly state its point of view to the global society. This inability, in turn, is partly because the Japanese people themselves lack a fair knowledge of Japanese history. This book, therefore, is an attempt to alleviate the situation through the field of family sociology.

Sometimes I have felt I was a "voice in the wilderness" among Japanese sociologists, insisting it is vital to study the regional groups in a country. My studies have focused on Japan and the differences among people in the various areas. "Although Japan is a small island country, the cultural diversity from one region to another is extensive," I wrote. I have also sought to explore the "dual structural model"—where

traditional values meet modern ideas. In analyzing family issues such as demographic characteristics, courtship and marriage, divorce, and the elderly in Japan, this book emphasizes the significance of two theoretical frameworks: the dual structure and regional variations of the community network in Japan. Thus, the hypothesis to be tested in this book is that family issues in Japan vary from region to region. At the same time, it is hoped to find the existence of continuities sustaining the traditional nature of the Japanese family and household. Therefore, family issues in Japan in these areas are studied most effectively and appropriately through these two theoretical frameworks.

This book is a sociological study of the Japanese family. More specifically, topics include demographic changes, courtship and marriage, international marriage, divorce, late-life divorce, and the elderly living alone. The method of analysis adopted in the study is qualitative with a historical perspective rather than a quantitative orientation.

In the title of the book, the expression "the elderly" is replaced with "older adults" as the former is considered ageist in a number of academic circles and journals in Western societies today. Using the expression "older adults" in the title is a reflection that I am aware of this recent trend in Western societies. Furthermore, those who go through the process of late-life divorces are likely people in their middle ages—40s, 50s, and 60s—not necessarily those 65 and over. In Japanese, the equivalent expression to older adults, the elderly, and elders is only one, i.e., *koreisha*. In the Japanese language, "seniors" may have a positive connotation as being experienced, senior ranking, or respected. Personally, however, the phrase "the elderly" does not sound offensive or discriminatory at all to me as I never used it in a disrespectful way. In the text, therefore, the expression "the elderly" is kept throughout, because I use the term to refer to the generalized category of the people 65 years old and over.

The special feature of this book is the prefecture and community-level discussion of family issues in Japan rather than taking Japan as a whole through the MANDARA mapping presentation. This way of graphic presentation will enable readers to easily grasp regional variations in Japan. Thus, the book provides insightful sociological analyses of Japanese demography and families, paying attention not only to national average data but also to regional variations and community-level analyses. It is a paradigm shift from former studies of Japanese families, which mostly relied on national average data. In this book, the focus is placed on sociocultural variations and the diversity of families in Japan. For these reasons, I believe, the book is an invitation to more in-depth qualitative dialogue in the field of family sociology in Japan.

This book also attempts to contribute to an understanding of the Japanese family and demography from the Japanese perspective, rather than the Western point of view, for which there are many publications. This new book builds powerfully upon my earlier works by taking the reader deep inside an institution normally hidden to non-Japanese eyes and revealing its regional variations. It is my hope that readers will be fascinated to realize that such regional variations have long been rooted in Japanese history. The knowledge of regional variations which exists in my small

island country will encourage the reader to reevaluate his or her perspective. The book also sheds light on how and in what direction the Japanese family will be shifting in the process of unprecedented population aging in twenty-first-century Japan. For these reasons, I believe that this book will be of great interest not only to Asian scholars but also to other specialists in comparative family studies around the world.

Bringing this book to successful completion has required a lot of work and a great deal of time. Fortunately, I was able to convince Lawrence R. Blake, formerly a professional editor, to assist me in editing, rewriting, and bringing the manuscript to publishable form. Through experience gained from his editorial and writing professions, Larry always seems to know intuitively what I am trying to say and how best to say it. Besides this, his work is always meticulous and his attitude is sincere. Without his support, I would not have been able to complete the numerous tasks required to publish this book.

Sincere acknowledgment is also extended to various individuals and institutions. Without their cooperation and warm support, this book project could not have been accomplished. It is next to impossible to list them all, but let me list a few. Jayanthie Krishnan, editor of Springer Asia, and Vishal Daryanomel, assistant editor of Springer Asia, encouraged me to pursue writing a monograph by providing me with insightful and meticulous instructions on the final editing of the book. Last but not least, special appreciation is extended to two anonymous reviewers of the manuscript for their critical but truly constructive comments. Their professional support was essential for the completion of this project.

Tokyo, Japan Fumie Kumagai

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Chapter 1
Introduction: A New View on Changes in Japanese Families

1.1 Two Theoretical Frameworks for the Study of Family Issues in Japan

Population aging in Japan has been dramatic over the past several decades. Curiously, there has emerged an acute increase in households where elders live either alone or as a couple, a drastic change from the multigenerational households of the past. It is not common among traditional Japanese families.

How have these changes emerged? How long has it taken? There are two essential areas that have had significant impact on the makeup of Japanese families. They are, namely, population aging and declining fertility. The initiation of these recent changes corresponds to the onset of the so-called aging society in Japan in 1970. Japan became an aging society relatively late, when the proportion of the elderly population 65 and over reached 7 %. One of the unprecedented features of the aging society in Japan, however, has been its swiftness. Japan experienced a doubling of the aging population—in that the elderly 65 and over grew to 14 % of the total population—in less than a quarter century, by 1994. This was unprecedented. No other industrialized nation experienced this speed. This book includes not only a comparison between 1970 data and the most recent statistics but also the oldest demographic data available for each relevant sociocultural characteristic. By this method, it is possible for us to view the entire trend from a longitudinal perspective.

Now that society is shifting to a global orientation with an information-based economy, the family is necessarily undergoing a transformation, regardless of its location in the world. Such a transformation differs from one society to another, being affected by historical and indigenous sociocultural characteristics. For the analysis of Japanese families, it is imperative to adopt somewhat different perspectives—a paradigm shift for the study of the family. Because families are cultural products of their society, regional and community characteristics must be taken into full consideration for the analysis. In this book, therefore, theoretical perspectives of the dual structural model and regional variations in the community network have been introduced for the

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analysis of family issues in Japan. With these two theoretical frameworks in mind, family issues on marriage, divorce, and the elderly[1] are analyzed.

There are two levels of analysis in this book. First, this book analyzes the historical development of the relevant demographic data viewing Japan as a whole, utilizing national average data. Then, the analysis will focus on regional variations of households in Japan. It is regrettable that the majority of scholars of Japanese families utilize solely national data for their analyses, obscuring the sociocultural variations and diversities of families in different regions of Japan. Therefore, in order to fill this gap, the present study attempts to analyze the dynamics and variations in Japanese families and households.

1.2 A Dual Structural Model of the Japanese Family: The Modified Stem Family

In analyzing contemporary Japanese society, one recognizes that it is neither primarily traditional nor primarily modern (Kumagai 1984, 1986, 1996, 2008, 2011). Instead, it is the coexistence of both tradition and change that demonstrates the complex nature of modern-day Japan. Julius Boeke found the same thing in Indonesia, with his analysis of Indonesian society under its colonization by the Netherlands (Boeke 1942, 1953). The dual structural perspective of society represents modern Western capitalism incorporated into a traditional agrarian society. The contrasting elements of external modernity and internal tradition coexist in a single system, composed of two layers and resulting in a dual structure.

This dual structural perspective is applied for the analysis of Japanese society and the family and called the modified stem family as seen in Fig. 1.1 (Kumagai 1984, 1986, 1996, 2008, 2011). Underlying this structural duality is a complex of cultural assumptions—some modern and some traditional, some borrowed, and some uniquely Japanese—which determine the manners and customs of the Japanese people. It is the deep-rooted traditions inherent in Japan's hierarchical family system that go furthest in explaining the meaning of contemporary Japanese society. As one of the fundamental institutions in any society, the retention of Japan's traditional family system into the postwar period has had an important and lasting impact on attitudes and human relations in Japan.

Although it has been on the decline, in Japan today more than 40 % (69.0 % in 1980, 42.2 % in 2011) of the elderly aged 65 years and over live with their adult children. Of them, the proportion of the elderly living with their married children

[1] The author of this book is fully aware of the recent development among the Western academics that the expression "the elderly" has been considered ageist and has been replaced with "older adults." In fact, that is one of the reasons for a part of this book title says "Older Adults" rather than "the Elderly." However, throughout the text of this book, the expression "the elderly" is used instead. It is because the elderly in this book refers to the generalized category of the people 65 years old and over, but not to suggest to any specific individuals.

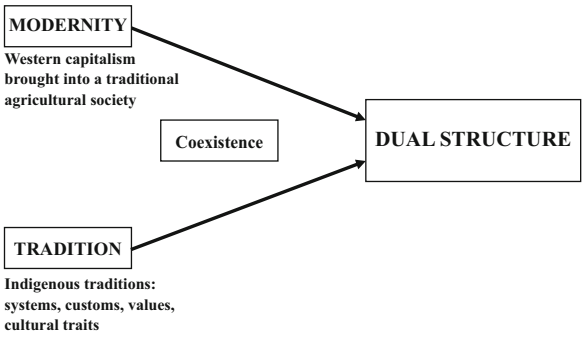

Fig. 1.1 A dual structural model of Japanese society (*Sources*: Kumagai 1996: 5, and Kumagai 2008: 4)

declined dramatically from 52.5 % in 1980 to less than one-sixth (16.6 %) in 2011 (MHLW 2013). The abrupt decline in three-generation family households has resulted in a drastic increase in households headed by the elderly, both couples and singles. Perhaps due to the ingrained values of the Japanese family system, most Japanese elderly still adopt traditional coresidency living arrangements.

Nimkoff defined the *nuclear* family as "the smallest family unit, usually consisting of father, mother and offspring. By virtue of its irreducible size, and also because it is the building block of all larger family systems, it is often called the nuclear family" (Nimkoff 1965, 5). The traditional Japanese *ie* system is called the stem family, that is, "an adoption of family structure to the problem of limited landholdings and a large family of sons. In this arrangement, the extended family would decide which of the married sons would stay on at the family household" (Clayton 1979, 64). Adding to this paradigm, Litwak (1960a, b) coined the term *modified extended family* to describe the family that may be geographically dispersed, but remains united through a network of aid and interaction. In light of the high frequency of coresidence, in which elderly parents move into one of their adult children's households later in their life course, Nasu has called today's Japanese family system a *modified stem family* (Nasu 1962). In the modified stem family, a person experiences the modern nuclear and the traditional stem family alternately throughout life. This modified stem family seems to blend harmoniously within itself both the traditional and modern elements of Japan.

The developmental process of the modified stem family throughout the life of a Japanese individual today is represented in Fig. 1.2. Based on the median ages of the various family life course stages of Japanese women today, the statistics presented in this figure summarize cross-sectional data for a specific point in time rather than longitudinal data for a specific birth cohort. Since the major objective here is to examine the nature of the modified stem family and not the life course of an individual Japanese woman, the lack of precision in the numerical data presented in Fig. 1.2 should not pose any serious problem. For a detailed analysis of the life cycle of the Japanese family, refer to the earlier studies of the author of this book (Kumagai 1984, 1986, 1996, 2008).

Until her marriage, a typical Japanese woman remains in the family into which she was born. From her marriage to her death, she will become part of two families

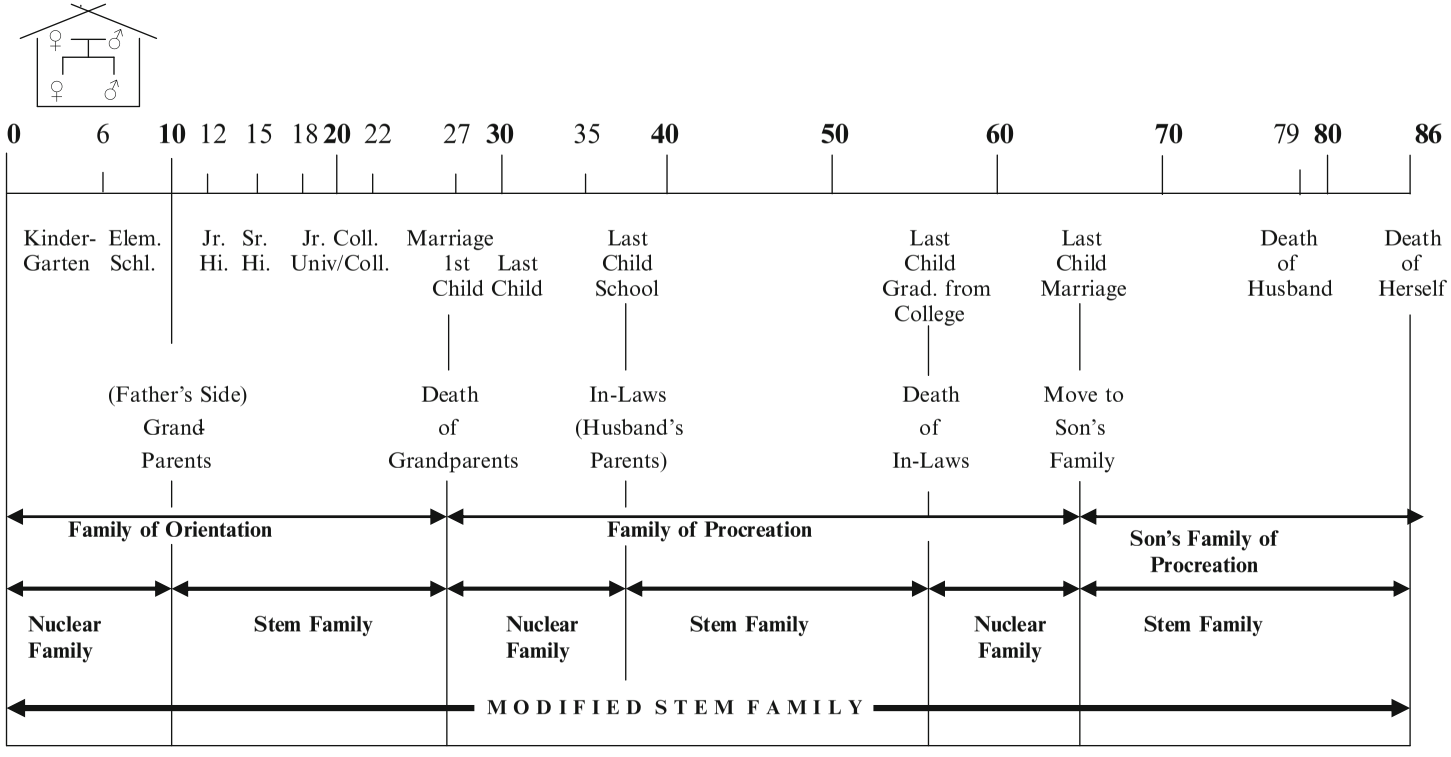

Fig. 1.2 The modified stem family in Japan (*Source*: Kumagai 1984, 1986, 2008; and MHLW 2014a, b. Demographic data were updated by the author)

of procreation: her own and her son's, assuming she lives with her son in her old age. Her family of orientation during her early life has two forms: the nuclear family, followed by the stem family. Until around the age of ten, she lives in a nuclear family with her parents and a brother. When her grandparents on her father's side move into the household, she lives in a stem family. Upon her marriage, she establishes her own family of procreation. Here again, she lives in a nuclear family, followed by a stem family. Until the parents of her husband move into the household, the family system is nuclear; the stem family occurs when the household becomes three generational. Another transition will take place in her family of procreation when it reverts to a nuclear family upon the death of her in-laws. Finally, when she moves into her son's family of procreation, she is part of a stem family again. In sum, this model shows the so-called average Japanese woman experiencing two family types, alternately nuclear and stem.

We must note, however, that the dual structural perspective for the average Japanese woman discussed here is a rather overly descriptive and linear style. And, therefore, limitations of this perspective would be that it does not allow variations from the average and/or the life course of any individual deviating from the average life cycle.

It must be remembered, however, that the proportion of the modified stem family households differs widely from one prefecture to the other. Why does this regional variation occur in the small island nation of Japan? To answer this question, a second theoretical framework postulated in this book must be understood.

1.3 Regional Variations by Prefecture: *Haihan Chiken* (Dissolution of Domains and Establishment of Prefectures)

Characteristics of the community network in Japan differ from one region or prefecture to the next. Although Japan is small, the cultural diversity from one region to another is extensive. In studying demography and the family in Japan, it is essential that we take for the unit of analysis the prefecture, rather than examining the population as a whole. Moreover, it is often the case that regional variations extend further down to the community level within the same prefecture.

Two reasons can be cited for the existence of significant regional variations in the culture and lifestyle of the local people. They are the establishment of the Centralized Government of Japan in 824, on one hand, and the so-called Second Meiji Restoration of Haihan Chiken (dissolution of feudal domains and establishment of prefectures), enforced in August 1871 on the other hand (Amino 1997: 150; Asai, 2007a: 28–31, b: 14–31; Jansen 2000: 348).

Regional divisions of Japan were established for the first time in 701 under the centralized administration called the *Ritsuryo* system (literally, due to statute). This system divided the area of Japan stretching from Tohoku on the north to Kyushu on the south (excluding Ezo (Hokkaido) to the north and Ryukyu (Okinawa) to the south) into the *Goki-Shichido* (five regions and seven national routes). These five

regions and seven routes were subdivided into *Kuni* (states), *Gun* (counties), and *Sato* (villages). After further consolidations of these regions and communities, the centralized Japanese administrative divisions from Tohoku to Kyushu were finalized into *Rokujyuu Ro-Kokku* and *Ni-to* (66 states and 2 islands) in 824.

These divisions lasted for more than a millennium until the end of the Edo/Tokugawa Shogunate. The control system of Edo Shogunate was characterized by its dual structure called *Baku-Han Taisei: Baku* or *Bakufu* means the central government of the Edo Shogunate, and *Han* represents the local feudal domain headed by the feudal lord. Although the exact number of Han is not known, it is widely believed that there were some 270 traditional feudal domains by the end of the Edo Shogunate (Shiba 1994, 153). The traditions developed by each of the feudal domains became ingrained into local residents and society. This, in turn, resulted in distinctive local characteristics of each feudal domain, as they developed independently of each other (Asai 2007a: 31; Shiba 1994, 153).

After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, the new government under the Meiji Emperor enforced Haihan Chiken in 1871. At that time Japan's centralized system became San-pu Sanbyakuni-ken (3 Fu and 302 prefectures), based on each of the feudal domains. It is natural, therefore, that these newly established 302 prefectures were identical to the former feudal domains. After further consolidation of these 302 prefectures in several stages, the administrative divisions of Japan were reduced by 1880 to a total of 46 prefectures, three of which were Fu (Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto).

Today, there are 47 prefectures in Japan; Okinawa was returned to Japan from US control in 1972. Therefore, it has been just 40 years since the administrative divisions of Japan have been organized as 47 prefectures, comprised of one To (Tokyo), one Do (Hokkaido), two Fu (Osaka and Kyoto), and 43 prefectures (See map on *Sekai Chizu to Kakkoku no Chizu* 2007 as shown in Fig. 1.3). The history of the traditional feudal domain system is long; the history of today's administrative divisions is short. As would be expected, therefore, characteristics of Japanese society, culture, and personality are deeply affected by the traditional feudal domain system.

In studying Japanese families today, we note that even within a single prefecture, there exist distinctively different characteristics from one area (or district) to the other. (Some examples of well-known prefectures containing multiple numbers of area characteristics are such as Aomori, Yamagata, Nagano, Shizuoka, Aichi, Hiroshima, and Fukuoka prefectures (Kumagai 2011, 25).)

Recently, the possibility has been discussed widely of reorganizing the administrative divisions of these 47 prefectures in order to establish the Do-Shu-Sei (the Do and Shu) system (National Diet Library 2012). It has been proposed, variously, to divide Japan into 9, 11, or 13 administrative divisions, each division consisting of several prefectures. This Do-Shu-Sei system is far from finalized, especially because of Japan's long-lasting traditional feudal domain system. Historical attitudes cannot be removed overnight; they remain deeply entrenched in the minds of the local people.

Based on two of the theoretical frameworks discussed above, this book proposes hypotheses on changes, continuities, and regional variations that family issues in Japan vary from region to region. At the same time, it is hoped to find the existence of continuities sustaining the traditional nature of the Japanese family and household.

Fig. 1.3 Map of Japan by prefecture: administrative divisions (*Source*: *Sekai Chizu to Kakkoku no Chizu* (World maps and Japanese maps) 2007)

1.4 Data and Methods

1.4.1 Data

Today, various Japanese vital statistics have been made available online by government bureaus. Depending on their objectives, researchers and academics can make use of these databases, which are accessible to the public. Data for the current study come primarily from the following nine sources:

1. Institute of Population and Social Security Research (IPSSR 2014a): Jinko Toukei Shiryoushuu: 2014 [Latest demographic statistics of 2014]. In particular, the current study depends heavily on vital statistics on households (Chapter VII) and demographic data by prefecture (Chapter XII).[2]
2. Institute of Population and Social Security Research (IPSSR 2014b): Nihon no Setaisuu no Shourai Suikei-To-Do-Fu-Ken betsu: Heisei 22-Heisei 47 [Projections for Japanese households by prefecture: 2010–2035]
3. Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW 2012). Guraph de Miru Setai no Jyoukyou: Heisei 22-nenn no Kekka kara [Graphical Review of Japanese Household-From Comprehensive Living Conditions, 2010].

[2] Chapter VII on households: http://www.ipss.go.jp/syoushika/tohkei/Popular/Popular2014.asp?chap=12&title1=%87%5D%87U%81D%93s%93%B9%95%7B%8C%A7%95%CA%93%9D%8Cv (accessed April 15, 2014)

4. Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW 2014a). Heisei 26-nenn Wagakuni no Jinkou Doutai: Heisei 24-nenn made no Doukou [Vital Statistics of Japan: Trends up to 2012]. February.
5. Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW 2014b). Heisei 25-nen Jinko Doutai Toukei Geppo Nenkei Gaisuu no Gaikyou [Vital Statistics of 2013-Summaries]. Published on June 4.
6. Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIAC 2011). Heisei 22-nenn Kokusei-chosa chushutsu sokuhou shuukei kekka-Heisei 23-nenn 6-gatsu 29-nichi kouhyou [Major statistics of the population, households, and living arrangements for all Japan, by prefecture and by community, based on the Japanese national census in 2010].
7. Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIAC 2014a). Toukei de miru to-do-fu-ken no sugata: 2012 [Characteristics of prefectures through statistics: 2014].
8. Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIAC 2014b). Toukei de miru shi-ku-cho-sonn no sugata: 2012 [Characteristics of communities through statistics: 2014].
9. Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication (MIAC 2014c). Heisei 25-nen 10-gatsu Tsuitachi Genzai Jinkou Suikei [Population estimates: As of October 1, 2013].

Various data from these sources were used to construct tables. Then, these tables are presented in graphic format for trend analyses and for the study of regional variations by prefecture. Graphic presentations of various data are meant to facilitate the understanding of changes in the Japanese household, especially of the elderly living alone, over time, and over space.

1.4.2 Analytic Strategy

Graphic presentations of these various data were made possible by using Excel graphics and the GIS mapping techniques of MANDARA software (MANDARA 2014). MANDARA is a GIS-based software developed by Professor Kenji Tani of Saitama University in 1992. This GIS software enables one to convert Japanese regional data into map format, by prefecture or by community, depending on the objective. If the data were for the United States, China, or the world, they could be converted into maps by state, county, or country, respectively.

It is important to remember that the pattern of dispersion for each family characteristic varies from one prefecture to another. Currently, Japan is comprised of 47 prefectures, from the northernmost (Hokkaido) to the southernmost (Okinawa), with 1,741 communities as of April 5, 2014 (J-LIS 2014).[3] One of the emphases in

[3] The total number of Japanese communities (i.e., cities, towns, and villages, combined) continues to decline due to the so-called Heisei-no-Daigappei (the great merger in twenty-first-century Japan), which has been in progress these past few years. Therefore, the total number of communities was 3,264 at the beginning of fiscal year 1991; 2,418 in 2005; 1,843 in 2006; 1,827 in 2007; 1,811 in 2008; 1,795 as of October, 2009; and 1,741 as of April 5, 2014, respectively (J-LIS 2014).

the current study of Japanese families is the very nature of regional variations. As a consequence, a clear grasp of the geographic distribution of Japan's land area is important. Using these methods, it is hoped to prove that Japanese family issues do indeed exhibit regional diversities.

1.5 Family Issues to Be Discussed

Family issues in Japan to be discussed in this book center around the following six topics:

- Demographic Changes in Japan
- History of Courtship and Marriage in Japan
- International Marriages in Japan
- Changing Divorce in Japan
- Late-Life Divorce in Japan
- The Elderly Living Alone in Japan

Now that we have discussed theoretical frameworks, and the data and methods used in this book, let us look at demographic changes in Japan in the following chapter. Demographic characteristics are basic components of families, and to consider their changes through a longitudinal perspective would facilitate our ways to propose counter measures and policy recommendations.

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Chapter 2
Demographic Changes in Japan

2.1 Introduction

It has been widely acknowledged that the progress of population aging in Japan has been dramatic over the past several decades, with a speed unprecedented among industrial nations. Hence, there has emerged an acute increase in households where elders live either alone or as a couple. It is not common among traditional Japanese families.

Before starting the discussion, let us identify two primary emerging issues. They are, in what respects and over what period of time have these changes emerged? In addressing these changes, there exist two essential areas that have had significant impact on the makeup of Japanese families. They are, namely, population aging and declining fertility. The initiation of these recent changes corresponds to the onset of the so-called aging society in Japan in 1970 (IPSSR 2014a; Kumagai 2008, 2010; MIAC 2014a, b).

Japan became an aging society relatively late, when the proportion of the elderly population 65 and over reached 7 %. One of the unprecedented features of the aging society in Japan, however, has been its swiftness. Japan experienced a doubling of the aging population—in that the elderly 65 and over grew to 14 % of the total population—in less than a quarter century, by 1994. This was unprecedented. No other industrialized nation experienced this speed (IPSSR 2014a, Table 2.18).[1] Today, however, some Asian nations, such as South Korea, Singapore, and China, that launched into the aging society much later than Japan, their doubling of the aging population supersedes even that of the Japanese counterpart (IPSSR 2014a,

[1] Examples of "a doubling of the aging population" of some other industrialized nations are as follows: France (114 years: 1864–1978), Norway (92 years: 1885–1977), Sweden (85 years: 1887–1972), the United States (72 years: 1942–2014), Canada (65 years: 1945–2010), the United Kingdom (46 years: 1929–1975), and Germany (40 years: 1932–1972).

F. Kumagai, *Family Issues on Marriage, Divorce, and Older Adults in Japan*,
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Table 2.18).[2] This chapter includes not only a comparison between 1970 data and the most recent statistics but also the oldest demographic data available for each relevant sociocultural characteristic. By this method, it is possible for us to view the entire trend from an objective perspective (IPSSR 2014a; b; MHLW 2014a, b; MIAC 2014a, b; UN 2014).

Based on two theoretical frameworks discussed in Chap. 1 of this book, the dual structural perspective and the regional variation in community analysis, this chapter proposes hypotheses on changes, continuities, and regional variations of Japanese families and households by prefecture. Thus, the hypothesis to be tested is that Japanese families and households vary from region to region. At the same time, it is hoped to find the existence of continuities sustaining the traditional nature of the Japanese family and household.

In this chapter, five areas of demography characteristics have been analyzed and presented in one table and 16 figures. These five areas are as follows: Changes in the Japanese Household Structure, Changes in the Three-Generation Family, Family Size, Demographics of the Japanese Elderly, and Living Arrangement of the Japanese Elderly. In presenting these figures, several features for each of these five characteristics were analyzed.

2.2 Changes in the Japanese Household Structure: The Nuclear Family

It is frequently asserted that industrialization and the nuclear family go hand-in-hand. What has been Japan's experience in this regard? According to the Census Bureau of Japan, a nuclear family is one which consists of (1) a couple only, (2) a couple with their unmarried children, or (3) a single parent (either male or female) with unmarried children. Statistics reveal that the total proportion of all such nuclear households in Japan in 1920 was 55.3 %. In the ensuing 35 years, the rate of increase was relatively gradual, thus the proportion in 1955 was still slightly below 60 %. After increasing to 59.5 % in 1990, the proportion of nuclear households since then has been on a gradual decline, totaling just 56.4 % in 2010, and is projected to further decline to 51.5 % by the year 2030 (IPSSR 2014a, Tables 7.10 and 7.12) (see Fig. 2.1). Thus, contrary to popular references of the nuclearization of the modern Japanese household, there is no evidence of a striking increase in such households over the past 90 years.

The proportion of single-person households, on the other hand, has increased dramatically, from just 6.0 % of the total in 1920, and 16.1 % in 1960, to 32.4 % in 2010, nearly one-third of the total households. Combining the proportional changes of nuclear family and single-person households reveals an increase from 61.3 % in 1920 to 88.7 % in 2010 (IPSSR 2014a, Table 7.9) (see Fig. 2.2). In other words,

[2] South Korea (19 years: 1999–2018), Singapore (22 years: 1999–2021), and China (26 years: 2001–2027).

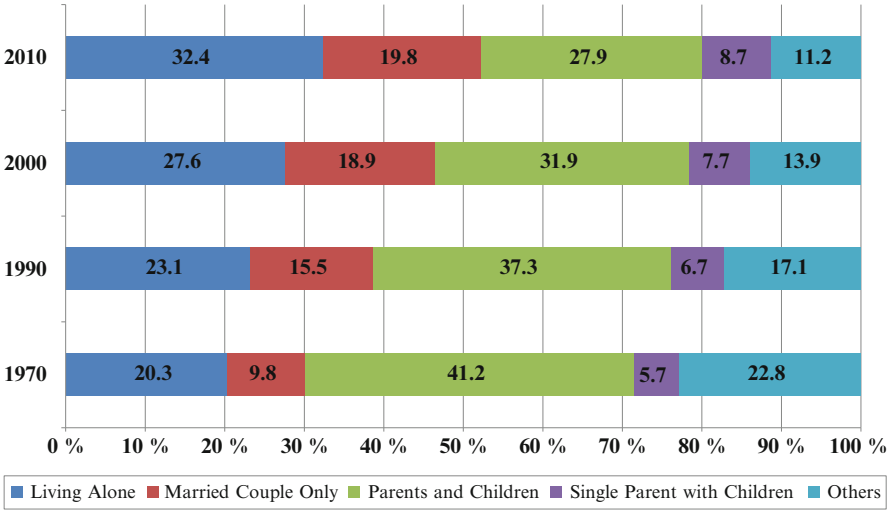

Fig. 2.1 Changes in the proportions of the household type: 1970–2010 (*Source*: IPSSR 2014a, Tables 7.10 and 7.12. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

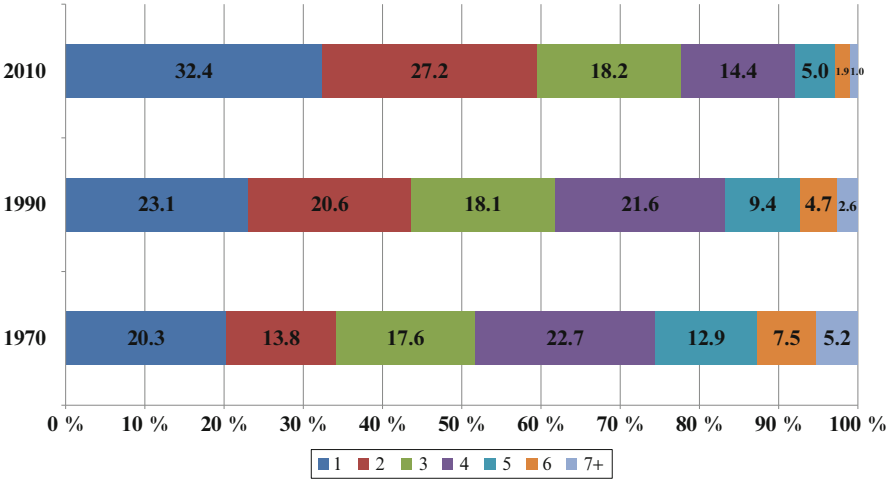

Fig. 2.2 Changes in the family size: 1970, 1990, 2010 (*Source*: IPSSR 2014a, Table 7.9. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

close to nine of ten households in Japan today fall outside the traditional Japanese family system, clearly signaling the decline in the traditional stem family in Japan.

Future projections, however, suggest that the nuclear family may not become a universal phenomenon in the modern era. With nuclear households projected to decline to 51.5 % by the year 2030, the proportion of single-person households is expected to increase to 37.4 % by that same year (IPSSR 2014a, Table 7.12).

These changes have been accentuated by the movement of young newlyweds, especially in urban areas, to households outside the family home. While upper-class families with ample property have customarily extended financial support to their newlywed children by building detached homes on their premises, people in the middle and lower classes have usually been obliged to rent independent housing or purchase a condominium and pay a mortgage in installments. This may be a reason why we see an increase in the couples-only category of the nuclear family household.

Establishing a first residence outside the family home has yet to become a standard arrangement among newly married Japanese. In rural areas, most newlywed couples continue to reside with one of the couple's parents. Even in urban areas, many self-employed newlyweds still reside with the family of the eldest son, as long as space permits. But the shortage of housing space is so acute in urban areas that the nuclearization of reduced-sized families has increased in recent years.

2.3 Changes in the Three-Generation Family

Just as the nuclear family is linked with modernization, the stem family (also referred to as the three-generation family or simply the generational family) seems to be one of the preconditions for modern economic development. The stem family structure incorporates a support network for elder members in the household where three, four, or even five generations live in a single household.

The Japanese family alterations become more apparent when we analyze changes in the proportion of three-generation families in Japan. Slightly more than one-third of all Japanese households in 1955 (36.5 %), and slightly less than one-third in 1965 (33.2 %), today the stem family accounts for only one in every 14 households (7.1 % in 2010) (Yamagata Prefecture 2012, Table 8). It is important to note, however, that there exist significant regional variations by prefecture in the proportion of three-generation households as shown in Fig. 2.3.

That is, although the national average for the three-generation households is only slightly more than 7 %, the prefecture showing the highest rate (Yamagata) is as high as 21.5 %. On the other hand, Kagoshima, southernmost prefecture on the Kyushu island, is less than half the national average (3.2 %). Where do these significant regional variations come from? Let us discuss this issue later in this book, i.e., Chap. 7: *Japanese Elders Living Apart*.

Of Japan's total households in 1975, those with elder members aged 65 years and over constituted slightly more than one-fifth of the total households (22.2 %). The proportion increased to nearly four out of ten by 2010 (39.9 %) (IPSSR 2014a, Tables 7.1, 7.15). Of these elderly, only slightly less than one in every five resides in a three- or more generational household today (86.8 % in 1960 versus only 16.2 % in 2010).

In addition, households with only elder members have increased dramatically over the years (see Table 2.1). The proportion of one-person elderly households increased from 5.2 % in 1960 to 16.1 % in 2012. Similarly, the proportion of elderly couple households increased from 5.8 % in 1960 to 37.5 % in 2012 (IPSSR 2014a, Table 7.16).

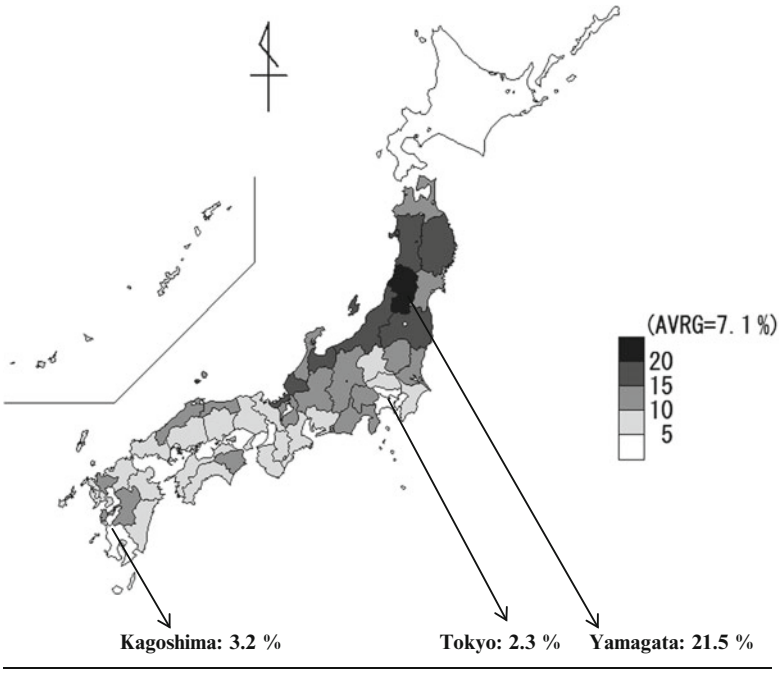

Fig. 2.3 Proportions of three-generation households by prefecture: 2010 (*Source*: Yamagata Prefectural Government 2012, Table 25, p. 30, and Table 1, p. 134. The figures were compiled and constructed by the author)

Table 2.1 Changes in the proportion (%) of family types of Japanese persons aged 65 and over: 1960–2012

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005	2010	2012
Living alone	5.2	6.7	8.5	11.2	14.1	15.5	16.9	16.1
Married couple only	5.8	10.1	19.6	25.7	33.1	36.1	37.2	37.5
Others	89.0	83.2	71.9	63.1	52.8	48.4	45.9	46.4
With their children			69.0	59.7	49.1	45.0	42.3	42.3
Children are a couple			52.5	41.9	29.4	23.3	17.5	16.0
Child(ren) currently not married			16.5	17.8	19.7	21.6	24.8	24.8
With other relative(s)			2.8	3.3	3.5	3.4	3.6	3.6
With non-relative(s)			0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: For 1960 and 1970: IPP 1990, table 8.16; for 1980, 1990, 2000, 2005, 2010, and 2012: IPSSR 2014a, table 7.16

Clearly, a greater proportion of the elderly 65 and over in Japan now live in one- or two-person-only households. As a consequence, an increasing number of Japanese elderly today are obliged to adopt independent lifestyles, not consistent with the traditional stem family system.

2.4 Family Size: Changes and Projections for the Average Number of Persons in a Household by Prefecture

Given this growth of nontraditional family structures, it is not surprising to find that, while the total number of Japanese households has increased nearly five times over the past nine decades, from 11 million in 1920 to 52 million in 2010 (IPSSR 2014a, Table 7.1), the average number of family members in a household has decreased dramatically. The average family in prewar Japan had more than five members, but today it has less than three (2.42 in 2010) (IPSSR 2014a, Table 7.9). This increase in the total number of households and decrease in average family size signals the emergence of the modern family in Japan. It should be noted with caution, however, that the modern family in this context means "a-traditional or nonconventional" rather than the traditional family household.

Governmental report and statistics on the "Projections for Japanese Households by Prefecture: 2010–2035" has been released recently (IPSSR 2014b). When we look at those on family size by prefecture, we notice consistently unique patterns on three points (see Fig. 2.4). First, it is evident that Japanese family size is getting smaller and smaller throughout Japan. It has been pointed out that the average family size in Japan today is much smaller than three (2.42 in 2010). This statistics, however, is not only for the average figure, but it also applies to all the 47 prefectures throughout Japan today already. This declining trend in attrition in the family size will continue in the future. (Those in 2025 and in 2035 would be 2.25 and 2.20, respectively.)

Second, the family size in Tokyo will become less than two (1.90) by 2025. It indicates that a significantly large proportion of the household in Tokyo will be those of living alone, may it consist of young people or of senior citizens. For the detailed discussion on the elderly living alone, see "Chap. 7: *Japanese Elders Living Apart: Policy Suggestions*" of this book.

Third, Yamagata prefecture and those in Tohoku and Hokuriku regions are and will expect to keep relatively larger family size, on one hand. On the other hand, however, prefectures in urban areas and those of rural Kagoshima and Kochi are and will continue to show the smallest family size in Japan. As discussed later in this book, it seems as if prefectural divorce rates and the family size by prefecture are inversely related to each other. In other words, the relatively large family size regions of Yamagata, Tohoku, and Hokuriku tend to show low divorce rates. On the other hand, prefectures which show relatively small family size in Tokyo, Hokkaido, Osaka, Kagoshima, and Kochi tend to show high divorce rates. The seemingly possible relationship between the high divorce rate and relatively small family size proposition does not apply for the case of Okinawa. There should be unique cultural variations accounting for these prefectural variations. (For detailed discussion on cultural factors which account for prefectural variations, please refer to the following chapters of this book, Chap. 5: *Changing Divorce in Japan*; Chap. 7: *Japanese Elders Living Apart*.)

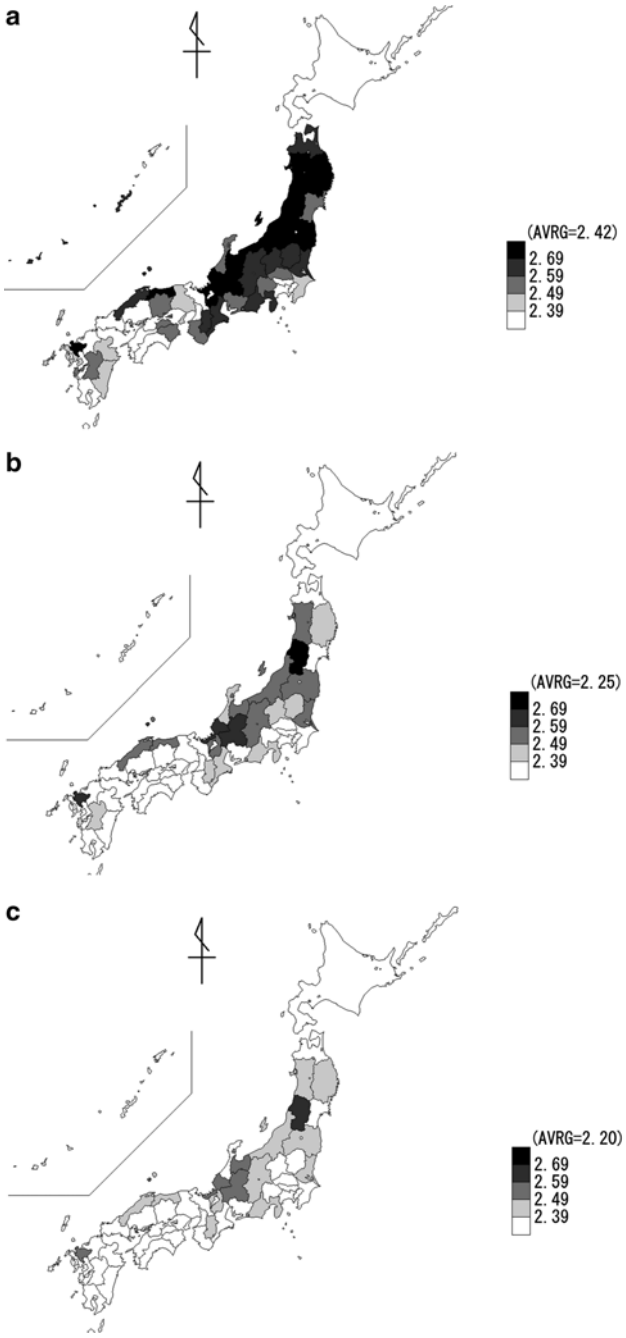

Fig. 2.4 Changes and projections for the family size by prefecture: 2010, 2025, 2035. (**a**) 2010: (Average: 2.42; Tokyo: 2.03-Yamagata: 2.94). (**b**) 2025 (Average: 2.25; Tokyo: 1.90-Yamagata: 2.71). (**c**) 2035 (Average: 2.20; Tokyo: 1.87-Yamagata: 2.59). (*Source*: IPSSR 2014b, Table II-2. The figures were compiled and constructed by the author)

2.5 Demographics of the Japanese Elderly

2.5.1 The Graying of Japan: Population Aging and Fertility Decline

As a consequence of this persistent trend of declining fertility, the number of children (up to 14 years old) in Japan has declined considerably over the years—from 29.4 million in 1950 (35.4 % of the total population) to 22.5 million in 1990 (18.2 % of the total population) and 16.5 million in 2012 (13.0 % of the total population) (IPSSR 2014a, Tables 2.5 and 2.6). In 1990, the dependency ratio of children for every 100 productive population (ages 15–64) was 26.2 (18.2 % vs. 69.7 %), indicating that approximately 3.8 productive persons supported every child. At the same time, the elderly in 1990 constituted 12.1 % of the total population (dependency rate: 17.3, signifying that 5.8 productive persons supported every elderly). By the year 2012, these ratios had declined significantly to 20.6 (13.0 % vs. 62.9 %) for the dependency ratio of children and increased to 4.9 productive persons supporting every child. Furthermore, the elderly population in 2012 increased to 24.1 % of the total population, resulting in the increase in the dependency ratio to as high as 38.4, indicating that only 2.6 productive persons supported every elderly (IPSSR 2014a, Table 2.6).

Kumagai in her earlier study projected that with an acceleration of the decline in child population and rapid increase in the elderly, the proportion of the elderly population would exceed that of the child population as early as by the end of the twentieth century (Kumagai 1990). In fact, it did so by the year 1997 (child population: 15.38 %; elderly population: 15.65 %). Since then, the proportion of children decreased to 13.1 % and that of the elderly increased to 25.1 % of the total population by the year 2013. Furthermore, projections for 2020 and 2060 would be, respectively, 11.7 % and 9.1 % for the child population and 29.1 % and 39.9 % for the elderly population (MIAC 2014a, Table 8) (see Fig. 2.5). In other words, by the year 2060, as many as four out of every ten of the Japanese population would be 65 years old and over.[3]

The proportion of Japanese 65 and over has been increasing at an unprecedented pace. This is termed the graying of Japan. Only in 1970 did Japan enter the aging society, in which the proportion of elderly 65 and over hit 7 % of the total population. In fact, Japan was one of the latecomers in this regard among the industrialized nations. Other countries became aging societies much earlier than Japan, some as early as the latter half of the nineteenth century (e.g., France in the 1860s and the United States in the mid-1940s).

Today, however, the increase in the aged is so acute in Japan that few other nations in the world, except Greece and Italy, surpass its rate. The national average aging rate in Japan today is as high as one in every four (25.1 % in 2013) (in comparison to Hong Kong 12.9 % in 2010, Korea 11.8 % in 2012, Singapore 9.9 % in

[3] For more detailed discussion on the topic of the elderly in Japan, refer to Chapter 5 of Kumagai 2008.

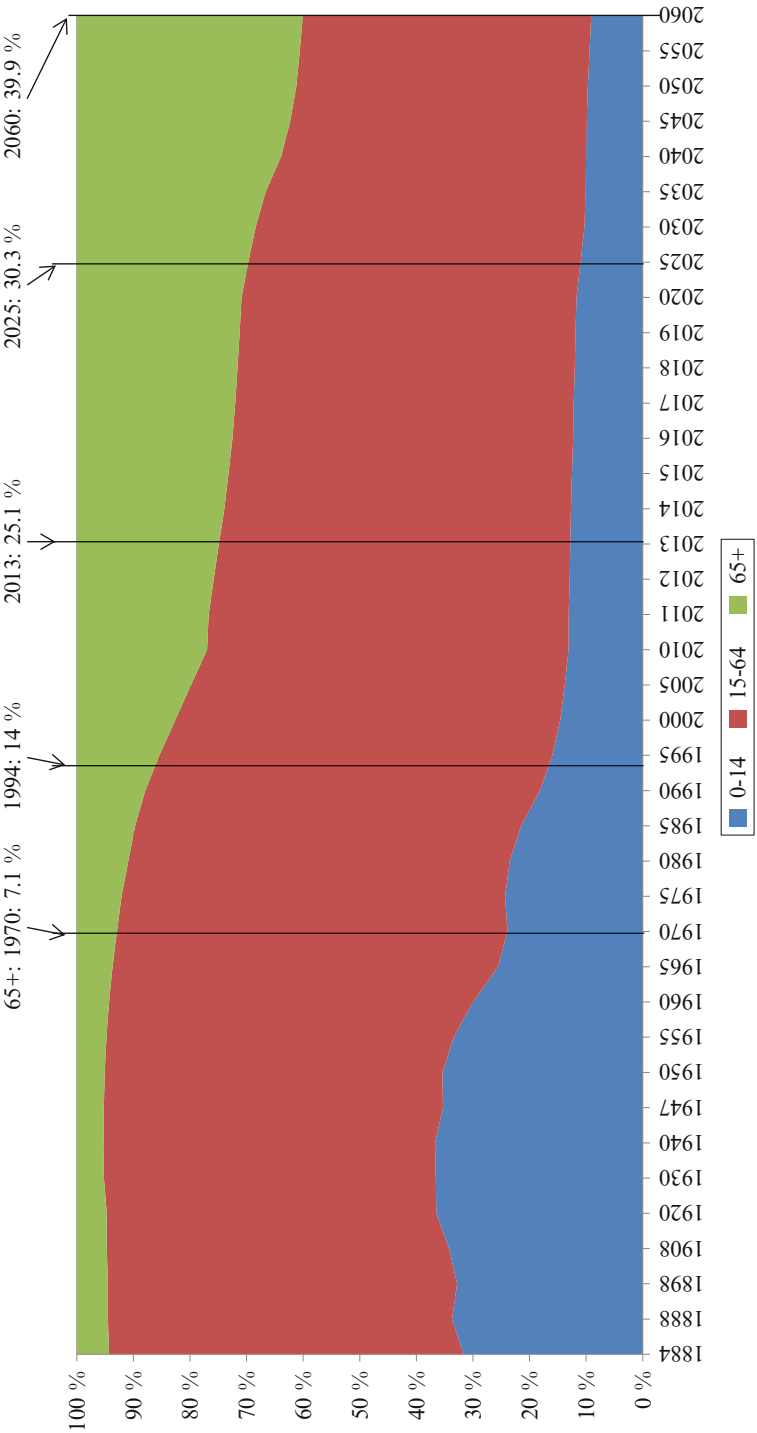

Fig. 2.5 Changes in percent distribution of the Japanese population by three age groups: 1884–2060 (*Source:* IPSSR 2014a, Tables 2.6 and 2.8, for data 2013, Statistics Bureau, MIAC 2014a. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

2012, and the United States 13.0 % in 2010) (IPSSR 2014a, Table 2.15, MIAC 2014a, 2). The predictions for aging rates by the National Institute of Population and Social Security are three out of every ten (30.3 %) for 2025 and as many as four out of every ten (39.9 %) for 2060 (IPSSR 2014a, Table 2.14) (see Fig. 2.5).

Furthermore, the elderly population in Japan today indicates the emergence of a frightening situation in the coming years. That is, when we look at the elderly population by two age groups, 65–74 years of age and 75 years plus, the older group appears to be growing faster. Of the total 5.1 % of the Japanese elderly population 65 and over in 2013, the under-75 group was 12.2 %, and the over-75 group was slightly less, 11.9 %. However, this will change in the future: with the over-75 group becoming proportionately larger. In fact, it is projected that of the elderly 65 and over, as many as two-thirds will be over 75 by the year 2060 (12.3 % vs. 18.1 % in 2025, 14.2 % vs. 24.6 % in 2050, and 13.0 % vs. 26.9 % in 2060) (IPSSR 2014a, Table 2.9) (see Fig. 2.6).

It is a natural course of our life that aging brings about health problems, physical and mental. In light of the population imbalance of fertility decline and population aging in Japan, the care of frail and bed-ridden elderly is one of the serious problems that Japan faces today. Why has this problem emerged?

2.5.2 Declining Birth Rates and Total Fertility Rates (TFR)

Further analysis needs to be conducted in the area of children's population—those who are less than 15 years of age.

Prior to the emergence of the aging society, Japanese children numbered just one-third of the total population. Today, however, the attrition rate in this proportion is so acute that it is as small as one in seven (13.1 % in 2013) (IPSSR 2014a, Table 2.6). It is predicted that the rate in Japan will decline to 11.7 % in 2020 and to 9.1 % in 2060 (IPSSR 2014a, Tables 2.6 and 2.8) (see Fig. 2.5 discussed earlier.)

Furthermore, very low level of the total fertility rate in Japan today (TFR: 1.43 in 2013) makes the demographic situation quite imbalanced, as has been discussed elsewhere (Kumagai 2008, 2011) (see Fig. 2.7).[4] Therefore, these trends have led to a much larger ratio of elderly to young people in Japanese society.

In addition to the overall changing trend of live births and the total fertility rate, TFRs by age group (Fig. 2.8) and TFRs by prefecture in 2013 (Fig. 2.9) are presented. By glancing at these figures, we can tell immediately that not only do Japanese women today delay their childbearing and child-rearing, but also there exist significant regional variations in the total fertility rate in Japan today. That is, the southeastern part of Japan tends to show higher total fertility rates rather than her northeastern counterpart.

[4] For more detailed discussion on "Changing Pattern of Fertility Rates in Japan: National Trends and Community Level Analyses," refer to Chapter 4 of Kumagai (2008).

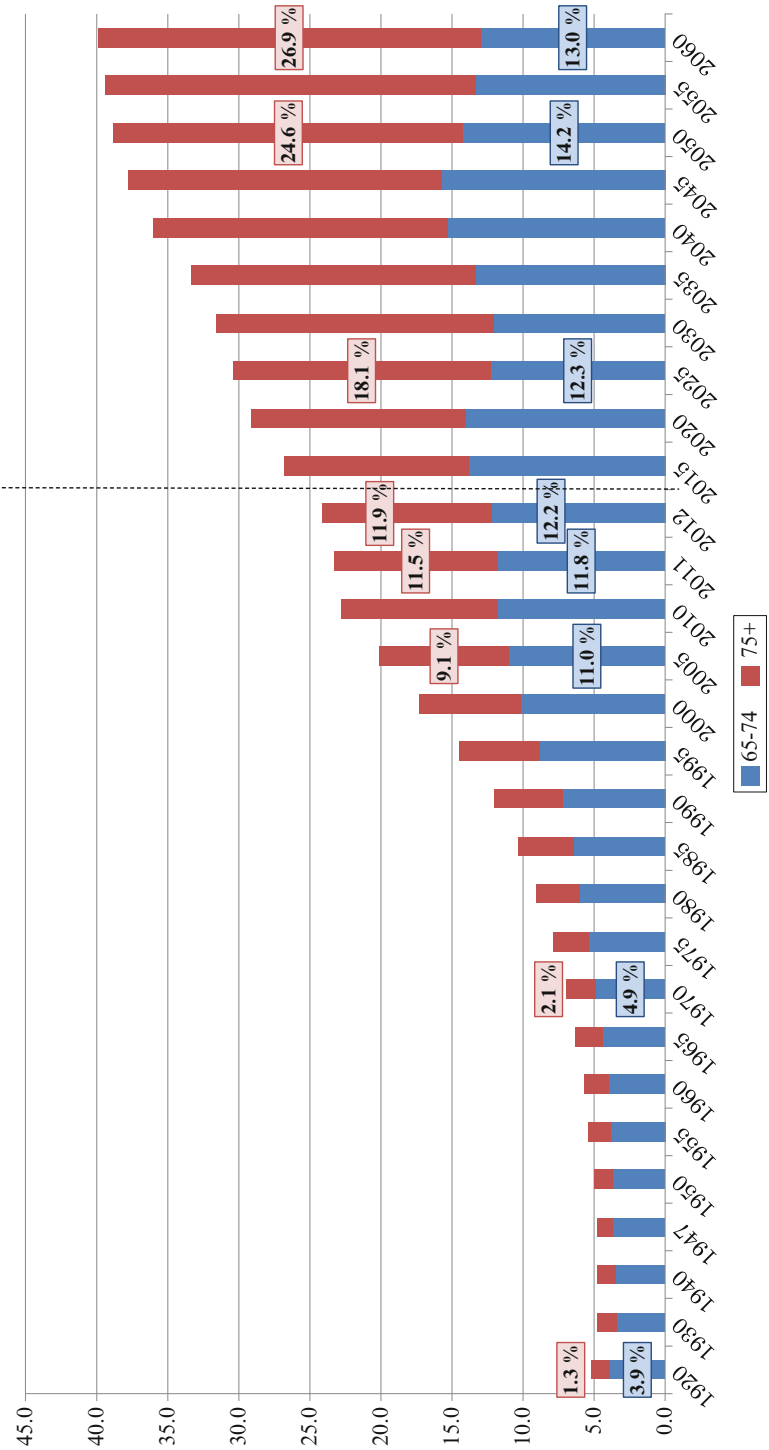

Fig. 2.6 Changes in the proportions of the Japanese elderly by age group: 1920–2060 (*Source*: IPSSR 2014a, Table 2.9. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

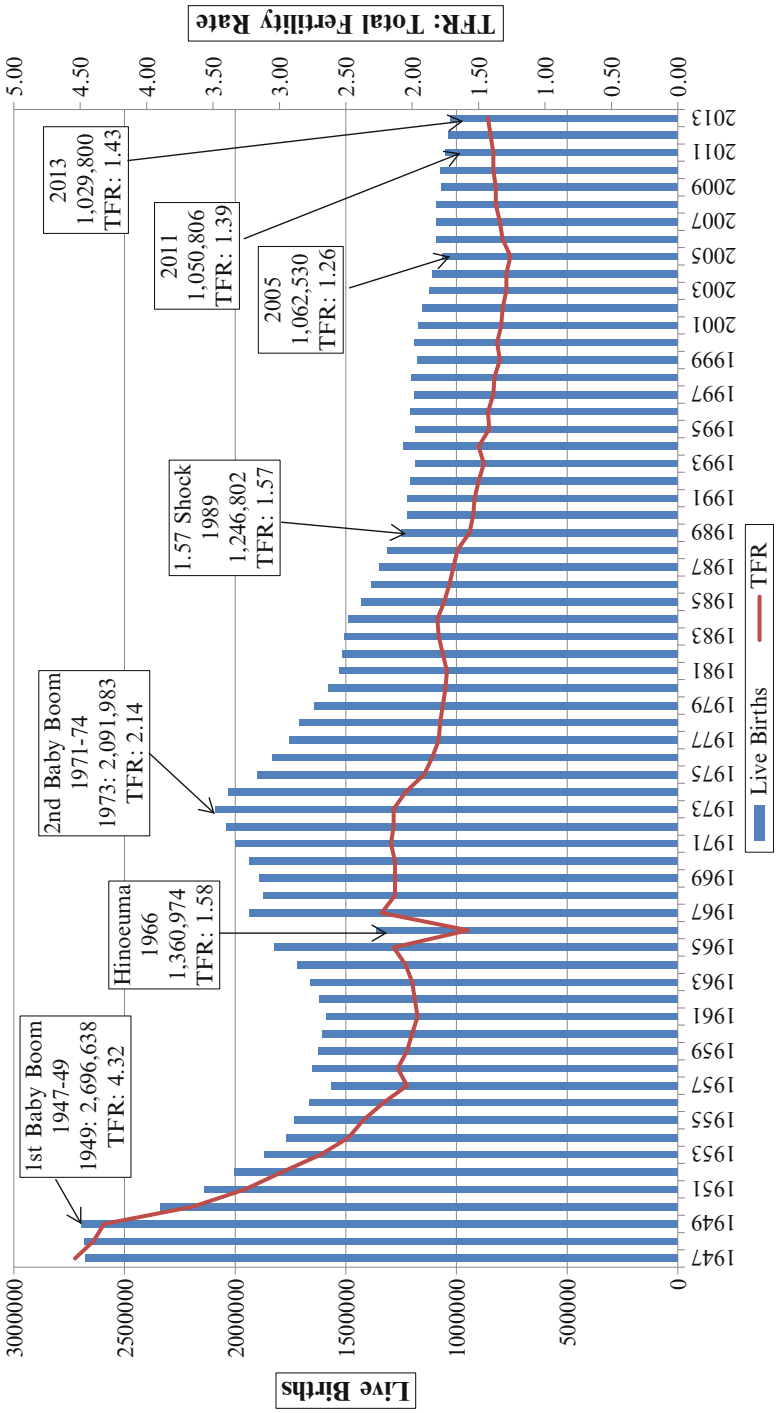

Fig. 2.7 Changes in live births and the total fertility rate: 1947–2013 (*Source*: IPSSR 2014a, Table 4.7, Statistics Bureau, MHLW 2014a, Table 2, and MHLW 2014b, Tables 1 and 2. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

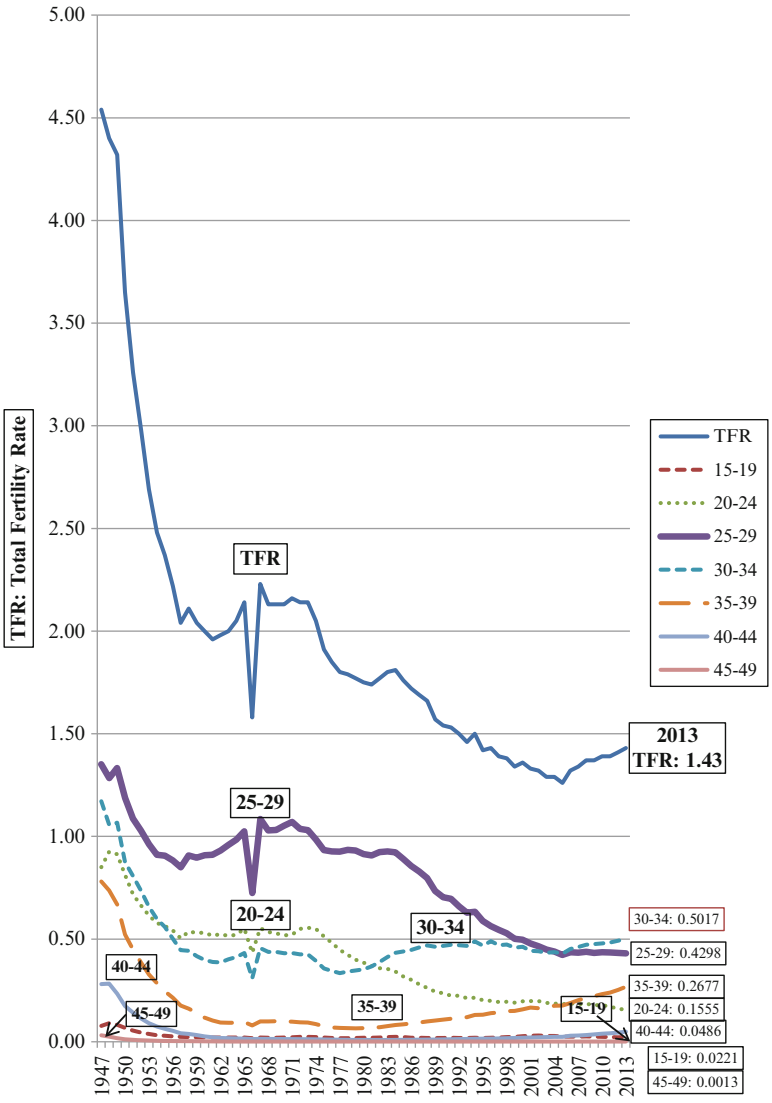

Fig. 2.8 Changes in total fertility rates (TFR) by age group: 1947–2013 (*Source*: MHLW 2014b: 7, Table 2. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

2.5.3 The Baby Boomer Generations

The impact of two Japanese baby boomer populations (8.1 million born between 1947 and 1949 and 8.2 million born between 1971 and 1974) has also contributed to the rapid rate of aging in Japan. By the time all the people in the first baby boomer generation are launched into old age, the proportion of Japanese elderly will exceed

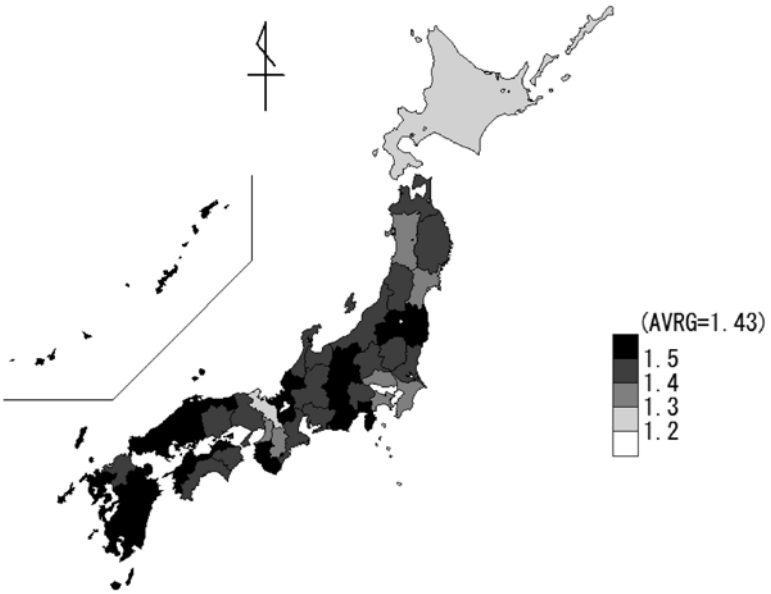

Fig. 2.9 Total fertility rates (TFR) by prefecture in 2013. TFRs in 2013: All Japan: 1.43; Lowest: Tokyo: 1.13; Highest: Okinawa: 1.94 (*Source*: MHLW 2014b: 7, Table 5. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

one in every five people. In fact, the acceleration of aging is so pressing that the Japanese elderly population surpassed 20 percent in September 2005 (20.2 %) and is now slightly more than a quarter of the total population: in 2013, it was 25.1 % (IPSSR 2014a, Table 2.6, MIAC 2014a: 2).

2.5.4 The Longevity Revolution: Rising Life Expectancy

Japanese citizens today are living longer than ever before (see Fig. 2.10). The life expectancy at birth of both Japanese men and women is now the highest in the world: 79.94 years for men and 86.41 years for women in 2012 (IPSSR 2014a, Table 5.12, b; MHLW 2014b, Table 6, United Nations 2014, Detailed Indicators). The longevity revolution experienced by most industrialized societies during the twentieth century has been most pronounced in Japan, where the increase in life expectancy has been both more rapid and more extensive than that of any other country. According to recent projections, the level of life expectancy among Japanese men and women is expected to be among the highest in the world throughout the twenty-first century. By 2035 and 2060, the projected life expectancies are 82.40 and 84.19 for the male population and 89.13 and 90.93 for the female population (IPSSR 2014a, Table 5.12).

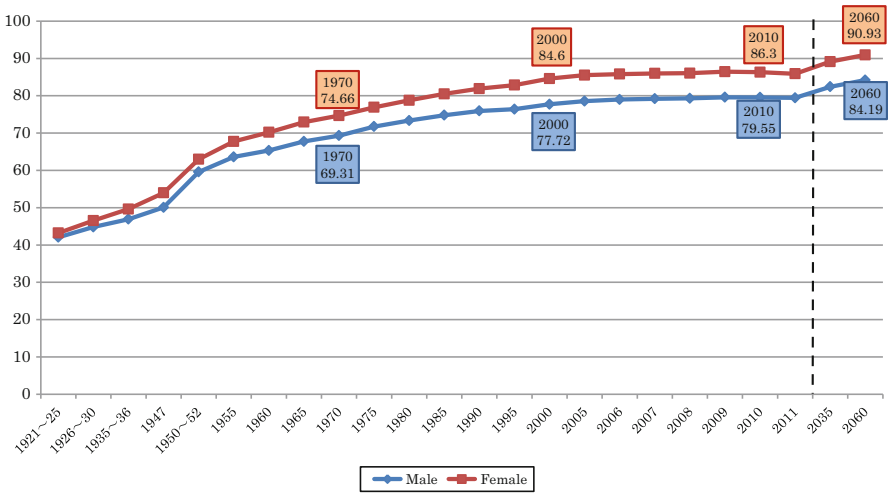

Fig. 2.10 Changes in life expectancy at birth of Japanese male and female: 1921–2060 (*Source*: IPSSR 2014a, Table 5.12. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

Life expectancy at birth for both men and women of other Asian countries, such as Hong Kong, Korea, and Singapore, has been prolonged significantly: Hong Kong, 80.3 and 86.4; Korea, 77.9 and 84.6; and Singapore, 79.7 and 84.6 in 2011, respectively (MHLW 2014b, Table 6, United Nations 2014, Detailed Indicators) (see Fig. 2.11). This fact suggests that aging will be a significant problem in many Asian nations in the twenty-first century, despite a relatively low level of current aging rates there.

2.5.5 Aging of the Elderly Population

The rising life expectancy in Japan has resulted in the aging of the elderly population itself. While the group of elderly 75 years and older constituted only one-quarter of the total elderly population in 1920, this proportion has increased to nearly half of the total elderly population today (49.4 % in 2012) and is projected to rise as high as 59.5 % by 2025 and 67.4 % by 2060 (IPSSR 2014a, Table 2.9) (see Fig. 2.6). As discussed earlier in this chapter, the population of 75 years old and over will exceed more than half of the total elderly population by the year 2020.

The age structure of the elderly population also differs by sex. Historically, the proportion of younger elderly men (65–74) has been greater than that of younger elderly women, and this difference has increased over time. In contrast, the older elderly (75 and over) are overrepresented by women. Although elderly men are living longer than ever before, there are still more elderly women in Japan who are, on the average, older than their elderly male counterparts. Consequently, the problems inherent in the aging process could be felt more severely by Japanese women than men.

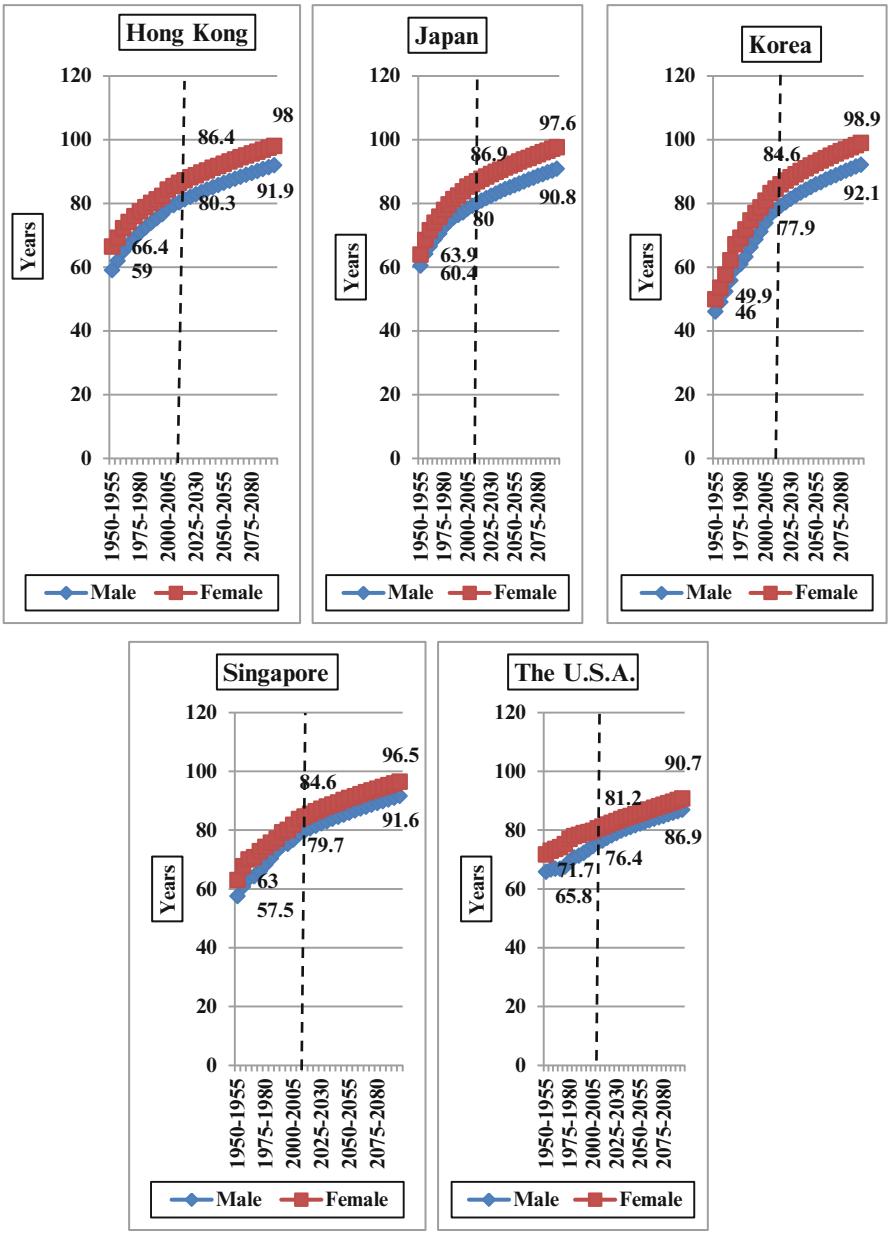

Fig. 2.11 Life expectancy at birth by sex: 1950–2100 in Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Singapore, and the United States (*Source*: United Nations 2014. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

2.5.6 Marital Status of Japanese Elderly

The marital status of Japanese elderly differs significantly by sex and age. The proportion of married elderly men is much higher than that of married elderly women: 90 % of men in their sixties are married, as are 80 % of men in their seventies and more than half of those 85 and over. However, of women in their late seventies, less than 30 % are married. Although widow(er)hood increases substantially with age for both men and women, the majority of Japanese women continue to outlive their husbands for two major reasons: first, in the early twentieth century, the average life expectancy of women was 2–3 years longer than men; and second, most elderly women were about 3 years younger than their husbands at their first marriage. Today, however, the average life expectancy of women is nearly 7 years longer than that for men (2012: 6.47 years) (IPSSR 2014a, Table 5.12) (see Fig. 2.10 discussed earlier). As a consequence, the average Japanese woman must expect to be a widow for approximately 5–10 years.

Marriage rates of Japanese elderly have been increasing over time for both men and women across different age groups. This does not mean, however, that Japanese elderly remain in their first marriages. Elderly men are much more likely to remarry than women, due to the availability of eligible partners. At the same time, the traditional orientation of Japanese culture continues to prevent widows from actively seeking remarriage. Widowhood is considered indicative of a woman's loyalty to her deceased husband and is still regarded as a virtue of Japanese womanhood.

Enjoying life after retirement as a couple is not yet a lifestyle fully appreciated by Japanese people. Most Japanese men who have devoted their lives to working outside the home find it difficult to manage free time after their retirement. And by the time their husbands retire from work, most Japanese women have established independent lifestyles that do not include their husbands. The unaccustomed full-time presence of a husband at home often has a negative impact on family life. Marital stress, difficult to cope with under the best of circumstances, becomes even more so for the elderly, particularly if their health and economic conditions are deteriorating. In some instances, the outcome of this negative impact has been identified as *jukunen rikon* (late-life divorce and separation), perhaps peculiar to Japanese elderly couples today, after being married for as long as 20 years or more. For a detailed discussion of *jukunen rikon*, refer elsewhere by the current author (Kumagai 2006; Kumagai et al. 2010). In addition, you may also like to refer to Chap. 6 of this book entitled on "*Late-Life Divorce in Japan Revisited: Effects of the Old-age Pension Division Scheme*."

2.5.7 Japanese Elderly and Family Relations

Societal aging has important implications not only for the elderly themselves but also for their families. This is especially true in Japan, where the traditional ideals of family life continue to play a critical role in Japanese society. Adult children and their families, especially the sons' families, are expected to extend support to their elderly parents by providing them a place to live.

2.6 Living Arrangements of the Elderly

2.6.1 With Family

With all these demographic changes, it seemed likely that living patterns of Japanese elderly would change dramatically. By 2010, elderly (65 and older) lived in nearly 40 % of the nation's 51,842,000 households. (IPSSR 2014a, Tables 7.1, 7.15). When Japan entered "the aging society" in 1970, one-fifth of all households included elderly member. Of all households which included the elderly, the number of households composed only of the elderly, living alone or as a couple, has more than doubled over the past 25 years. The traditional living arrangement of generational families, where elders reside with the family of one of their married children, has declined dramatically over the years. In 1975, more than half of the elderly in Japan were in generational households (54.4 %). The rate, however, had dropped to 15.3 % of the total households with the elderly by 2012 (see Fig. 2.12).

The traditional Japanese living arrangements in which the elderly live with their married children's families are becoming increasingly rare. Sometimes, one married couple cares for four elder parents, placing great stress upon the family. Moreover, most of the burden rests upon the shoulders of the caretaker, usually the married woman, denying her some independence. Marital stress, difficult under the best of circumstances, becomes even more so in generational homes, particularly if the health and economic conditions of the elderly are deteriorating.

The coresidency rate for the elderly, that is, the proportion of the elderly 65 and over who reside with their married and/or unmarried children, and/or relatives, used to be quite high in Japan, compared to Western societies. In fact, until the 1960s, the rate was more than 80 %. Today, however, only (42.3 %) of Japanese elderly adopt such living arrangements (IPSSR 2014a, Table 7.16). Although still quite high, the percentage is significantly lower than 50 years ago, when 86.8 % of Japan's elders lived with their families. This is also reflected in the increasing number of elders living alone and those as couples (see Fig. 2.13).

One-person households in Japan have more than quadrupled over the past five decades, from 3.8 % in 1960 to 16.1 % in 2012. The rate of increase of elderly couples living alone (7.0 % in 1960 to 37.5 % in 2012) has been even greater than one-person elderly households.

Living arrangements for Japanese elders vary according to marital status, sex, age, and the community in which one resides. Several trends may be identified (MHLW 2014a):

- The rate of coresidency increases as the elderly age, ranging from 42.7 % for those between 65 and 69 years of age to 63 % for those 85 years and older.
- Elders living in urban areas are less likely to live with their children's families and more likely to live with a spouse or alone.
- The coresidency rate of elder women has always been higher than that of men, and the gap becomes more apparent as elder women grow older. This is because women tend to live longer than men and have spouses who are older than they are.

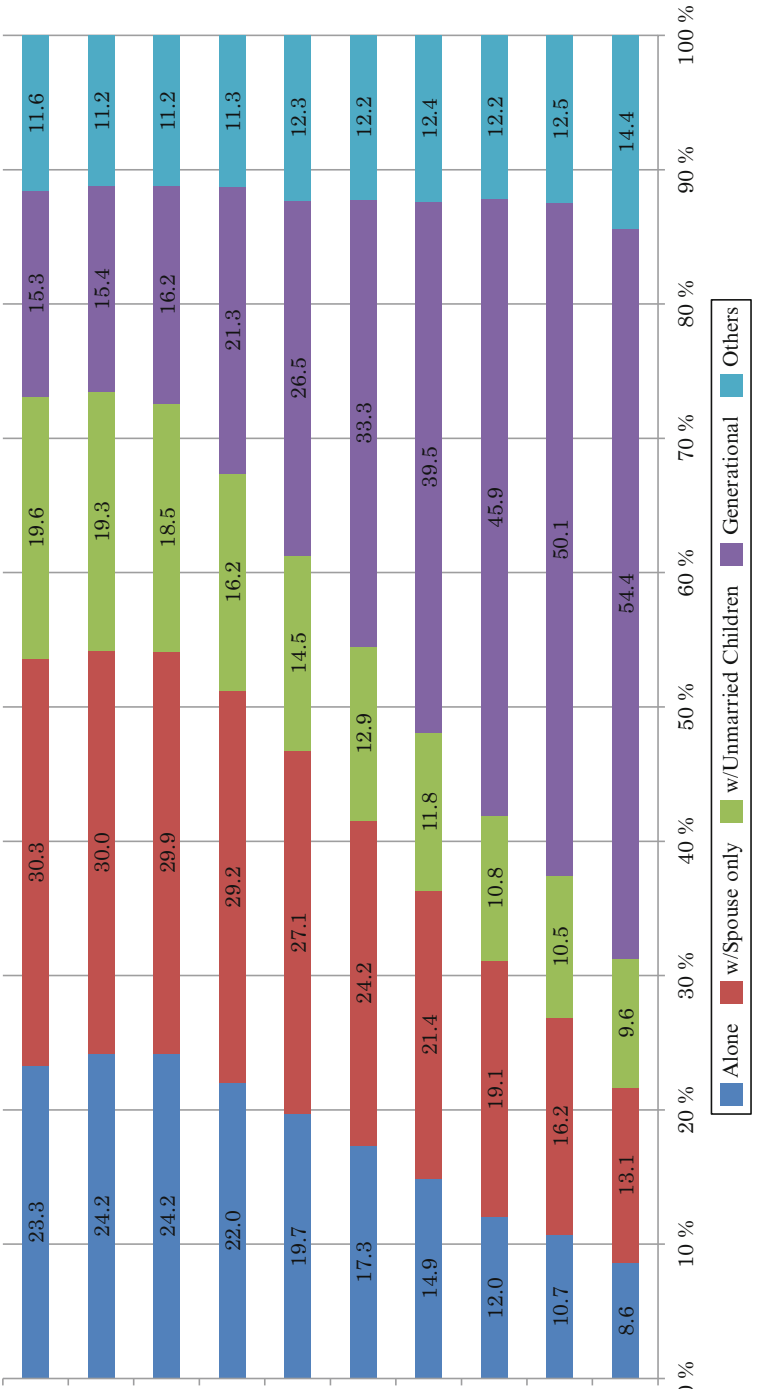

Fig. 2.12 Changing proportions of household types with elderly 65 and over: 1975–2012 (*Source*: IPSSR 2014a, Table 7.15. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

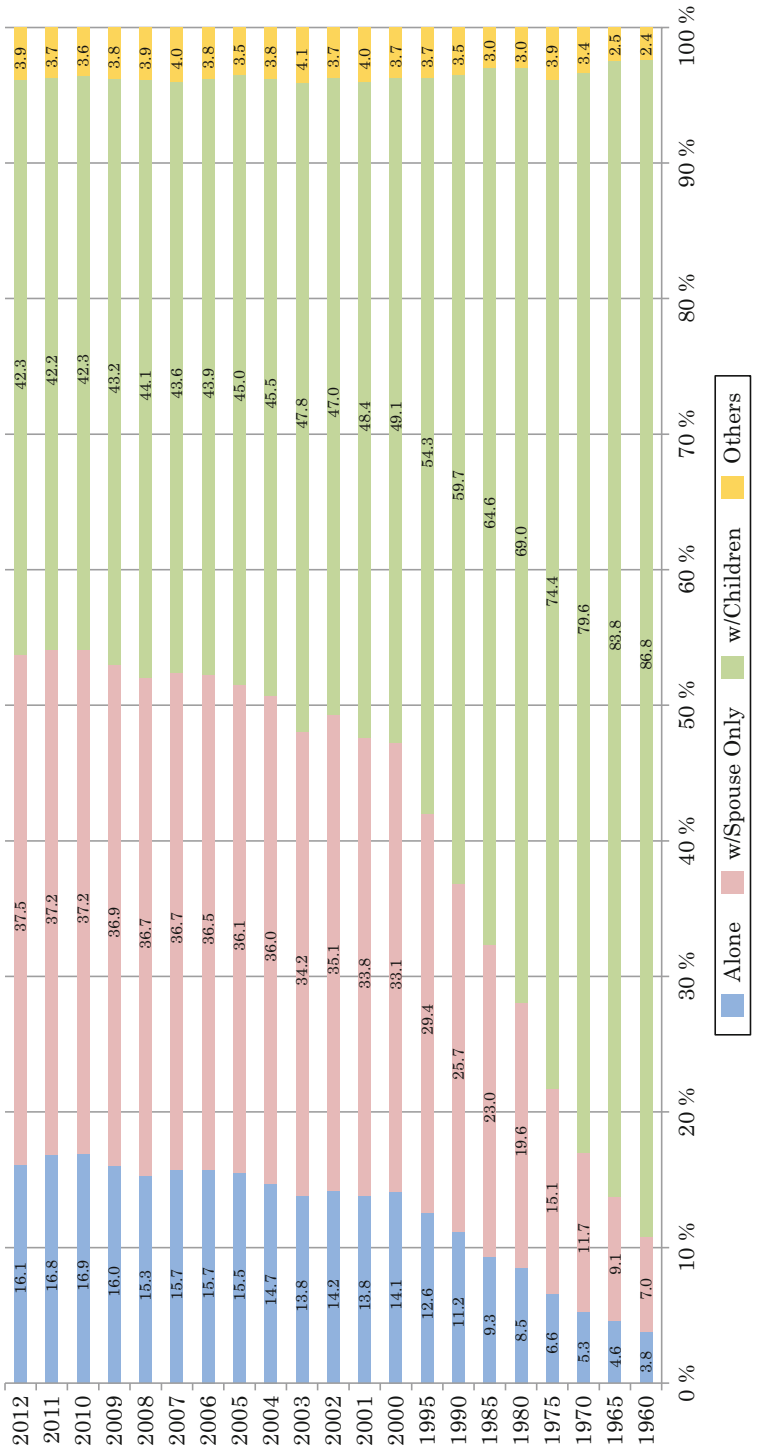

Fig. 2.13 Changes in the proportions of the elderly 65 and over by living arrangements: 1960–2012 (*Source*: For data 1980–2011, IPSSR 2014a, Table 7.16; for data 1960–1975, Statistical Bureau, MIAC 2014a. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

- Women are less likely than men to live with their spouse only and more likely to live with children or alone.

Living in traditional intergenerational families might be conflict laden, particularly between married women and mothers-in-law. In the idealized traditional extended family model, the elderly—both natural parents and in-laws—are willing to share responsibilities of childcare and household chores. But it is not reality. A study by the author of this book showed the opposite is true, at least for cross-sectional data at one point in time (Kumagai 1997a, b; Kumagai and Kato 2007). Kumagai analyzed reasons why a married woman would seek employment. Using logistic multiple regression analysis of a national representative sample, key factors were revealed. Japanese married women who live with their mothers-in-law eagerly seek employment outside the home if:

- The youngest child is 0–10 years old.
- The husband's annual income is low.
- The husband is non-salaried.
- They reside in a small community.
- They possess liberal attitudes toward traditional marital roles.

Working outside the home, perhaps, is an effective strategy for married women in traditional intergenerational families to reduce conflict with her mother-in-law.

2.6.2 Problems Associated with Coresidency Living Arrangements

Often, in Western eyes, the intergenerational families of Japan are looked on with envy—the symbol of a closely knit family working together. But it is not clear whether this is due to traditional sociocultural aspects of the Japanese family system or simply inadequate social support policies for the elderly. The author of this book elaborated three possible reasons for the relatively high rate of coresidency in Japanese society (Kumagai 1996, 149–51): (1) the tradition of family support for the elderly, (2) preferred living arrangements of the Japanese people, and (3) the lack of other alternatives.

During the prewar period when life expectancy was much shorter, successive generations of families lived together for much briefer periods of time, and generational conflicts were minimized. Today the stress of prolonged multigenerational living arrangements has resulted in intense conflicts, which reveal the ongoing struggle between traditional attitudes and modern lifestyles in Japan, particularly since adjustment to new lifestyles is more difficult for the older generation. In addition, the strong intergenerational ties that existed between mother and son in times past can be a continuing source of friction for young wives, who must cope with their mothers-in-law on a daily live-in basis.

Although there is no ideal solution for the intergenerational problems that can accompany living together, Japanese elders in the twenty-first century might look to

the United States to find another pattern of independent lifestyles. Being independent does not necessarily mean a complete absence of contact with family members and relatives. Rather, both the elderly and their children's families could maintain their privacy while still sharing close contact in everyday life. Dramatic increases in the elderly one- and two-person households in Japan today might be considered as the elderly learning to lead independent lifestyles.

In the United States, many younger Americans are willing to extend support to their elder parents and to maintain close contact with them. In fact, empirical studies prove the existence of strong and cohesive intergenerational relationships among American families despite their low rates of coresidency (Brubaker and Brubaker 1999; Swartz 2009). Swartz (2009: 191) suggests that "Intergenerational relations constitute an important and largely hidden aspect of how families contribute to the reproduction of social inequality in society. These findings reinforce the value of extending both scholarly and cultural notions of family beyond the traditional nuclear family model."

2.7 Regional Variations of the Japanese Elderly

Let us now elaborate on the marked diversity of Japanese families and aging in different regions. Although Japan is a small island country, its wide regional variations in sociocultural and demographic characteristics are unusual. The proportion of elderly population in many farming regions in northern and western Japan is already more than one in four (Kumagai 1996, 134–35). According to population estimates based on the Japanese National Census in 2010 conducted by the Statistics Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, the proportion of elderly in Japan varies significantly by region (IPSSR 2014a, Tables, 12.14, 12.19). As discussed earlier, the national average elderly population in Japan today is 23.3 %. However, among Japan's 47 prefectures, higher proportions of elderly are found in some of the southwestern areas of Japan, such as Shimane (29.1 %) and Kochi (28.8 %), and in some northeastern areas, such as Akita (29.6 %) and Yamagata (27.6 %). Prefectures with relatively low proportions of elderly are Okinawa (17.4 %), Kanagawa (20.2 %), Aichi (20.3), satellite prefectures of the Tokyo metropolis (20.4 %), Saitama (20.4 %), and Chiba (21.5 %) (see Fig. 2.14). Thus, we note that in looking at the distribution of the elderly population by prefecture, we must pay close attention to regional differences rather than looking at Japan as a whole.

By the year 2025, the national average elderly population is projected to be 30.5 % of the whole. Population projections, however, reveal that the process of aging in Japanese society will accelerate evenly across both lower populated rural areas and densely populated urban regions (IPSSR 2014a, Table 12.19, b) (see Fig. 2.15).

This regional variation of the aged population in Japan is also true for elderly households where the head of household is 65 and over. Of the total Japanese house-

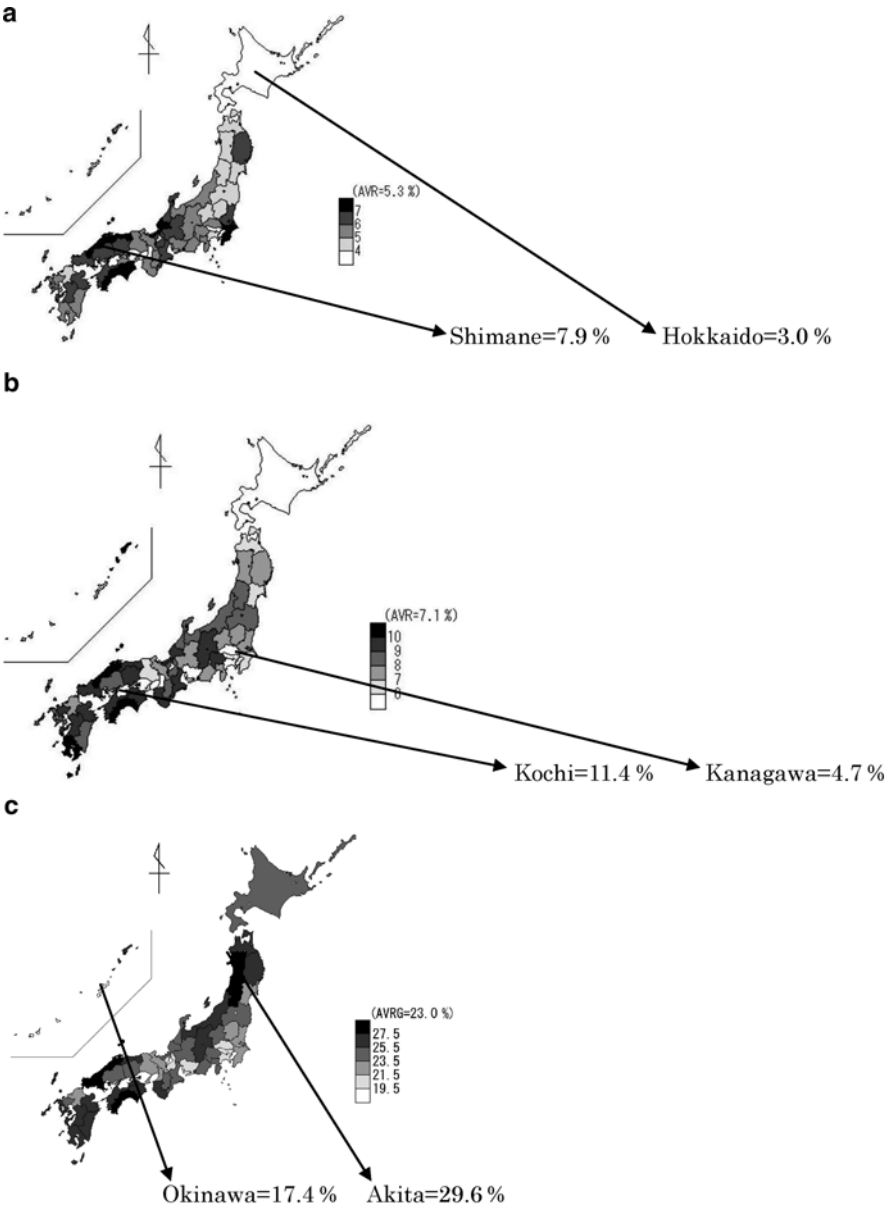

Fig. 2.14 Changes in the proportion of the Japanese elderly population: 1920–1970–2010. (**a**) 1920: (Average = 5.3 %; Hokkaido = 3.0 %-Shimane = 7.9 %). (**b**) 1970: (Average = 7.1; Kanagawa = 4.7 %-Kochi = 11.4 %). (**c**) 2010: (Average = 23.0 %; Okinawa = 17.4 %-Akita = 29.6 %) (*Source*: IPSSR 2014a, Table 12.14. The figures were compiled and constructed by the author)

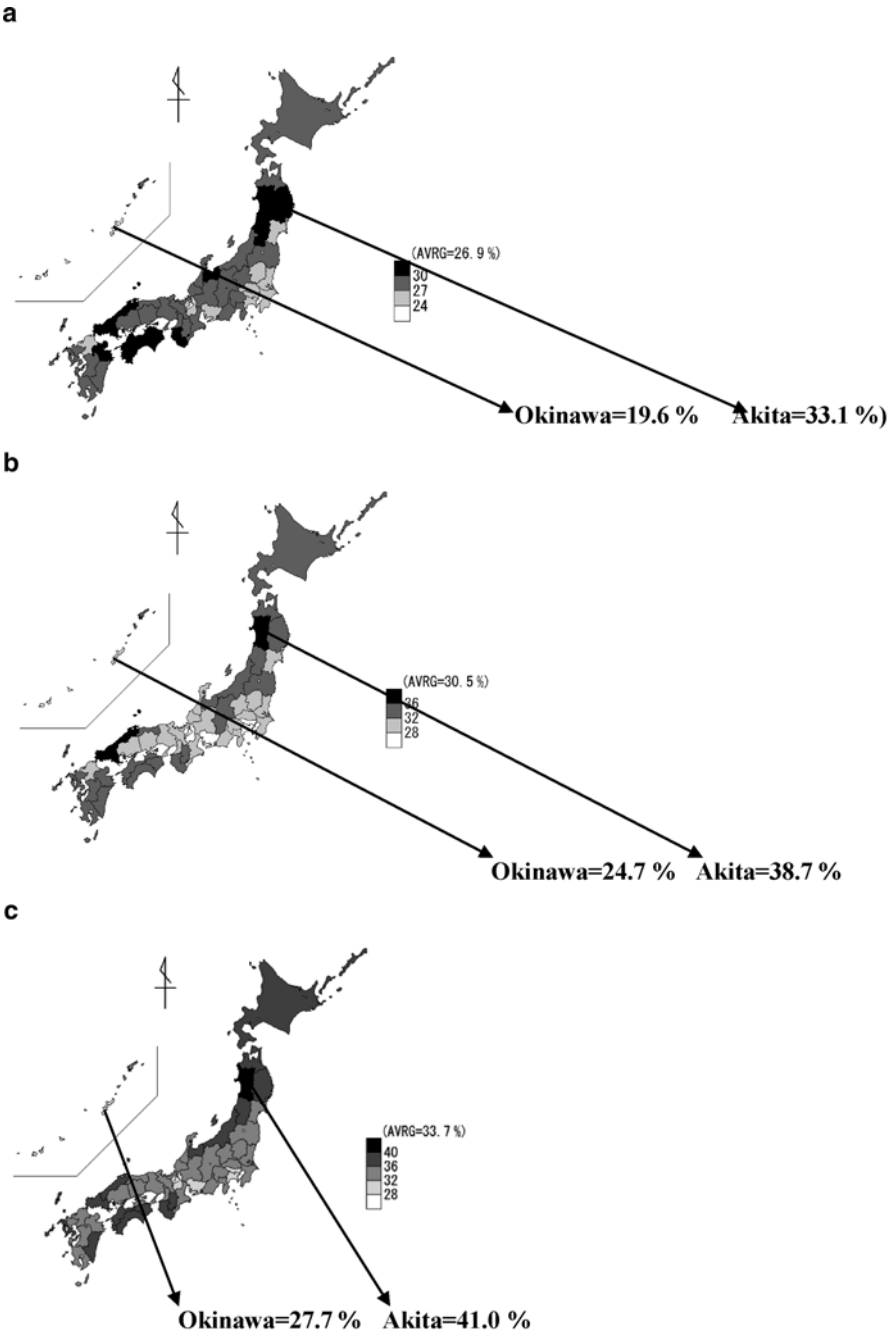

Fig. 2.15 Changes in the projected proportions of the Japanese elderly population: 2015–2025–2035. (**a**) 2015: (Average = 26.9 %; Okinawa = 19.6 %- Akita = 33.1 %). (**b**) 2025: (Average = 30.5 %; Okinawa = 24.7 %-Akita = 38.7 %). (**c**) 2035: (Average = 33.7 %; Okinawa = 27.7 %-Akita = 41.0 %) (*Source*: IPSSR 2014a, Table 12.19. The figures were compiled and constructed by the author)

holds in 2010 (51,842,000), such elderly households were more than one in every ten (15,987,000; 30.8 %) (IPSSR 2014a, Table 7.27). However, of the 47 prefectures in Japan, in one-third of mostly rural farming regions, the elderly proportion exceeded 30 % by 1995. The national average rate for elderly households has now reached more than three in every ten (30.8 %) in 2010 and is projected to be more than one-third of all households (35.2 %) by 2020. Moreover, in 2020 the elderly household rate for all 47 prefectures may be more than 30 % and in some areas may be more than 40 %.

The regional variation of the proportion of Japanese elderly suggests that the Japanese aging society must be studied carefully, with close attention to the region and the community (Kumagai 1997b, c). Policies for elderly welfare need to be proposed in the same manner, not simply by looking at the national average statistics.

Conclusion

In an attempt to prove the hypotheses on changes, continuities, and regional variations of Japanese families as a whole and by prefecture, data concerning households were examined. Findings suggest that the institution of the Japanese family currently differs widely from one region to another. At the same time, the study highlighted continuities sustaining the traditional nature of the Japanese family and household, by analyzing the traditional coresidency households in the northern part of the farming region. Similarly, the finding identified a long-existing unique family household type in the southern part of Kyushu, in which one- or two-person households are the predominant types among the elderly. These findings suggest that community and family policies are culturally bound, and therefore, it is essential for each Japanese community to develop family policies best suited to its own needs.

Most Japanese elderly today are healthy, active, and independent (90 % of those 65 and over) (PHP 2013: 17). If that is the case, seniors living by themselves have all the means to lead useful and active lives and to enjoy various lifestyles of their own. To fill these needs for the changing lifestyles of the active elderly, various business sectors in Japan have been offering programs and information about health care, food, adult education, travel, art, music, dance, sports, ICT, and many others.

As for the security of the elderly living alone, various devices such as the SECOM system and Mimamori.net have been well developed to watch their daily activities (Kumagai 2011). In case of an emergency, the network system that connects to the central headquarters will immediately contact a person to be informed. Nursing robots for the elderly helps them perform daily tasks in place of the growing shortage of caregivers. Robot dolls have been also

(continued)

developed to assist communication with lone elders by providing personal conversations and responses.

The onset of Japan's aging society in 1970 came relatively late among Western industrialized nations. Afterward, however, population aging in Japan has been progressing with unprecedented speed. Acute attrition in the children's population aged 0–14 in recent years in Asian countries such as Hong Kong, Korea, and Singapore bring about serious concern for the aging society there in the years to come, perhaps more critical than in their Japanese counterpart (see Figs. 2.16a, b). In other words, the increase today in elderly one- and two-person households in Japan could be a lesson for these Asian societies that will also face the situation in the near future.

This is not to suggest, however, that the Japanese disregard the family policies of Western nations that are successful in developing countermeasures for the elderly apart households. It goes without saying that policies of such countries should be studied carefully. In developing family policies in Japan, it is important to consider the historical and cultural background specific to each region. For this very reason, it is believed that this chapter has significant policy implications not only for the future of the Japanese aging population and family but also for those in Asia.

Through the historical and longitudinal analyses of demographic characteristics in Japan, we now realize that Japanese society today is truly going through a process of fertility decline and population aging. Thus, in the next chapter, we will turn to a basic issue in the study of the family, i.e., courtship and marriage.

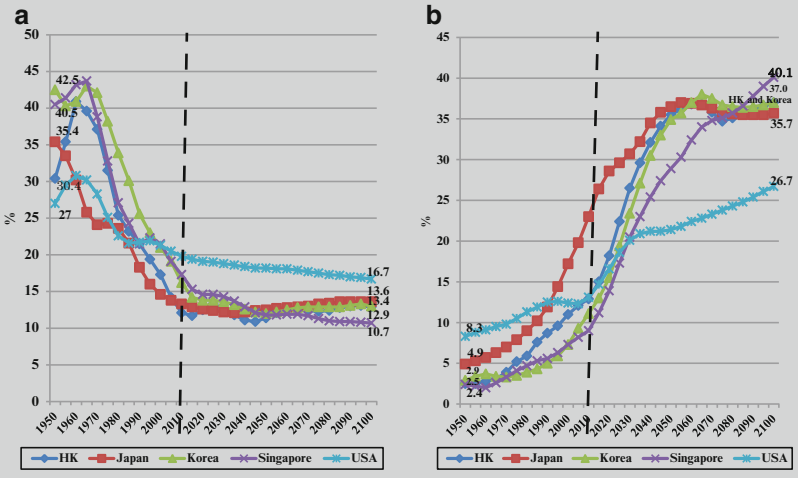

Fig. 2.16 Proportions of population (**a**) aged 0–14 and (**b**) 65 and over: 1950–2100 in Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Singapore, and the United States (*Source*: United Nations 2014. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

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Chapter 3
History of Courtship and Marriage in Japan

Fertility decline is one of the most pressing issues among industrial nations today. In the case of Japan, one of the major causes is that young men and women are not inclined to marry or cannot meet potential marriage partners. As a consequence, the rate for men and women who never marry has been rising steeply (male, 20.14 %; female, 10.61 % in 2010) (IPSSR 2014, Table 6.24) (see Table 3.1). Having witnessed this situation, now is the time for us to review the history of courtship and marriage in Japan to understand how Japanese people got married and had children in the past. This will hopefully give young Japanese some guidelines, encouraging them in courtship and marriage.

We take it for granted that we are here, but we seldom question how we got here. This is the starting point of this chapter on the history of courtship and marriage in Japan. Owing to the well-developed media technology, the topic of courtship and marriage in modern and recent Japan may be understood widely by people outside Japan. Its ancient situation, however, does not necessarily receive the same understanding. Thus, let us study the following four issues on the history of courtship and marriage in Japan: first, the historical perspective; second, attitudes toward marriage and mate selection; third, the current situation; and fourth, *kon-katsu.*

3.1 Historical Perspective

Marriage patterns in Japan in ancient times, through the Kamakura Shogunate, can be identified only through ancient records and classic literature. These include the *Kojiki* (Record of Ancient Matters) and *Nihon Shoki* (The Chronicles of Japan) in the early eighth century. Examples of classic literature are Japan's oldest anthology of poems, *Manyoshu* (Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves), between

F. Kumagai, *Family Issues on Marriage, Divorce, and Older Adults in Japan*,
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Table 3.1 Changes in the rate for never-married Japanese people by sex and age group: 1920–2010

	1920	1920	1930	1930	1950	1950	1960	1960	1970	1970	1980	1980	1990	1990	2000	2000	2010	2010
Age	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
20~24	70.9	31.4	79.6	37.7	82.9	55.3	91.6	68.3	90.1	71.7	91.8	77.8	93.6	86.0	92.9	88.0	94.0	89.6
25~29	25.7	9.2	28.7	8.5	34.5	15.2	46.1	21.6	46.5	18.1	55.2	24.0	65.1	40.4	69.4	54.0	71.8	60.3
30~34	8.2	4.1	8.1	3.7	8.0	5.7	9.9	9.4	11.7	7.2	21.5	9.1	32.8	13.9	42.9	26.6	47.3	34.5
35~39	4.1	2.7	3.9	2.4	3.2	3.0	3.6	5.5	4.7	5.8	8.5	5.5	19.1	7.5	26.2	13.9	35.6	23.1
40~44	2.8	2.1	2.4	1.8	1.9	2.0	2.0	3.2	2.8	5.3	4.7	4.4	11.8	5.8	18.7	8.6	28.6	17.4
45~49	2.3	1.9	1.8	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.4	2.1	1.9	4.0	3.1	4.5	6.8	4.6	14.8	6.3	22.5	12.6
50~54	2.0	1.7	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.2	1.1	1.7	1.5	2.7	2.1	4.4	4.4	4.1	10.3	5.3	17.8	8.7
55~59	1.8	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.0	1.3	1.2	2.0	1.6	3.5	3.0	4.2	6.1	4.3	14.7	6.5
60~64	1.7	1.4	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.2	0.9	1.1	1.0	1.6	1.2	2.4	2.0	4.2	3.9	3.9	10.3	5.5
65~69	1.5	1.4	1.0	1.0	1.3	1.3	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.3	0.9	1.7	1.4	3.4	2.6	4.0	6.1	4.5
70~74	1.5	1.4	0.9	0.9	1.4	1.3	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.1	0.8	1.3	1.0	2.3	1.7	4.0	3.8	4.0
75~79	1.4	1.4	0.9	0.8	2.0	1.5	1.0	1.1	0.9	1.1	0.7	1.0	0.8	1.7	1.2	3.3	2.4	4.0
80~84	1.2	1.3	0.7	0.7	2.0	1.2	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.0	0.7	0.9	0.7	1.3	0.9	2.3	1.6	4.1
85+	1.5	1.4	0.7	0.7	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.9	1.2	1.0	0.7	0.7	0.7	1.0	0.8	1.6	1.0	2.9

Source: IPSSR (2014), Table 6.24. The table is rearranged and compiled by the author

the end of the seventh and the end of the eighth centuries in the Nar period; *Kokin Wakashu* (Collection of Japanese Poems of Ancient and Modern Times), completed sometime around 920 in the Heian period; *Hyakunin Isshu* (a classical Japanese anthology of one hundred Japanese *waka* by one hundred poets between the reign of Emperor Tenchi in the Asuka period and the Juntoku-in in the Kamakura period and compiled by Fujiwara no Teika sometime in the early thirteenth century); *Genji Monogatari* (The Tale of Genji), written by Murasaki Shikibu in the early years of the eleventh century, around the peak of the Heian period; and *Makura no Soshi* (The Pillow Book) by Sei Shonagon, during the 990s and early eleventh century in the Heian period (Nojima 2006; Takamure 1963).

Takamure (1963) divides the history of Japanese courtship and marriage into eight periods as shown in Table 3.2. Let us discuss each of these eight different marital patterns briefly.

3.1.1 Primitive Times of Jyomon and Yayoi: BC 12,000–AD 240

The marriage pattern in Japan began with the group/horde marriage in the primitive times of the Jyomon and Yayoi periods (see Table 3.2). During these times, each group lived independently by hunting and gathering. People dined together, and a woman had sexual intercourse with men within the group (*nai-kon*). Later in the period, settlements formed around farms, and sexual interaction expanded outside one's group. Then, sexual intercourse was conducted between a woman and a man of different groups (*gai-kon*), and the children lived with the mother's group. As a consequence, a maternal clan lineage started to be established (Takamure 1963, 12–34).

Table 3.2 History of marriage pattern in Japan

Era	Primitive	Yamaato	Asuka-Nara-Early Heian	Mid-Heian	End-Heian	Kamakura-Nanboku	Muromachi-Azuchi Momoyama-Edo	Meiji-Taisho-Showa-Heisei
Year	BC12,000-AD240	End 3rdC-587	593-794-1000	1018-	1086-1192	1192-1336	1336-1568-1603-1867	1868-1912-1926-1989-
	Jyomon-Yayoi	Tumulus						
Pattern	Group/Horde-*kon*	*Tsumadoi-kon*	Early *Mukotori-kon* (*muko*-in)	Formal *Mukotori-kon*	Wedding Hall *Mukotori-kon*	Quasi *Mokotori-kon*	*Yometori-kon* (*yome*-in)	*Yoriai-kon*
Family lineage	Maternal Clan	Matrilineal	Matrilineal	Matrilineal	Matrilineal	Matrilineal	Patrilineal and "*ie*"	Both sides of the groom and the bride
Wedding head	Group God	Clan Head of the bride	Mother of the bride	Father of the bride	Father of the bride	Father of the bride	Household head of the groom	Mutual concent of the individuals

Source: Takamure 1963. The table is compiled and constructed by the author

3.1.2 Yamato (Tumulus) Era: From the Third to the Sixth Century

When farming became the common means of subsistence, the courtship and marriage pattern changed to *tsumadoi-kon* (the husband commuted to the residence of the wife) in the Yamato (Tumulus) era (see Table 3.2). *Tsumadoi-kon* is a type of marriage based on meetings (*taiguu-kon*) rather than living together. *Taiguu-kon* is a marriage enabling a woman and a man to be free from the group marriage of primitive times. It was a natural pairing, but not a formal pairing under the law. Thus, it was possible for one woman to have a marital relationship with several men simultaneously, and vice versa (Takamure 1963, 35–43).

In the *tsumadoi-kon* marriage, the man commuted to his wife's residence, and the courtship of the groom was called *yobai* (to call, or calling behavior). Thus, in *tsumadoi-kon*, once the bride accepted the groom who visited her for a *yobai* courtship, it was understood as a marriage and sexual intercourse was acceptable. In the *tsumadoi-kon*, the bonding between the bride and the groom was weak, so that divorce occurred easily. Divorce was as simple as the man ceasing his marital visits or the bride refusing to welcome the groom into her home. When the bride and the groom terminated the relationship, any children belonged to the bride and her family—the matrilineal marriage pattern (Takamure 1963, 43–60).

3.1.3 Asuka–Early Heian: 593–1000

During the Aristocracy (Asuka, Nara, and Heian times) and the Kamakura and Nanboku Shogunate periods, *muko-in*, i.e., the groom living with the bride's family (see Table 3.1), was the pattern of the marriage. However, the *muko-in* pattern of marriage should be divided into four different stages. The courtship pattern practiced during the Asuka to Nara to early Heian eras, regardless of one's social class (both the aristocrats and the common people), was called *zen-mukotori* (early *muko-in*) in which the mother of the bride led the wedding ceremony. Consequently, the mother of the bride became the parents, and the groom moved into their residence to live together (Takamure 1963, 61–74).

There was a ceremony called *tokoro arawashi* (*tokoro* = site; *arawashi* = to spot, meaning to spot the site) to welcome the groom as a member of the bride's family. That is, at the beginning stage of the *zen-mukotori*, the groom came to visit the bride and slept with her secretly. Then, the family members of the bride playfully forced the groom to eat rice cakes made by them. After the *tokoro arawashi* ceremony, the groom stopped visiting secretly and started to visit her openly and/or lived with her family. Thus, during the period, the *mukotori* meant that the mother of the bride captured the groom, and she was responsible for preparing and providing the groom all the formal ceremonial and everyday clothing he wore (Takamure 1963, 74–82).

Under *zen-mukotori*, all aspects relating to childbearing and child-rearing, such as the health of the pregnant bride, giving birth, and raising children, were guaranteed by the bride's family. The Ritsuryo Statute stated that divorce could be granted for a husband's infertility and he had to leave the house. It was called *kisai*, meaning abandonment of the wife. The husband could divorce through formal writing (Takamure 1963, 82–97).

3.1.4 Mid-end Heian Period

The second stage of the *muko-in* courtship practice occurred in the mid-Heian period, i.e., from the early eleventh century to the mid-twelfth century when the manorial system in Japan was widely recognized. Under this social environment, farming production increased substantially, and each man's labor was regarded as a valuable asset. A family with daughters, wealthy families in particular, welcomed the *muko-in* courtship system. In the *muko-in* courtship, during this period the father of the bride was the head of the wedding ceremony. In other words, the bride's father made a formal request to the groom for the courtship of his daughter. Thus, *muko-in* during this period is called *jun-mukotori* (genuine *muko-in*) rather than the *zen-mukotori* of the previous period. During this period sons in the family married out, and the groom moved in to live with the bride. By the time the wife grew up, her parents moved elsewhere, leaving the residence to the couple. In principle, the second and the third daughters of the parents were provided with the newly built dwelling. Should the parents lack the financial means, the groom of the first daughter was usually responsible for their place (Takamure 1963, 98–110). This is similar to the *inkyo* family system in Kagoshima prefecture, of the sons, not of the daughters (Kumagai 2008, 2010, 2011).

In *jun-mukotori*, the process of courtship, dating, and wedding was formalized and became more ceremonial than before. Ceremonies were divided into two major groups, the *niimakura* and the *tokoro arawashi*. The *niimakura* ceremony was conducted during a courtship process extending over three nights, and the groom commuted to the bride's residence each of those three nights. The *niimakura* ceremony had to go through various events such as *keshikibami* (courtship by the bride's father of the groom), *fujimizukai* (the groom's virtual courtship upon accepting *keshikibami*), *muko gyouretsu* (the procession of the groom to the bride's residence in the dark), *hiawase* (a torch from the groom's family was lighted to one at the bride's residence), *kutsu-tori* (the shoes of the groom were taken by the bride's mother to sleep with them for three nights), *fusuma-ooi* (when the groom entered inside a bamboo blind, to meet with his bride, her mother would put a quilt cover over them), and *kinuginu no tsukai* (when morning came, the bride and the groom put on their clothes, and the groom returned to his residence). A series of these events were conducted for three nights (Takamure 1963, 111–119).

It was only after this three-night ceremony that the *tokoro arawashi* took place to welcome the groom to the bride's family. The *tokoro arawashi* during this period

became more formal than before, including not only *mikka mochi* (the eating of rice cake for three nights) but also three additional ceremonies of the *shinzoku taimen* (the groom meets with the bride's family), *kyoujin kyouroku* (a feast for the groom's servants), and *mandokoro hajime* (building a home office for the groom). It was then that the groom started to live with the bride and her family. Then, the *muko no yuki-hajime* (a ceremony in which the husband returned to his former family for the first time after the marriage ceremony) took place. Now that he was a member of his wife's family, all the cost for the *yukihajime* procession was borne by them, which included oxcarts, drivers, attendants, and their clothing (Takamure 1963, 119–130).

In the *jun-mukotori*, children of the couple belonged to the wife. Thus, if there were a divorce, children were left with the wife's parents, and they reared their grandchildren. The children met with their natural mothers whenever special occasions arose. All in all, the succession of the *ie* (household and family lineage) in the *jun-mukotori* was matrilineal (Takamure 1963, 131–149).

3.1.5 End Heian Period: The End of Eleventh to the End of the Twelfth Century

During the entire century from the end of eleventh to the end of twelfth century, the *inn-sei* political regime took place, when retired emperors became priests and exercised their powers in ruling and controlling politics. The courtship pattern during the period shifted from *jun-mukotori* to *keieisho-mukotori*. The difference between these two types of *mukotori* courtships is that all the ceremonies for the latter took place at a wedding hall rather than the residence of the bride's parents. The shift to the *keieisho-mukotori* did not cause any fundamental change in the *muko-in* courtship pattern. The wedding hall and a new residence for the newlyweds were regarded as parts of, or the secondary residence, the bride's parents (Takamure 1963: 150–155).

Ceremonies of the wedding hall *mukoire-kon* resembled those of the formal *mukoire-kon* of the previous period, except two new events were introduced. They were the *chichi-ire* (the groom's father visited the bride's family) and *yome-yukihajime* (the bride visited the groom's family for the first time). After the marriage, the groom's father visited the household of the newlyweds as a guest. In the history of Japanese courtship and marriage, this *chichi-ire* ceremony should be regarded as highly significant because the father of the groom was formally acknowledged as one of the relatives of the newlyweds. In the *yome-yukihajime*, on the other hand, the groom's family received the bride accompanied by their son, i.e., the groom. During this period the *yome-yukihajime* was formalized along with the *muko-yukihajime* that started in the previous period (Takamure 1963, 155–165).

During this period, it became the common practice that the newly married couple establishes their independent household with the financial support of the bride's family. Divorce was easy for the groom, because he could just leave the house. He might go back to his parents or to the residence of a new bride. As he was lawfully permitted to have multiple wives, he might have visited his former wife from time

to time while living elsewhere. For the wife to pursue divorce, however, she had to take some positive action, such as closing the house gate so the husband could not enter or by sending back the husband's clothing and pillows to his parents. Once the married couple lived in their own household, the problem of adultery started to occur frequently. The *Konjaku Monogatari* (Anthology of Tales from the Past), believed to have compiled during this period, included various episodes of spousal murders, in which either the husband or wife killed the other (Takamure 1963, 165–174).

3.1.6 Kamakura Shogunate and Nanboku-cho: 1192–1333–1336

The courtship pattern during the rise of the *samurai bushi* Shogunate was called the *gisei-mukotori-kon* (quasi *mukotori-kon* marriage). The meaning of the quasi in this context rests upon the fact that the wedding takes place with the bride moving into the residence of the groom's parents. Concerning their residence, there were two ways for the groom's parents to do this before the wedding. One way was for either to move out of the residence so that the bride could move in, enabling her father to pursue the wedding ceremony. The other way was that the wedding ceremony was conducted at the residence of the bride's parents and the groom started living with her. After a while, the parents of the groom moved out of their residence, or they deceased, and the married bride and the groom moved into the new residence, i.e., the residence of the groom's parents where no one was now living. Whichever the way, the residence of the groom's parents was considered to belong to the wife. This matrilineal courtship was called "quasi" *mukotori-kon*. It was considered as a transitional stage from the *muko-in* to the *yome-in* which followed afterward (Takamure 1963, 175–182).

This period was accompanied by some violent incidents called *metori*. That is, a man might abduct a married woman when she was walking alone on the street and make her his wife. Due to the frequent occurrence of the *metori* incidents, it came to be regarded that a woman walking alone was seducing a man, inviting him to violently capture her. Another problem relating to the courtship and marriage in this period is that women started to lose property rights rapidly. Both the *metori* and women's loss of property rights could be regarded as a transitional stage from the *mukotori-kon* (muko-in) to the *yometori-kon* (*yome-in*) which started in the following period (Takamure 1963, 189–204).

3.1.7 Muromachi Shogunate-Edo Shogunate

With the rise of the samurai warriors, the system of women marrying into men's families called the *yometori-kon* (yome-in) was gradually adopted widely, during the Muromachi-Asuka-Edo eras in the fourteenth to nineteenth centuries.

The *yometori-kon* brought about major changes in Japanese courtship and marriage. Now the head of the wedding shifted to the household head of the groom, the family lineage shifted to patrilineal, and the continuation of the *ie* (family name and property) by the son became of utmost importance. Women under the *ie* system were placed under the control of the household head without any property rights at all. Giving birth to a son, who would succeed as the household head, was regarded as the most important task of the bride. If she did not succeed in this task, she was simply expelled from the groom's household (Kumagai 1983). The eldest son in the household who succeeded as the household head was important, but not the second or the third son. In the *yometori-kon* marriage, therefore, it is the household head of the groom's family who decided whether or not to welcome the bride, ignoring the intentions of either the groom or the bride. Under these circumstances, children belonged totally to the father (Takamure 1963, 175–213).

Prior to the wedding, *yuinou* ceremonies took place. That is, a go-between received commodities from the groom's family to deliver to the bride. Then, in turn, the go-between delivered commodities from the bride's family to the groom's family. Thus, the role of the go-between was important in the *yometori-kon* marriage. The household heads of both families exchanged property. The bride was taken from her parents' home to the residence of the groom's father by riding on a *koshi* (palanquin). This procession was, therefore, called *koshiire*, a woman marrying into a man's household. The household of the *yometori-kon* was a large patrilineal multigenerational (commonly three generations) stem family, and family members lived under one roof. Thus, the bride was obliged to confront the difficulty of dealing with the mother-in-law (Takamure 1963, 213–230).

In the *yometori-kon*, the bride had no property rights and became the provider of labor. Divorce could only be formally declared by the side of the husband, not by the wife's side. The only way women could pursue divorce was to flee into a Buddhist temple, to become a nun and stay for 3 years (Kumagai 1983). When the wife was divorced by the husband, she was also severed from the children. The husband-wife relationship in the *yometori-kon* was based on that of the master and servant, not on the basis of affection. For this reason, adultery on either side was regarded as a serious crime and punished severely. Dowry was brought by the bride to the groom's family, and it sometimes became burdensome to the bride's family (Takamure 1963: 231–242).

3.1.8 Meiji to Taisho to Showa to Present (Heisei): Yoriai-kon

Before discussing the courtship and marriage during this period, one should understand the two types of different family systems which prevailed under two Civil Codes: the Meiji Civil Code of 1898 and the new Civil Code of 1947. The following explanations were taken from the previous studies of the author (Kumagai 1983, 2008, 9–11).

3.1.8.1 The Family System Under the Civil Code of 1898

Even though the Meiji Restoration in 1868 ended the feudal era in Japan, only enforcement of the Civil Code of 1898 officially abolished the class system. The Japanese people were now united under the emperor, and as a consequence, the nature of the *ie* system changed. The *ie* system now came to characterize not only upper-class but also lower-class families, and each family was considered to be directly subordinate to the emperor. Therefore, the Meiji Restoration strengthened the hierarchical-traditional nature of the Japanese family, rather than modernizing it.

In the new *ie* system, the household headship was transferred only to the eldest son, as had been the case among the upper-class families of the feudal period. Moreover, succession to the family head changed to signify the inheritance of family assets and properties. Therefore, the family was no longer a unit of production and/or consumption, where an egalitarian familial relationship was emphasized, as it had been among the lower-strata families. Instead, the family structure shifted to a hierarchical-vertical organization comprising the ruler and the ruled. Confucianism was adopted as the moral code of the Japanese and was taught as part of the compulsory educational program. It emphasized two major concepts: *chu* (loyalty and subordination to the Emperor) and *ko* (filial piety). These two concepts molded the *ie* system and then contributed to solidify the hierarchical-vertical orientation of human relationships within the structure.

What was the situation of the *yome-shutome* relationship during this period? Women were completely subordinate to the authority of the household head. The *yome's* (daughter-in-law's) value to the family rested solely upon her ability to produce children, especially a son who could continue the family lineage. The yome, a newcomer to the house, was forced to assimilate to the norms of the husband's family. Moreover, the education of the *yome* in these norms was conducted by the *shutome* (mother-in-law). Thus, the relationship between *shutome* and *yome* became that of the ruler and the ruled, even though both had to submit to the authority of the household head.

3.1.8.2 The Family System After WW II

With the enactment of the new Civil Code in 1947, following WW II, the family system in Japan experienced drastic changes. In addition, Article 24 of the new constitution explicitly called for the safeguarding of the dignity of the individual and the equality of the sexes in family life. The *ie* system was abolished by the revised Civil Code, and the family unit was defined to include only husband, wife, and children. With the abolition of the household head, husband and wife were given equal rights in the family. In addition, the family of a married son and his parents' family became independent of each other, and both were accorded equal position in the larger family context.

The *yome's* name was no longer registered in the family register of the household head. Instead, upon marriage, which was now based on the mutual consent of the two parties involved, an independent family register for only the husband and wife was established, signifying the rejection of the old direct-lineage family system and the adoption of a married-couple system as the basis of family life. Thus, the new Civil Code of 1947 is regarded as a significant modernizing change in the history of the Japanese family.

In reality, however, the stated ideals of equality and independence in the family have never been fully realized. Legislative change does not necessarily impact everyday life, and many of the unique aspects of the *ie* family system continue to pervade the Japanese family and Japanese society. Therefore, it is well to note that the Japanese family system today may not be truly modern—it contains elements of both tradition and modernity.

With the coming of modernization of Japan in the Meiji era, a new type of courtship and marriage was introduced to Japan from the western societies. That is called the *yoriai-kon* in Japanese, in which both the bride and the groom were regarded as equal individuals with equal rights. The previous *mukotori-kon* was supported by the family clan, the *yometori-kon*, by the household head, and the *yoriai-kon*, by the society. Although the *yoriai-kon* was introduced to Japan in the Meiji era, it was not practiced until the Showa era. Prior to the Meiji era, the *ie* system was practiced only among the feudal warriors and families of the upper class (Kumagai 1983, 2008, 2010). With enactment of the Meiji Civil Code in 1898, the *ie* system was codified and strengthened for all Japanese, and all the family members were placed under the control of the household head, in a patrilineal system. And therefore, the wife was submissive completely to the control of the household head and to her husband, and her family name was changed to that of her husband (Kasahara 1989; Koyama 1973; Takamure 1963: 243–258).

After WW II, a new Civil Code was enacted in 1947, which clearly stated that all people are equal (Article 14), and marriage can be pursued only by the mutual agreement of the marrying man and woman, and both individuals possess equal rights (Article 24). The most significant aspect of the family law in the new constitution is that the *ie* system was completely abolished. Thus, all the rights of women are recognized in laws regulating the family, marriage, divorce, and inheritance. The new family register could be under either one of their family names (Takamure 1963: 258–259).

The US Embassy in Tokyo translated the conditions for marriage in Japan into English entitled "Who Can Get Married in Japan?" (Embassy of the United States 2013). Excerpts are as follows: Article 731 to 737 of the Japanese Civil Code stipulates the following requirements:

- The male partner must be 18 years of age or older, and the female partner must be 16 years of age or older.
- A woman cannot get married within six months of the dissolution of her previous marriage. According to Japanese law, this is to avoid confusion as to the identification of a child's father if a birth occurs close in time to the end of the marriage.

- Most people related by blood, by adoption, or through other marriages cannot marry each other in Japan.
- A person who is under 20 years of age cannot get married in Japan without a parent's approval.

With the rise of the *yoriai-kon*, the place where the wedding takes place shifted from the home of the groom's parents to such public places as shrines, temples, and/or community halls, quite similar to the *keieisho-mukotori* toward the end of the Heian period. It would be taken as proof that the *yoriai-kon* was now supported by society rather than by the family of the groom as in the *yometori-kon* (Takamure 1963: 258–265).

3.2 Attitudes Toward Marriage and Mate Selection

3.2.1 Miai-kekkon *and* Ren-ai-kekkon

It is commonly acknowledged that in the *yoriai-kon* marriage, there are two types of mate selection, the *miai-kekkon* (arranged marriage), and the *ren-ai-kekkon* (romantic marriage). *Miai*, or the practice of arranged marriages, spread through all classes of Japanese society at the beginning of the Meiji Period. Prior to that, it had been common only among samurai families, as they often needed to arrange unions across long distances to match their social standing. Although marriages were most frequently arranged by the *nakoudo* (matchmaker) who served the role of a go-between for families in the *miai* process, it was not necessary for all *miai*. The *nakoudo* can be a family member, relative, superior at work, friend, or matchmaking company.

The primary function of the arranged marriage was still to ensure the continuation of the family and its assets and lineage, and it was still imperative that the prospective partner come from a family of compatible status and family background (Kodansha 1983). With changes in society, attitudes toward marriage and mate selection among young Japanese people have changed dramatically (Kumagai 2008: 33–34 with statistics updated).

Under the traditional *ie* system, the prime objective of marriage was the continuation of the family lineage, and therefore, the will of the parents played a significant role in the decision to marry. Today, on the other hand, marriage is based on the mutual consent of the two parties, and their wishes are given the first consideration over those of the parents.

The general meaning of marriage in contemporary Japan has shifted from an institutional to a personal one (Burgess et al. 1963). The emphasis on family lineage has faded, and in turn, affection has become the major concern. Over time, there has been a gradual shift from the traditional arranged marriage to the modern romantic marriage. Of all marriages, the proportion of romantic marriages has increased considerably from 13.4 % in 1935 to 88.1 % by 2005–2010 (IPSSR 2010; see Fig. 3.1).

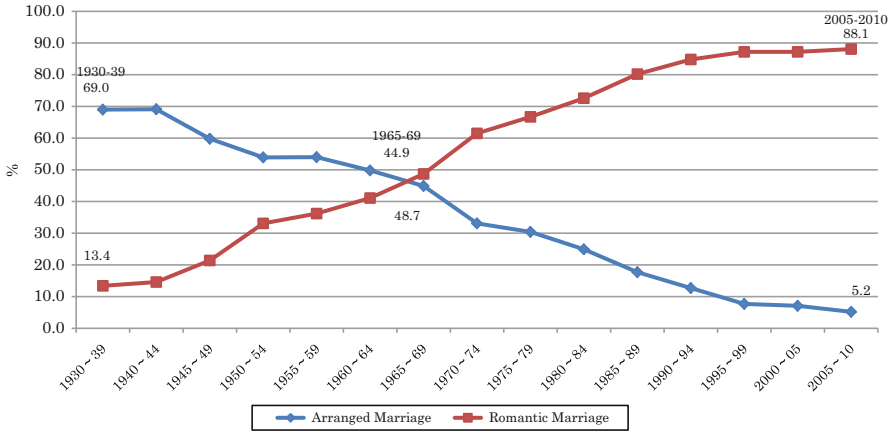

Fig. 3.1 Changes in mate selection rates (%): 1930–2010 (*Source*: IPSSR 2010, No. 14th survey on marriage and fertility, record #101135. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

Moreover, since the nuclear family is functional in modern industrialized society, it is probably most desirable to have a small age discrepancy between the spouses in order to establish a companionship of mutual regard (Kumagai 2008, 33–34) (see Fig. 3.2).

A corollary to this changing trend was the dramatic fall in the proportion of arranged marriages, as seen in Fig. 3.1. Until the end of WW II, the *miai* (arranged marriage) constituted approximately 70 % of all marriages, and the rest were modern romantic marriages. Starting from the mid-1960s, however, a complete reversal emerged (in 1965, the proportions were 44.9 % for arranged marriage and 48.7 % for romantic marriage). That is, instead of the previous 7:3 ratio, the proportion of *miai*-romantic marriages shifted to nearly even, and this trend accelerated by the year 2002 to only 7.3 % for *miai* (IPSSR 2014, Table 1.3). In half a century, a modern style of marriage has come to dominate in Japan, not only in urban areas but also in rural regions. This reversal in marriage characteristics indicates the Japanese people's changed attitude from the traditional toward the modern direction within the institution of marriage and the family (Kumagai 2008, 33–34).

The complete reversal in marriage pattern coincides with a reversal of the Japanese working population from primary to tertiary industries in the mid-1960s when Japan launched into a high economic growth period. A structural change in Japanese economies likely had a significant impact on the mate selection, marriage, and lifestyles of Japanese people (Kumagai 1996, 5–8).

With the improved status of women in society, Japanese women have gradually developed a new perspective regarding courtship and marriage. Thus, they have come to see marriage as a relationship of companionship between equals. Consequently, it has become less significant today as to whether the wife is younger or older than the husband.

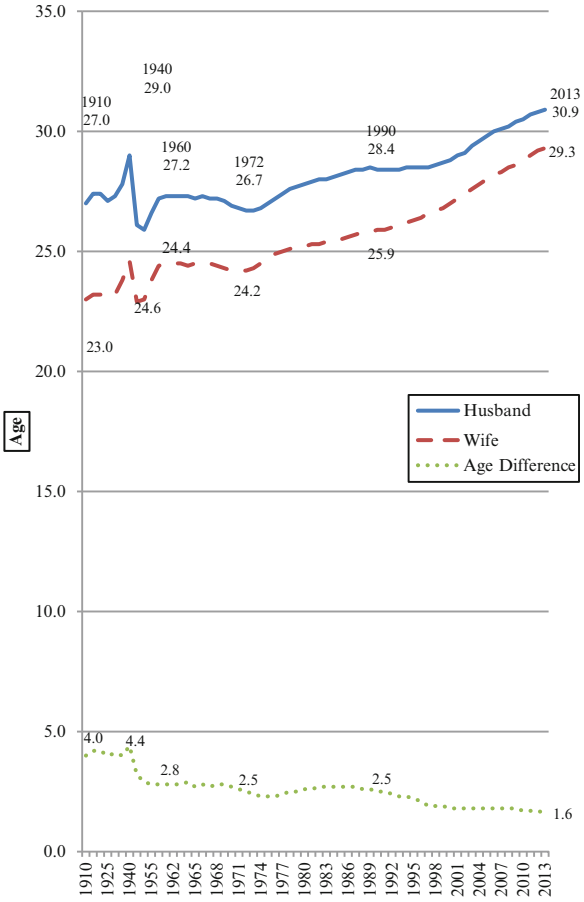

Fig. 3.2 Changes in the average age at first marriage of husband and wife and age difference: 1910–2013 (*Source*: IPSSR 2014, Table 6.12, and MHLW 2014a, Table 10.1. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

3.2.2 High Ages at First Marriage and the Delayed Marriage

Not only does the pattern of mate selection but also the attitudes toward marriage seem to have changed dramatically over the years. Until during the 1980s, the average age at first marriage[1] for Japanese women was considered at around 25. In

[1] Spouses' ages at marriage were recorded in the following manner: through the year 1943, they were recorded at the time of registration, while statistics between 1947 and 1967 were based on the time when the wedding were held, and those from 1968 onward are based on the time of the wedding or the initiation of coresidence. No marriage license is required in Japan. A marriage becomes valid only after it is officially registered in the family record, the *koseki*, and it need not be registered for some years (IPSSR 2014, notes for the Table 6.12).

fact, at 25 years of age, a Japanese women was called "a Christmas cake," something for which there is no use after the twenty fifth (Kumagai 1996: 31).

According to the Prime Minister's Office, in 1882 the average age at first marriage for Japanese men was 22.10 years and for women 19.14 years (Prime Minister's Office 1886). A century later in 1992, the average age was 28.4 for men and 26.0 for women, and three decades elapsed by now, in 2013, they increased as high as 30.9 for men and 29.3 for women, respectively. With Japanese women marrying considerably later than they did before, the age gap between spouses has shrunk from 4.0 in 1910 to 1.6 years in 2013 (MHLW 2014b, Table 10.1, and see Fig. 3.2). In addition, there seems to be little regional variation in the delayed marriage of Japanese men and women today throughout all the 47 prefectures (MHLW 2014b, Table 10.2). Thus, the delayed marriage in Japan today has become a nationwide phenomenon.

The advancement in educational achievement of Japanese men and women is the major reason for high ages at first marriage. Today, almost all the graduates of primary schools (98.4 % in 2013) and more than half of high school graduates (55.1 % for both men and women in 2013) advance to higher education (IPSSR 2014, Table 11.3).

With the higher education at hand, it seems that more and more women in Japan are deferring marriage (see Fig. 3.3) with the expectation of pursuing a career. Japanese women are now able to make their own living more easily than in the past, and marriage is no longer as attractive as before, especially for able and independent women. As a consequence, because of the enhanced autonomy of women, it has become common among Japanese men and women today to postpone marriage until in their early thirties, or never. The natural consequence of the delayed marriage of Japanese women is their delayed childbearing and child-rearing. In fact, the average age of Japanese mother at the birth of her first child in 2013 was as high as 30.4 (nearly 5 years older than it was in 1975) (see Fig. 3.4). The educational achievement of Japanese women enhanced their economic independence, leading to the delayed marriage and further to the delayed childbearing and child-rearing or never get married.

It is a matter of grave concern that a growing number of people never marry. It might be due to their choice, or they might have little opportunities for courtship and marriage, especially because the *miai-kekkon* seems to have become an outdated mode of mate selection in Japan today.

3.2.3 Lifetime Singlehood

The percentage of single Japanese men in the 20–24 age brackets in 1970 was 90.1 %. The rate for the same cohort changed to 21.5 % in 1980, 11.8 % in 1990, 10.3 % in 2000, and 10.3 in 2010, yielding an extremely high rate for the percentage of people who remain unmarried at the age of 50 (see Table 3.1) (IPSSR 2014, Table 6.24). These rates in 2010 rose to a high of 20.1 % among men and 10.6 % among women (see Table 3.1). (The rate is derived by the median of the 45–49 and 50–54 age brackets.)

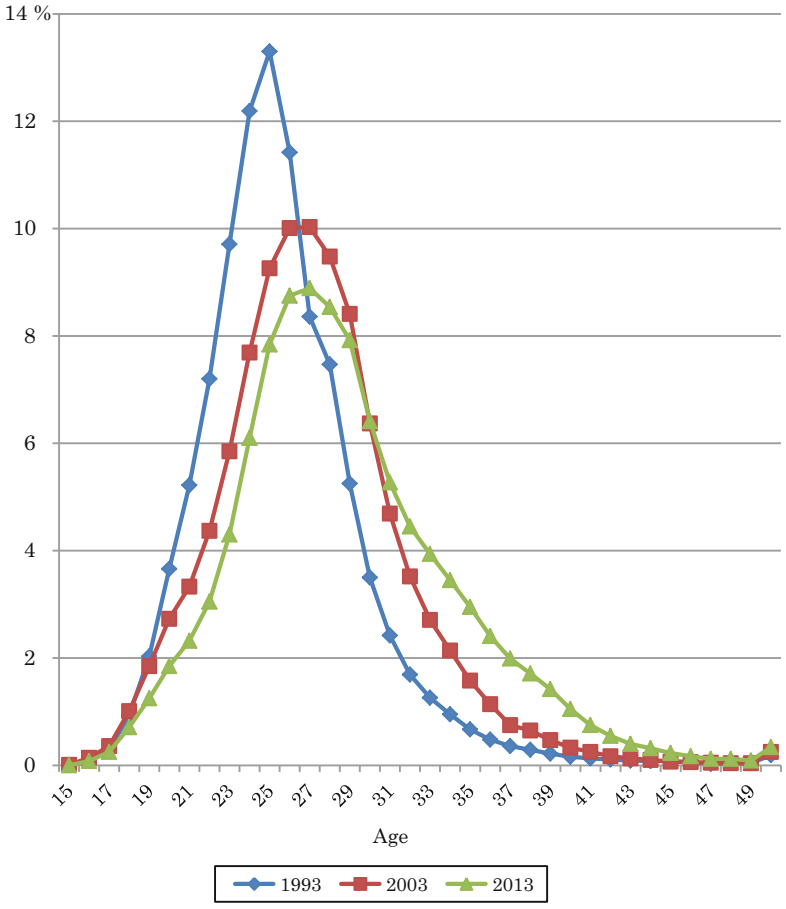

Fig. 3.3 Changes in proportions (%) of marriages by the age of the first marriage of wife: 1993, 2003, 2013 (*Source*: MHLW 2014a, b, Table 10. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

It should be noted in particular that there has been only a minimal change in the rate for never-married men: 40–44 in 1990, 50–54 in 2000, and 60–64 in 2010. This fact suggests that a large proportion of men who had never married in the 40–44 age group (28.6 %) will remain in the same marital status in 2020. In other words, about one in five men in their early 50s in 2020 will have never married.

A similar trend could be projected for the Japanese women who had never married by 2010. It is quite likely that a great majority of never-married women 40–44 in 2010 (17.4 %)) will continue to be single in their early 50s in 2020 (see Table 3.1). This increasing trend in the never-married rate of women has a serious impact on the declining fertility and population aging in Japanese society as it will aggravate the declining birth rate in Japanese society.

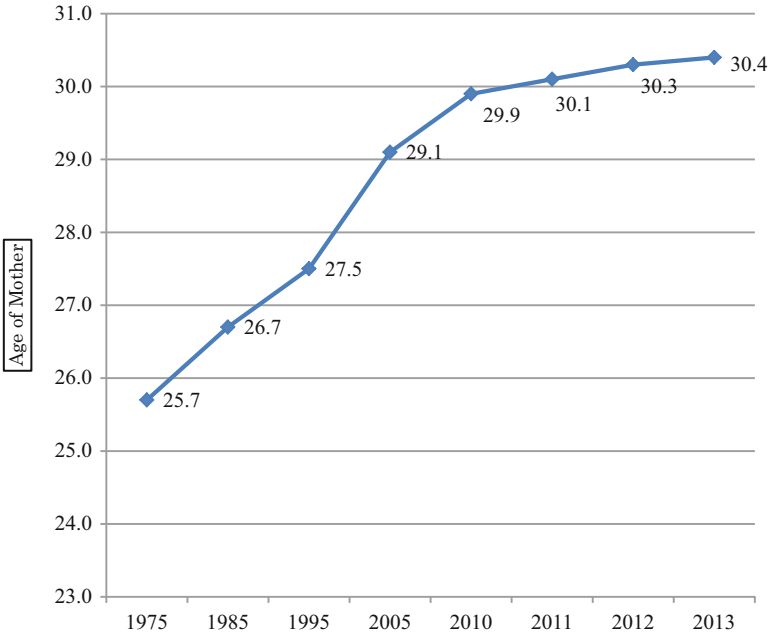

Fig. 3.4 Changes in the average age of mother at the birth of her first child: 1975–2013 (*Source*: MHLW 2014b, Table 3. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

Furthermore, most women are hesitant to give birth for the first time after 40 years of age. Age-specific total fertility rates (TFRs) for females in Japan in 2013 reveal clearly that Japanese women in their 40s are not active in their reproductive activities (total, 1.43; for 20–24, 0.1555; for 25–29, 0.4298; for 30–34, 0.5017; for 35–39, 0.2677 vs. for 40–44, 0.0486; for 45–49, 0.0013) (IPSSR 2014, Table 4.12, MHLW 2014b 7, Table 2; see Fig. 3.5).

3.2.4 Live Births to Unmarried Mothers

Single mothers are not yet an accepted social norm in Japan. Although the rate of births to unmarried mothers (as part of the total live births) in Japan has been on the rise, it is still extremely low among industrialized nations (see Fig. 3.6) (IPSR 2014, Table 4.18).[2] In the United States, 40.7 % of all births were to single mothers in 2012.

[2] Rates (%) for live births to unmarried mothers of major industrial nations in 2008 were as follows: Sweden, 54.7; France, 52.6; Denmark, 46.2; the United Kingdom, 43.7; the Netherlands, 41.2; the United States, 40.6; Iceland, 32.7; Germany, 32.1; Spain, 31.7; Canada, 27.3; Italy, 17.7; Hong Kong, 5.6; and Japan, 2.1 (OECD 2014, Chapter 3: General Context Indicators).

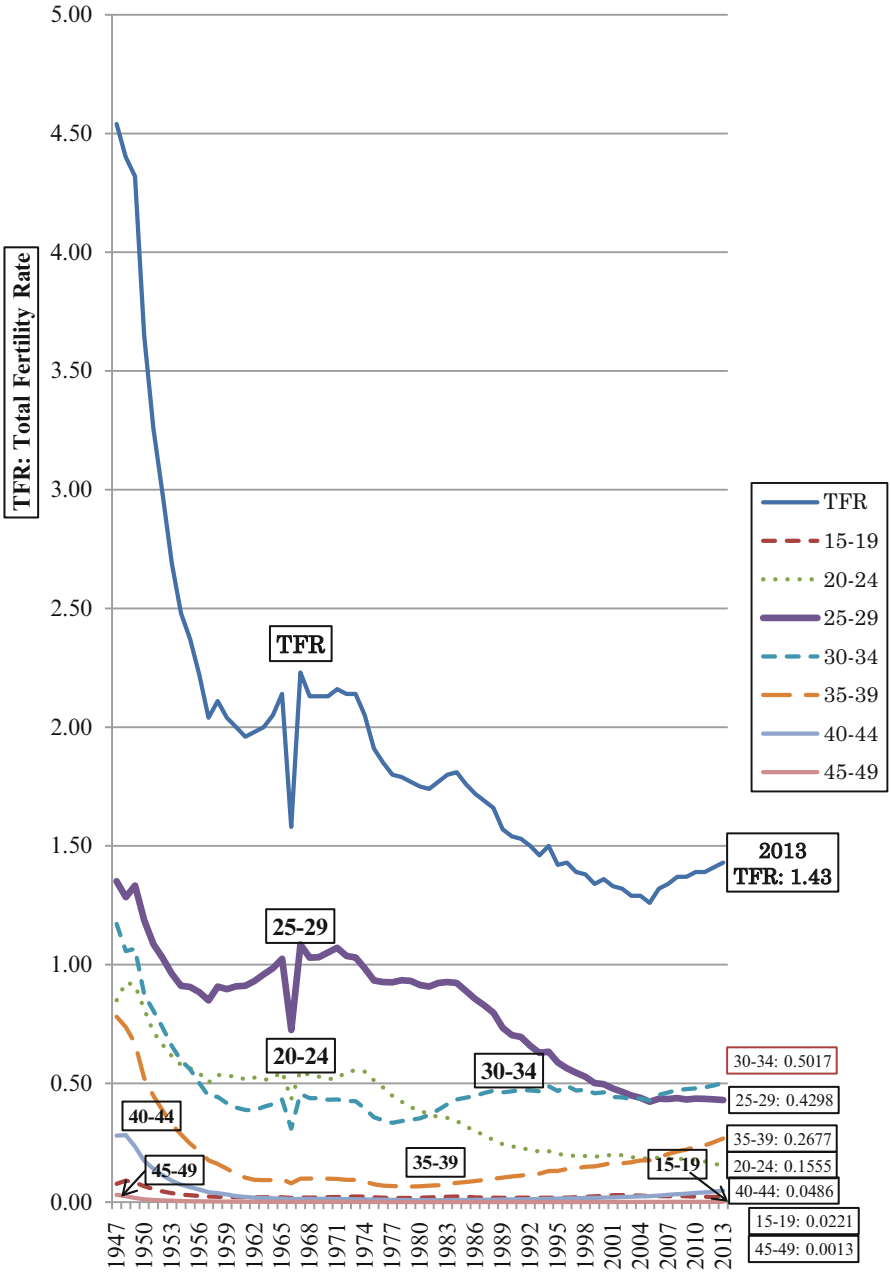

Fig. 3.5 Changes in total fertility rates (TFR) by age group: 1947–2013 (*Source*: MHLW 2014b: 7, Table 2. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

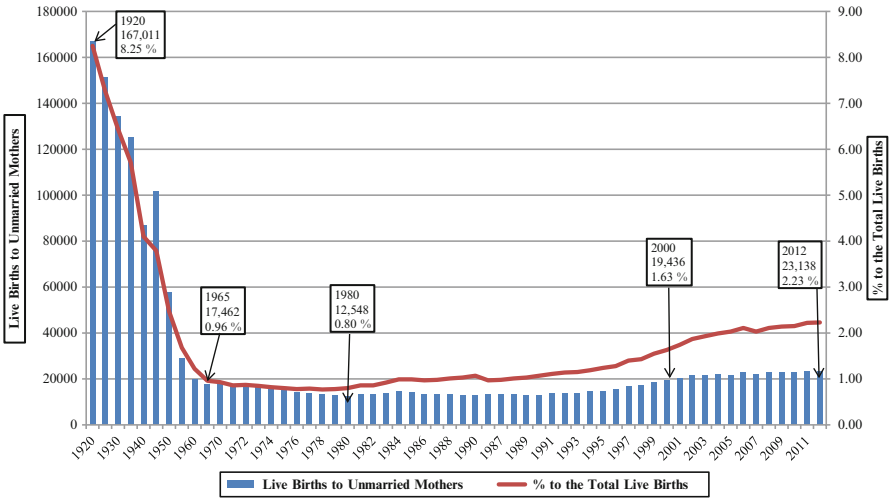

Fig. 3.6 Changes in live births to unmarried mothers and rates (%) to the total live births: 1920–2012 (*Source*: IPSSR 2014, Table 4.18. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

The rate was 2.23 % in Japan that year. The US rate should probably be looked at with caution until the entire population is divided by ethnicity, and by state, for example (CDC 2013; US Census Bureau 2012).[3]

At any rate, births to unmarried mothers in Japan today are extremely low in comparison to other industrial nations. It could be due to factors within Japanese society and culture.

Four possible reasons for the low rate of births to unmarried mothers could be pointed out. First, the so-called social norm that "everyone should get married" still prevails throughout Japan today. Second, illegitimate children have been discriminated against by inheritance laws division (paragraph 4 of the Civil Law's Article 900). After as long as 115 years of discriminatory practices, however, the law to alleviate the situation was finally enacted on December 11, 2013.[4] Third, the traditional Japanese family system of *ie* discourages people from challenging the social norm. Fourth, as discussed earlier in this chapter, the Japanese Constitution today states a marriage is based solely on the mutual consent of the man and woman

[3] The US national average in 2012 was 40.7, for whites 35.7, African Americans 71.8, Native Americans 65.8, Hispanics 52.6, and Asians or Pacific Islanders 16.9. When we look at statistics by state in 2012, there exist significant regional variations with Utah the lowest at 18.7. States with high rates were Mississippi, 54.7; Louisiana, 53.2; and New Mexico, 52.1 (US Census Bureau 2012, Tables 86 and 89) (CDC 2013, Table I.1).

[4] However, the recent ruling by the Japanese Supreme Court on September 4, 2013, regarding an illegitimate child's portion of an inheritance is discriminatory and is expected to prompt the Diet to overhaul the Civil Law in the near future (Tamura 2013). In fact, the law to alleviate this inheritance discrimination against an illegitimate child passed the Diet on December 4 and enacted effective December 11, 2013.

involved, and therefore, there is no need to choose *de facto* partnerships, i.e., cohabitation arrangements.

In other words, marriage in Japan has been liberalized, but the traditional *ie* system is still operating underneath the Japanese psyche, discouraging births out of wedlock. This could be taken as evidence of the dual structural system in the institution of matrimony in modern-day Japan.

3.2.5 De facto *Partnerships: Cohabitation*

The trend in Western society has been, for years, for couples to "test" a possible marriage by living together. Thus we have *de facto* partnerships, i.e., cohabitation unions, but not legal marriage. The next stage of the partnership is having babies, out of wedlock. This type of partnership originated in Scandinavian countries and has been gaining popularity throughout Europe and in North America (Atoh 2011; Lesthaeghe 2010; Van de Kaa 1987).

In societies where there is an extremely low fertility rate, including Japan, *de facto* partnerships and births from these partnerships are not yet accepted socially. In fact, a recent report by OECD reveals that, for Japanese people 20–49 years old, the rate of cohabitation was extremely low in 2012 (0.2 %; for the Americans, 12 %; for the Swedish, 19.4 %) measured at one point in time (OECD 2014).

In 2010, the Cabinet Office of the Government of Japan conducted international interview research on attitudes toward fertility of people ages 20–49 in five countries: Japan (sample size, 1,248), Korea (sample size, 1.005), the United States (sample size, 1.000), France (sample size, 1.002), and Sweden (sample size, 1.001). The partnership formation pattern by age group (those who are in their 20s, 30s, and 40s) also revealed similar results to those of the OECD's for *de facto* partnerships in these countries (for Japan, cohabitation rates for Japanese samples were as follows: total average (20s–40s) 1.3 %, for the 20s, 1.6 %; for the 30s, 1.8 %; for the 40s, 0.6 %) (CAO 2011).

The cohabitation rates, however, were based on one point in time. Substantial increases in the prevalence of *de facto* partnerships in Japan were reported when survey data included married respondents, analyzed through the event history life table methodology (Iwasawa 2005; Nishi and Suga 2008; Raymo et al. 2009; Tsuya 2006). Of those born between 1970 and 1979, as many as 21 % have currently adopted, or in the past had adopted, cohabitation partnerships—for an average duration of 2 years. Most of them resolved their cohabitation unions by legal marriage (Raymo et al. 2009).

Recent research on the increasing prevalence of *de facto* partnerships may prompt us to say that the coming of the second demographic change in Japan is in order. However, it would be premature to say that the pattern of the partnership formation in Japan has shifted to the second demographic transition with non-marital cohabitation. It is because the dual structural nature of Japanese society and culture sustains the traditional family culture in the minds of even the young people in Japan today. Upon giving births to their first babies, cohabiting couples are most likely to resolve their cohabiting unions by the traditional marriage.

3.2.6 *Roles and Functions of the* Nakoudo*: The Traditional vs. the New*

As discussed earlier, until around the mid-1960s, most marriages in Japan were arranged. The *nakoudo* played a crucial role, to provide introductions for people entering a new arrangement and to assist shy candidates. Three major roles of the traditional *nakoudo* were as follows: first, matching the qualifications of the two individuals; second, arranging a date and place for the two parties to meet; and third, assisting in reaching a decision in about three months (Yamada and Shirakawa 2013, 162–165).

As only a fraction of new marriages are arranged in the traditional manner today, it has been necessary that new types of the nakoudo role be developed. Therefore, there have emerged new types of courtships, including a "marriage meeting." Consequently, roles of the "new" *nakoudo* have changed significantly. According to Shirakawa (Yamada and Shirakawa 2013, 162–165), seven such roles could be identified:

- Before the actual marriage meeting, working to "sell" the images of the participants
- Allowing the participants take the initiative and be active
- Matching the attributes of possible marriage partners
- Arranging a date and place for the two parties to meet
- Following up the development of their *miai* meetings
- Organizing some attractive events that participants would enjoy
- Assisting in any marriage plans

3.3 The Current Situation

Assisting the people who seek dating opportunities with the opposite sex there emerged three new types of *nakoudo*: commercial matchmaking/dating agencies, the local community and/or municipal offices, and *machi-kon*, town-based events to encourage meetings between men and women. Let us discuss them briefly.

3.3.1 *Commercial Matchmaking/Dating Agency*

The research report by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI 2006) said that the matchmaking agencies' total business was about 60 billion yen a year. Of nearly 4,000 such agencies throughout Japan, 70 % are run by individuals and comprise a total membership of approximately 600,000 (male 60 % and female 40 %). By now, the membership could have increased to as many as one million.

We can break down the commercial matchmaking/dating agency into three types: go-between marriage counselors, data matching programs, and Internet dating services. Their characteristics are as follows:

The "go-between": The "go-between" or a person in charge sets up *miai* and/or provides opportunities to meet. Of the total commercial matchmaking agencies, about 87 % fall under this category, with a yearly business of 7.5 billion yen and about 100,000 members.

Data matching: The agency introduces "matching" partners based on personal responses to questionnaires. This type of agency is mostly run by large-scale industries (about 8 % of the total agencies fall under this category), with a yearly business of 32.5 billion yen and about 300,000 members.

Internet dating service: In the virtual reality of the Internet, members choose ones they would like to date, and agencies extend them support in their dating. These represent about 3 % of the commercial dating services, with an annual business of 14.2 billion yen and about 200,000 members.

Problems that commercial matchmaking agencies possess could be categorized into three groups. First, there are significant discrepancies between the demand and supply. Although there are large amount of needs and demands for marriage information services, they are not fully met by what agencies offer. Commercial matchmaking agencies, therefore, must find ways to provide their customers with proper life design scheme suitable for each membership.

Second, it is usually the case that commercial matchmaking agencies adopt a prepaid deposit service system. When someone decides to cancel a contract, the prepaid deposit is not likely to be returned. It is necessary, therefore, that some appropriate system needs to be implemented to ensure the content of services and to present service fees explicitly, so the customer will have clear information before signing a contract for the service. Then, a significant number of complaints will be reduced.

Third, the commercial matchmaking agency has a negative image. Since the agency functions as a life-support provider to single persons seeking marriage partners, it must earn trust from the customer. Thus, some effective strategy needs to be developed to raise the industry-wide image and to promote publicity. If these problems are overcome with effective countermeasures, the commercial matchmaking/dating agency will gain solid trust from the public.

3.3.2 Matchmaking by Local Communities and/or Municipal Offices

The Cabinet Office in 2011 conducted an extensive research on matchmaking programs organized by local communities and/or municipal offices and nonprofit organizations (NPOs) (Cabinet Office 2011). Objectives of the research were twofold. First, it is to collect data from young people in their 20s and 30s on their attitudes toward marriage and the family. Ten thousand persons responded through the Internet. Second, the mail questionnaire data was adopted for matchmaking

programs by local communities and/or municipal offices and NPOs. Let us confine our discussion here with the second aspect of this research.

3.3.2.1 The Research Results

The questionnaire was sent to 1,797 local communities and/or municipal offices in the fall of 2010. There were 1,745 (97.1 %) respondents, and 90 (44.8 %) of the total 201 NPOs and organizations responded.

Matchmaking programs have been organized by two-thirds (66.0 %, 31) of all the 47 prefectures, and a great majority of programs (74.2 %, 23 prefectures) have been organized since 2001. As for local communities, on the other hand, only one-third (31.2 %, 172 organizations) have such programs. Major reasons for organizing and offering such programs are to replace the matchmaking once extended by the family, community, and work environment, to revitalize the community-wide power and activities, to assist the young people wishing employment in local industries, to alleviate difficult situations that the young people face in raising their children under the fertility decline and aging population in the local community, and others.

Programs offered are diverse. There are, for example, programs for organizing events for the young men and women (parties, trips, agricultural, and/or fishing field works), matchmaking/dating services to those who registered, fostering young people who wish to become go-betweens in the community, and offering courses on improving communication skills for the young adult and for their parents as well.

Based on the research result, seven points could be suggested as keys for successful matchmaking/dating programs by local community offices. First, it is important to make the program a community-wide event. Second, the enthusiasm of people wishing to revitalize their community must be met by the community at large. Third, it would be wise to encourage community authorities to cooperate with other communities also interested in enforcing such programs. Fourth, such events as offering casual opportunities for young men and women to meet each other are recommended rather than the formal *miai* meetings. Fifth, prior to attending the matchmaking/dating programs, the young people, men in particular, need to take communication enhancing programs and learn proper dressing, table manners, and communication skills. Sixth, keeping the privacy of the information of the participant must be ensured completely. Seventh, strive to encourage mass media reports on the matchmaking/dating programs. The mass media possess enormous power to publicize these programs to generate broad interests not only within but also across the communities.

3.3.3 Machi-Kon, the Town-Based Marriage-Meeting Event

The *machi-kon* is a town-wide large-scale event to provide meeting opportunities between the sexes and to revitalize the town. Its origin is *Miya-kon* of Utsunomiya, a city in Tochigi prefecture. It was held in 2004 for the first time. Ever since then,

the *machi-kon* events have spread widely throughout Japan. In fact, during the year of 2012, approximately 2,000 *machi-kon* events were held, and as many as 600,000 people participated throughout Japan (Nihon Keizai Shinbun 2013a). The *Machi-kon* Japan (2011) stipulates four rules. First, two persons of the same sex make a group; second, at the beginning of the *machi-kon* event, participants visit and dine at designated restaurants where they must stay during a designated period (usually 30–40 min); third, they pay participation fees (¥6,000 for male, ¥4,000 for female); and fourth, participants go to as many member restaurants as they like during the period when the *machi-kon* is held (usually 3–4 h).

Websites of *Machi-kon* Japan (Machi-kon Japan 2011) highlight five characteristics of their activities First, the number of participants to any *machi-kon* event ranges from about 200 to as many as several thousand. Second, participants in the *machi-kon* event identify themselves by wearing a wrist band. Third, reasonable participation fees (between 4,000 and 6,000 yen) allow participants to dine as much as they want and at as many restaurants as they like during the time when the event is held. Fourth, a variety of restaurants provide participants with a gourmet tour which they could not afford otherwise. Fifth, the event is held mostly during the day (between 14:00 and 18:00), so that the security of participants is guaranteed. The *machi-kon* event enables individuals an opportunity to meet and exchange conversation with those of the opposite sex, in a relaxed atmosphere.

For the participating restaurants, the *machi-kon* is attractive in two ways. First, it brings in customers during their slow business periods. Second, it has a great publicity. The economic impact of the *machi-kon* is significant with little capital investment as it uses existing restaurants for the event site. Thus, the *machi-kon* has become an effective tool for the revitalization of local communities. However, further development of the *machi-kon* should include raising its quality in various ways (Nihon Keizai Shinbun 2013b).

Conclusion: *Kon-Katsu*

As a result of the fading function of the traditional type of *miai* and *nakoudo*, we have witnessed programs emerge which provide opportunities to meet for people wishing to get married. At the same time, we noticed that there are a large proportion of single people who want to get married (86.0 % Cabinet Office, 2011). In light of these current situations, the word *kon-katsu* has been popularized ever since Yamada coined the jargon in 2007 (Yamada 2007; Yamada and Shirakawa 2008, 2013).

Kon-katsu literally means "marriage-seeking activities," the combination of *kekkon* meaning marriage and *katsudou* meaning activities. Thus, *kon-katsu* is the activity of individuals seeking to get married by participating in programs relating to marriage. Marriages do not happen if people just wait for an opportunity to come. Instead, they must actively get involved in *kon-katsu* programs.

(continued)

As discussed earlier, various organizations, agencies, and programs assisting *kon-katsu* are available today. In addition, the Japanese government has decided to allocate funds to assist kon-katsu activities. In light of these changes and development, single people wishing to get married should embrace the *kon-katsu* activities and be willing to take advantage of the newly developing social environments.

At the same time, it is important to realize that those who want to get married need to further refine themselves to become more "marketable," to make themselves better individuals, if not perfect. Marriage is an ongoing process to be constructed through the cooperative participation of the two individuals and should not be expected to be perfect. It is the product of mutual understanding and efforts. Single people wishing to get married should try to find a "better" half, rather than the "best," through positive participations in *kon-katsu* activities.

It is interesting to note that courtship and marriage in ancient Japan was matrilineal rather than patrilineal. It was only after the Meiji era that Japanese marriage changed to the mutual consent of marriage partners. Increasing number of young people in Japan today finds it difficult to choose ideal marriage partners, so end up never marrying. How to change this? One way is through international marriage, the topic of Chap. 4.

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Chapter 4
International Marriage in Japan: A Strategy to Maintain Rural Farm Households

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Two Opposing Views on International Marriage

The issue of international marriage, foreign brides in particular, has been getting a broad attention throughout the world since the 1990s. However, the question arises as to the changes and continuity of the family institution over time throughout the entire life course of those who adopt such type of marriage. Hence, there have emerged two opposing views to analyze the contemporary international marriage, foreign brides in particular. One view holds negative attitudes toward this type of marriage as it demonstrates the clash between two cultures and suggests that foreign brides have come to be victimized of human right exploitation (Constable 2003, 2004; Ishii 1995, 2003; Kamoto 2001; Nakamatsu 2003; Nakamura 1995; Ohara-Hirano 2000; Sadamatsu 2002; Takahata 2003; Wang and Chang 2002). The other view, however, despite the numerical predominance of the problematic issues associated with foreign brides, highlights positive impacts of such marriage on the institution of the family and cross-cultural interaction (Garcia 2006; Górny and Kepinska 2004; Heikkila 2004, 2007; Lauth Bacas 2002; Piper 2003; Pries 2001; Satake 2004; Truong 1996).

The former view of international marriage pointed out various problems associated with such type of marriages. We cannot deny that when marriages cross national borders, there emerge various cultural clashes. Some examples are the language and

The first half of this chapter is an excerpt of the paper written by the present author entitled "Marriage as an International Migration," in Elli Heikkila and Daniel Rauhut, eds. Marriage Migration (Institute of Migration, Finland, 2014) with permission and with statistics updated. The second half of the chapter, however, focuses on international marriage in Japan as a strategy to maintain rural farm households by incorporating the new report on the "current state of Yamagata prefecture" published in March 2014.

F. Kumagai, *Family Issues on Marriage, Divorce, and Older Adults in Japan*,
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communication problems, lack of information on community life, children's education, interaction with family members and relatives, and community network. Consequently, countermeasures for these problems have been proposed.

In analyzing contemporary international marriage in Japan, of foreign brides in particular, the author of this book holds the latter view. Within the framework of the latter view, various terms have been coined to analyze these foreign brides. Some examples are as follows: reproductive workers (Truong 1996), transnational social spaces (Pries 2001), bridges between different cultures (Lauth Bacas 2002), linkages between government or elite politics and civil society activism (Piper 2003), an economic approach to human behavior (Górny and Kepinska 2004), a dynamic family model (Satake 2004), multicultural links (Garcia 2006), and ethnic bridges (Heikkila 2007).

4.1.2 International Marriage as a New Way to Maintain Rural Farm Households

The author of this book presents a new way to look at such family institution as "a strategy to maintain rural farm households" effectively. The perspective seems to be akin to "reproductive workers" discussed by Truong (1996) in that women in industrialized society entered into the labor force outside home. As a consequence, there emerged an acute shortage of "reproductive workers." In order to fill this gap, foreign brides are brought into these industrialized nations.

Thus, in this chapter, let us propose to say that *Should the traditional farm household have been revitalized bringing foreign brides into the farming regions, there would be a significantly high correlation between the proportion of foreign residents and that of three-generation households.* Therefore, it is the purpose of this chapter to see this relationship in international marriage as a strategy to maintain rural farm households in Japan.

4.2 International Marriage in Japan

4.2.1 Historical Development

International marriage is a form of exogamy in which a person marries outside of their social group. This form of marriage has existed ever since Japan opened her doors to the world in the Meiji era. During the first half of the twentieth century, Japan underwent strong influences of nationalism, and international marriage was strictly controlled. Immediately after the end of WWII, quite a few Japanese brides married American soldiers who were stationed in Japan. The official statistics for marriages between Japanese and foreign nationals residing in Japan became available in 1965 for the first time. In that year, such marriages constituted less than

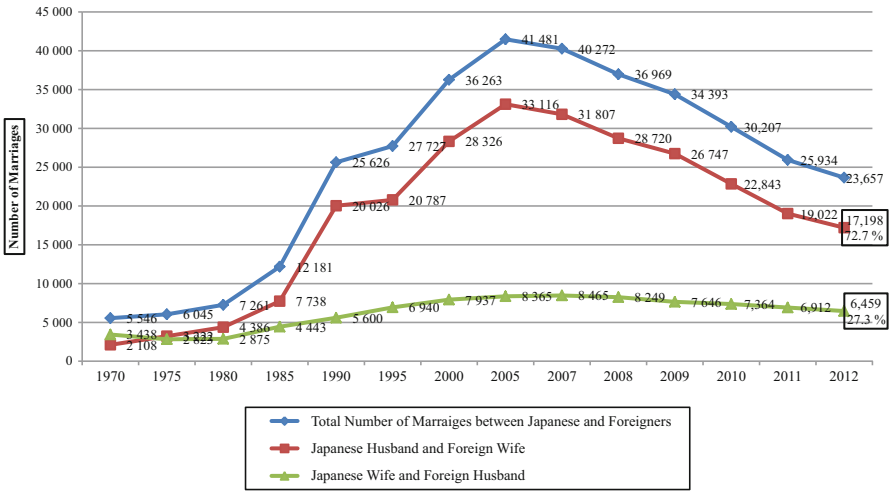

Fig. 4.1 Changes in Japanese marriages between Japanese and foreigners residing in Japan: 1970–2012 (*Source*: IPSSR 2014, Table 6.16. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

one-half percent of the total marriages taking place (4,156 cases; 0.4 % of the total marriages) (IPSSR 2014, Table 6.17; MHLW 2014: 32).

Japanese asset price bubble burst in the 1980s, and a number of Japanese businessmen living abroad married foreign brides. With the bursting of the asset price bubble and the rapid progress of globalization, a new situation relating to foreign brides in Japan has developed. That is, there emerged an acute shortage of brides in rural farming regions. To alleviate the situation, foreign brides have been brought in to farming regions in Japan. As a consequence, the annual number of international marriages has continued to rise, to slightly less than six percent of the total marriage in 2005 (41,481; 5.8 % of total marriages) (IPSSR 2014, Tables 6.16 and 17, MHLW 2012, Marriage Table 2). This increase in the international marriage rate from 0.4 to 5.8 % of total marriages over the period of four decades is worthy of close attention.

Since then, however, with the decline in the total marriage cases in Japan, international marriages among the Japanese people also have begun to decline. They decreased to 23,657 cases and 3.5 % of the total Japanese marriages by 2012 (see Fig. 4.1.) (IPSSR 2014, Tables 6.16 and 17).

4.2.2 Demographic Features of International Marriages: Foreign Brides Versus Foreign Grooms

Three demographic features of foreign brides in Japan today will be highlighted. First, as shown in Fig. 4.1, of the total number of newly married couples, the proportion where one of the spouses is foreign has increased dramatically over the years

(1965, 4,156, 0.44 % of total marriages; 1990, 25,626, 3.55 % of total marriages; 2005, 41,481, 5.78 % of total marriages). In other words, not only the total number of international marriages but also their proportion to the total annual marriages in Japan has risen dramatically up to 2005. However, this does not necessarily mean that Japanese society is becoming internationalized or has become a global society. Ever since 2005, these figures have been on the decline continuously to 23,657 cases and 3.52 % by the year 2012 (IPSSR 2014, Tables 6.16 and 17; MHLW 2014: 32).

The second demographic aspect of these international marriages to be highlighted is that more than two-thirds of them involve foreign brides (2012: 72.7 %) rather than foreign grooms. There has been a dramatic shift in the pattern of international marriages in Japan, from the majority being foreign grooms to a majority of foreign brides, instead. Of the total international marriages in 1965, foreign brides constituted a quarter of the total (25.7 %). This increased to one-half in 1974 (50.0 %) and rose to more than two-thirds in 1990 (78.1 %) (IPSSR 2014, Tables 6.16 and 17) (see Fig. 4.1). The reason for this dramatic shift in the pattern of international marriages in Japan must be studied carefully. It might be due to the internationalization and globalization of the Japanese economy and the rise in labor force participation of Japanese women in tertiary industries, rather than in the primary or secondary sectors.

The third demographic feature to be emphasized about foreign brides is the change in their nationalities. In 1965, they were mostly comprised of North and South Koreans (79 %), followed by Chinese (11.3 %), and Americans (6 %). Today the ethnic background of foreign brides has altered significantly. In 2012, these foreign brides came primarily from three regions in Asia, namely, China (41.7 %), the Philippines (20.5 %), and North and South Korea (17.5 %). Moreover, the proportion of American brides in 2012 had decreased to only one percent (IPSSR 2014, Tables 6.16 and 17; MHLW 2012, marriage Table 2; MHLW 2014: 32) (see Fig. 4.2). These dramatic changes in the proportion of foreign brides from Asian nations, and the decline in American brides, became apparent in the early 1990s. These trends coincided with the abrupt decline in the Japanese economy.

The characteristics of foreign grooms, however, are somewhat different. In 1965 more than half of them were Americans (51.5 %), followed by Koreans (36.5 %), and Chinese (5.1 %). More than four decades later in 2012, although marriage cases between American grooms and Japanese wives have declined significantly (1,159), its proportion to the total international marriages stays about the same (1965, 18.5 %; and 2012, 17.9 %). That would be because the nationalities of foreign grooms in Japan today have become truly diverse (Koreans, 28.2 %; Chinese, 12.7 %; Filipino, 2.2 %; Thai, 0.5 %; Americans, 17.9 %; British, 4.4 %; Brazilians, 4.2 %; Peruvians, 1.4 %; and others, 28.4 %) (IPSSR 2014, Tables 6.16 and 17; MHLW 2012, marriage Table 2; MHLW 2014: 32) (see Fig. 4.3). It could be said, therefore, that Japanese men today are likely to have more opportunities to meet marriage partners in an international context than ever before.

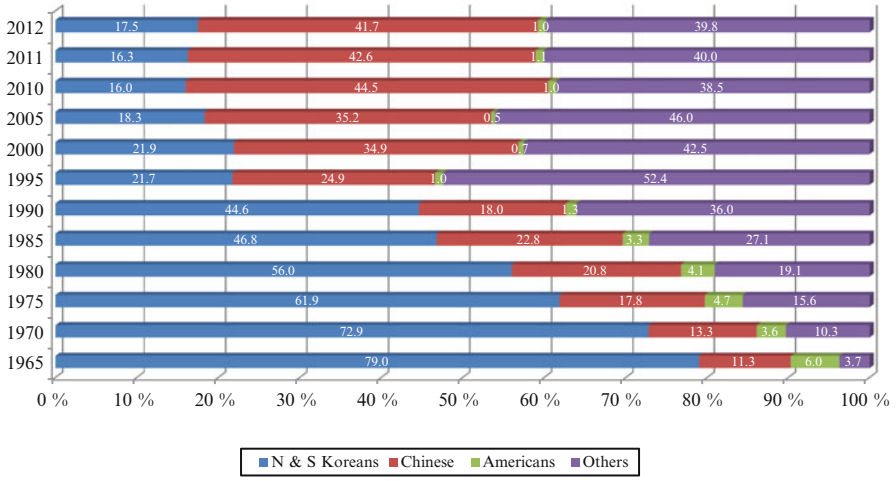

Fig. 4.2 Changes in proportions of Japanese marriages between Japanese husband and foreign wife by nationality: 1965–2012 (*Source*: IPSSR 2014, Table 6.17. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

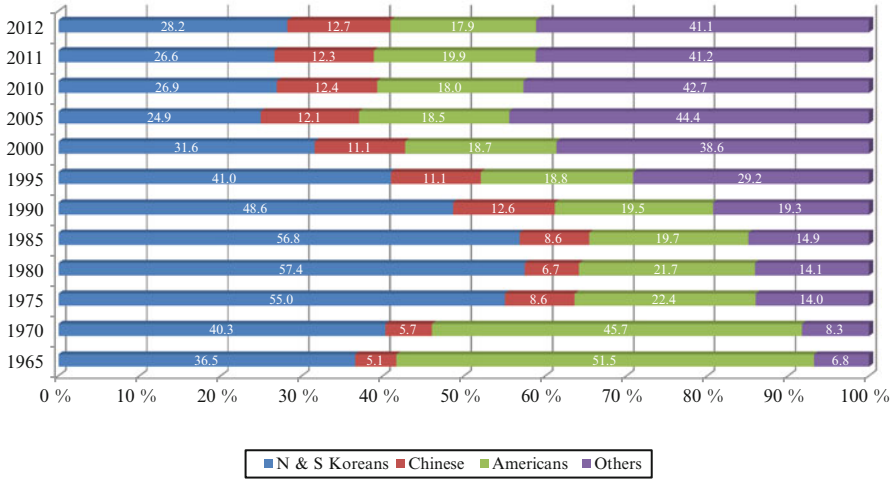

Fig. 4.3 Changes in proportions of Japanese marriages between Japanese wife and foreign husband by nationality: 1965–2012 (*Source*: IPSSR 2014, Table 6.17. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

4.3 Regional Variations in International Marriages by Prefecture

4.3.1 International Marriages: Percentage of Total

Foreign nationals residing in Japan are heavily concentrated in urban regions in the vicinity of large cities (IPSSR 2014, Table 12.58). Would this fact also apply to the international marriages in Japan? In order to clarify this question, the study examined differences in the rates for international marriages compared to total marriages in four points in time by prefecture, i.e., 1975, 1995, 2005, and 2010, respectively (IPSSR 2014, Table 12.38).

In 1975, the national average of international marriages to the total marriages was 0.64 %, ranging from the highest of Tokyo (1.67 %), followed by Osaka (1.31 %) down to the lowest of Yamagata prefecture (0.05 %) ranked at the bottom of all the 47 prefectures. These statistics reveal that international marriages in 1975 took place more frequently in regions where large cities were located and rarely so in traditional farming regions such as Yamagata prefecture.

Two decades later, however, the rate for international marriages for Yamagata jumped abruptly to 3.87 % placing at the 11th of all the 47 prefectures. The reason for this abrupt jump needs close attention. The national average of proportion of international marriages to the total new marriages taken place in 2005 and 2010 were 5.81 % and 4.31 %, respectively. Instead, proportions and rankings of Yamagata prefecture for international marriages in 2005 and 2010 were at the 12th (6.27 %) and at the 28th (2.70 %), respectively.

Thus, it would be significant to pay special attention to Yamagata prefecture. By 1995 their ratio for international marriages rose from 0.05 % in 1975 to 3.87 %, exceedingly high among the rural farming regions in the northeastern part of Japan. The high international marriage rate in Yamagata prefecture is primarily due to marriages between a Japanese husband and a foreign wife, rather than between a Japanese wife and a foreign husband. As seen in Fig. 4.1, by sometime around the year 1995, a great majority of international marriages in Japan took place between Japanese husband and foreign wife. In this regard, Yamagata prefecture was not an exception.

4.3.2 Japanese Wife/Foreign Husband: Percentage of Total

International marriage between a Japanese wife and foreign husband residing in Japan occurs less frequently today than in previous years and averaged only 1.1 % of total marriages in 2010. Nonetheless, prefectures showing higher proportions for this type of interracial marriages were as follows: Okinawa (3.5 %), Tokyo (2.1 %), Osaka (1.7 %), Kanagawa (1.4 %), Kyoto and Chiba (1.1 %), and Aichi (1.0 %) (IPSSR 2014, Table 12.38). In this type of international marriage, it is more often

the case that the nationality of the husband is American (Okinawa, 89.3 %; Aomori, 81.0 %; Nagasaki, 67.9 %; Yamaguchi, 39.7 %; Kanagawa, 34.7 %; and Saga, 33.3 %). There are American military bases in all six of these prefectures, and this fact likely contributed to their high rates of American grooms.

4.3.3 Japanese Husband/Foreign Wife: Percentage of Total

The average percentage for this type of international marriage by prefecture in 2010 was 3.3 % of total marriages, with Chiba being the highest (4.7 %), followed by Aichi, Tokyo, and Gifu (4.6 %), Nagano (4.4 %), and Saitama, Ibaraki, and Yamanashi (4.2 %). Yamagata is the only prefecture that shows relatively high proportion for international marriages between a Japanese husband and foreign wife in the rural farming regions in northeastern Japan. In 2010, the ratio for Yamagata was 2.48 % (the national average, 3.26 %) and ranked the 25th of the total 47 prefectures. The rest of the rural farming prefectures in northern Japan ranked at the bottom layers of all (IPSSR 2014, Table 12.38) (see Fig. 4.4).

Of the total 47 prefectures in Japan today, Yamagata's rankings of this type of international marriages were as follows: 1975, the 47th and the bottom; 1995, the 5th from the top; 2005, the 8th; and 2010, the 25th (IPSSR 2014, Table 12.38). Thus, it is speculated that something might have occurred in Yamagata prefecture, perhaps sometime during the 1980s. The issue will be discussed in detail in the following sections in this chapter.

4.4 Yamagata Prefecture-Pioneering Prefecture for International Marriage in Japan Today

4.4.1 Foreign Residents in Yamagata Prefecture

In studying the topic of international marriage in Japan, it is essential to pay special attention to Yamagata prefecture. This is because several municipal offices of the villages and towns in rural farming regions in Yamagata prefecture took the initiative to bring foreign brides to Japan from the Far East and South East Asian nations in the mid-1980s. Therefore, Yamagata prefecture, in a sense, could be regarded as a pioneering prefecture, which sought to revitalize rural farming households with the active participation of foreign brides from Asian nations.

In looking at the total number of foreigners residing in Japan, Yamagata prefecture did not rank high in 2013 (there were 6,182 out of a total of 2,066,445), and it ranked 34th of all 47 prefectures in this regard (Ministry of Jurisdiction 2014). Of the total population in Yamagata prefecture, the proportion of foreign residents was 0.53 % (ranking 30th out of 47 prefectures), whereas the national average was 1.22 % (Yamagata Prefecture Bureau of Planning and Statistics 2012, Table 15). Of

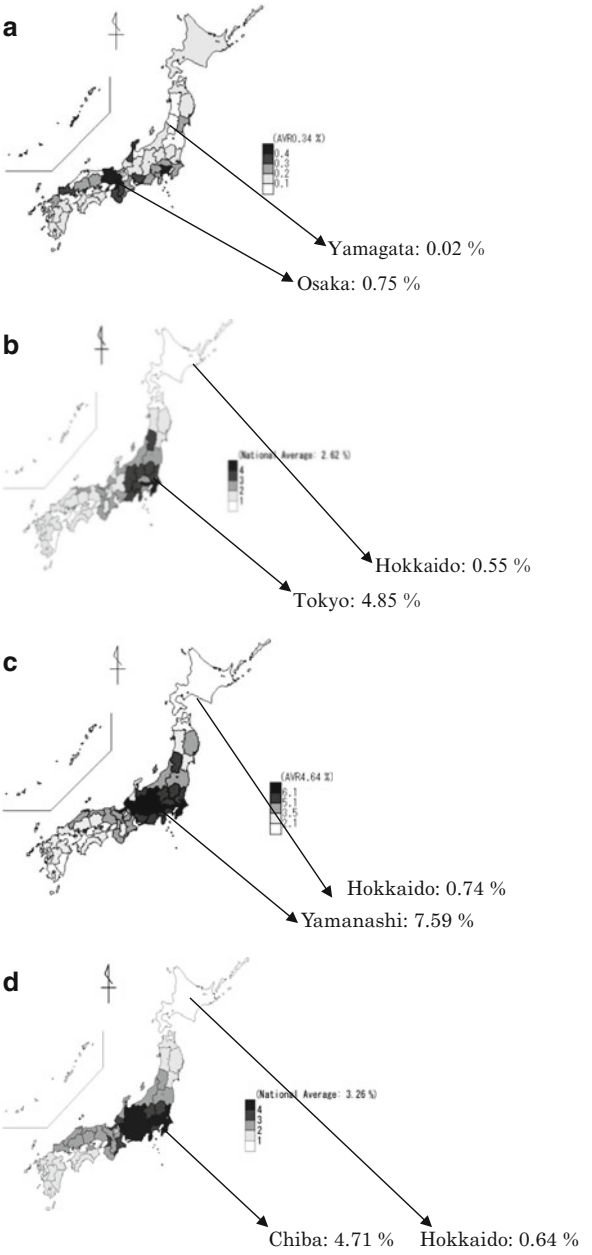

Fig. 4.4 Proportions of Japanese marriages between Japanese husband and foreign wife residing in Japan by prefecture: 1975, 1995, 2005, and 2010. (**a**) 1975 (National average = 0.34 %; Yamagata: 0.02 %-Osaka: 0.75 %). (**b**) 1995 (National average = 2.62 %; Hokkaido: 0.55 %-Tokyo: 4.85 %). (**c**) 2005 (National average = 4.64 %; Hokkaido: 0.74 %-Yamanashi: 7.59 %). (**d**) 2010 (National average = 3.26 %; Hokkaido: 0.64 %-Chiba: 4.71 %) (*Source*: IPSSR 2014, Table 12.38. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

Table 4.1 Foreign residents in Japan in 2013 by prefecture, sex, and objective for staying in Japan

	Total	Female	Female %	Objective-spouse to a Japanese	Spouse %
All Japan	2,066,445	1,123,008	54.34	151,156	7.31
Yamagata	6,182	4,797	77.60	548	8.86
Tokyo	407,067	215,387	52.91	28,333	6.96
Kanagawa	165,573	89,443	54.02	14,104	0.85
Aichi	187,808	105,314	56.08	13,545	7.21
Osaka	203,921	108,458	53.19	9,609	4.71

Source: Ministry of Jurisdiction 2014, alien registration statistics, Tables 5 and 6. The table was constructed and calculated by the author

the total number of foreign residents (6,182), more than two-thirds were female (4,797, 77.6 %) (Ministry of Jurisdiction 2014) (see Table 4.1). As shown in Table 4.1, in most of the prefectures, where a large number of foreign residents cluster, the ratio for male to female is about 50:50. In Yamagata prefecture, however, a great majority of foreign residents are women. In fact, the proportion is as many as eight out of ten. In other words, although foreign residents in Yamagata prefecture represent only a very small proportion of the total population there, their great majority is represented by woman.

Statistics published by the Japanese Ministry of Jurisdiction break down foreign residents by their objectives for staying in Japan. Of them the category relevant to the current study would be "as a spouse to a Japanese person." Thus, such statistics in 2013 for all Japan and Yamagata prefecture were compared and contrasted (see Table 4.1).

Statistics for foreign resident as a foreign spouse to a Japanese person, not identified if it is wife or husband, was examined. Of the total number of foreign spouse living in Japan (151,156), Yamagata is as small as nearly negligible (0.4 %), but they represent nearly one in ten (8.86 %) of foreign residents in Yamagata prefecture (6,182), much larger in other prefectures (see Table 4.1) (Ministry of Jurisdiction 2014, Tables 5 and 6). This fact indicates that foreign women in Yamagata would be an integral force for sustaining the traditional farming households.

4.4.2 Nationalities

Chinese (31.4 %) and North and South Koreans (29.2 %) made up more than half (56.6 %) of the total number of foreign residents in Japan in 2013, followed by Filipinos (10.1 %), and Brazilians (8.8 %). In Yamagata prefecture, by contrast, more than four out of ten (42.3 %) of the foreigners living there were Chinese. The nationalities of foreigners in Yamagata prefecture other than Chinese included North and South Koreans (29.2 %), Filipinos (10.8 %), Vietnamese (3.9 %),

Americans (2.1 %), Brazilians (1.3 %), and others (9.1 %) (Ministry of Jurisdiction 2014, Tables 5 and 6).

One of the striking differences in the nationalities between these two groups is that, in Yamagata, there is a greater concentration of Asians. The nationalities of foreigners in Japan as a whole are more widely diverse than those in Yamagata prefecture.

4.4.3 Correlation Between Number of Foreigners and Household Type by Municipality

Yamagata prefecture has been known for its high proportion of three-generation households (as discussed in Chap. 2 of this book). This fact was confirmed by the 2010 national census data. The national average for three-generation households was 7.1 %, whereas the rate in Yamagata prefecture was the highest of all 47 prefectures, at 21.5 % (Yamagata Prefecture Bureau of Planning and Statistics 2012, Table 25, p. 30 and Table I.1, p. 134). (The lowest rate of all 47 prefectures is found in Tokyo, at 2.3 %.) In other words, in Yamagata prefecture today, slightly more than one out of every five households still maintains the traditional three-generation lifestyle. When we compare the rate for Yamagata prefecture with the national average, and with those for other prefectures, we realize how high the rate is in Yamagata. Looking at households of all types, the odds of finding a three-generation household in Tokyo is just 2 in 100, as opposed to 22 in 100 in Yamagata (see Fig. 4.5, identical to Fig. 2.3 in Chap. 2 of this book).

As in other regions, Yamagata prefecture has been experiencing the problem of depopulation and a growing shortage of women who are willing to become brides in a farm household. Therefore, in the mid-1980s, some municipalities in Yamagata prefecture introduced policies for bringing foreign brides from Asian nations such as Taiwan, Korea, and the Philippines into their farm households. These public policies contributed significantly to revitalizing, in a sense, opening the door to men who lack marriage opportunities otherwise.

We hypothesize, therefore, that *Should the traditional farm household have been revitalized with the assistance of prefectural government in bringing foreign brides into the farming regions, there would be a significantly high correlation between the proportion of foreign residents and that of three-generation households.* Since March 1, 2007, there are four regions in Yamagata prefecture, namely, Murayama (7 cities, 7 towns), Mogami (1 city, 4 towns, 3 villages), Okitama (3 cities, 5 towns), and Shonai (2 cities, 3 towns).[1] At the time of the national census survey in 2005,

[1] Due to the recent enforcement of the reorganization of municipalities throughout Japan, Yamagata prefecture also went through the same. Therefore, the total number of municipalities in Yamagata at the time of the national census survey in 2005 was 38. Since March 1, 2007, it has been reduced to 35 municipalities in total. To be precise, the reduction of three municipalities comes from Shonai region, with two cities and three towns, rather than two cities and six towns.

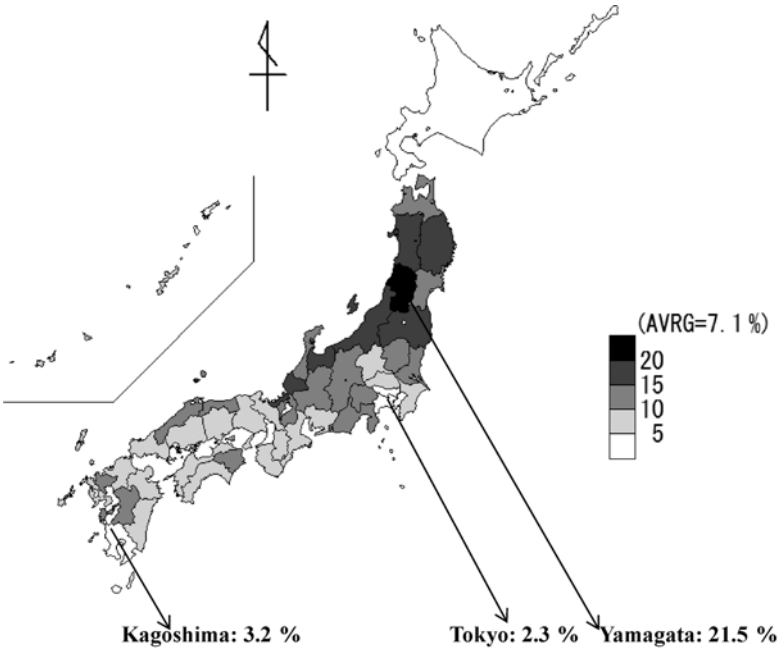

Fig. 4.5 Proportions of three-generation households by prefecture: 2010 (*Source*: Yamagata Prefecture Bureau of Planning and Statistics 2012, Table 25, p. 30, and Table 1, p. 134, and 2013, p. 13. The figures were compiled and constructed by the author)

there were 38 municipalities in Yamagata prefecture. Based on the national census data for regional statistics of Yamagata prefecture by municipality, Pearson correlation coefficients are examined for five variables. These variables are the rate for foreign residents to the total population and those relating to the household, such as nuclear family household, three-generation household, single-person household, and number of persons per household.[2]

The results of Pearson correlation coefficients reveal that except in one case, these coefficients are statistically high (see Table 4.2). When the number of foreign residents in the municipality is large, there is a tendency that the number of three-generation households is also large (r: .340, $p < .05$). Furthermore, when there are many foreigners in the community, the number of family members in the household is likely to be large (r: .322, $p < .05$). At the same time, the municipality with a high rate of foreign residents is less likely to have nuclear households (r: −.408, $p < .05$).

[2] In the statistical analyses, data for the total sample size (N) is shown as 44 rather than 38. This is because six additional data for each variable were included. These six were the total (or average) values for the prefecture, each of the four regions, and one city (before merging three towns).

Table 4.2 Pearson correlation coefficients between foreigners and the type of family households in Yamagata prefecture by municipality: 2005

		Foreigners/total population (%)	Nuclear family household (%)	Three-generation household (%)	Single person household (%)	Number of persons/household
Foreigners/total population (%)	Pearson *r*	1	−.408**	.340*	−.210	.322*
	p		.006	.024	.171	.033
	N	44	44	44	44	44
Nuclear family household (%)	Pearson *r*	−.408**	1	−.876***	.588***	−.780***
	p	.006		.000	.000	.000
	N	44	44	44	44	44
Three-generation household (%)	Pearson *r*	.340*	−.876***	1	−.896***	.980***
	p	.024	.000		.000	.000
	N	44	44	44	44	44
Single person household (%)	Pearson *r*	−.210	.588***	−.896***	1	−.948***
	p	.171	.000	.000		.000
	N	44	44	44	44	44
Number of persons/household	Pearson *r*	.322*	−.780***	.980***	−.948***	1
	p	.033	.000	.000	.000	
	N	44	44	44	44	44

Source: Yamagata Prefecture Bureau of Planning and Statistics 2007. The table was constructed and calculated by the author

***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$ for both tails

The impact of foreign residents in municipalities in Yamagata prefecture extends to other types of households indirectly. The municipality with a high rate of nuclear family households, for example, is likely to possess a high rate of single-person households (r: .588, $p < .001$). Furthermore, it can be said that the municipality with a high rate of nuclear family households is likely to show neither a high rate of three-generation households (r: −.876, $p < .001$) nor large family size (r: −.780, $p < .001$). In addition, as it was expected, the municipality with a high rate of three-generation households exhibited large family size (r: .980, $p < .001$). It is also expected that the municipality with a high rate of three-generation households is less likely to show a high rate for single-person households (r: −.896, $p < .001$).

Correlation coefficients show the linear relationship, but not causality. Thus, with these correlation coefficients at hands, we can say that foreign residents residing in municipalities in rural Yamagata prefecture are significantly related to a three-generation household. In other words, foreigners in Yamagata prefecture seem to be a driving force to maintain the traditional multigenerational households in the rural farming region of Yamagata prefecture. There is a positive correlation between foreign residents and three-generation households.

It seems as if the multigenerational family and the aging society in Yamagata prefecture are highly related to each other. In 2013 the proportion of persons 65 and over in Japan was slightly more than one out of every four (24.1 %), whereas that in Yamagata prefecture was nearly three in every ten (28.3 %), which ranked fifth highest of all 47 prefectures (Yamagata Prefecture Bureau of Planning and Statistics 2013). We have already noted that foreigners residing in Yamagata seem to contribute to the sustainability of the traditional three-generation household. Therefore, the rate for three-generation households is significantly related to indicators for the aging society, such as the elderly population 65 and over (r: .554, $p < .001$), "young olds" of 65–74 (r: .488, $p < .01$), and the elderly 75 and over (r: .702, $p < .001$). Here again, we can say that a high proportion of foreigners in Yamagata prefecture live in a traditional three-generation household.

4.4.4 A Brief History of Foreign Brides in Yamagata Prefecture

The high economic growth in postwar Japan was achieved only by shifting the Japanese industrial structure from its traditional agricultural basis to the cost efficiency of a highly productive technological structure. This technological development was achieved only at the expense of agricultural industries. As a consequence, the rural farming regions in Japan suffered from an acute depopulation problem, and farm households faced difficulties in succeeding with agricultural industry full time.

With the influence of globalization, Japanese industries were eager to expand their markets abroad. In the agricultural industries, however, globalization

meant the influx of foreign agricultural products into the Japanese market. Under these circumstances, marriage, one of the most fundamental institutions in society, has become difficult to accomplish in the rural farming regions in Japan. This problem of the acute shortage of brides (only one marriageable woman for every five marriageable men) will soon apply not only to Yamagata prefecture but will extend throughout Japan. In other words, the shortage of marriageable women in Japan will have a significant impact on the marriage market to Japanese men for the selection of suitable marriage partners (Kumagai 2008, 2010).

In order to alleviate the acute shortage of brides in the rural farming areas in Japan, some local municipal offices have organized to bring in brides from various Asian nations. In the mid-1980s, the town of Asahi-machi and the village of Okura-mura in Yamagata prefecture both organized officially for the first time to introduce Asian brides to Japanese men wishing to pursue the institution of marriage (Satake 2004, 2006; Sato 1989: 47–69; Sato: 2000).

There are several reasons why most Japanese women today do not wish to become a bride in the farming household. First, the traditional Japanese family system of *ie* generates hierarchical human relationships, not only in the family but also in the village, rendering authoritarian power only to men. Second, women are placed on the lower rung of the ladder, without having any right to participate in important decision-making situations. Third, agricultural farming work is very challenging physically. Fourth, the income from agricultural farming is not very stable. Consequently, Japanese women today are not inclined to marry men engaging in agricultural farming (Sato 1989: 47–69).

4.4.5 Asahi-machi

Asahi-machi town, with its population of less than 10,000 (8,593 in the 2005 census, and reduced to 7,856 in the 2010 census), is popularly known as the "village of apples and wineries,"[3] established a system to extend marriage consultation and matchmaking, beginning in the 1970s. In 2010, in Asahi-machi, more than one-third (37.8 %) of all men in their 30s were not married, and the population has been aging rapidly (the proportion of persons 65 and over in Asahi-machi in 2012 was 36.0 %, compared to 28.3 % for Yamagata prefecture and 24.1 % for all Japan) (Yamagata Prefecture 2013). In the early 1980s, the Asahi-machi town office made arrangements to bring in foreign brides from Taiwan and South Korea, followed by nine Filipinos a year since 1985. Of the total households in Asahi-machi in 2010, nearly as high as one-third (31.2 %) was that of the three-generation households. Furthermore, in 2010, the total number of 53 foreign brides resided in Asahi-machi

[3]The Town of Asahi-machi Home Page. Retrieved May 20, 2014 from http://www.town.asahi.yamagata.jp/

(26 Chinese, 17 Koreans, and 10 Filipinos) (Yamagata Prefecture 2012, Table 10, p. 21, and Table 27, p. 31).

The procedure for a week-long "arranged marriage interview tour" to the Philippines established by Asahi-machi was as follows: A single Japanese man seeking a Filipino bride was taken there for arranged interviews; a wedding ceremony was performed; they had a honeymoon trip and then returned to Japan as a married couple. At that time, it cost approximately ¥2,000,000 (≅US$20,000) for a Japanese man to successfully pursue all of these arrangements. Nonetheless, the acute shortage of brides is an imminent problem in the great majority of Japanese farming regions. Thus, it seems as if the demand for bringing foreign brides from the Philippines, and the national policy of the Philippines to seek adequate means for living by sending Filipinos abroad, has been mutually beneficial. This was the reason for the success of the "bringing foreign brides" system by Asahi-machi town in Yamagata prefecture (Satake 2004, 2006).

It should be remembered, however, that the foreign bride system could easily be interpreted as similar to "human trafficking." That concern would be indicated if the human rights of foreign brides were not protected to a full extent and if the marriages materialized as a result of a monetary transaction. Foreign brides are brought to Japan from Asian societies not because of mutual affection but because of the interest of Japanese farmers in continuing to maintain their farming household and the family lineage. Therefore, the success of international marriages between Japanese men in the farming regions and foreign brides from Asian societies rests upon good understandings and cooperation from Japanese relatives and the people surrounding the married couples. If the Japanese relatives impose their own ideas and ways of doing things upon foreign brides, it is evident that these marriages may end unsuccessfully (Satake 2006).

4.4.6 Tozawa-mura

A small village called Tozawa-mura in Yamagata prefecture is famous for its "Mogami River Boat Cruise" (Tozawa-mura Home Page 2014a, and Mogami-gawa Funa Kudari 2014b).[4] The village has been suffering from problems due to an acute level of depopulation and the rapid progress of aging (the total population was 5,304, and the proportion of persons 65 and over was 31.9 %, and that of children 0–14 was 10.4 % in 2012). The village is a typical example of the traditional farming village, which continues to maintain a high rate of traditional three-generation households (38.5 %, compared to Yamagata, 21.5 % and the national average, 7.1 %) (Yamagata Prefecture 2013, p. 13). Following in the footsteps of Asahi-machi and Okura-mura of Yamagata prefecture, Tozawa-mura also established an

[4] Tozawa-mura Home Page. Retrieved May 20, 2014, from http://www.vill.tozawa.yamagata.jp/; and "Mogami-gawa Funa Kudari" [Mogami River Boat Cruise], retrieved May 20, 2014, from http://www.vill.tozawa.yamagata.jp/?page_id=7649#3

official program that brings foreign brides from Asian societies in 1990. A total of eleven foreign brides from South Korea and the Philippines were brought into Tozawa-mura in 1990. In 2010, the total number of foreign brides in Tozawa-mura was 53 (1.00 % of the total population: 11 from South Korea, 8 from the Philippines, and 34 from China) (Yamagata Prefecture 2012, Table 13.1, pp. 120–121).

The success in bringing foreign brides to Tozawa-mura was significantly enhanced by the active introduction of various supporting program by the Tozawa-mura municipal office. Examples of these supporting programs are language programs; health, welfare, and insurance programs; educational programs for children; and international friendship programs (AIRY 2006, 2011).

4.5 Three Reports on Research into Family Relations in Yamagata Prefecture

As has been noted earlier, the family in Yamagata prefecture maintains the traditional family structure, in which three generations coreside in one household (ranking at the top of all 47 prefectures). In addition, the rate for both married spouses participating in the labor force is quite high (ranking second highest of all 47 prefectures). At the same time, Yamagata is going through the process of population aging, and fertility decline. Nonetheless, the average number of children for married couples between 20 and 39 years of age has stayed pretty much constant over the past four decades. This indicates that the one of the major factors contributing to the declining fertility rate is, in fact, the lowering of the marriage rate. The national average rate for never-married men at 50 years of age today is nearly two in ten (1960, 1.12 %; 2000, 11.35 %; and 2010, 18.71), and the one for Yamagata prefecture in 2010 is 18.5 %, similar to the national average (IPSSR 2014, Table 12.37).

In the traditional farming Yamagata prefecture, this rate (18.5 %) for never-married men at 50 years of age should be looked at with caution. Because, it suggests that there are as many never-married men at 50 years of age as those of the national average. The rate for the lifetime singlehood of men in Yamagata has come to be as high as that of the national average today. Factors which made Yamagata men obliged to stay single throughout their lives seem to be the very reasons for fertility decline and population aging in Yamagata prefecture.

Three survey reports on family relations in Yamagata prefecture have been published. One is the “Survey Report on the Attitudes toward Families in Yamagata Prefecture” (Association for International Relations in Yamagata: AIRY 2006), and the other is the “Report on the Questionnaire Survey Research on Foreigners Residing in Yamagata Prefecture” (Association for International Relations in Yamagata: AIRY 2011). In addition, the Department of International Economic Exchange of Yamagata Prefecture published report on “The State of Yamagata Prefecture” (Yamagata Prefecture Bureau of Planning and Statistics 2014).

4.5.1 *"Survey Report on the Attitudes Toward Families in Yamagata Prefecture" (Association for International Relations in Yamagata: AIRY 2006)*

"Survey Report on the Attitudes toward Families in Yamagata Prefecture" (AIRY 2006) is the report of a study on people in Yamagata prefecture, detailing their attitudes toward marriage, the family, child-rearing, and labor force participation. The questionnaire survey was administered in October 2004 to men and women between 20 and 49 years of age. (The total number of valid questionnaires returned was 1,390, yielding a valid return rate of 56.7 %).[5] The major objective of the survey was to identify the factors contributing to the difficulty in attaining marriage, which, in turn, resulted in the fertility decline in Yamagata prefecture.

An overview of the attitudes toward the family among the people in Yamagata is traditional rather than liberal and in favor of avoiding divorce and raising one's own family of procreation. Although people in the marriageable age cohorts desire to get married, there exist factors that hinder them from getting into the institution of the marriage. Examples of these factors are as follows: first, there exist very limited opportunities for these people in Yamagata prefecture to meet marriageable people of the opposite sex. Second, the family in Yamagata is characterized by a high rate of coresidency, in which married women live with their parents-in-law within the same household. Third, people in Yamagata feel strongly that care for elderly parents should be extended by their adult children, especially when they are coresiding. Fourth, delayed marriage of women results in delayed child-rearing. It also brought about a high rate of labor force participation among married women in Yamagata. At the same time, married women in the labor force are reluctant to impair their career prospects by raising a family, thereby lowering the fertility rate among the women in Yamagata.

4.5.2 *"Report on the Questionnaire Survey Research on Foreigners Residing in Yamagata Prefecture" (Association for International Relations in Yamagata: AIRY 2011)*

The first survey research was conducted in 2005 (Association for International Relations in Yamagata: AIRY 2006) and the second in 2010 (AIRY 2011). The following is a summary of the second survey. Survey questionnaires were sent to a total of 1,884 foreign citizens who were 18 and over and registered residents of Yamagata prefecture in June–July 2010 (the sample consists of registered members

[5] The proportional random sampling methods by sex and population were applied to men and women aged 20–49 residing in Yamagata prefecture in October 2004. Of the total number of valid responses, 628 (M: 391, F: 236) were never married and 762 (M: 316, F: 446) were married.

of AIRY, registered foreign residents, and foreign citizens taking the intermediary-level Japanese language course at that time with Association for International Relations in Yamagata (Association for International Relations in Yamagata, AIRY 2011).[6]

Of the total number of 392 completed questionnaires returned, more than two-thirds (272, 70.5 %) were women and two-thirds were aged 30 and over (30s, 27 %; 40s, 21 %; 50s, 9 %). Similar to the report made by the national census, the origins of these foreign citizens in Yamagata were predominantly from Asian societies such as China (124, 32.1 %), South and North Korea (83, 21.5 %), and the Philippines (31. 8 %). More than 60 % of these foreign residents had been staying in Yamagata for less than five years (0–2.9 years, 48.6 %; 3–4.9 years, 12.7 %), one-fifth of them for 5–9.9 years (18.2 %), and two out of ten (20.5 %) for more than 10 years.

Foreign citizens in Yamagata express their strong feeling that they are discriminated against, not treated properly, and not accepted by the community. They feel that Japanese people tend to lack appreciation for foreign ideas and values different from their own. Furthermore, foreign residents desire to have more opportunities for intercultural exchange between the Japanese people and foreign citizens residing in Yamagata and would like to express themselves more frequently (AIRY 2011: 13–28).

Foreign brides in Yamagata feel strongly that their husbands and family members do not understand the adjustment problems that they experience. Consequently, foreign brides are placed in a disadvantageous situation. They encounter psychological distress and physical hardship in their daily labor and may become victims of physical or verbal abuse (AIRY 2011: 13–28).

Respondents are asked to state their sentiments freely on living in Yamagata. Let us list some of them which seem to address key issues for enhancing globalization of not only Yamagata but also Japan. It is a great interest that sentiments expressed coincide with those of the author of this book expressed on "*Toward the Globalization of Japanese Families*" in Chap. 8 of this book. Some examples of what they expressed are found below:

1. Japanese people in Yamagata need to know themselves and Yamagata on both good and bad aspects as well so that they are able to explain about themselves to foreigners.
2. People in Yamagata should be more open-minded to foreign cultures and ideas so that people can exchange intercultural communication. It does not mean, however, that all the ideas expressed by foreigners should be accepted, but rather the people should be sensitive enough to the differences in thoughts and ideas.
3. People in Yamagata should be willing to take part in various activities with foreigners so that both sides could exchange ideas and communicate.

[6] Questionnaires in Japanese, together with that of the native tongue of each respondent (either in English, Chinese, or Korean), were sent to 1,884 randomly selected foreign residents in Yamagata in June–July 2010. Of the total number of questionnaire sent, 48 were returned as undeliverable, and 392 completed questionnaires were returned by July 10, 2010, yielding a return rate of 21.4 %.

4. People in Yamagata need to take more active efforts in exchanging dialogue with family members, neighbors, and people in the community so that they understand feelings, sentiments, and ideas of others.
5. People in Yamagata should be more active in letting foreigners understand them and various aspects of life in Yamagata.

Success in international marriage comes if and only if mutual understanding is generated. It is true that foreign brides must learn to adjust to Japanese society, culture, and way of life. At the same time, educational programs concerning foreign cultures, societies, and their way of life need to be provided for their spouses and for family members as well.

4.5.3 Yamagata Prefecture Bureau of International Economic Exchange (2014)

When people interact across national boundaries, there naturally emerge not only positive results but also negative consequences. The success in bringing foreign brides to rural farming municipalities in Yamagata prefecture also has gone through the same experiences. Consequently, Yamagata Prefecture Bureau of International Economic Exchange has recently published the report on the "State of Globalization in Yamagata Prefecture" (Yamagata Prefecture 2014). Based upon their experiences in cultural exchange with foreign people residing in various municipalities, Yamagata prefectural office took active role to introduce various supporting programs. The following five programs should be noted: information booklet for foreign residents; oral consultation by the Association for International Relations in Yamagata (AIRY); language programs; health, welfare, and insurance programs; and educational programs for children (Yamagata Prefecture 2014).

4.5.3.1 Various Guidebooks for Foreign Residents

In December 2012, Yamagata prefecture compiled and published the "Life-Support Information Booklet for Foreign Residents in Yamagata Prefecture" in English, Chinese (both in Mandarin and Taiwanese), Korean, Portugal, and Tagalog, distributed through municipal offices. This booklet includes various information on the life-support programs available not only through Yamagata prefectural office but also through international exchange organizations. With this information booklet, foreign residents not familiar with Japanese daily living are guided to Japanese customs in their native languages. In addition, this booklet lists various life-support publications by municipalities in Yamagata prefecture. (As of March 2014, 30 different publications on life-support-related booklets are published by various municipalities in Yamagata prefecture.)

4.5.3.2 Oral Consultation by the Association for International Relations in Yamagata: AIRY

AIRY (Association for International Relations in Yamagata) in Yamagata city offers free oral consultation to foreign residents in English, Chinese, Korean, Portugal, Tagalog, Thai, and Indonesian by appointment on both general and specialized matters. As of June 2011, four cities and two townships in Yamagata prefecture offer similar consultation to foreign residents in Yamagata prefecture.

4.5.3.3 Language Programs

As of March 2014, there are 32 organizations that offer Japanese language programs for foreign residents in Yamagata prefecture. The format of the program differs from one organization to the other. The Tozawa-mura municipal office, for example, offers language programs to foreign brides in Filipino, Korean, and Chinese, once a week for each language. Each of the foreign brides is encouraged to maintain her native language by conversing in her mother tongue. Japanese language education and information on the mother country, as well, are given in the native language of the foreign bride. Furthermore, family members and employees are requested to make special efforts to enable these foreign brides to attend the language class once a week. Language programs organized by the Tozawa-mura office give opportunities for foreign brides to express themselves in their own language and contribute significantly to curtailing the stress naturally felt by foreign brides. At the same time, these efforts extended by the municipal office are well received by the village people and have become the driving force in enhancing the liberalization of their attitudes.

4.5.3.4 Health, Welfare, and Insurance Programs

Special programs for foreign brides relating to health, welfare, and insurance have been established. In cooperation with local NGOs and the Japan Volunteer Center (JVC), the Tozawa-mura municipal office provides foreign brides with medical consultation manuals in their native tongues and offers medical interpretation services. These programs have contributed significantly to reduce the psychological strains and stresses experienced by foreign brides in Japan.

4.5.3.5 Educational Programs

Educational programs incorporating the children of foreign brides, both for the children themselves and for the community as well, must be reevaluated. The number of children born to foreign brides in Tozawa-mura has now exceeded 300. Naturally, concerns about the adjustment of these children to the local school systems have been expressed. Fortunately, no serious problems of bullying

were reported. It seems as if children in Tozawa-mura, both those of local and of foreign brides, know the rules and regulations as to how to interact with each other (Kuwayama 1995: 38). Nevertheless, it is an issue to be solved for the children of foreign brides as to how to learn the foreign culture of their mothers and how to form an identity of their own.

Conclusion

This chapter attempts to analyze the issue of international marriage as an outcome of depopulation in rural farming regions and the globalization of the Japanese economy. We have discussed the historical development, current situation, difficulties, and possible solutions for this issue.

International marriage is a form of exogamy based on the international population migration in which a person marries outside of their social group. This form of marriage has existed ever since Japan opened her doors to the world in the Meiji era. During the first half of the twentieth century, Japan underwent strong influences of nationalism; at that time, international marriage was strictly controlled. Immediately after the end of WWII, quite a few Japanese brides married American soldiers who were stationed in Japan. During the bubble economy in the 1980s, some Japanese businessmen living abroad married foreign brides. With the bursting of Japanese asset price bubble and with the rapid progress of globalization, a new type of problem relating to foreign brides in Japan has emerged. That is, an acute shortage of brides in rural farming regions has emerged. To alleviate this situation, foreign brides have been imported to farming regions in Japan.

Three demographic features of foreign brides in Japan today were highlighted. First, of the total number of newly married couples, the proportion with a foreign spouse has increased dramatically over the years (1965, .44 %; 1990, 3.55 %; 2005, 5.81 %; and 2012, 3.50 %). Second, of the international marriages, foreign brides now constitute the majority, rather than foreign grooms (1965, 25.7 %; 1990, 38.0 %; 2012, 72.7 %). Third, these foreign brides come primarily from three regions in Asia, namely, China, the Philippines, and North and South Korea (in 2012, 41.7 %, 20.5 %, and 17.5 %, respectively).

Analyses of demography and the family in Yamagata prefecture confirmed that the traditional Japanese family structure still persists today. They also indicated that one of the major factors contributing to the declining fertility rate in Yamagata is the lowering of the marriage rate. In fact, the rate for never-married men at 50 years of age is as high as nearly one in five today (1960, 1.12 %; 2010, 18.71 %).

In-depth analyses of foreign brides were conducted in several municipalities of Yamagata prefecture that have high rates of coresidency and elderly

(continued)

population. The study confirmed that there exists a high correlation between foreign brides and traditional three-generation households. Therefore, it could be said, "Foreign residents residing in municipalities in Yamagata prefecture are significantly related to three-generation households." In other words, foreigners in Yamagata prefecture seem to be a driving force to maintain the traditional multigenerational household in rural farming regions of Yamagata prefecture.

When we study international marriage in the rural farming region of Yamagata, we recognize regional and community differences in what many view as Japan's highly homogeneous society. At the same time, we know that where there is marriage, there is divorce. Thus, the next family issue, in the next chapter, is on changes in divorce in Japan.

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Chapter 5
Changing Divorce in Japan: With Special Attention to Regional Variations

5.1 Introduction

It is unfortunate that not many Japanese scholars have paid due attention to regional variations in the study of not only divorce but also family relations in general. The author of this book, however, emphasizes that such perspective is essential for the study of demography and the family in Japan (Kumagai 1983, 1984, 1986, 1996, 1997a, b, 2008, 2010, 2011). It is strongly believed that understanding divorce in Japan will be further enhanced when we focus the unit of analysis on the prefecture level rather than the population as a whole. This is the very reason for studying the issue of divorce with special attention to regional variations.

Although the recent trend in divorce in Japan has been on the rise, her current crude divorce rate (CDR, measured per 1,000 population) was 1.84 in 2013, not as high as her western counterparts (4.68 in Russia in 2011, 2.81 in the United States in 2011). It is considered one of the lowest among the modern industrial nations (Institute of Population and Social Security Research, hereafter referred to as IPSSR 2014, Table 6.19; Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, hereafter referred to as MHLW 2014a) (see Fig. 5.1). The land area of Japan is very small, just equivalent to one twenty-fifth of the mainland United States. Nevertheless, when this tiny island nation is examined closely, its cultural diversity from one region to another is realized. The issue of divorce is not an exception in this regard. In other words, the CDR in some regions of Japan is much higher than other regions. The major purpose for this chapter, therefore, is to identify, compare, and contrast the cultural factors which account for regional variations in divorce in Japan.

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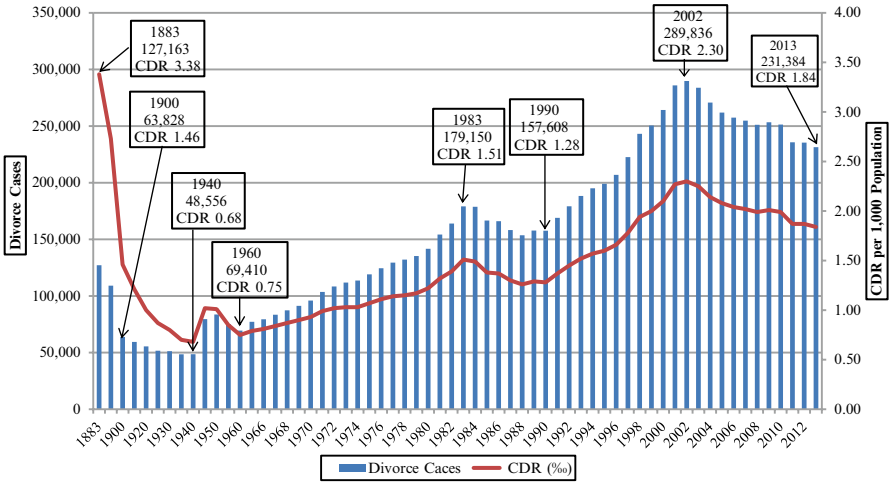

Fig. 5.1 Changes in divorce cases and crude divorce rates (CDR ‰) in Japan: 1883–2013 (*Source*: IPSSR 2014: Table 6.2, MHLW 2014b Tables 1(2.2) and 2(2.2). The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

5.2 A Brief History of Divorce in Japan

Before we discuss regional variations in Japanese divorce, let us consider a brief history of divorce in Japan. In earlier studies, the author of this book explored a century of divorce history in Japan from 1883 to 1983 by dividing the entire period into six subperiods (Kumagai 1983),[1] adding three more subperiods later. Thus, an overview of the history of divorce in Japan over the past 130 years will be presented as nine periods: 1883–1897, 1898–1899, 1900–1943,[2] 1947–1950, 1951–1964, 1965–1983, 1984–1990, 1991–2002, and 2003 to the present (see Fig. 5.1). Detailed discussion on each of these nine periods is found elsewhere (Kumagai 2008: 49–58, 2010).

In this chapter, the analysis of Japan's divorce is confined to a comparison of the first and second periods, namely, 1883–1897 and 1898–1899, with an overview of 1960–2013. This comparison reflects the contrasting cultural factors associated with regional variations of divorce in Japan.

[1] This section depends heavily on the author's earlier works, with the statistical data updated (Kumagai 1983: 86–94; 2008: 50–58).

[2] No official demographic statistics are available for the years 1944, 1945, and 1946 due to WWII.

5.2.1 The First Period: 1883–1897

Japanese society was transformed by the Meiji Restoration beginning in 1868 (Meiji Era: 1868–1912), and many people enthusiastically took part in laying the foundations of modernization. Official statistics on divorce first became available in 1883. During the early part of the Meiji era, the divorce rate was extremely high, from a peak of 3.39 (per 1,000 population) in 1883 to a low of 2.62 in 1892, the average being 2.82 for the 15 years from 1883 to 1897.

A divorce rate of 3.34 is equivalent to that in the USSR in the early 1980s, and it is only since the 1970s that such a high divorce rate was attained in the United States (United Nations 2013). The US divorce rate between the years 1882 and 1892 was somewhere around 0.6; only after 1915 did it exceed 1.0 (US Census Bureau 2013). In fact, Japan's divorce rate was higher than any other nation at the time.

There are various explanations for this. Goode (1963) argued that, in Japan, the traditional family system was originally a "high divorce" system. He further contends that once the traditional family system began to be undermined, the divorce rate would fall. Others such as Kuwahata (1956: 26) and Ohshio (1956: 61–69) attributed these high rates mainly to the then-existing custom of expelling a wife from the traditional Japanese family, the so-called *ie* system.[3] The majority of divorces during this period, however, occurred among the common people—farmers, fishermen, and merchants—who made up approximately 80 % of the total population. The members of the upper strata consisted of samurai warriors, landowners, and noblemen. Goode (1963) contended that in a system which permits rather free divorce, the lower strata would have a higher divorce rate than the upper strata.

There are three major reasons for a low divorce rate among people of the upper strata. First, a man who married a "higher class" woman would be constrained by her family (his in-laws). Second, concubines were accepted among the higher classes at this time, so a husband could find happiness with another woman. It was not considered adultery if a husband had sexual relations with a concubine. Third, a woman in an upper strata family was taught to "be a good housewife." For these reasons, divorces among families of the upper strata were quite rare.

On the other hand, divorce among the lower classes and in rural areas occurred frequently and contributed to the high overall rate. In addition to those reasons discussed by Goode, Kuwahata, and Ohshio, three other explanations for this phenomenon are possible, although there is no proof they contributed to the high divorce rate to any significant degree (Yuzawa 1979: 172–81). First, all five prefectures in the Tohoku region (Aomori, Iwate, Miyagi, Akita, and Yamagata), which are situated in the northern part of the main island of Honshu (primarily the farming areas), demonstrated high divorce rates. Marrying young was common there. The average age at first marriage in these five prefectures in 1882 was below 21 for

[3] The phenomenon of expelling the wife is called yome oidashi, in which most commonly the in-laws drove the wife out of the household. When the in-laws disliked the son's wife, they could expel her, and she was not allowed to resist. Confucian filial piety was the basic moral code of the traditional Japanese family.

males and 18 for females, and in the case of Iwate prefecture, 17.07 for males and 14.09 for females—about 5 years younger than the national average (IPSSR 2014; MHWL 2014a, b). Farming households in northern Japan possessed relatively larger farms and regarded the bride as valuable labor. However, if she did not meet the expectations of her husband's family, she was simply expelled. Lacking any influence in the situation, she turned to divorce.

The situation was reversed in the Tohoku farming region and the fishing villages of Hokkaido, the northernmost island, where there were three times as many matrilineal marriages as in Kyushu, the southernmost island. In the matrilineal system, the relationship between husband and wife was considered to be an employment contract of the groom by the bride's family. If the work of the groom turned out to be unsatisfactory, he was immediately divorced.

It seems likely that a matrilineal marriage system itself could create a high divorce rate within a traditional male-oriented society. Such a nontraditional marriage, a deviant family system, could create frustration in the husband and conflict within the family. The dissatisfied bride's family could use divorce as a way to resolve marital disputes. Nonetheless, this matrilineal marriage subgroup could not be solely responsible for the very high divorce rate in Japan during this period.

There was also a casual attitude among the common people toward marriage and divorce; both divorce and remarriage were common. Arichi (1977: 32–38) pointed out the four most frequently cited reasons for divorce at the time: lack of deliberation at the time of marriage, financial problems, persisting authority of the in-laws and the husband, and simplicity of divorce and remarriage. Marriages were frequently based on a forced arrangement by parents or relatives, or the temporary emotions of the partners. As a consequence, marriages often did not last long. The lack of a strong commitment was likely influenced by the absence of the concept of the companionship marriage in the traditional *ie* system.

These contrasting aspects of the traditional *ie* system, that is, the stringent impact of the family on the institution of marriage and the lack of an interpersonal relationship, interacted with each other. Aside from the traditional institutional aspect of the *ie* system, somewhat loose social and moral controls on marriage and divorce existed during the early years of the Meiji era. This was mainly due to the abolishment of the feudal system, that is, the Meiji Restoration, as well as to the introduction of Western ideas.

5.2.2 The Second Period: 1898–1899

Even though a 2-year span is too brief a time to be considered a period, it can be viewed as a demarcation line between two periods. There was an abrupt drop in the divorce rate in 1899, 1 year after the Meiji Civil Code was put into effect.[4] Within 2

[4] Although both husband and wife were granted the right to divorce under the Meiji Civil Code, the reality was far different. The wife's right to divorce was considerably restricted. It was only after

years the divorce rate decreased by nearly half, from 2.87 in 1897, to 2.27 in 1898, to 1.50 in 1899. The enforcement of the Civil Code required that marriages, as well as divorces, be reported to the *kocho* (headman) if they were to be valid. In addition, it became necessary to submit in writing a reason for the divorce, which was not required before.

As a result, people's attitudes toward divorce changed, with more deliberation before both marriage and divorce. However, Goode (1963: 369–60) pointed out the anomalous aspects of this sharp decline and questioned the validity of these statistics; since the Meiji Civil Code was not enforced until 1898, it is quite possible that there was a failure to register a divorce when a marriage had not been registered. If so, Goode concluded these bureaucratic changes would account for the sharp drop in the divorce rate in 1898–1899. However, it is beyond the scope of this book to discuss the validity of these statistics.

5.2.3 An Overview of Japanese Divorce: 1960–2013

During the high economic growth since the mid-1960s, divorce rates continued to increase to 1983. This was the first time in Japanese divorce history that industrialization seemed to have increased the divorce rate in contemporary Japanese history. Then, during the period 1984–1990, divorce rate declined continuously. Japanese economy during this period was so prosperous that it has been called "Japanese asset price bubble." We note, however, CDR (crude divorce rates) during this high economic growth continued to decline. This economic growth would perhaps ease social pressure of the people and enable them to keep the standard of living up to the decent level (Kato 2005; Kono 2012).

During the following period, 1991–2002, divorce rates increased sharply (CDR from 1.37 in 1991 to 2.30 in 2002) and then declined today (1.84 in 2013). It is a principle of the economic life cycle that whenever we have an asset price bubble, there follows a sudden crash when the bubble bursts. This was also true for the Japanese economy, and the bubble burst in 1991 in Japan. Since then, Japanese society has been undergoing a serious economic recession, and the economy has been suffering from serious stagnation, leading to sharp increases in divorce rates. The impact has been so serious that not only the public sector but also the personal lives of the Japanese people have been affected. The Japanese people have been obliged to develop more economical lifestyles, to learn to conserve resources, and to develop budgetary strategies in their domestic finances to make both ends meet. Some people may not have good strategies to solve these problems, and the family dynamics can easily generate tensions and conflicts. As a result, divorce may be the final resort available to family members for conflict resolution.

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the enactment of the new Japanese Civil Code in 1947 that the wife was accorded an actual right to divorce.

Fortunately, today we can see hints of an upturn in the economy. Perhaps due to this encouraging outlook, the CDR in the past couple of years has been on the decline. In fact, the CDR in Japan hit 2.0 in 1999 for the first time in recent years and then continued to rise until the peak of 2.30 in 2002. Since then, it has been on a decline, to 1.84 in 2013 (see Fig. 5.1). It is not certain, however, how long this decline will last. At one point, it was speculated that some housewives were only waiting for the old-age pension division program to go into effect in 2007 (Kumagai et al. 2010), when the divorce rates would jump, but it did not happen. This change in the pension division program enabled the full-time housewife wishing a divorce to negotiate a maximum of one-half the old-age pension to be paid for the husband. Thus, with the hope of receiving this old-age pension upon the retirement of their husbands, Japanese wives might have postponed divorce proceedings for a short while. In actuality, however, the divorce rate never rose, but continued to decline. (For the discussion on "Late-Life Divorce in Japan," please see the next chapter, i.e., Chap. 6, in this book.)

An economic recession for more than two decades from the year 1991 to the present is a long span for any person to endure. Frustrations felt by individuals may perhaps have contributed to high divorce rates. Studies report negative impacts of economic recession on marital lives. Kato finds that economic growth eases the impact of social stratification factors which yield the breakup of marriage (Kato 2005). Kono reports that whether or not one can lead a decent life is the essential factor for stable marriage (Kono 2012). Therefore, we sincerely look forward to an upward turn of the Japanese economy, as it may be accompanied by a downward trend in the divorce rate.

5.3 Three Conspicuous Characteristics of Divorce in Japan

Before we turn our discussion to regional variations in divorce in Japan, let us note three conspicuous characteristics of divorce in Japan. They are, first, the duration of marriage before divorce; second, child custody in divorce; and, third, divorce by mutual agreement. In this chapter, however, let us just look at the general trend of these characteristics. Detailed discussion on the first and the third characteristics will follow in the next chapter, i.e., Chap. 6, of this book.

5.3.1 Duration of Marriage Before Divorce

In Japan, of all the divorce cases in a year today, more than half (52.8 %) occurs in less than 10 years of marriage, and more than 80 % does so in less than 20 years (IPSSR 2014, Table 6.13) (see Fig. 5.2). The average length of marriage that ends

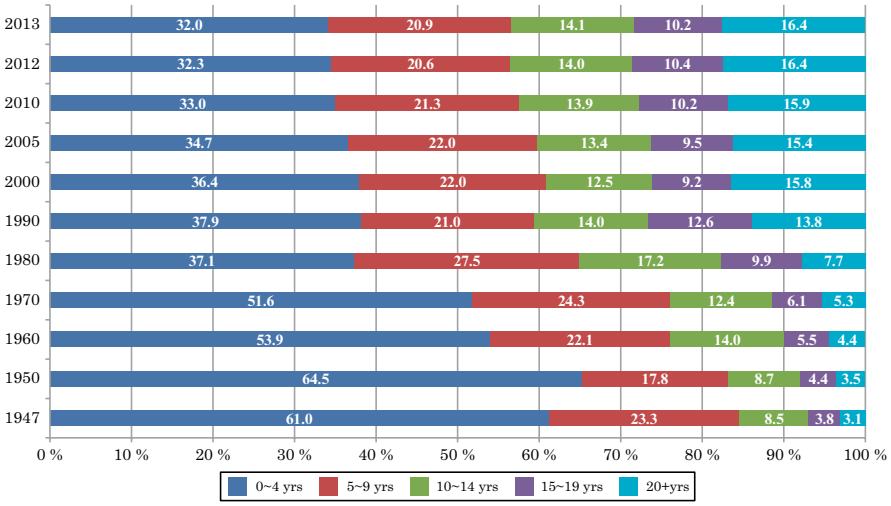

Fig. 5.2 Changes in proportions (%) of divorces by duration of marriage: 1947–2013 (*Source*: IPSSR 2014, Table 6.13, and MHLW 2014b, Table 10. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

in divorce in 2010 was 11 years (MHWL 2011).[5] In other words, should the divorced couple have children, majority of them are minors under 20 years old. (For more detailed discussion on this topic, see Chap. 6 in this book.)

5.3.2 Child Custody in Divorce

In Japan, the child custody in divorce in principle is sole custody that a child resides with and is under the supervision of one parent. Shared custody that a child has periods of residing with and being under the supervision of each parent is granted only to special cases in the best interests of the child. Ever since the mid-1960s, the maternal preference in child custody has superseded to the paternal preference, as high as 84 % in 2012 (ISPPR 2014, Table 6.14, see Fig. 5.3). It has been reported that the income for mother-headed single-parent households tends to be substandard. Consequently, these families are obliged to be in poverty-stricken situation (Honda et al. 2011).

[5] For the case of the United States, the duration of first marriage for those whose first marriage ended in divorce in 2010 was 8 years (men 8.2 years and women 7.9 years) (US Census Bureau 2013).

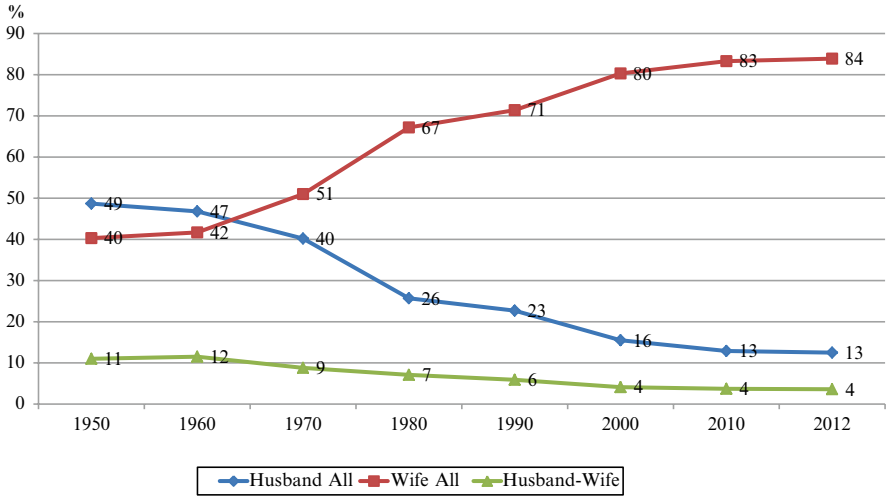

Fig. 5.3 Changes in proportions (%) of child custody in divorce in Japan: 1950–2012 (*Source*: IPSSR 2014, Table 6.14. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

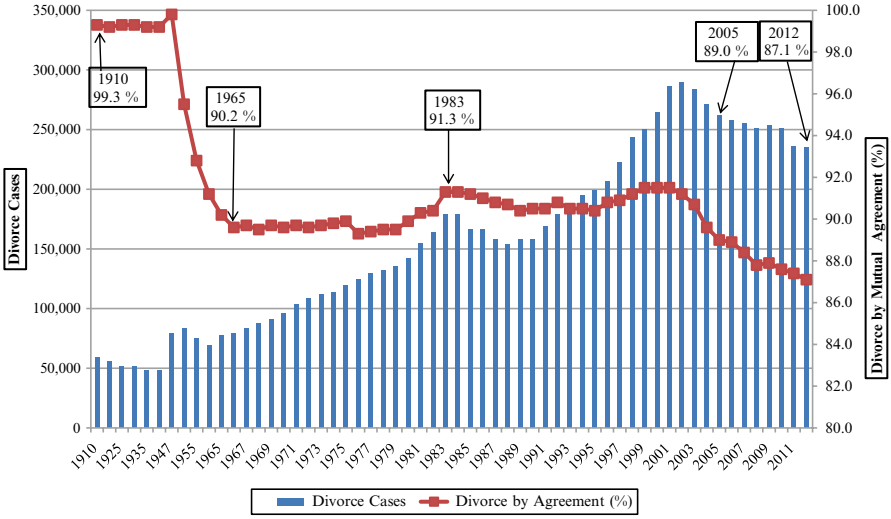

Fig. 5.4 Changes in proportions (%) of divorce by mutual agreement and divorce cases: 1910–2012 (*Source*: IPSSR 2014, Table 6.2. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

5.3.3 Divorce by Mutual Agreement

The divorce by mutual agreement in Japan could be obtained by notifying the official in charge of family registers. This type of divorce, rather than the one through the judicial procedure, has been always prevalent throughout the history of divorce in Japan (IPSSR 2014, Table 6.2; see Fig. 5.4). Although it has been on the decline

gradually, of all the divorce cases in a year, nearly nine in every ten cases are based on the mutual agreement (87.1 %). Recent changes in the Civil Code (Article 766) have made it necessary for divorcing parents to designate the visitation right and alimony for the education of children (Ministry of Jurisdiction 2011). These legal changes, however, do not possess any legal forces to be pursued. Thus, the divorcing parents may not abide by this legal regulation. Thus, the prevalence of divorce with mutual agreement and mother-headed economically strained single families are likely to continue in the future. For more discussion on this topic, see Chap. 6 in this book.

5.4 Regional Variations in Divorce

Since industrialization is most often accompanied by urbanization, we postulate a hypothesis that there are higher divorce rates in urban/industrial areas in Japan than in rural/agricultural areas. When changes in the crude divorce rate by prefecture in 1920, 1970, and 2013 were examined, the result clearly reveals different patterns of distribution between 1920 and 2013 (see Table 5.1 and Fig. 5.5). That is, the prefectures with high crude divorce rates in 1920 are vastly different from those in 2013, except Okinawa.

In 1920, when the national CDR was 0.99, there were 24 prefectures that showed a CDR higher than that, whereas the national CDR in 2013 was 1.84, with 13 prefectures above the national average. Interestingly, of these 24 prefectures above the national average in 1920, only three (Okinawa, 2.60; Chiba, 1.85; and Kumamoto, 1.86) were above the average in 2013. The remaining 21 prefectures occupied the lower level of CDR rank in 2013. This is a clear indication that significant structural changes occurred in Japanese society, perhaps sometime around the mid-1960s, when Japan experienced a high economic growth period. During this same period, divorce rates also began to trend upward, as seen in Fig. 5.5 (IPSSR 2014, Table 12.32, MHLW 2013, Table 1, 2014b, Table 9).

Changes in the pattern of Japan's working population have naturally accompanied the modernization process. Until the early 1950s, approximately half the Japanese working population was engaged in primary industries. Following the onset of the high economic growth period in 1964, however, this proportion declined significantly; it has now become less than five (4.0 % in 2010) percent of the total working population. In contrast, the proportion of tertiary industry workers has more than tripled from the prewar period, from 20 % in 1920 to 66.5 % in 2010 (IPSSR 2014, Table 8.7).

Significant attrition in Japan's farming population and household is also evident. At 6.2 million farm households in 1950, the numbers fell to less than two million (1.94 million) in 2005 and further down to 1.631 million in 2010 (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries [(hereafter referred to as MAFF) 2011)]). In these decades, the Japanese farming population was reduced to one-fifth of the pre-high economic growth period, indicating a dramatic structural change in modern Japanese society.

Table 5.1 Changes in crude divorce rates (‰: rate per 1,000 population) by prefecture: top 5 and bottom 5: 1920–2013

47	46	45	44	43	5	4	3	2	1	Rank
Ibaraki	Osaka	Hyogo	Shiga	Kanagawa	Okinawa	Niigata	Aomori	Hiroshima	Akita	1920 All Japan
0.67	0.68	0.72	0.72	0.73	1.47	1.49	1.50	1.56	1.62	(‰) 0.99
Saitama	Ibaraki	Nagano	Yamanashi	Tokyo	Fukui	Aomori	Akita	Ishikawa	Okinawa	1940 All Japan
0.45	0.45	0.48	0.53	0.54	0.94	0.97	0.99	1.01	1.31	(‰) 0.66
Ibaraki	Nagano	Shiga	Yamanashi	Saitama	Ehime	Fukuoka	Nagasaki	Kochi	Okinawa	1950 All Japan
0.65	0.67	0.70	0.70	0.74	1.25	1.26	1.28	1.29	–	(‰) 1.01
Nagano	Shiga	Saitama	Ibaraki	Yamanashi	Nagasaki	Yamaguchi	Fukuoka	Kochi	Okinawa	1960 All Japan
0.45	0.48	0.49	0.49	0.51	0.96	0.99	1.00	1.18	–	(‰) 0.75
Shiga	Nagano	Shimane	Niigata	Ibaraki	Fukuoka	Aomori	Kochi	Hokkaido	Okinawa	1970 All Japan
0.58	0.59	0.60	0.62	0.63	1.22	1.24	1.36	1.43	–	(‰) 0.93
Shimane	Yamagata	Niigata	Shiga	Nagano	Aomori	Kochi	Fukuoka	Okinawa	Hokkaido	1980 All Japan
0.74	0.79	0.80	0.81	0.82	1.52	1.53	1.58	1.84	1.86	(‰) 1.22
Niigata	Shimane	Yamagata	Shiga	Iwate, Nagano	Tokyo	Osaka	Fukuoka	Hokkaido	Okinawa	1990 All Japan
0.81	0.83	0.87	0.92	0.94	1.53	1.58	1.61	1.73	1.90	(‰) 1.28
Shimane	Niigata	Toyama	Yamagata	Iwate, Akita, Fukui	Miyazaki	Fukuoka	Hokkaido	Osaka	Okinawa	2000 All Japan
1.45	1.47	1.55	1.58	1.62	2.32	2.42	2.51	2.63	2.74	(‰) 2.10
Niigata	Shimane	Toyama	Ishikawa	Akita	Miyazaki	Fukuoka	Hokkaido	Osaka	Okinawa	2005 All Japan
1.49	1.52	1.58	1.63	1.63	2.31	2.31	2.42	2.43	2.71	(‰) 2.08
Toyama	Niigata	Fukui	Shimane	Ishikawa	Miyazaki	Fukuoka	Osaka	Okinawa	Hokkaido	2010 All Japan
1.45	1.45	1.55	1.56	1.57	2.13	2.18	2.38	2.58	2.99	(‰) 1.99
Niigata	Akita	Toyama	Shimane	Yamagata	Fukuoka	Hokkaido	Osaka	Miyazaki	Okinawa	2012 All Japan
1.38	1.41	1.44	1.44	1.47	2.09	2.13	2.16	2.16	2.59	(‰) 1.87
Niigata	Akita	Toyama	Yamagata	Shimane	Fukuoka	Miyazaki	Osaka	Hokkaido	Okinawa	2013 All Japan
1.41	1.42	1.47	1.47	1.50	2.04	2.08	2.08	2.09	2.60	(‰) 1.84
47	46	45	44	43	5	4	3	2	1	Rank

Source: IPSSR 2014, Table 12.32, for 2012 MHLW 2013, Table 1, and for 2013 MHLW 2014b, Table 9. The table is compiled and constructed by the author

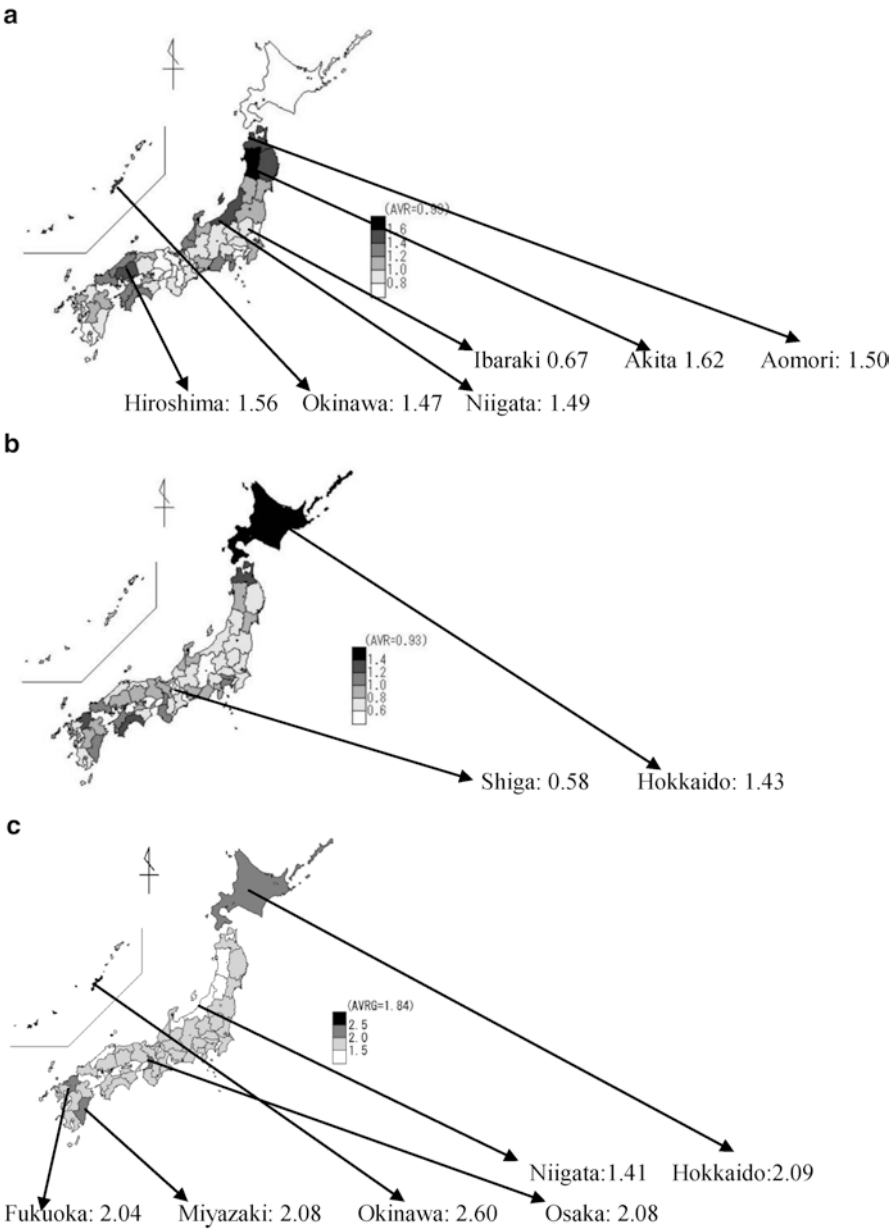

Fig. 5.5 Changes in crude divorce rates (CDR: rate per 1,000 population) by prefecture: 1920, 1970, 2013. (**a**) CDR: 1920 (Average: 1.0; Ibaraki: 0.67–Akita: 1.62). (**b**) CDR: 1970 (Average: 0.93; Shiga: 0.58–Hokkaido: 1.43). (**c**) CDR: 2013 (Average: 1.84; Niigata: 1.41–Okinawa: 2.60) (*Source*: IPSSR 2014, Table 12.32, MHLW 2013, Table 1, and MHLW 2014a, b, Table 9. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

The introduction of modern technology into farming as well as low farming income has contributed to a sharp decline in the number of full-time farmers and a rapid increase in part-time farmers. Part-time farming households fall into two categories: in Type 1, the primary source of income is agriculture; in Type 2, it is non-agriculture. Since 1960, farm households have been shifting to Type 2. In 2010, in a typical rural farming area in Japan, 27.7 % of total farm households were full time. Of the remainder (part time), only 13.8 % were Type 1, and the rest, 58.6 %, were Type 2 (MAFF 2011, Table: 99).

The reality of farm families today represents the dual structure of Japanese society and the family. Classified as engaging in the traditional farming occupation, these families actually rely on modern-type occupations for their subsistence. These contrasting elements of modernity and tradition coexist with the Japanese farming institution and households without any conflict.

5.5 Some Cultural Explanation of Divorce in Japan

Analyses of divorce attribute major contributing factors to economic situation of the society and/or the family at stake (Goode 1963; Kato 2005; Kono 2012). Unfortunately, however, little has been done to look at historical, geographical, and cultural milieu of the region in which people reside. As we have discussed extensively in Chap. 1 of this book, more than a millennium history of the feudal domain, the Ritsuryo system established in 701, and feudal Han dynasties (302 in total) in control of each region have contributed significantly in making of diverse differences and variations in Japanese society, culture, personality, and language. As a consequence, in a tiny island nation of Japan, we observe wide variations in every sphere of people's lives from one local region to the other (Asai 2007a, b; Kumagai 2011; Sofue 1971; Takemitsu 2001).

Furthermore, due to the autonomous nature of the *Han* ruling, there emerged different cultural milieu in even within a single prefecture today, such as in Aomori prefecture (Hirosaki vs. Hachinohe), in Yamagata prefecture (Yamagata vs. Sakata), in Nagano prefecture (Nagano vs. Ueda vs. Saku vs. Matsumoto vs. Ina), in Shizuoka (Shizuoka vs. Hamamatsu), in Aichi prefecture (Owari vs. Mikawa), in Hiroshima prefecture (Hiroshima vs. Fukuyama), and in Fukuoka prefecture (Chikuzen vs. Chikugo vs. Buzen) (Kumagai 2011: 25).

In an attempt to clarify regional variations in divorce rates in Japan, Kawashima and Steiner conducted an elaborate analysis of Japanese prefectures at different time periods between 1884 and 1957 (Kawashima and Steiner 1960: 228–39), and Kumagai (1983) followed their footsteps, extending the analysis to the year 1980.[6]

Goode (1963, 363) summarized Kawashima and Steiner's findings as follows: the northern Japanese region Hokuriku (excluding Niigata), central Honshu (Kinki),

[6]This section heavily depends on the author's earlier work (Kumagai 1983: 102–04), with the statistical data updated.

and the southern areas of Shikoku and Kyushu, which had been low divorce rate areas, had become high divorce rate areas. By contrast, the area around Tokyo (Kanto), northern Honshu (Tohoku), and the mountainous areas of central Japan, together with the prefectures of Niigata and Shimane, started out with high divorce rates and now had low rates (see Table 5.1 and Fig. 5.5).

The overall pattern of variations in divorce rates by prefecture in 1970 and in 2013 is quite similar and quite different from the one in 1920. As pointed out earlier, the striking structural change seems to have occurred along with the high economic growth in Japan since sometime around the 1960s, when employment shifted from the primary to the secondary and tertiary industries. The impact of these changes appears as changing demographic factors: population distributions, marriage rates, and divorce rates, in total and by prefecture. Younger generations tended to move to urban regions, such that the northeastern farming regions now had a large elderly population.

In recent years two prefectures, Niigata and Shimane, have shown consistently low divorce rates (see Table 5.1). Goode pointed out as long as five decades ago (1963) that they started out with high divorce rates and now have relatively low rates. In fact, Niigata moved from 4th highest in 1920 to the very lowest of all the 47 prefectures today. Shimane's change was almost as dramatic, from 9th to 43rd in the 93-year period.

The top five prefectures in CDR in 2013 were mostly low on the CDR in 1920, except for Okinawa. More specifically, Hokkaido was 42nd, Okinawa 5th, Osaka 46th, Fukuoka 31st, and Miyazaki 30th in CDR in 1920.

But it is not appropriate to say that urban industrial regions are divorce prone, while rural northeastern regions have low divorce rates. Why do these inconsistent variations emerge? These regional variations by prefecture were the result of *Haihan Chiken* (Dissolution of Domains and Establishment of Prefectures) as we discussed earlier. As a consequence, even the prefectures adjacent to each other may present quite different patterns of divorce. These characteristics could be called "*chiiki-ryoku*" (literally meaning regional power/strength including both pros and cons of regional characteristics) (Kumagai 2011; Miyanishi 1986, 2004). The concept of "social capital" seems to emphasize the positive aspects of the community in which one resides. But negative factors in a community/region can also be significant "capital" for the construction of a regional bond. This is clearly different from the regular sense of social capital (Kumagai 2011, chapter 1); it is because the realization of negative characteristics will suggest solutions. Thus, the problem of divorce in Japan may suggest some unique measures for handling the issue in each prefecture.

Let us, therefore, confine our discussion on regional variations in divorce in Japan today to the 2013 data set. Of the total 47 prefectures, we will discuss two prefectures which show low divorce rates (Niigata and Shimane) and six prefectures with high divorce rates (Hokkaido, Osaka, Fukuoka, Miyazaki, Okinawa, and Kochi).

5.5.1 *Prefectures with Low Divorce Rates Today: Niigata and Shimane*

5.5.1.1 Niigata

"Coming out of the long tunnel I saw snow country," writes Yasunari Kawabata, a Nobel Prize winning Japanese author, when he begins his tale of *Yukiguni* (Snow Country) (1937). The snow-covered land (Niigata) at the tunnel's end forms a nearly perfect juxtaposition to the sunny winter day the narrator has left behind in Tokyo—and this in just one brief ride through the Shimizu Tunnel, which connects the two sides (the Pacific Ocean and the Japan Sea) of the small island country. The contrast that Kawabata describes is one that permeates the very fabric of Japanese society and the institution of the family as well (Kumagai 2008: xi). This vision has inspired the author of this book to look at Japanese families through the perspective of community analyses, especially because she lived there for 3 years.

In the snow-covered winter of Niigata, the annual snowfall reaches as much as 15 m, and oftentimes snow accumulates as high as 3 m (Suzuki 1936: 25). The snow there is very wet, making it necessary to shovel snow off the roofs of homes. It is a very dangerous task to perform. Under these circumstances, people must develop persistence to endure the hardship. In addition, being surrounded by mountains, there is frequently a "foehn phenomena" and summer heat waves (Asai 2007a: 44, Iwanaka 2007: 136, Sofue 1971: 138–141, and Yawata 2009: 166). This kind of severe natural environment is rarely found elsewhere in Japan, and it has fostered genuine persistence in their minds.

The lives of people, animals, and natural surroundings in Echigo (the old name for Niigata before the Haihan Chiken) are thoroughly described with illustrations of the late Edo period, by Bokushi Suzuki[7] in seven volumes of essays entitled *Hokuetsu Seppu* (Landscape and Human Lives in the Snow Country) in 1841. Even then, he compared and contrasted the severe climate in Echigo with Edo (present-day Tokyo), its warmer counterpart, highlighting the climatological juxtaposition in the tiny island nation (Suzuki 1936). He was stunned by the fact that the people in Edo had little knowledge about the snow country of Echigo. It encouraged him to publish his four decades of lifework on *Hokuetsu Seppu*.

Yet the negative character of snow brought about two positive local products to the region: the precious and expensive Echigo-Chijimi hand-woven cloth, on one hand (Suzuki 1936: 71), and one of the most tasteful rice in Japan, Uonuma Koshihikari, on the other (Iwanaka 2007: 136). At the final stage of Echigo-Chijimi production, cloths are washed in the cold winter river and laid on snow, resulting in

[7] Bokushi Suzuki (1770–1842) was a successful merchant of Chijimi cloth in Shiozawa, Echigo. At the same time, he possessed a keen insight into the areas of ethnography and geography and, as an essayist, wrote the snow landscape of Echigo. As a successful merchant of Echigo-Chijimi, he oftentimes made business trips to Edo. It is said the original idea of *Hokuetsu Seppu* came to Bokushi Suzuki's mind when he was 30 years of age, and it took four decades to complete the entire work.

a high-quality delicate cloth. The Uonuma Koshihikari rice is the product of melted water from deep snowfalls throughout the long winter there, grown in terraced fields.

Both Echigo-Chijimi and Uonuma Koshihikari are examples of positive things coming from negative characteristics. Rather than lamenting their destiny of living under a severe natural environment, people there have learned to turn it into their fortune. It is quite likely, therefore, that the environment and wisdom of the people enhanced a coping mechanism for the problems in conjugal and family relationships, leading to the low divorce rate today.

It would be interesting to see if the prefectures that show highly positive degrees of correlation coefficients with Niigata prefecture today would also rank low on the divorce rate among the 47 prefectures.[8] Examples of prefectures with positively high correlation coefficients to Niigata are Yamagata (r: .456, CDR: 43rd in 2013), Akita (r: .434, CDR: 46th), Iwate (r: .4213, CDR: 41st), Fukushima (r: .4069, CDR: 34th), and Toyama (r: .3315, CDR: 45th). All six prefectures, including Niigata, belong to Tohoku and Hokuriku rural farming regions where divorce rates were relatively high in the early history of divorce in Japan (see Table 5.1).

Prefectures with a high negative relationship to Niigata, i.e., those contrasting to Niigata, are Osaka (r: −.3871, CDR: 3rd in 2013), Hyogo (r: −.3211, CDR: 16th), Fukuoka (r: −.3078, CDR: 5th), Kyoto (r: −.3003, CDR: 25th), and Okinawa (r: −.2516, CDR: 1st) as listed from high to low degree of correlation coefficients. These five prefectures all belong to the Kansai and Kyushu-Okinawa areas, but none are in the Tohoku and Hokuriku regions. In Japan's early history, these prefectures were relatively low on the CDR scale, except for Okinawa (see Table 5.1). These results coincide with a significant structural change emerging around the period of the high economic development in postwar Japan.

5.5.1.2 Shimane

In recent years most of the prefectures that show a low level of divorce are located in the Tohoku and Hokuriku regions except for Shimane in the Chugoku region. People in Shimane are, natural, persevered, and diligent. These personality characteristics are likely to have emerged from its severe climate (Iwanaka 2007: 249).

Shimane prefecture was established by merging the three ancient domains of Izumo, Iwami, and Oki: areas with three distinctively different personalities. The people in Izumo are more or less conservative, and outsiders view them as less open. In the Iwami region, fishing is the major industry, and the people are open-

[8] The website entitled "To-Do-Fu-Ken betsu tokei to rankingu de miru kennminsei" [Characteristics of prefectures through statistics and rankings] lists 300 life-related indicators with real values, rankings, and standard deviations by prefecture. Furthermore, the website shows the interrelationship of 47 prefectures with each other. http://todo-ran.com/ (accessed April 25, 2014).

minded. In the Oki region, people are simple-minded and kind. In Shimane as a whole, however, the Izumo personality stands out (Sofue 2000: 181). Stated differently, people in Shimane possess personality traits commonly found in the San-inn region: conservative, traditional, and natural, with the family as a priority. These personality characteristics brought about the low level of divorce among the people in Shimane.

Although it is descriptive through the analyses attempted here on divorce rates for Niigata and Shimane today, it could be said that Japanese prefectures which maintain traditional family patterns in rural areas with severe climatological settings would yield low divorce rates today.

5.5.2 Prefectures with High Divorce Rates Today: Hokkaido, Okinawa, Osaka, Fukuoka, Miyazaki, and Kochi

It is often the case that bad economic situations affect negatively the stability of family relationships (Goode 1963; Kato 2005; Kono 2012). In 2013, the following prefectures composed the top five in CDR rank: Okinawa, 2.60; Hokkaido, 2.09; Osaka, 2.08; Miyazaki, 2.08; and Fukuoka, 2.04 (MHLW 2014a, Table 1; MHLW 2013, 2014b) (see Table 5.1). However, the total unemployment rates in 2010 were as follows: the national average, 7.4 %; Okinawa, 13.1 %; Aomori, 10.6 %; Kochi, 9.8 %; Tokushima, 9.4 %; Fukuoka, 9.2 %; Osaka, 9.1 %; and Miyagi, 9.0 % (IPSSR 2014, Table 12.53). At a glance it seems as if there exists a strong correlation between divorce and unemployment rates. In fact, their correlation coefficients are highly positive (for men, .710, $p < .001$; for women, .790, $p < .001$). It is evident that losing a job brings about a financial crisis to the family and may likely lead to marital dissolution.

Since the end of WWII, the pattern of divorce altered dramatically, and more and more wives, as opposed to husbands, have taken the initiative in pursuing divorce (Secretariat of the Supreme Court of Japan 2013, Table 14).[9] When such alteration occurred, most of the prefectures in the Tohoku and the Hokuriku regions, where divorce rates used to be high, changed to low on the score. Although there have been fractional changes, prefectures that show high divorce rates are more or less the same with those reported in the most recent report, namely, Hokkaido, Okinawa, Osaka, Fukuoka, and Miyazaki. Except for Hokkaido, all the rest of the prefectures are located in the southwestern part of Japan. Thus, let us discuss the characteristics of these five prefectures and Kochi whose divorce rates used to be quite high that show high divorce rates in Japan today.

[9] Of the total marriage cases (67,892) brought to 50 family courts throughout Japan in 2012, 49,156 cases (72.4 %) were done so by wives (Secretariat of the Supreme Court of Japan 2013, Table 14).

5.5.2.1 Hokkaido

"*Dossan-ko*" (the people of Hokkaido) is known as broad-minded, cheerful, and friendly; they do not dwell on "the small stuff." Despite its severe winter climate, located in the northernmost part of Japan, Hokkaido is indeed quite different from the rest of the northeastern region of Japan (Iwanaka 2007: 30). As opposed to the somewhat gloomy impressions that the latter present, Hokkaido is different. Both natural and cultural climates of Hokkaido are similar to the northeastern part of the United States, the New England frost-belt region, where the author of this book lived for some years.

During the Meiji era, the Japanese government was eager to develop the land of Hokkaido with the active introduction of Western technology and culture. In fact, the University of Hokkaido in Sapporo was developed under the directorship of Dr. William Clark of the University of Massachusetts, USA. Massachusetts and Hokkaido share similarities in climate and landscape. At the time of departure from Sapporo, Dr. Clark left with his famous words to the students, "Boys, be ambitious!"

The reason why Hokkaido is different from the rest of Japan rests upon the historical development of its exploration of land. The people of Hokkaido, living on the geographically vast land, without a wet rainy season nor the indigenous Japanese traditions and/or customs, became broad- and open-minded and willing to challenge the unexplored (Yawata 2009: 297–301).

Ever since its exploration period, both men and women worked on equal footings. As a consequence, women in Hokkaido are self-reliant, assertive, hardworking, and diplomatic. In fact, Governor Ms. Harumi Takahashi has been pursuing gubernatorial duties since 2003, currently on the third term. They stand on equal footing with men. These characteristics likely resulted in the high divorce rate in Hokkaido (Sofue 1971: 207–210).

The divorce rate of Hokkaido around the turn of the century in early 1900s, however, was low, ranking 42nd in 1920. When its CDR became the 6th highest of all the 46[10] prefectures in 1960, Hokkaido started to gain the attention of Japanese people. Ever since then, the divorce rate of Hokkaido has ranked as one of the top three. It was only after the Meiji era that the exploration and development of Hokkaido took place actively. During the early stage of its development, the great majority of the people who immigrated to Hokkaido were mostly those from the Tohoku region because of its geographic proximity, with those from the Hokuriku region following. As was discussed in the previous section of this chapter, the people in both the Tohoku and Hokuriku regions today show a low divorce rate, perhaps due to their enduring and strong personality traits. Personality characteristics of the people in Tohoku and Hokuriku contributed to a low divorce rate in Hokkaido during their initial development. Today, however, these initial characteristics have developed into different forms, similar to Western culture rather than the traditional Japanese counterpart (Asai 2007a: 57–60; Takemitsu 2001: 50–54).

[10] It was 1972 when Okinawa was returned to Japan by the United States. Thus, divorce statistics for Okinawa were not included in 1960.

The cultural uniqueness of Hokkaido has likely contributed to the emergence of a high divorce rate there today. Ever since 1970, the CDR of Hokkaido has ranked as one of the top three. The economy in Hokkaido has deteriorated, especially since the breakup of the Hokkaido Takushoku Development Bank in 1997, and Hokkaido has not recovered from it yet. It is possible that these negative economic factors negatively affected conjugal relationships, resulting in today's high divorce rate in Hokkaido.

5.5.2.2 Osaka

Since the early 1990s, Osaka, the second largest city in Japan, has been one of the top three divorce-prone prefectures. In 1920, however, the divorce rate in Osaka ranked 46th, the second from the bottom, of all the 47 prefectures (as seen in Table 1). After WWII the rate started to rise gradually, and it was eighth in 1950, fourth in 1990, second in 1998, and third in 2012.

The history of divorce in Osaka is in accord to its economic situation (Yawata 2009: 61). During periods of economic prosperity, the divorce rate has been quite low, whereas when the economy has stagnated, it has risen high on the list. Present-day Osaka used to be called Nanba, the central commercial district in western Japan, connecting the Seto Inland Sea and Kyoto-Nara regions. During the Muromachi era (1336–1573), Sakai, located in the southern part of Osaka, was a prosperous port city that exchanged trade with the Chinese Min dynasty. The Shogunate Hideyoshi Toyotomi built Osaka Castle, made it a symbol of the business center of Japan, and encouraged the independence of local merchants. During the Edo Shogunate, the economic prosperity of Osaka was further strengthened by the leadership of successful merchants, and Osaka was called "*Tenka no Daidokoro*," the distribution center of Japan. The cultural climate of Osaka has become practical, individualistic, and business oriented. From the beginning of the Meiji era, the people in Osaka were eager to absorb modern Western technology, and it became the leading industrial city of Japan (Iwanaka 2007: 217; Yawata 2009: 64).

Recently, however, the business center of Japan has shifted from the Kansai-Osaka region to the metropolitan Tokyo area. Consequently, the economic deterioration of Osaka has become evident, with Osaka's unemployment rate becoming the highest in Japan, followed by Okinawa. (As discussed earlier, the divorce rate in 2013 for Okinawa ranked as the highest, and the one for Osaka was third highest of all the 47 prefectures.) Thus, it would be appropriate to consider that the high divorce rate for Osaka since the 1990s was affected strongly by its negative economic situation.

People in Osaka are practical, and they avoid waste and are careful in their conduct. They are cheerful and individualistic, but extremely money conscious. The Japanese word "*gametsui*" (greedy) could probably describe the personality trait of them best. Outsiders sometimes say it is difficult to understand the true intentions of someone from Osaka. Thus, it is often said that the people in Osaka

can be good friends, but not very good marital partners (Iwanaka 2007: 214–222; Sofue 1971: 172–176).

Men in Osaka are likely to be emotional, and women tend to count on the economic support of men (Iwanaka 2007: 214–222). Thus, under the prolonged recession when the economic situation of a husband in Osaka deteriorated, his wife may decide to pursue divorce. As a consequence, the divorce rate in Osaka has become notoriously high for two decades.

5.5.2.3 Fukuoka

Although not mentioned as often, Fukuoka has always occupied a high ranking in the history of divorce in Japan and, in fact, has always ranked among the top five in the postwar era. In discussing the cultural orientation of Fukuoka, it must be divided into three subareas, because the prefecture was composed of three different *Han*, (the local feudal domain headed by the feudal lord). They were, namely, the northwestern area of Chikuzen (city of Fukuoka-Hakata today), the southern part of Chikugo (Kurume, Yanagawa, and Ohmuta cities today) (Iwanaka 2007: 296–303; Yawata 2009: 228–231), and the northeastern part of Buzen (cities of Kitakyushu and Ikuhashi and the old coal mining area). As the region used to be governed by three different feudal lords, their cultural traits are distinctively different.

People in Chikuzen have had a long history of exchanging commercial ties with their Chinese counterparts since ancient times. Consequently, they avidly absorbed Chinese culture. Their personality traits are associated with such characteristics as being open-minded, yet ostentatious and flashy. They like drinking and get excited easily but lose interest easily. People in Chikugo, by contrast, are sincere, persistent, and hardworking. These personality traits were brought about by the frequent floods in the area. They have been obliged to prepare for emergencies and are keen to monetary values. Buzen people represented by the Chikuhou coal mining region, however, are characterized by the phrase "*kawasuji kishitsu*," people who are sensitive to obligations and human sentiments. At the same time, however, they like to gamble and drink heavily, presumably after a hard day's work in the mines (Sofue 1971: 200; Iwanaka 2007: 297–298). Although not evidence based, differences in cultural milieu of the people in Chikuzen, Chikugo, and Buzen in Fukuoka prefecture today come from the ruling of three different feudal lords.

The economy of Fukuoka is not healthy. According to 2010 statistics, the total unemployment rate for men (9.2 %) ranked as fifth highest and for women (6.2 %) did as fourth among the total 47 prefectures. In addition, the percentage of households receiving welfare ranked fifth highest; and the rate for single households (all those who were in their 20s, 30s, 40s, and 50s as well) was sixth highest (MIAC 2013, 2014a, b), all of which is likely to affect their conjugal and family relationships. Consequently, their divorce rates have become constantly high ever since the 1950s, ranking among the top five prefectures throughout that time. Therefore, it is strongly expected that some effective measures to improve the job market in Fukuoka could be introduced, to enhance their family relationships.

5.5.2.4 Miyazaki

It is regrettable that not many people are aware of Miyazaki being a highly divorce-prone prefecture today. In fact, among many volumes of books on the regional variations of Japan by prefecture, only one mentions that Miyazaki is a highly divorce-prone prefecture and that was only one line (Zennkoku Kennminnsei Kenkyuu-kai 2009: 190):

In the pre-WWII period, the divorce rate in Miyazaki was not really high; of all the 47 prefectures, it ranked 30th in 1920, but it has been on the rise gradually after the war. It ranked 11th in 1970, and since 2000 it has been ranked as high as fifth, after Fukuoka. In 2013, CDR for Miyazaki ranked as the third highest of all the prefectures in Japan (see Table 5.1).

The high divorce rate of Miyazaki has not been discussed widely, perhaps, due to their personality characteristics. Some of the examples associated with the people in Miyazaki are as follows: honest, cheerful, forgiving, optimistic, gentle, peaceful, happy, accessible, reluctant, obedient, and sincere. Their simple and mild personalities are quite different from the rest of prefectures in Kyushu where people are mostly temperamental, assertive, and straightforward in their expressions. And therefore, people in Miyazaki resemble Okinawans more closely than the rest of Kyushuites. Interestingly enough, both the birth rate and the total fertility rate (TFR: number of children that a woman expects to have between 15 and 49 years of age) of Miyazaki is very high, second only next to Okinawa (Iwanaka 2007: 325–328; MHLW 2014b: p. 7, Table 5).

During ancient times Miyazaki prefecture was called Hyuuga-no-kuni, the nation that faces the sunrise. According to legend, Mizuho no Kuni in Hyuuga was said to be where the grandson Ninigi-no-mikoto, prince of the goddess Amaterasu, descended to establish the nation of Japan. There are far many more myths and legends associated with the foundation of Japan in Miyazaki than any other prefecture. In addition, numerous tumuli found in Miyazaki (approximately 2,200) tell that the area was the center for cultural activities in ancient times (Yawata 2009: 210–211).

The fertile land of Miyazaki contributed to foster a relaxed and generous personality among the people. It is the destiny of Miyazaki to cope with typhoons frequently. Although typhoons brought destruction, they also brought fertile land to Miyazaki. For this reason, the unique personality trait called "*Hyuugateki Taifuu Mentaritii*" could be translated into a typhoon mentality for the people in Hyuuga-no-Kuni (Iwanaka 2007: 325–328).

The disaster caused by a typhoon is beyond human control, and all the property that people have diligently constructed can be washed away instantly. Although people have learned to accept this destiny, the cycle of natural fortune will be brought back again with its fertile land and agricultural products. Under these circumstances, natural hardships do not give lessons; instead, people tend to develop a feeling of resignation, abandonment, and laziness. They learn that without any effort by them, nature will bring back richness to their land eventually. This wise cycle of destiny is called "*Hyuugateki Taifuu Mentaritii*," or "*Hyuuga-boke*" (fool, blurring) (Iwanaka 2007: 328).

Why then has this fertile land of Miyazaki come to show consistently high divorce rate in recent years? It would be, perhaps, due to the same socioeconomic factors accounting for the high divorce-prone prefectures of Okinawa, Osaka, and Fukuoka as have been discussed earlier. The total unemployment rate for Miyazaki in 2009 ranked sixth, worse than Fukuoka; the birth rate was second highest after Okinawa, and the rate for both single-parent (mother or father) family households was second highest after Okinawa. All in all, Miyazaki prefecture presents a strongly negative image, with household income ranked 45th of the 47 prefectures; household savings, 46th; personal bankruptcy, third; annual allowance of the household head, 44th; annual household food costs, 46th; annual alcohol intake, third; number of Pachinko parlors, first (followed by Kagoshima, Oita, Kumamoto, Saga, Nagasaki, all in the Kyushu region); suicide rate, fourth (after Akita, Aomori, Iwate, all in the Tohoku region), and building fire rates, 4th.[11] As a consequence of all the 47 prefectures, Miyazaki is placed at the 44th, and its overall rating is at the second lowest of D level on the six-level scale (the highest of S to the lowest of E) (National Tax Agency 2013; To-Do-Fu-Ken Kakuzuke Kenkyujyo 2014).

Both men and women like to drink "*shouchuu*" (distilled alcoholic beverage) heavily, and they often drink beyond their income (National Tax Agency 2013; To-Do-Fu-Ken Kakuzuke Kenkyujyo 2014).[12] As a result, it is difficult for the people in Miyazaki to save money. Owing to their optimistic personality, they are not willing to try hard diligently. Men in Miyazaki are likely to be open-minded, but not trusting in personal relationships. Women, on the contrary, are emotional and open-minded; although they support their husbands during marriage, they are quick to abandon them during difficult times (Iwanaka 2007; Sofue 1971; Takemitsu 2009; Yawata 2009). The vicious cycle of these socioeconomic factors likely to relate to the high divorce rate in Miyazaki.

5.5.2.5 Okinawa[13]

Historically, Okinawa was once the Ryukyu Empire, and its sociocultural and family characteristics differ significantly from those of any other part of Japan (Iwanaka 2007: 337–343; Yawata 2009: 257–260). However, there are a few islands

[11] Special Edition of Weekly Magazine, *PRESIDENT,* June 17, 2010, issue. Shusse-Kekkon-Okane wa kenminsei de 9-wari kimaru [Ninety percent of successes in business, marriage, and earnings are determined by the characteristics of the prefecture of one's origin]. Tokyo: PRESIDENT-sha. The section depends on its "Kenminsei rankings" [Rankings of various indicators by prefecture], pp. 136–141.

[12] The annual consumption rate of Shochuu (per 1,000 population) of Miyazaki prefecture in 2010 was the highest of all 47 prefectures (12.03 litters) followed by Kagoshima (10.44), Kumamoto (10.28), and Kochi (9.54). Source: http://grading.jpn.org/area450006.html, and http://grading.jpn.org/Divzei1008016.html accessed May 31, 2014.

[13] This section has been adopted with some modifications from one of the author's publications (Kumagai 2008: 74–75, 94–95).

in Kagoshima today, adjacent to Okinawa, which once belonged to the Ryukyu Empire. Consequently, the sociocultural and family characteristics of these communities bear significant resemblance to those of Okinawa.

Throughout the history of the family in Okinawa, there existed no *ie* system such as in the traditional Japanese family. The family in Okinawa is called *yaaninjyu* and its continuity is based on a patriarchal relationship (Tamaki 1997; Tanaka 1986). The idea and the scope of *yaaninjyu* are based only on each individual's own perspective, rather than any defined concept. Therefore, the subjective orientation of *yaaninjyu* determines the boundary of the structure as well as the function of the family in Okinawa. People who are categorized as family members are those within the boundary of the *yaaninjyu* who solidify a binding family tie with one another. Such a strong bond, in turn, reflects on the interpersonal relationships of the people within the *yaaninjyu*.

As for the religious orientation of the Okinawans, the great majority believe in and practice ancestor worship. This is signified by the *ihai* (the symbol of the family ancestor) sacredly placed within the *butsudan* (a miniature Buddhist temple in the home). This *ihai* is passed on from one generation to the next within the family. However, only the eldest son in the family may be the successor; no female offspring can assume this role. Therefore, a new wife is only acknowledged as a family member after giving birth to her first son. It would appear that this practice facilitates the high birth rate among women in Okinawa. Women are eager to have sons.

The high rates of CDR in Okinawa and Hokkaido in recent years may perhaps be accounted for by the interaction of similar factors. The cultural characteristics of Hokkaido and Okinawa are quite unlike the rest of Japan. Because of their political history, these two prefectures are culturally akin to the United States. In fact, America originally modernized Hokkaido during the early years of the Meiji era, and the island of Okinawa was returned to Japan by the United States in 1972. Therefore, the impact of Western lifestyles on the people in these two prefectures has been significant. Hokkaido has been given special attention ever since the early 1970s as the region having the highest or second highest divorce rate in Japan, and Okinawa has had the highest or second highest CDR since the mid-1970s. Recently, it seems as if Hokkaido and Okinawa alternate their turns as the highest or the second highest on the CDR by prefecture in any specific year.

It is interesting to note that the history of divorce rates in Okinawa has not been in accordance with the overall trend in Japan (Tsubouchi and Tsubouchi 1970: 200–09). During the beginning years of recorded divorces, the rates for Okinawa were significantly lower than the national average (.51 vs. 3.39 in 1883) and then suddenly increased to 3.62 in 1892 (vs. the national average of 2.76). From 1900 to 1940, the divorce rate in Okinawa was about 1.5; it was still 1.3 in 1936 when the rate in all other prefectures had declined below 1.0. During the postwar period, divorce in Okinawa conformed to the national average in that a gradual decline from 1951 to 1964 was followed by a constant increase thereafter.

High divorce rates in Okinawa during the prewar periods may be attributed to the following four factors (Nitta 1980: 23; Tsubouchi and Tsubouchi 1970: 204–205):

1. First, because of the geographic distance from mainland Japan, social controls which might prevent people from getting divorced were not pervasive among Okinawan culture and society.
2. Second, as a result of the history of the Ryukyu Empire, which separated Okinawa from the other parts of Japan, the marriage system there differed considerably from that in other parts of Japan.
3. Third, owing to various contacts with Kyushu, Korea, China, and Southeast Asian countries throughout the process of historical development, the Okinawans became open, straightforward, and future oriented, rather than dwelling on past misfortunes.
4. Fourth, women in Okinawa have been independent, possessing economic power. The Okinawans, in general, maintain a strong tie with their original relatives and kin. Thus, women in divorce have little difficulty in returning to their original families. Okinawans consider divorce a natural consequence in one's life, similar to the cultural characteristics of Hokkaido. These factors facilitate the termination of the marital relationship of couples who no longer possess affection for each other.

5.5.2.6 Kochi

Kochi was once regarded as one of the more divorce-prone prefectures, but it is not now listed among the top five divorce-prone prefectures (see Table 5.1). Its CDR was the highest from 1950 to 1967 and was the sixth highest for 1990, 2000, and 2005. But after 1980, it was not one of the top five prefectures in CDR and was the same as the national average in 2012, ranking 15th of the 47 prefectures (CDRs in 2012: the national average and also for Kochi were 1.87), and ranked at the 7th highest (CDR: 1.94) in 2013 (IPSSR 2014, Table 12.32; MHLW 2014b, Table 9). It may be worthwhile to investigate possible factors contributing to these changes in the divorce rate in Kochi prefecture over the years.

Personality expressions in *Tosa-ben* dialects for men and for women in Kochi are known as *igosso* and *hachikin*, respectively (Iwanaka 2007: 287–293; Kumagai 2011: 87–89; Sofue 1971: 194–197; Takemitsu 2009: 218–222). *Igosso* signifies such personality traits as a good man, a heavy drinker, perversity, stubbornness, and uncompromising. The literal meaning of *hachikin* is a woman who twists four men simultaneously around her finger. She is a heavy drinker as much as *igosso*, is a lively and assertive tomboy, competes on an equal footing with men, is short-tempered, is and self-centered. Then, we come to the question as to how these personality traits of *igosso* and *hachikin* have been formed.

When Japanese people hear about Kochi prefecture, it is highly likely that the name is associated with *Tosa* and Sakamoto Ryoma. Under the old provincial system of Ritsuryo and *Goki Shichido*, discussed in Chap. 1 of this book, Kochi was

called *Tosa*. Located in the southern part of Shikoku, it is divided by mountains which run through the west to the east. More than 80 % of the area is mountainous, providing the narrowest inhabitable land area throughout Japan *Tosa* was isolated from the influence of the major samurai powers. Just before the Sengoku period (the Warring States period) (1467–1568), there were several minor warrior families fighting each other to control the area until it came under the control of the Chosokabe; Chosokabe Motochika organized the peasants, unifying not only all Tosa but also a great majority of Shikoku. At the Battle of Sekigahara, which divided Japan into the east and the west camps, the Chosokabe was defeated in 1600, and Yamanouchi Kazutoyo from Owari (Aichi prefecture today) became the first Tosa-han clan. Yamanouchi Kazutoyo placed his own fellow samurai as higher-ranking samurai warriors and those of the Chosokabe as lower-ranking poor ones called *goshi. Goshi* had to support themselves by farming while not at war. Throughout the entire Edo period (1600–1868), there was a fierce, antagonistic relationship between the upper-ranking samurai of the Yamanouchi and the lower-ranking Chosokabe. Such people as Sakamoto Ryoma, who helped overthrow the Tokugawa Shogunate, and Iwasaki Yataro the founder of the Mitsubishi conglomerate, were *goshi* status (Kumagai 2011: 88).

Personality traits of *Tosa* people, *igosso* for men and *hachikin* for women, have been attributed anthropologically to its geographic isolation and little contact with people from other parts of Japan in premodern times (Sofue 1971: 196–197). Furthermore, the antagonistic relationship between the upper-ranking samurai and the lower-ranking samurai of *goshi* contributed to create a rebellious spirit among the majority of *Tosa* people. It is quite likely that such rebellious spirit of *goshi* became the driving force for Tosa-han and Sakamoto Ryoma in helping establish the Meiji Restoration (Takemitsu 2001: 221–222).

Both the *Tosa* dialects of *igosso* and *hachikin* indicate people in Kochi are heavy drinkers. The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications published annually alcohol consumption and cost paid for alcohol beverages per household, excluding living alone household, by prefecture. In 2012 Kochi ranked at the fourth highest of all the 47 prefectures, and the average for the 5-year period from 2008 to 2012 of Kochi ranked at the top highest. On average, the cost for alcohol beverage consumption per household in Kochi (¥36,488) was more than twice the national average of ¥16,929 (MIAC 2013, 2014a, b). Although causality was not tested, many of the safety and health-related social indicators for Kochi show quite high. Some examples are as follows (statistics are shown as Kochi vs. the national average, the rate is per 100,000 population unless otherwise indicated): death by traffic accident, 7.0 vs. 3.5; numbers hospitalized, 17.7 vs. 6.7; medical doctors, 284.0 vs. 226.5; nurses, 1,054.0 vs. 684.9; hospital beds, 2,476.2 vs. 1.237.7; number of days for hospitalization, 50.7 vs. 31.2; annual ambulance usage per 10,000 population, 502 vs. 453; welfare household rate per 100 households, 4.36 vs. 2.79; and employment rate, 76.7 vs. 83.0.

The proportion of workers in the primary industry in Kochi ranks second highest (12.1 % vs. 4.0 % of the national average in 2010) (ISPPR 2014, Table 12.35). Agriculture is the main occupation, and Kochi is one of the few places in Japan with

a climate that permits harvesting twice annually. Forestry and fishing are also very important in Kochi (Kodansha International 1983: 239).

With these descriptive statements, it is not known yet why Kochi that used to be a highly divorce-prone prefecture turned into less so among all today.

The simple descriptive statistical analysis conducted in this chapter is not enough to prove our working hypothesis set forth earlier by any means. Nevertheless, we know now that regional variations in society, culture, and personality in Japan are historically bound and difficult to measure, and they resulted in differences in lifestyles and the divorce rate in each region. Thus, we can say that Japanese prefectures which suffer from low socioeconomic status, with individualistic lifestyles adopted from foreign/Western cultural influences in the process of their historical development, in urban areas, with little influence of Japanese traditional family system of *ie*, are related to exhibiting high divorce rates today.

Conclusion

In an attempt to prove the hypothesis on the changes, continuities, and regional variations of Japanese divorce, historical, archival, and current national and prefecture level statistical data were examined. Findings suggest that the institution of Japanese divorce currently differs widely from one region to another. At the same time, the study highlighted continuities sustaining the traditional culture in Japanese divorce by analyzing the northern part of the farming region in Tohoku and Hokuriku. Similarly, the finding identified a long-existing unique cultural trait in the southern part of Kyushu and Okinawa, in which people tend to consider divorce as a natural course of one's life, hence a high divorce rate.

This chapter proved that Japanese divorce today shows clear regional variations in that some prefectures are highly divorce prone, but others are not. In other words, divorce in Japan differs from one region to another. That being the case, it is important for Japanese to learn from the regions in Japan that enjoy relatively low divorce rates. Although it is desirable to maintain amicable family relations, it is not always true in real domestic arenas. Now that cultural factors likely to enhance conjugal relationship have been highlighted, we should try to emulate them. At the same time, where sociocultural factors likely to contribute to the conjugal disruption have been identified, we should make efforts to manage and/or control them.

In analyzing the issue of family dissolution through the regional relation and the regional power standpoints, it is realized that factors accounting for divorce are specific to each prefecture. Furthermore, the historical fact that the formation of Japanese society is based on feudal domains makes the issue complicated. To put it in different terms, there are many instances, even within

(continued)

a single prefecture today, in which several contrasting cultural milieu exist, based on the feudal domain which lasted until *Haihan Chiken* (dissolution of domains and establishment of prefectures) was enforced in 1871. It has been less than four decades since the present-day administrative regime of 47 prefectures was established when Okinawa was returned to Japan from US control in 1972.

Realization of these factors will bring about a strong human relationship to the community and facilitate creation of a community bond. In developing family policies in Japan, it is important to remember Japan's unique historical and cultural background in each region. For this very reason, it is believed that this chapter has significant policy implications for the future of Japanese divorce and the family.

Analyses reveal that divorce rates in Japan differ significantly, from time to time and from one prefecture to the other; in some cases there are significant differences within the same prefecture. It is due to the feudal domain system which was established in 701. Characteristics of the people in each district are significantly affected by the *Han* dynasty that was in control there. These historical and cultural factors, difficult to measure, affected the emergence of regional variations in divorce in Japan. Nevertheless, most divorces occur during relatively early stages of marriage, but the so-called late-life divorces have been conspicuous in Japan recently. Thus, let us move our discussion to "late-life divorce in Japan" in the next chapter.

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Chapter 6
Late-Life Divorce in Japan Revisited: Effects of the Old-Age Pension Division Scheme

6.1 Introduction

An earlier study on late-life divorce in Japan (Kumagai 2006b) found that late-life divorces had increased dramatically, although the increment in late-life divorce cases was due primarily to the baby boomer population born between 1947 and 1949. It was thought that late-life divorces would increase after 2007 when the new old-age pension division plan for divorcing couples would be in effect. But has it? It may be a fallacy. This is the starting point of this chapter.

It has become a popular notion in Japan today that a growing number of couples divorce later in their lives. In fact, the total divorce cases in Japan in 1975 were 119,135. Of those, at the time of divorce, those with duration of more than 20 years were 6,810 (5.7 % of the total) cases. A little less than three decades later in 2002, these statistics had hit their peaks, i.e., increased to 289,836 and 45,536 (15.7 % of the total) cases, 2.4 times and 6.9 times their counterparts in 1975. Furthermore, the latest statistics in this regard in 2013 reveal them as 231,384 and 38,034 (16.4 % of the total), respectively (IPSSR 2014, Table 6.13; MHLW 2014b, Table 10) (see Figs. 6.1 and 6.2). More detailed discussion on "duration of marriage prior to divorce" will follow later in this chapter (Sect. 6.3).

Consequently, the Japanese public has come to assume that the rate for late-life divorces has experienced a dramatic increase recently. It should be remembered that a conspicuous increase in the *number* of late-life divorces is one situation and a rise in the *rate* for late-life divorce would be quite another. This is the central issue to be addressed in the present study.

A classic theory of the study of divorce argues that the analysis of family dissolution of any kind must always keep in view the extent to which the pressures and structures of the society help to create the problems which family units (or at times, some agency in society) must solve (Goode 1966:483). In addition, various researches suggest that children are a binding force and an incentive for some parents to remain together (Anzo 2003; Kato 2005; Waite et al. 1985; White and

F. Kumagai, *Family Issues on Marriage, Divorce, and Older Adults in Japan*,
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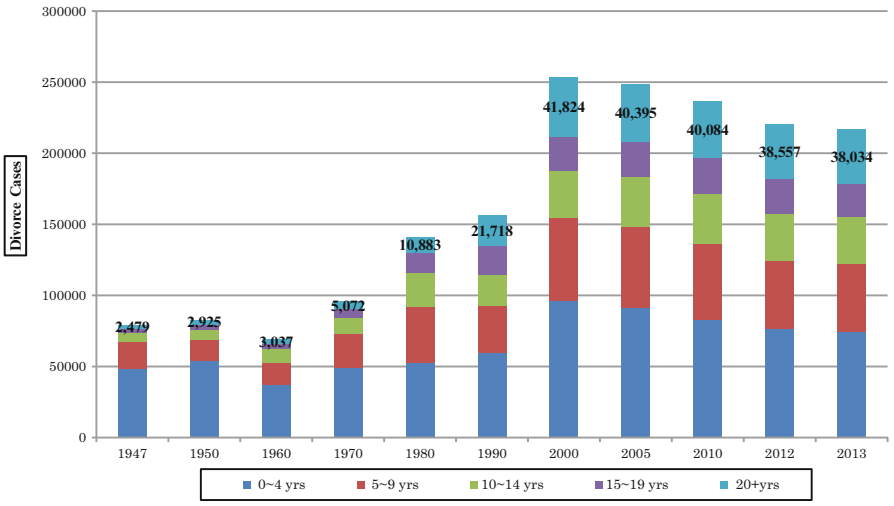

Fig. 6.1 Changes in divorce cases by the duration of marriage 1947–2013 (*Source*: IPSSR 2014, Table 6.13, and MHLW 2014b, Table 10. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

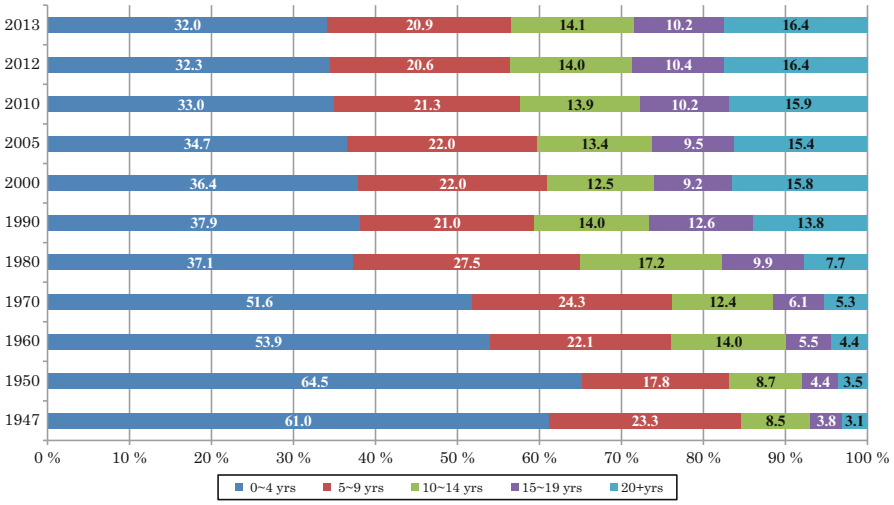

Fig. 6.2 Changes in the proportion (%) of divorces by the duration of marriage: 1947–2013 (*Source*: IPSSR 2014, Table 6.13, and MHLW 2014b, Table 10. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

Booth 1985). In fact, there is a Japanese saying "*ko wa kasugai*" (children are a bond between their parents). It implies that parents keep their marital relationship intact even after the loss of affection for the sake of their children. When the children leave home, however, parents face a transition; those who are unable to manage the new marital dynamics in the empty nest may face late-life divorce (Glenn 1990).

From the standpoint of children, some study reveals that children are better off if their antagonistic parents get divorced rather than observing them to quarrel and/or fight constantly. Being exposed to unhappy parental relationship gives children negative impacts on their psychological well-being more so than parental divorce itself (Noguchi 2009).

A recent study by Open University in England, however, suggests contrasting survey results that couples without children have happier marriages (The Guardian 2014).[1] Couples with divorce history have learned from previous relationships and are able to make their next one a more enriching experience without having children. The study could take divorce as a positive step toward reconstructing a happier relationship with the new partner.

In order to clarify the issues related to late-life divorce in Japan, five central issues are examined in this chapter:

1. Increases in late-life divorces.
2. Changing patterns of marriage and divorce and the year 2007 issue.
3. The significance of baby boomers.
4. Longer marriages mean less likely divorces.
5. Different reasons for late-life divorces.

6.2 Recent Changes in Divorce in Japan

As we discussed in Chap. 5 of this book, in her earlier study, the author elaborated a century of divorce history in Japan from 1883 to 1983, dividing the entire period into six subperiods (Kumagai 1983). She then updated her research by incorporating two additional subperiods (1984–1990 and 1991–2005) (Kumagai 2006b, 2008) and further extends to the year 2013 statistics (IPSS 2014; MHLW 2014b) (see Fig. 6.3).

The crude divorce rate (CDR) has been increasing continuously for well over half a century in most Western industrialized nations. The observed rate of 1.84 divorces per one thousand population in Japan in 2013 (MHLW 2014b) is much lower than in such nations as the United States (4.19 in 2000, and 3.6 in 2011) (US Census Bureau 2013; US CDC 2013) and Russia (4.7 in 2011; UN 2013). The CDR in Japan today is much lower than many European nations (ranging from 3.0 to 4.0) and even some of the Asian nations such as South Korea (2.28 in 2012) (MHLW 2014a, b).[2] The direction in which the CDR has been moving is certainly an issue worth examining (see Fig. 6.3).

[1] The survey was led by Jacqui Gabb, an Open University senior lecturer in social policy, and was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. Researchers surveyed more than 5,000 participants of all ages, sexual orientations, and statuses.

[2] Crude divorce rates (CDRs) in other industrialized nations were as follows: the United States, 4.7 in 1990, 4.2 in 2000, 3.4 in 2009 (US Census Bureau 2013), and 3.6 in 2011 (US CDC 2013); Russia, 4.7 (in 2011, UN 2013, Table 24); Denmark, 2.8; Finland, 2.4; Germany, 2.2; Hungary, 2.2;

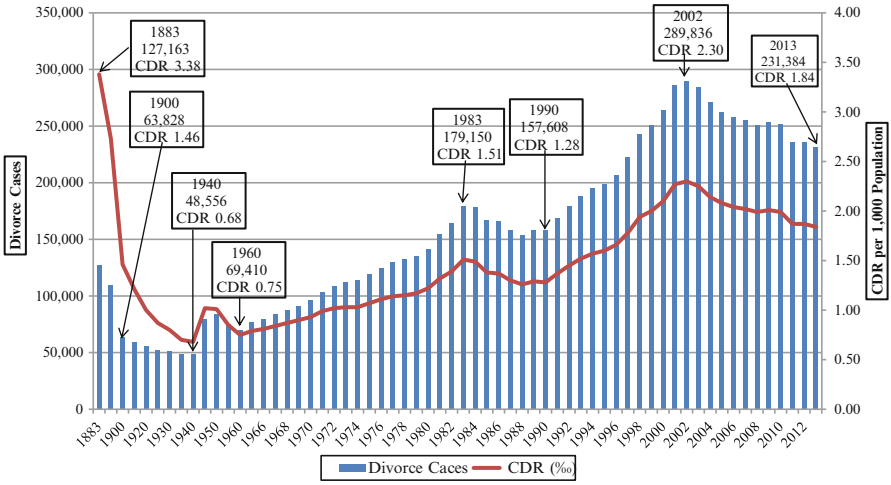

Fig. 6.3 Changes in divorce cases and crude divorce rates (CDR ‰) in Japan: 1883–2013 (*Source*: IPSSR 2014, Table 6.2, and MHLW 2014b Tables 1(2.2) and 2(2.2). The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

6.3 Duration of Marriage Prior to Divorce

Attitudes toward marriage are changing. Not only do more people postpone marriage into their later years, but also significant changes have emerged in the motivation to marry (Kumagai 1986a, b). Similarly, the pattern by which Japanese people pursue divorce has also changed (Kumagai 1984). That is, divorces motivated by considerations of family lineage and family harmony occur comparatively soon after the marriage, while those based on personal happiness may occur at any time. Kawashima and Steiner postulated that a trend toward the lengthening of the

Austria, 2.0; Belgium, 2.5; Sweden, 2.5 (CDRs for European nations are those of 2012 by Eurostat 2014); Korea, 2.28; Singapore, 1.81 (both in 2012, MHLW 2014a, b: 52). All of the CDRs used throughout the present study are derived by dividing the total number of divorce cases by one thousand population in the given year (CDR = divorce cases/1,000 population). These rates are based on the population as a whole, rather than the population of newly married or existing married couples. Because of the nature of the statistical data and the need for comparability, it has been common to present CDR based on per one thousand population. However, divorce rates are more accurate if they are based on the existing marriages at any given point in time. Therefore, a modified divorce rate (MDR) has been suggested, in which the divorce rate equals the divorce cases divided by the number of existing marriages (MDR = divorce cases/existing marriages × 100). Thus, age-standardized divorce rates for the married population in any given year for males and females are adjusted by eliminating the differences of age structures in order to compare them. The author derived the Pearson correlation coefficient between these two divorce rates, and it is significantly high ($r = .732$, $p < .001$); therefore, the CDR rather than the MDR has been adopted throughout the current study.

period of marriage prior to divorce would seem to indicate that the proportion of divorces obtained for traditional reasons is declining (Kawashima and Steiner 1960:219–221).

At the beginning of this chapter, we discussed briefly on the changing situation of the duration of marriage prior to divorce in Japan today. Figures 6.2 and 6.3 show the number of divorce cases for the average number of years elapsed prior to divorce and the proportions of divorces by the duration of marriage in the postwar period, respectively (1947–2013). Shortly after WWII, most divorces occurred during the first 5 years of marriage. That has changed significantly. Six out of ten (61.0 %) divorces occurred within the first 5 years of marriage in 1947, whereas the proportion declined to one third of the total (32.0 %) in 2013. It is also worth noting that the proportion of divorces occurring within the first twelve months of marriage, a period when decisions on childbirth may be a factor, has been declining considerably, from 14.1 % in 1947 to 6.2 % in 2013 (IPSSR 2014: Table 6.13; MHLW 2014b, Table 10).

Yet it is amazing to note that the proportion of divorces occurring after more than 20 years of marriage has been on the increase continuously, from 3.1 % in 1947 to 16.4 % in 2013. Divorce late in the marriage is more than five times more frequent today than six decades ago. One reason might be that parents stay together until the children have grown and the psychological damage of divorce could be minimized. Furthermore, many divorces occur today when husbands have retired from their work and have started to stay home all the time. It may come as a shock to wives, unaccustomed to having their husbands around home constantly. When people realize that there is little affection in their marriage, they are more than willing to end it.

Divorces among middle-age or senior couples in Japan—those occurring after more than 20 years of marriage, in particular—are often referred to as *jukunen rikon* [late-life divorce], *nure ochiba rikon* [divorce due to husbands being wet leaves that stick around even after sweeping], or *taishoku-kin rikon* [retirement pension divorce] (Kumagai 1996:131; Kumagai et al. 2010; Motoyama 2000:128).

The number of late-life divorces occurring after more than 20 years of marriage began to be conspicuous by the mid-1990s; the percentage of late-life divorces compared to total divorce cases has been increasing continuously ever since: 2,479 cases in 1947 (3.1 % of the total), 21,718 cases in 1990 (13.8 %), 41,824 cases in 2000 (15.8 %), and, the peak, 45,536 cases in 2002 (see Figs. 6.1 and 6.2). Since then, however, even after the enactment of the old-age pension division program for divorcing couples, such divorce cases have been on the decline (38,034 cases, and 16.4 % of the total 231,384 divorce cases in 2013).

This trend of increasing duration of marriage in Japan prior to divorce is notably at odds with the well-accepted notion that there is a decline in the divorce rate relating to greater length of marriage in most countries, while the overall rate of divorce continues to increase (Goode 1963; Kawashima and Steiner 1960). Nevertheless, the notion that the old-age pension plan would increase late-life divorces does not seem to be supported in Japan. It needs to be examined closely.

6.4 Late-Life Divorce and the Year 2007 Issue

It has been recognized that both the number of divorce cases and the divorce rate have been on the decline since their peak in 2002 (2002: 289,836 cases, CDR 2.30; 2013: 235,034 cases, CDR 1.84 (see Fig. 6.3). These declines may possibly be attributable to two major factors: (1) signs of an upturn in the Japanese economy and (2) the so-called year 2007 revision of the old-age pension division program.

Recently there have been some signs of improvement in Japan's economy, which may have tended to relieve some of the pressure on married couples, especially those in late-life marriages. However, it is uncertain how long the declining trend in the divorce rate will last, especially among those who have been married for many years. It is often the case that financial pressures are difficult to cope with for many an elderly couple, even if their marriage is intact. Therefore, it is quite foreseeable that divorced women in their senior years may face insurmountable difficulties, not only financially but also in leading their daily lives.

The year 2007 issue refers to two interrelated matters. The baby boomer generation (born between 1947 and 1949, approximately eight million in total) began reaching 60 years of age in 2007, retirement age for many major corporations in Japan. Therefore, a great many husbands who devoted their entire life to their company began to retire in 2007. Upon retirement, many of these ex-businessmen spend most of their time at home. Not only do that many of them find it difficult to manage their free time after retirement, but their wives feel uneasy dealing with husbands who hang around at home all day long. It is natural, therefore, for wives to start feeling animosity toward their retired husbands and consider divorce. As a consequence, it was widely predicted that an upturn trend in the number of divorces would emerge in Japan after 2007. In actuality, however, it did not happen. On the contrary, the divorce rate has been on the decline ever since its peak in 2002.

Another reason that may have contributed to the declining trend in the divorce rate over the short term was a misunderstanding over the "Old-Age Pension Division Reform Bill." This change in Japan's old-age pension reform scheme passed the Diet on June 5, 2004, and came into effect on April 1, 2007. It provides that housewives may have a share of her husband's pension. The new law entitles both husband and wife to a share of the other's pension at the time of divorce, whereas the old law gave no entitlement to the wife for her husband's pension. However, the new scheme must be understood cautiously. It does *not* mean that the wife who attains divorce is automatically entitled to receive one-half of the pension that her divorcing husband receives.

The new pension plan gives the full-time housewife an entitlement to a *maximum* of one-half of the old-age pension that her divorced husband receives *only for the period of her marriage to him*. Moreover, both spouses concerned must agree upon the proportions of the old-age pension, and the family court makes the final decision. The husband is solely entitled to receive any portion of his old-age pension earned prior to the marriage. Furthermore, effective April 1, 2008, an additional provision went into effect—pension premiums paid after April 2008 are subject to an automatic

50/50 pension division between the divorcing spouses (Jukunen Sedai no Ikikata Kenkyu-han 2006:58–59; Kumagai et al. 2010: 107–113).

If both husband and wife work and pay social security pension premiums, then a different pension division scheme is applied. That is, both of their pensions are added together, and the proportion must be mutually agreed upon between the spouses, with the family court issuing the final decision. In other words, should the wife receive a higher pension than her husband, it may happen that the husband would get some of her pension (Jukunen Sedai no Ikikata Kenkyu-han 2006:59).

This change in the old-age pension plan enabled a full-time housewife wishing a divorce to negotiate a maximum of one-half the social security pension to be paid to her husband, who has been employed by an organization. Thus, hoping to receive this social security pension upon the retirement of their husbands, Japanese wives might have postponed divorce for a short while. Therefore, it was said that it would be very likely that the upward divorce trend would return after April 2007, as some wives looked to receive the old-age pension division at the time of their divorce. As stated already, however, it did not happen.

The actual effects of the old-age pension division are quite ambiguous indeed. Many wives who considered initiating divorce after April 1, 2007, might have hoped to receive half their husband's pension; however, they were likely to find themselves disappointed. The only legal certainty is the 50/50 old-age pension division for pension premiums paid after April 2008. The proportion of the pension that the full-time housewife will receive is not automatically half the amount, but rather it is so only if the ex-husband agrees and the family court concurs with the couple's proposed apportionment.

If that is the case, the amount of a pension that a full-time housewife receives might be too little for her to establish an independent life on her own. The realization of this fact likely discouraged housewives from pursuing divorce. Hence, the divorce rate after 2007 did not really change.

6.5 Baby Boomers and the Duration of Marriage at the Time of Divorce

Since the mid-1990s, there has been a substantial increase in the number of late-life divorces. The question is, does this really reflect a true change in the institution of divorce? In other words, the numerical increment in late-life divorces is different from the suggestion that divorce in Japan has been shifting to those who have gone through many years of marriage together. It is easy to be misled by what could be termed the fallacy of late-life divorce in Japan (Kumagai 2006b, 2008).

Figures 6.1 and 6.2 discussed earlier confirmed that the majority of divorces in Japan today occur in relatively early stages of marriage. Although late-life divorces appear to have increased dramatically in recent years, they in fact consist of only a small fraction. In other words, an increase in the number of late-life divorces is one situation and is not the same as an increment in the proportion of such divorces.

In her earlier study on the same issue (Kumagai 2006b), the author of this book confirmed this point for both Japanese divorce cases in general and for divorce by legal procedure as well. That is, there seems to be no significant differences between the two data sets, i.e., the one of the divorce cases in general and the other of divorce by court procedure. Therefore, we can discuss the issue based on the divorce cases in general.[3]

6.6 Higher Divorce Rate Among Younger Couples Over Veteran Couples

Let us discuss the fourth point of investigation stipulated at the onset of the current chapter. That is, as the duration of marriage increases, Japanese married couples are less inclined to pursue divorce.

In examining changes in the divorce rates of husbands and wives separately by their birth cohort, the earlier study found that assumptions concerning late-life divorces did not truly reflect the reality (Kumagai 2006b). That is, divorce rates for Japanese husbands and wives beyond their 50s remain the lowest among all the birth cohorts examined. Most of the couples that pursue divorce do so up to the age of 30 or so across the various birth cohorts. In other words, couples who have been married for a long period of time do not get divorced easily. These veteran couples have faced difficulties countless times in the course of their marriage. Therefore, they have acquired wisdom through their life experiences and have developed strategies to cope with marital crises.

When we look at the issue from the other side of the coin, the same statement could also apply. That is, changes in the divorce rate by age group over time also prove that the majority of divorces in Japan continue to take place during the early stages of marriage (see Fig. 6.4a, b). Notably, the rate for late-life divorces today is still the lowest among all age groups (see Fig. 6.5a, b). The divorce rate for husbands who pursue divorce in their 30s today is more than nine times as high as for those in their 60s and over; for wives in the 25–34 age group, it is close to five times as high as those in their 50s and as much as 24 times greater than those in their 60s and over (see Fig. 6.5).

[3] In examining divorces by legal procedure with respect to the age of husband and wife, the above points have been confirmed. Total divorce cases by court procedure in 2004 were 67,688 (25 %) vs. total divorce cases in 2004, which were 270,815 (100 %) (for husbands $r = .911^{***}$, $p < .001$; for wives $r = .919^{***}$, $p < .001$). Both husbands and wives pursue divorce most frequently during the 30–34 age bracket (husbands, 19 %; wives, 21 %), followed by the 35–39 age bracket (both husbands and wives: 18 %). The majority of husbands and wives pursue divorce before they reach 40 (husbands, 52 %; wives, 60 %), and only a very small proportion do so after 60 years of age (husbands, 8 %; wives, 6 %). Furthermore, examinations of the proportions for divorces by 5-year age brackets reveal that they hit a peak at 30–34 and thereafter decline continuously for both husbands and wives.

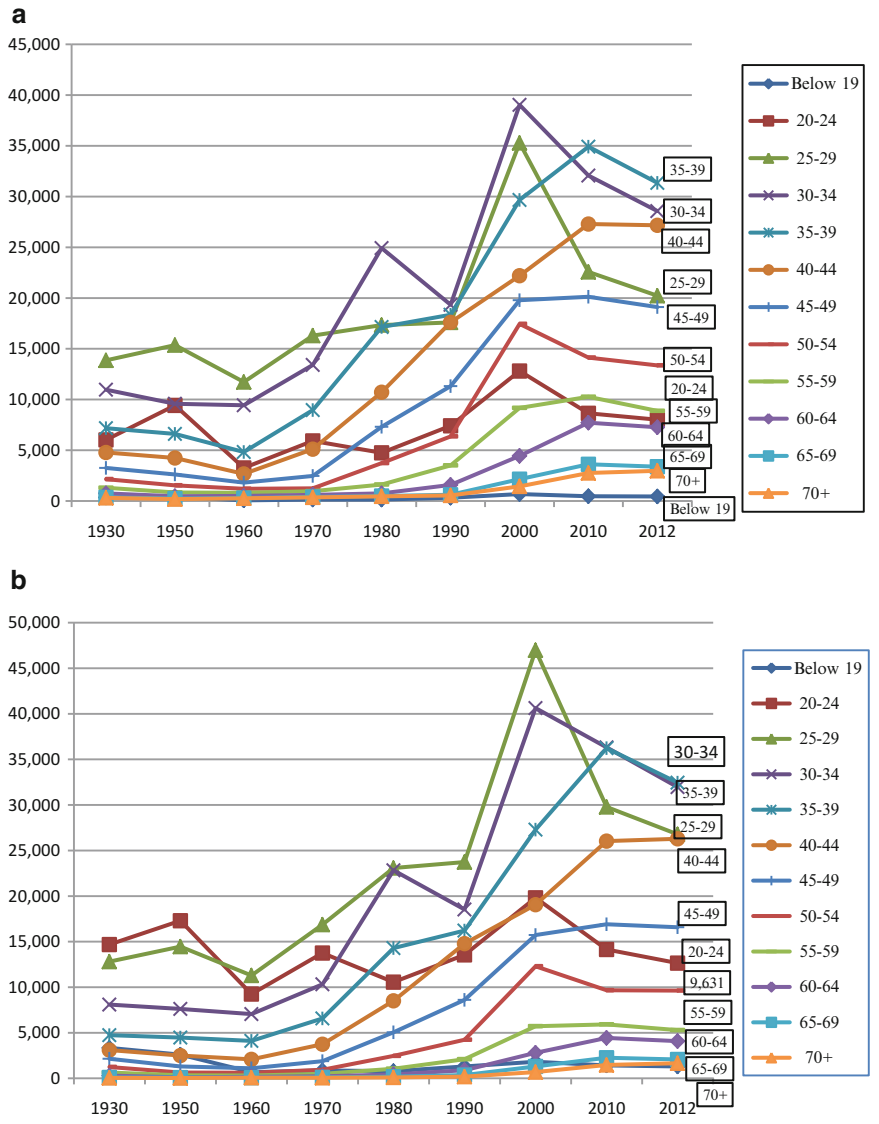

Fig. 6.4 Changes in divorce cases for husbands/wives by age group: 1930–2012. (**a**) For husbands. (**b**) For wives (*Source*: IPSSR 2014, Table 6.7. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

Moreover, breaking age group of 60 and over into 60–64, 65–69, and 70 and over, we observe clearly that the higher the age group, the lower the divorce rate over time for both husbands and wives (IPSSR 2014, Table 6.8, see Fig. 6.5a, b). Some may argue that the prolonged life expectancy of Japanese men and women might have been a contributing factor for increased numbers of late-life divorces among Japanese couples. In fact, life expectancy at birth of Japanese men (79.94 in

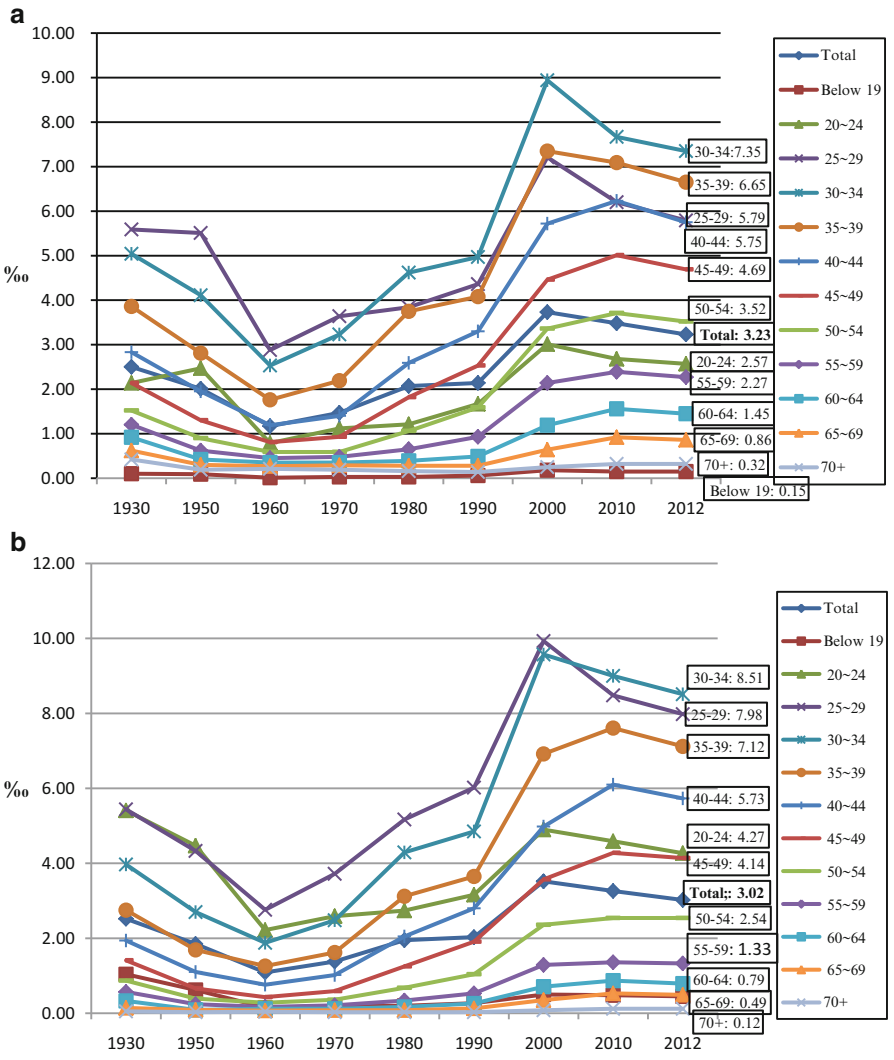

Fig. 6.5 Changes in divorce rates (‰) for husbands/wives by age group: 1930–2012. (**a**) For husbands. (**b**) For wives (*Source*: IPSSR 2014, Table 6.8. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

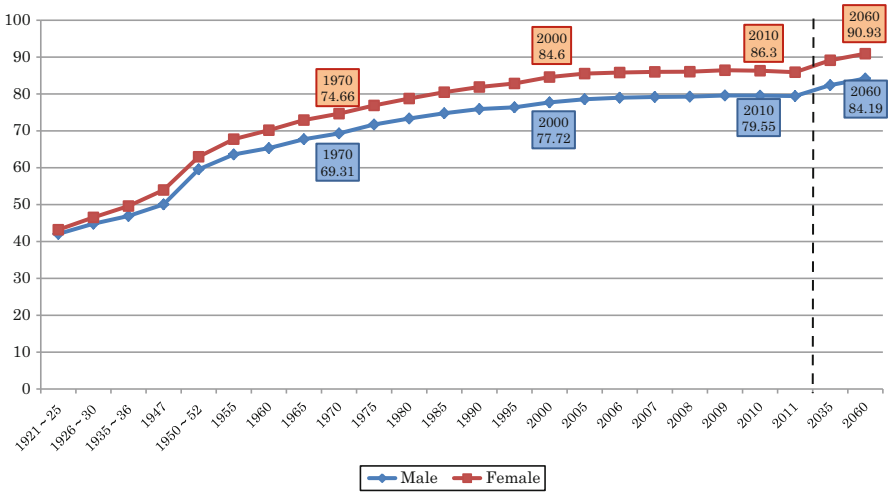

Fig. 6.6 Changes in life expectancy at birth of Japanese male and female: 1921–2060 (*Source*: IPSSR 2014, Table 5.12. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

2012) and women (86.41 in 2012) today is the world's highest (IPSSR 2014, Tables 5.12 and 5.16, see Fig. 6.6). The author of this book, however, is skeptical to this contention. It is because the prolonged life expectancy of Japanese people is one thing and increased numbers of late-life divorces is another. As it has been pointed out, rates for late-life divorce among couples in the higher age groups have been quite low. Late-life divorces defined as divorces by couples married longer than 20 years occur most frequently among those in their 40s and 50s.

These findings confirm that the majority of divorces today still occur within marriages of shorter duration. Although divorces by couples in their 50s today have become conspicuous, their divorce rate still remains low.

We can say that the conspicuous increase in late-life divorce cases is mostly due to the baby boomer population born between 1947 and 1949. They have now launched into the life stage wherein they have come through 20 years or more of marital life. Even if many more late-life divorces are taking place today than before, the sizable population of this age cohort keeps their divorce rate quite low.

6.7 Reasons for Late-Life Divorce

Earlier in the discussion, we stated that there is no significant difference between the total divorces incurred and those taking place by legal procedure on the overall divorce rate. Divorces occurring after being married for more than 20 years, however, seem to take place more frequently via legal procedure than is true for divorces in general (22 % vs. 16 %) (Kumagai 2006b: 128). The reason for this would be the

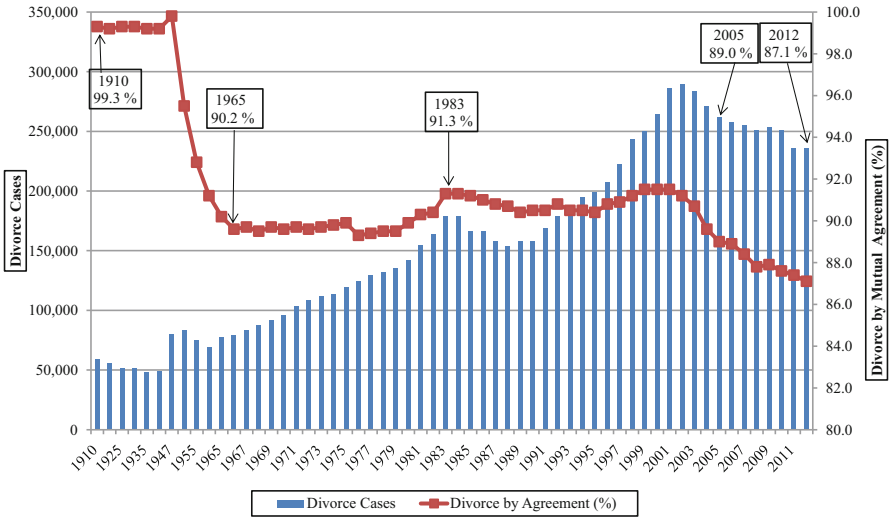

Fig. 6.7 Changes in cases and proportions (%) of divorce by mutual agreement and divorce cases: 1910–2012 (*Source*: IPSSR 2014, Table 6.2. The figure is compiled and constructed by the author)

costs entailed in the judicial procedure, which might be difficult to bear for many who might wish to pursue divorce, especially full-time housewives. Thus, let us consider the two types of divorce in Japan, namely, divorce by agreement and divorce by judicial procedure.

6.7.1 Divorce by Mutual Agreement or by Judicial Procedure[4]

There were two types of divorce in Japan under both the old Civil Code of 1898 and the new Civil Code of 1947 (Kumagai 1996, 2008). Divorce by mutual agreement was obtained by notifying the official in charge of family registers. As discussed briefly in Chap. 5 of this book, the divorce by mutual agreement has always been prevalent in Japan (see Fig. 6.7, and the figure is duplicated). Nevertheless, given the social changes in Japan, it was assumed that divorce by judicial procedure would grow. Kawashima and Steiner state their reasoning as follows (1960: 225–226):

> In a social system in which, using Talcott Parsons' terms, the pattern-variable cluster of collectivity orientation, particularism, ascription, and diffuseness is dominant, morality is the typical social control, while in a social system in which the opposite pattern-variable cluster predominates, law becomes the typical social control. In a country such as Japan, in

[4]This section is mostly cited from Chap. 3 of the book by the present author (Kumagai 2008), with the statistics updated.

> which Confucianism played an important ideological role, articulating the role expectations of collectivity orientation, particularism, ascription and diffuseness, the utilization of law and courts was traditionally frowned upon as antithetical to the traditional order. It is the custom of Japanese to incline to avoid a lawsuit as far as possible in matters relating to family relations. The utilization of laws and courts is an important aspect of the transition from one type of social system to the other.

It was assumed that the weakening of tradition in family matters would result in an increase in the proportion of divorces by the courts. In addition, more and more wives were expected to take the initiative in pursuing divorce.[5]

In the case of late-life divorces by judiciary procedure, wives in Japan file the majority of cases (Secretariat of the Supreme Court of Japan 2013). It is interesting to note, though, that an opposite trend has occurred in the United States. That is, under a "fault" system, it is usually the wife who brings suit. Under a "no-fault" system, however, this changes drastically, i.e., there is a dramatic increase in the number of men who file (Friedman and Percival 1976; Gunter and Johnson 1978).

In Japan, the proportion of divorces by mutual agreement has decreased continuously, from 99.3 % in 1910, and 95.5 % in 1950, to 87.1 % in 2012 (see Fig. 6.7). Conversely, the proportion of litigated divorces is on the rise; divorces by arbitration increased from 3.9 % in 1950 to 10.0 % in 2012, and divorces through the courts, including both judgments of domestic relations and court decisions, rose from 0.5 % in 1950 to 1.2 % in 2012 (IPSSR 2014: Table 6.2). The traditional values concerning marriage and the family in Japan are weakening.

Statistics on the proportion of spouses who took the initiative in pursuing divorce by agreement are reported in the Annual Legal Statistics—Family Courts Edition, which is compiled by the Japanese government. These statistics have been available on the Internet beginning with the year 2000 (Secretariat of the Supreme Court of Japan 2013).[6] Wives reported they initiated 64.6 % of the divorce cases in 1978, although husbands reported they initiated 54.4 %. According to the government statistics, the proportion of divorces pursued by wives increased to 72.4 % in 2011 (Secretariat of the Supreme Court of Japan 2013).[7]

In short, an increasing frequency of divorces initiated by wives indicates the enhanced autonomy of women in marriage (Otani 2008). It is expected that this trend will continue in the future.

[5] Divorce by arbitration differs from conciliation as practiced in Western societies. The former facilitates the divorce through the assistance of arbiters. Conciliation, on the other hand, assists in averting divorces.

[6] "Shihou Toukei Nenpou: Heisei 24-nendo Ban" [Annual Reports of Japanese Legal Statistics: 2012]. http://www.courts.go.jp/search/jtsp0010List1 (accessed April 30, 2014).

[7] Table 14 of the Annual Reports of Japanese Legal Statistics—Family Courts Edition: 2012. Accessed April 30, 2014. (http://www.courts.go.jp/sihotokei/nenpo/pdf/B24DKAJ14~16.pdf).

6.7.2 Reasons for Divorce[8]

It is difficult to correctly identify the reasons behind the decision to divorce, because the stated reasons and the realities do not necessarily coincide. The Family Courts Edition of the Annual Legal Statistics reports the reasons for divorce alleged by either husbands or wives. The people who intend to pursue divorce are permitted to state a maximum of three major reasons for their decision to divorce.

It seems, however, that the most frequently cited reasons for divorce have changed recently. Through the end of the 1970s, the most commonly cited reasons were adultery, financial problems, and incompatibility in personality. Today, on the contrary, financial problems are not among the most serious reasons for divorce cited by either wives or husbands. Instead, on the part of divorced wives, the most frequently cited reason is incompatibility in personality, followed by violence and abuse by husbands, and adultery. On the part of divorced husbands, incompatibility in personality is most frequently cited, followed by adultery, and not being able to get along well with relatives. Very few people cited financial problems, and it is certainly not one of the major reasons for divorce today, at least for divorced husbands (Secretariat of the Supreme Court of Japan 2013: 36–37, Table 18).

The fact that financial problems have declined as a reason for divorce, and the citation of cruelty by divorcing wives has increased, indicates that the marriage relationship in Japan has moved from an institutional to a personal orientation. That is, Japanese people have been placing more and more emphasis on personal happiness within their marriage. Naturally, incompatibility in personality is detrimental to the maintenance of marital harmony. In an industrialized society, marriage has come to be viewed as a matter between individuals. With the decline in the traditional *ie* [feudal family] system, the conjugal tie has become crucial. Therefore, it is expected that divorces caused by incompatibility in personality will further increase in the future.

6.7.3 Motives for Late-Life Divorce

From the legal point of view, Otani (2008) analyzed late-life divorce initiated by wives. The study suggests to conclude that the major reason for it would be their dissatisfaction with the traditional sex role identification. Wives who pursued sex roles primarily in domestic arena for over two decades have come to realize their total lack of autonomy. In husband-wife relationship, wives have been placed under the control of husbands and have neither been treated as partners on the equal footing nor individuals. In other words, the marital relationship between husbands and wives of late-life divorces reflects the realization of women to seek for the

[8] This section is mostly cited from Chap. 3 of the book by the present author (Kumagai 2008), with the statistics updated.

autonomy from the ruler and the subordinate situation. It reflects the enhanced autonomy of women in marriage (Otani 2008). Desire for autonomy of these unsatisfied wives, however, could not always be materialized.

Today, wives resenting their retired husbands who linger around home all day long initiate the great majority of late-life divorces in Japan (Otani 2008; Secretariat of the Supreme Court of Japan 2013). Thus, such phrases as *sodaigomi* [large useless trash] or *nure ochiba* [wet leaves that stick around even after sweeping] were coined to signify retired husbands. Late-life divorces started to become conspicuous by mid-1990, and Kumagai (1996, 2011); Kumagai et al. (2010) elaborated the sentiments expressed by wives who pursued late-life divorce a couple of decade ago:

Enjoying life after retirement as a couple is not yet a lifestyle fully appreciated by the Japanese people in general. Most Japanese men who have devoted their lives to working outside the home find it difficult to manage free time after their retirement. And by the time their husbands retire from work, most Japanese women have established independent lifestyles that do not include their husbands. The unaccustomed full-time presence of husbands at home often has a negative impact on family life. Thus, Japanese wives often refer to their unwelcome retired husbands as *sodaigomi* [large useless trash] or *nure ochiba* [wet leaves that stick around even after sweeping]. Marital stress, difficult to cope with under the best of circumstances, becomes even more so for the elderly, particularly if their health and economic conditions are deteriorating (Kumagai 1996:131).

What was said about late-life divorces a decade ago still appears to be true today. Devoted businessmen, once they retire, are confronted with difficulties in coping with their wives at home every day. They have never had time to develop special interests or hobbies, nor do they have any specific place to go; hence, they tend to stay home all day long. Many of them have nothing to do but watch TV programs. When this is the case, the wife must prepare meals for them three times a day, and is totally deprived of the freedom she had grown accustomed to in her life. When the wife has an appointment for a social gathering, her retired husband may become so inquisitive that he insists on coming along. This is the reason that the husband upon his retirement is called *nure ochiba.*

When Japanese people are asked about late-life divorce, more than a quarter respond that it is a topic of strong interest (Asahi Shimbun 2006). That is, of 2,711 total respondents (males, 1,343; females, 1,368), 24 % of males (322) and 31 % of females (424) answered that they are interested in the problem of late-life divorce. The reasons for their interest in late-life divorce are somewhat self-centered, such as (1) "Late-life divorces have come to be conspicuous," (2) "The wife is dissatisfied with the husband," (3) "Financial strain has come to an end," (4) "Children have grown-up," and (5) "(I) Know people who have pursued late-life divorces" ("Jukunen rikon" 2006).

Questions arise, however, whether or not these complaints expressed by wives or their dissatisfaction with their retired husbands could become valid reasons for late-life divorce. In the case of divorce by mutual agreement, there is no need to state the reason for divorce, whereas, in the case of divorce by judiciary procedure, the party who initiates it is required to state the reasons for the divorce. These reasons must

be "serious enough so that marriage could no longer be sustained" (Common Law: Article 770, Section 1–5) (Tajima 2004; Yamanouchi 2004). Complaints of wives could be the reflection of their self-centered attitudes, and efforts should be made before their marital discord becomes irreconcilable. Under these circumstances, late-life divorces are not likely to be granted (Ninomiya and Sakakibara 2005:60–61).

If a couple has been living separately for some time and there exists no actual husband-wife relationship, then the marriage can be considered as revocable and the wife can pursue divorce (Ninomiya and Sakakibara 2005:75–77). However, a divorced wife has no guarantee whatsoever to receive alimony from her ex-husband (Tajima 2004:60). That is, attaining the status of divorce is one thing, and the granting of alimony is another.

No marriage can be perfect, nor is it feasible that husband and wife will agree upon all matters. It is natural to have differences of opinion in any human relationship, and the same is true for the marital relationship. What is needed for both husband and wife in their marital relationship is a sense of balance, in that each of them should be psychologically independent of each other. If and only if that is achieved, will husband and wife respect each other, exchange lively dialogue, enjoy each other's company, and still appreciate time for each to pursue their independent interests.

Conclusion

Late-life divorces in Japan, those with longer than 20 years of marriage at the time of divorce, have become more conspicuous since the mid-1990s. However, that does not mean the rate of that type of divorce has increased. We must question the validity of the contention that late-life divorces have become more common recently. They may be more conspicuous, but it may be a fallacy that divorces in Japan occur today more frequently among middle-aged and elderly married couples. This was the starting point for the current chapter.

It is true that late-life divorces (in which couples have been married for more than 20 years) have become more numerous since the mid-1990s, but the increase is due primarily to the baby boomer generation born between 1947 and 1949, some members of which are now pursuing late-life divorces. Although the numbers of this age group have risen, the rate of divorce is still low, among those who are 50 years old.

It was expected that late-life divorces would continue to increase after the year 2007 when the old-age pension division plan was enacted. This new program enabled full-time housewives to demand a maximum of one-half the old-age retirement pension that their husband receives. With expected gains in some portion of the old-age pension, wives would be more likely to seek a

(continued)

divorce, it was thought. But it has not seemed to change much. It is not clear, but the new pension division scheme does not seem to have had any significant impact. Neither the overall divorce rate nor those for veteran couples seem to show any significant increase since 2007. However, the old-age pension division must be studied carefully, and it should be noted that it is not, in fact, as attractive as it may appear on the surface.

Another point: the longer a marriage lasts, the more likely it is to last even longer. Couples married a long time are less likely to pursue divorce. This is perhaps due to the strategies that they have developed throughout their marriage. There certainly exist ups and downs in marital life, and veteran couples have developed effective ways to cope with these difficulties.

Finally, the reasons for late-life divorces seem to differ from those expressed for divorces in general. That is, many wives in late-life divorces possess negative attitudes toward their husbands after retirement. The wife may feel that her accustomed lifestyle, long established without the presence of her husband, is impaired so significantly that she feels a need to divorce. Many of these wives, however, possess very little knowledge about or resources for their own financial welfare following their divorce. What is waiting after late-life divorce is not an easy path to follow.

These findings confirm that the majority of divorces in Japan today occur in relatively early stages of marriage. Although it seems late-life divorces have increased dramatically in recent years, in reality they consist of only a small proportion. This is what could be termed the fallacy of late-life divorce in Japan. Therefore, we can say that the conspicuous increment in late-life divorce cases is mainly due to the baby boomer population born between 1947 and 1949. They have now launched into the life stage where they have come through 20 years or more of marital life. Even if many more late-life divorces are taking place today than ever before, the sizable population of the baby boomer age group keeps their divorce rate quite low.

The results of these analyses, therefore, have clarified the factors facilitating late-life divorces in Japan. At the same time, however, they have shown the fallacy of there being a proportional increase in this phenomenon. Now is the time for Japanese couples married for many years to reconsider and to reconstruct their marital relationships for the better.

We found that late-life divorces in Japan, i.e., by couples married longer than 20 years, have increased dramatically over the past 30 years. We also noted, however, that hikes in late-life divorce cases are due primarily to the "baby boomers" born between 1947 and 1949. Furthermore, no significant increase in late-life divorce cases and/or rates has been detected since 2007, the year when the Old-Age Pension Division Scheme was enacted. One reason for it would be the fear of women about managing their lives and finances after divorce, especially in their older ages. Thus, it would be most appropriate to discuss the topic on Japanese elderly living alone in the next chapter.

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Chapter 7
Japanese Elders Living Apart: Policy Suggestions

7.1 Introduction

From the previous chapters of this book, we note that Japanese society has been going through fertility decline and population aging. An increasing number of Japanese men and women have difficulties in meeting with marriage partners. Consequently, they never get married and are obliged to lead lifetime single-hood. Furthermore, late-life divorces in Japan, i.e., by couples married longer than 20 years, have been increasingly common since the mid-1990s. Then, we expect to see the emergence of significant changes in living arrangements of the Japanese elderly, which used to be considered as the traditional generational households.

Concerning the living arrangement of the elderly,[1] Chap. 2 of this book highlighted three points to be remembered. First, the rate for coresidency increases as the elderly get older. Second, elders living in urban areas are less likely to live with their children's families and more likely to live with a spouse or alone. Third, the coresidency rate of elderly women has always been higher than that of men, and the gap becomes more apparent as elderly women grow older. With these information in mind, let us now focus our discussion on the elderly living alone.

[1] The author of this book is fully aware of the recent development among the Western academics that the expression "the elderly" has been considered ageist and has been replaced with "older adults." In fact, that is one of the reasons for a part of this book title says "Older Adults" rather than "the Elderly." However, throughout the text of this book, the expression "the elderly" is used instead. It is because the elderly in this book refers to the generalized category of the people 65 years old and over, but not to suggest to any specific individuals.

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7.2 Living Arrangements of the Elderly: Living-Alone Households

7.2.1 Family Size

The Institute of Population and Social Security Research publish a report on the household projections by prefecture every 5 years. The most recent one, "Projections for Japanese Households by Prefecture: 2010–2035," was released in April 2014 (IPSSR 2014b). Concerning the family size by prefecture, three major trends should be noted (see Fig. 7.1a). First, the family size is getting smaller and smaller throughout Japan, and the average is much smaller than three today (2.42 in 2010). In fact, the average family size is smaller than three for all the 47 prefectures throughout Japan today already. The attrition in the family size will continue in the future (will be 2.25 in 2025 and 2.20 in 2035, respectively) (see Fig. 7.1b, c) (IPSSR 2014b, Table II-2).

Second, by the year 2025, the family size in Tokyo will become less than two (1.90). Therefore, we expect to see that a significantly large proportion of the household in Tokyo will be those of living alone, of either young people or the elderly 65 and over.

Third, Yamagata prefecture and those in Tohoku and Hokuriku regions are and will expect to keep relatively larger family size, on one hand. On the other hand, however, prefectures in urban areas and those of rural Kagoshima and Kochi are and will continue to show the smallest family size in Japan.

7.2.2 Living-Alone Households by Sex and by Age Group

Before discussing regional variations in elderly one-person households, let us look more closely by sex and by age group. There exist clear differences in this type of Japanese household by sex over time from 2000 to 2030. For males, the highest rate for one-person households is the 20–34 age group (see Fig. 7.2a). This is indicative of the high rate of Japanese people, especially of Japanese males, who never marry (Kumagai 2008, 31–32).

For Japanese women, on the other hand, the highest rate for one-person households has consistently been the elderly over 65 (see Fig. 7.2b). In other words, problems associated with living alone, if any, would be more serious for elderly women over their male counterpart (IPSSR 2014a, Table 12.49).

7.2.3 Proportions of the Household Type in Which the Elderly Sixty-Five and Over Reside by Prefecture

Elderly one-person households are quite low proportionally in prefectures with traditional farming regions and high in prefectures where independent family units are a family custom. The latter type of household is especially pronounced in the southern

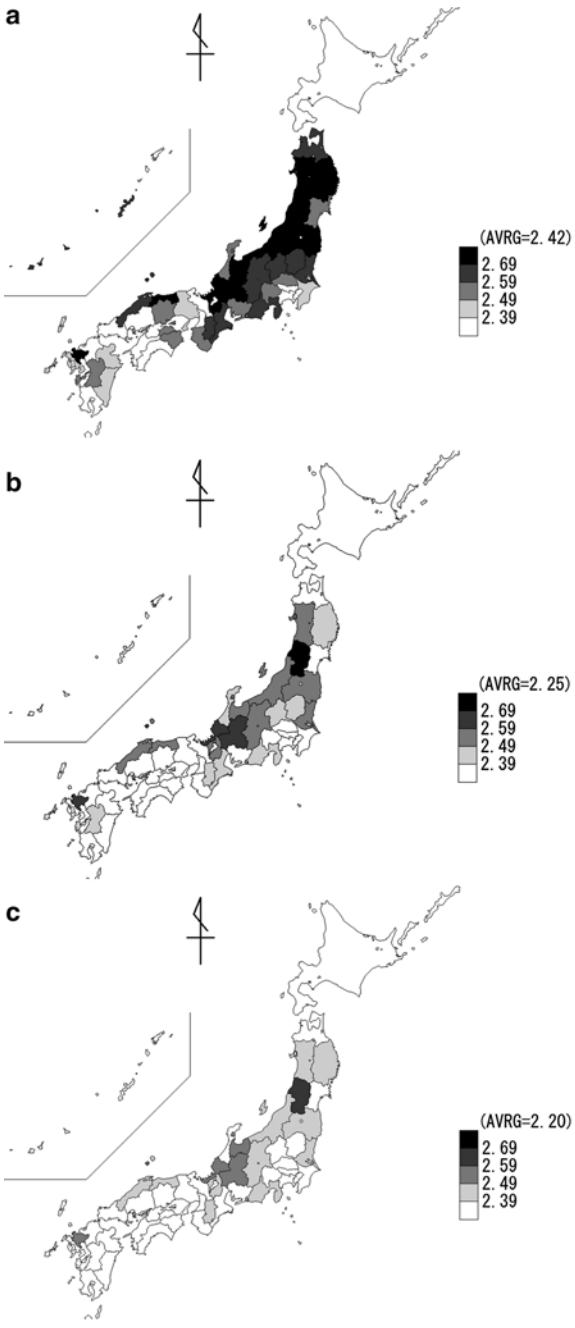

Fig. 7.1 Changes in the family size by prefecture: 2010, 2025, 2035. (**a**) 2010: (Average: 2.42; Tokyo: 2.03-Yamagata: 2.94). (**b**) 2025 (Average: 2.25; Tokyo: 1.90-Yamagata: 2.71). (**c**) 2035 (Average: 2.20; Tokyo: 1.87-Yamagata: 2.59) (*Source*: IPSSR 2014b, Table II-2. The figures were compiled and constructed by the author)

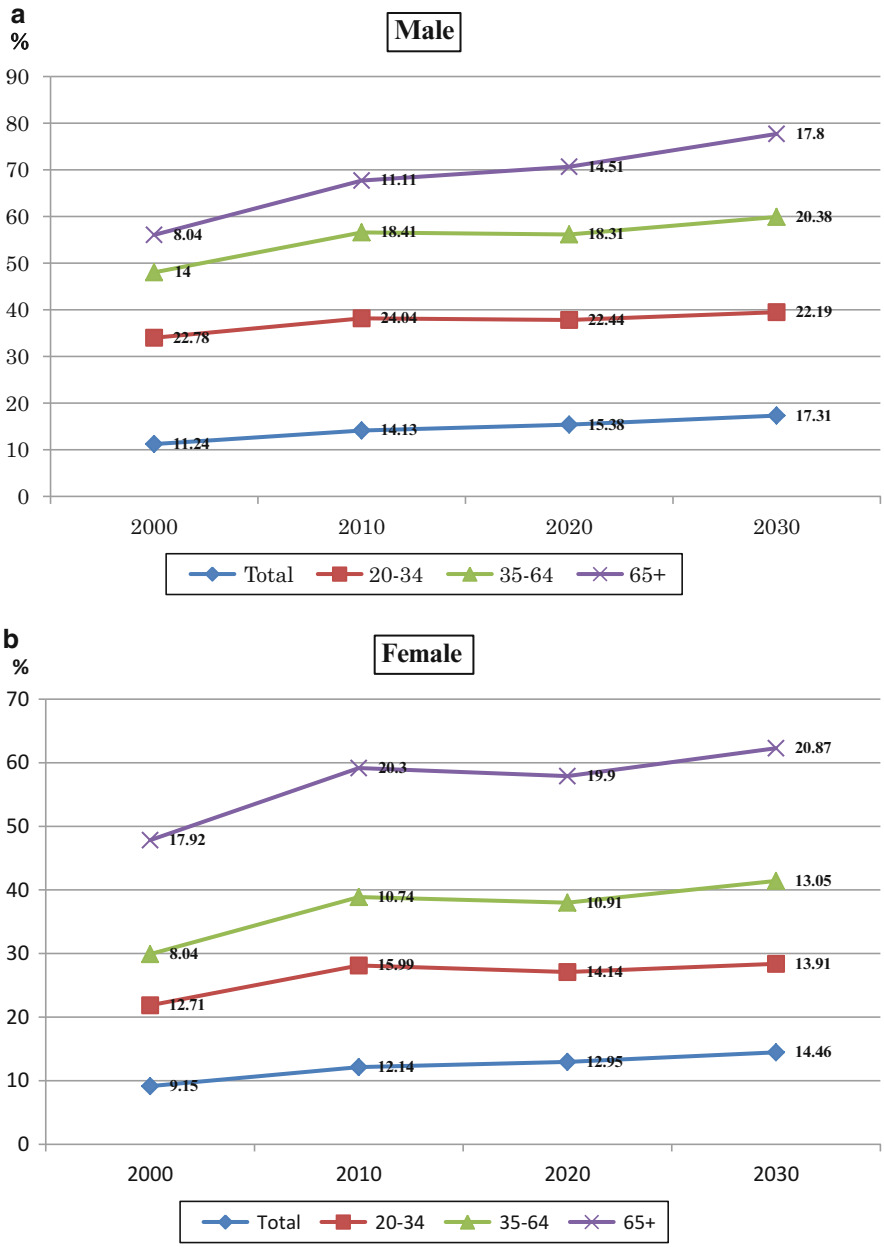

Fig. 7.2 Changes and projections for proportions (%) of living-alone households by sex and age group: 2000, 2010, 2020, 2030. (**a**) Male. (**b**) Female (*Source*: IPSSR 2014a, Table 12.49 (1), (2), (3), (4). The figures were compiled and constructed by the author)

part of Kyushu (such as Kagoshima) and in Miyazaki, Hokkaido, and other urban regions such as Tokyo and Osaka. Both Fig. 7.3a, b demonstrate this. In urban regions, more and more Japanese elderly are not in generational households and live either in one- or two-person households. This trend seems to be the fate of Japanese elderly today, and therefore, they must learn to adjust to living in these household situations.

If a prefecture shows a high coresidency rate, then it is also expected that there will be a high rate of three-generation household in which elderly parent(s) live with the family of their married children. Prefectural distributions for such rates coincide with those of the coresidency households. The national average for three-generation households by prefecture in 2010 was 7.1 %, with Yamagata the highest (21.5 %) and Kagoshima the lowest (3.2 %) (IPSSR 2014a, Table 12.50).

However, it is expected that the contrasting situation would be true for both elderly one- and two-person households. That is, prefectures where coresidency rates are high coincide with the so-called traditional farming regions, namely, Yamagata, Fukui, Shiga, Toyama, Niigata, and Fukushima (see Fig. 7.3c). Although the national average for such coresidency households of elderly 65 and over is less than half of the relevant population (42.3 %), in these farming regions, a majority of the elderly (more than 50 %) still live in traditional coresidency households. This fact clearly indicates that there exist continuities in the institution of the family in Japan.

It is true that the proportion of the elderly who live with their adult children declined over the years (69.0 % in 1970 to 42.3 % in 2010). Nonetheless, there are significant variations among all Japanese prefectures (IPSSR 2014a, Table 12.50). A typical traditional farming prefecture, Yamagata, showed the highest coresidency proportion (65.5 %) in 2010, while the lowest was in Kagoshima (23.8 %). In the latter region, a typical institution of the family is called *inkyo*, where parents leave the household in the hands of their married sons. In another traditional farming prefecture, Niigata, where the coresidency rate in 2010 was 58.5 %, the family structure reflects the coherent traditional community relationship called *maki*, in which all family activities, such as weddings and funerals, are conducted by all the family members in the community (Kumagai 1997a, b, c).

7.2.4 Elderly-Headed Households

Of all the households in Japan today, the proportion for the elderly headed, in which the elderly 65 and over are the household heads, is approximately one-third (31.2 %), and the prefecture that shows the proportion higher than 40 % is only one, i.e., Akita prefecture (see Fig. 7.4a). By 2025, the elderly-headed households in Akita will surpass half of all the households (51.1 %), and more than half of all the 47 prefectures (31), the proportion will surpass 40 % (see Fig. 7.4b) (IPSSR 2014b, Table II-8). Furthermore, by the year 2035, rapidly increasing trends in the rise of the elderly-headed households prevail throughout Japan and will be more than four out of every ten households (see Fig. 7.4c).

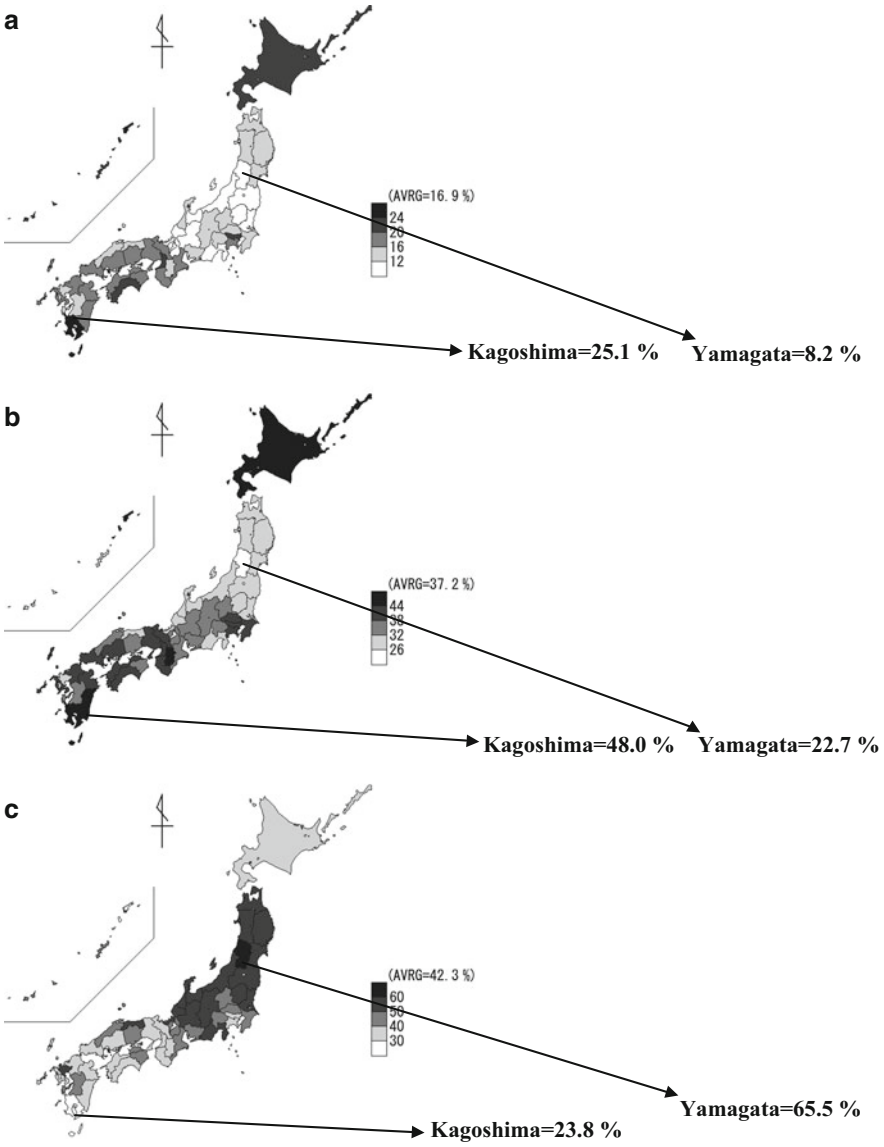

Fig. 7.3 Of the total elderly people sixty-five and over proportions (%) of the household type in which they reside by prefecture: 2010. (**a**) Elderly alone households: (National average = 16.9 %; Yamagata = 8.2 %-Kagoshima = 25.1 %). (**b**) Elderly couple only households: (National average = 37.2 %; Yamagata = 22.7 %-Kagoshima = 48.0 %). (**c**) Co-residency households with families of children: (National average = 42.3 %; Kagoshima = 23.8 %-Yamagata = 65.5 %) (*Source*: IPSSR 2014a, Table 12.50. The figures were compiled and constructed by the author)

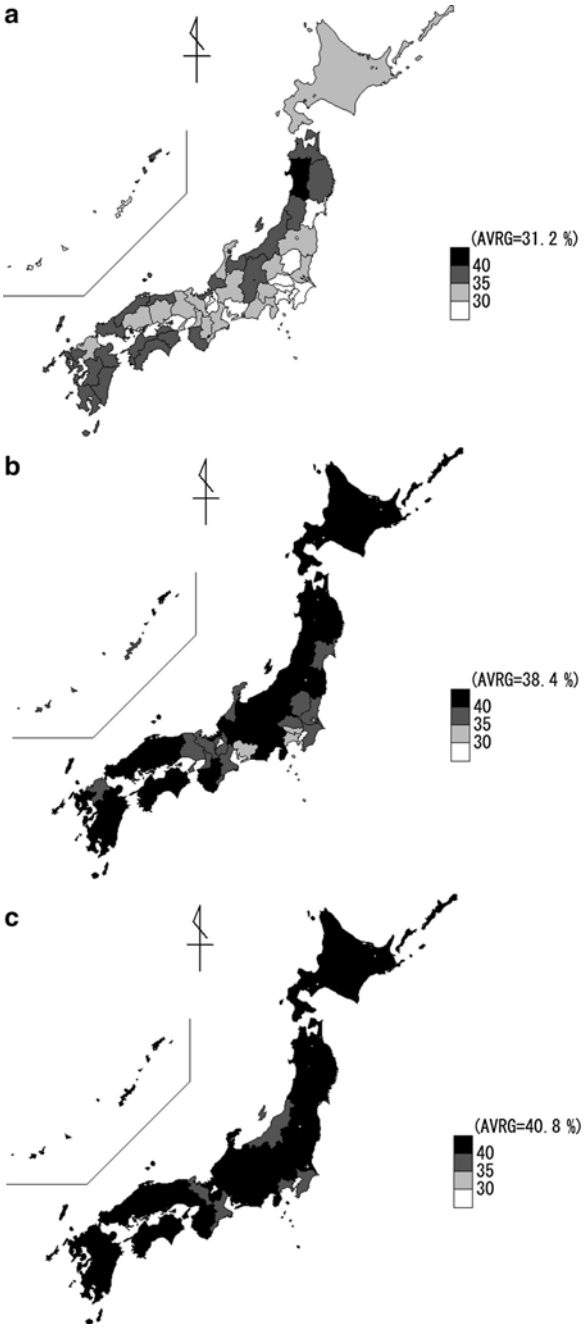

Fig. 7.4 Changes in the proportion (%) of elderly-headed households: 2010, 2025, 2035. (**a**) 2010 (Average: 31.2 %; Tokyo: 26.2 %-Akita: 40.5 %). (**b**) 2025 (Average: 38.4 %; Tokyo: 31.2 %-Akita: 51.1 %). (**c**) 2035 (Average: 40.8 %; Tokyo: 35.8 %-Akita: 52.8 %) (*Source*: IPSSR 2014b, Table II-8. The figures were compiled and constructed by the author)

In light of the increasing trend of elderly-headed households, various aspects on the life of Japanese people need to be reevaluated. Elderly care business, for example, must shift from the in-hospital program to the home-visiting system. Consumer activities would shift from the young adult oriented to those of the elderly oriented. These reorientations in consumer products need to be evaluated carefully in all the sectors in Japanese business, i.e., foods, clothing, housing, ICTs, transportation, and all the others. To put it differently, lives of Japanese people in the future will change drastically to meet the demand for the so-called the super aging society.

7.2.5 Living-Alone Households of Japanese Elderly by Sex

As we have discussed already, the rate for elderly one-person households is the highest in Kagoshima and the lowest in Yamagata. We come to the question, however, if it is also true for both elderly men and women. As we have witnessed, the pattern of one-person households differs by sex and age group over time (see Fig. 7.2); it is quite likely that there will be significant regional variations for elderly one-person households by sex.

Among Japanese men 65 and over, those who are living by themselves are least frequently seen in Yamagata prefecture (see Fig. 7.3a). This was expected as we have witnessed an extremely high coresidency rate in Yamagata (see Fig. 7.3c). Elderly male living-alone households have been most frequently seen in Tokyo. The rates for Tokyo have been high and are projected to be on the rise continuously (a. 2000, 13.74 %; b. 2010, 17.56 %; c. 2020, 20.68 %; d. 2030, 24.08 %) and followed by Kagoshima (see Fig. 7.5) (IPSSR 2014a, Tables 12-49-1 and 2). To put it differently, today one in every six men in Tokyo is living alone, and by 2030, nearly one in four will be living alone.

Although it has been on the decline slightly, elderly women living alone have been seen most frequently over time in Kagoshima. Nearly three in every ten of them are and are projected to be living alone (see Fig. 7.6) (IPSSR 2014a, Tables 12-49-3 and 4). Furthermore, both elderly men and women living alone are least frequently found in Yamagata prefecture.

7.2.6 Elderly Living-Alone Households of the Total Elderly-Headed Households

Of all the elderly-headed households today, slightly less than one-third are those of elderly living alone, with Yamagata prefecture the lowest of 20.7 % and Tokyo the highest of 38.7 %, followed by Kagoshima and Osaka (see Fig. 7.7a) (IPSSR 2014b, Table II-11-1). This increasing trend in elderly living-alone households will continue in the future. By 2035, nearly four out of ten elderly-headed households will be those of the elderly living alone (see Fig. 7.7c).

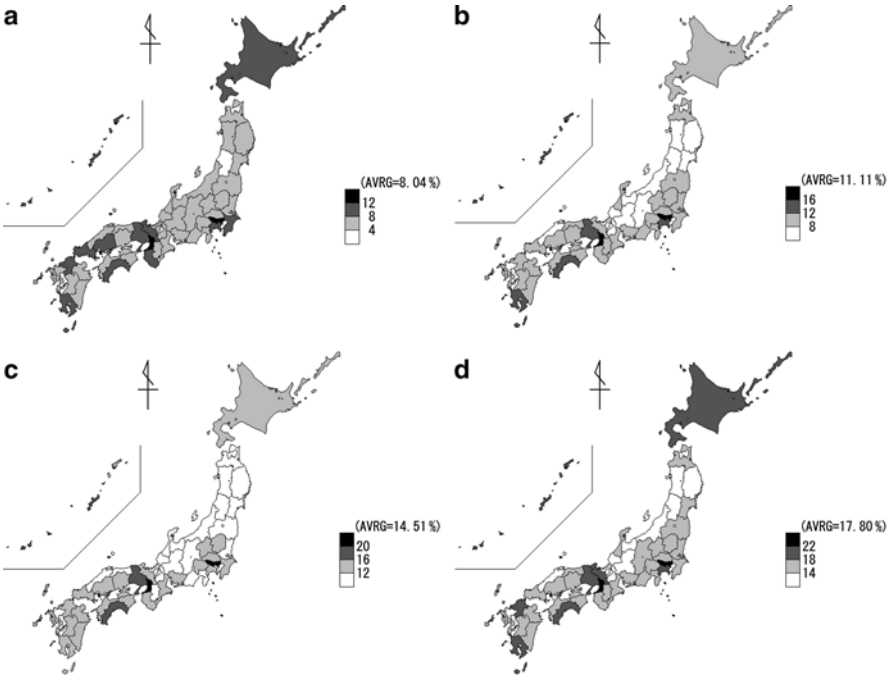

Fig. 7.5 Changes and projections for the proportion (%) of living-alone households of Japanese elderly males 65 and over by prefecture: 2000, 2010, 2020, 2030. (**a**) 2000: (Average = 8.04 %; Yamagata = 3.59 %-(Kagoshima = 9.89 %)-Tokyo = 13.74 %). (**b**). 2010: (Average = 11.11 %; Yam agata = 5.97 %-(Kagoshima = 12.88 %)-Tokyo = 17.56 %). (**c**) 2020: (Average = 14.51 %; Yamagat a = 9.47 %-(Kagoshima = 15.91 %)-Tokyo = 20.58 %). (**d**) 2030: (Average = 17.80 %; Yamagata = 12.92 %-(Kagoshima = 18.86 %)-Tokyo = 24.08 %) (*Source*: IPSSR 2014a, Table 12.49 (1) and (2). The figures were compiled and constructed by the author)

The prevalence of elderly living-alone households across Japanese prefectures is evident not only of all the households, as discussed earlier (see Fig. 7.4), but also among the elderly-headed households. Although regional variations exist in terms of the level of the proportion, it is undeniable that Japanese aging society in the future will undoubtedly be characterized with that of elderly living-alone households. For the case of Tokyo, in particular, it is projected that nearly half of the elderly-headed households will be those of elderly living alone by the year 2035.

7.2.7 Elderly 75 and Over Headed Households

Not only the substantial increase in the elderly 65 and over and their households but also Japanese society would witness the significant increment in the proportion of the old olds, i.e., elderly 75 and over. As seen in Fig. 7.8, of all the households in

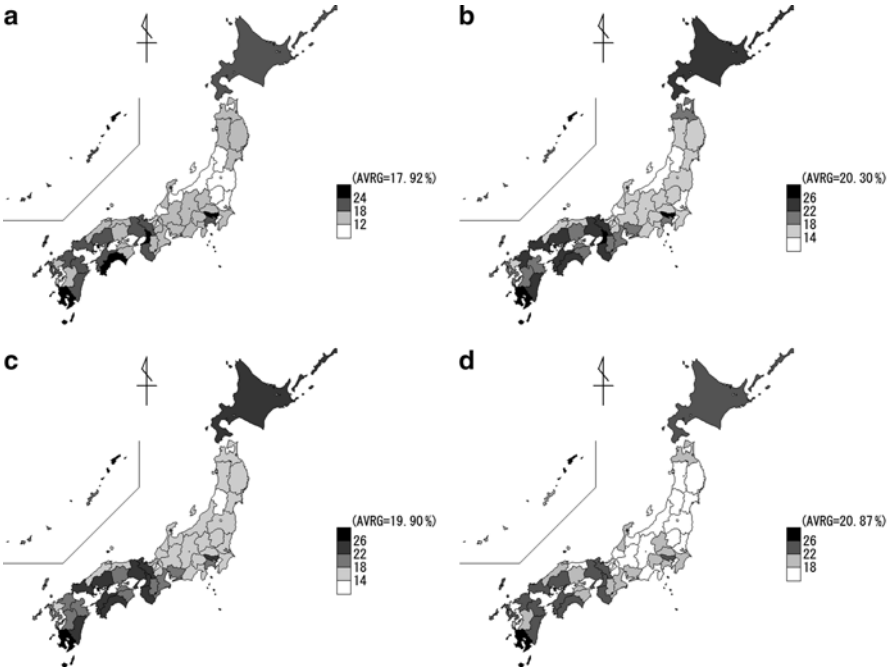

Fig. 7.6 Changes and projections for the proportion (%) of living-alone households of Japanese elderly females 65 and over by prefecture: 2000, 2010, 2020, 2030. (**a**) 2000: (Average = 17.92 %; Yamagata = 9.26 %-Kagoshima = 29.81 %). (**b**) 2010: (Average = 20.30 %; Yamagata = 11.49 %-Kagoshima = 29.37 %). (**c**) 2020: (Average = 19.90 %; Yamagata = 13.20 %-Kagoshima = 28.03 %). (**d**) 2030: (Average = 20.87 %; Yamagata = 15.37 %- Kagoshima = 27.64 %) (*Source*: IPSSR 2014a, Table 12.49 (3) and (4). The figures were compiled and constructed by the author)

Japan today, one out of seven are those headed by the elderly 75 and over (Fig. 7.8a). By the year 2035, however, such proportion would increase nearly one out of four (see Fig. 7.8c) (IPSSR 2014b, Table II-13).

Furthermore, we must pay close attention to the fact that of the households headed by the elderly 75 and over, nearly half of them are living-alone households today (see Fig. 7.9a) and would be six out of every ten of them by 2035 (see Fig. 7.9c) (IPSSR 2014b, Table II-11-14). Regional variations by prefecture in this regard will not be so apparent in the future as seen today. In other words, significantly large proportion of Japanese households in the future will not only be those of the elderly headed but also those headed by 75 and over.

Of all the households in Japan today, elderly 75 and over living-alone households are 5.2 % with Kagoshima (9.6 %) being the highest of the 47 prefecture (see Fig. 7.10a). It is projected that by 2035 elderly 75 and over living-alone households will be almost one out of every 10 households (9.4 %) in Japan, nearly double the proportion of what is today (see Fig. 7.10c) (IPSSR 2014b, Table II-16-1). Today, no prefecture in Japan show the proportion higher than 10 %, but as many as 20

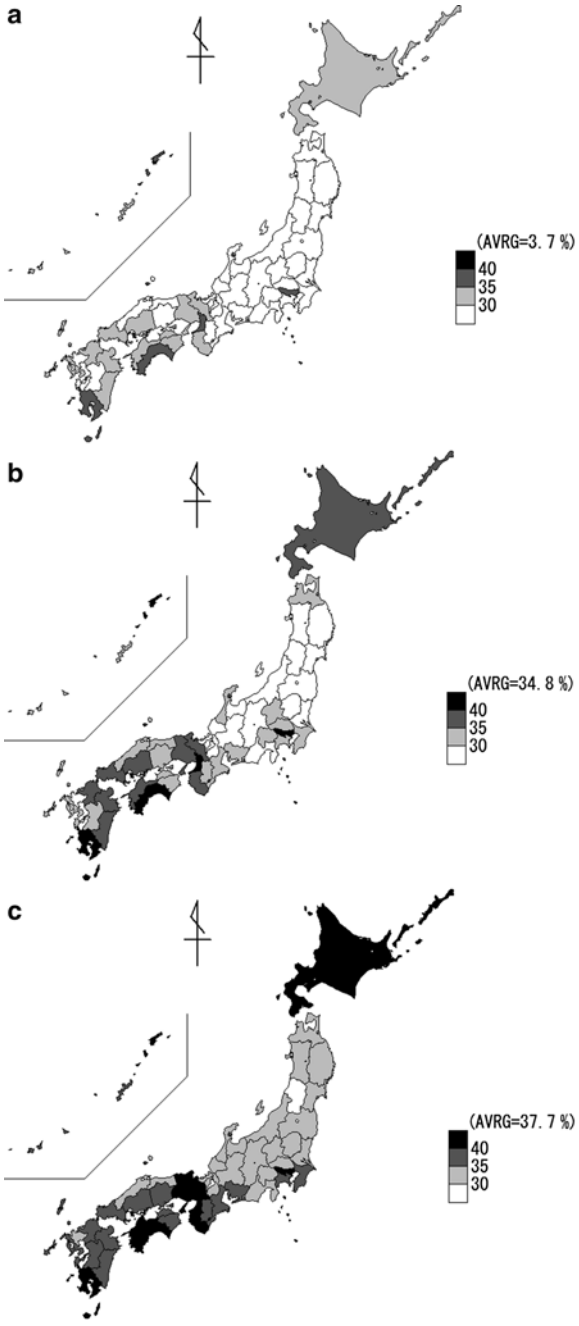

Fig. 7.7 Changes and projections for the proportion (%) of elderly living-alone households of the total elderly-headed households: 2010, 2025, 2035. (**a**) 2010 (Average: 30.7 %; Yamagata: 20.7 %-Tokyo: 38.7 %). (**b**) 2025 (Average: 34.8 %; Yamagata: 24.4 %-Tokyo: 41.9 %). (**c**) 2035 (Average: 37.7 %; Yamagata: 28.3 %-Tokyo: 44.0 %) (*Source*: IPSSR 2014b, Table II-11-1. The figures were compiled and constructed by the author)

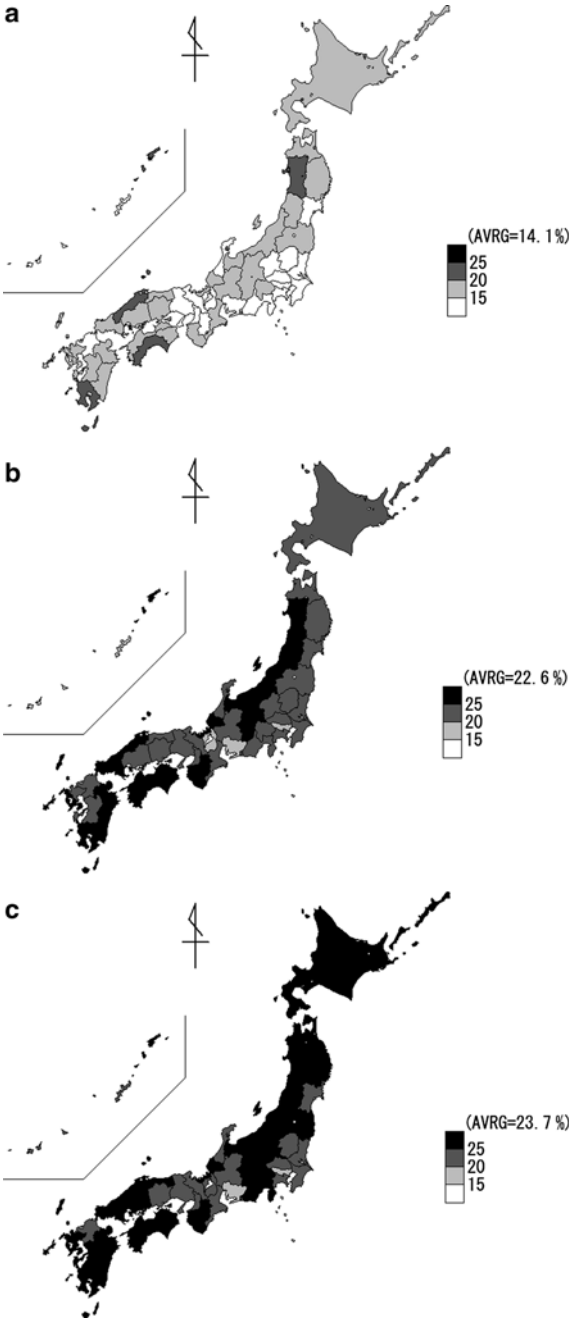

Fig. 7.8 Changes in the proportion (%) of elderly 75 and over headed households: 2010, 2025, 2035. (**a**) 2010 (Average: 14.1 %; Saitama: 10.6 %-Kagoshima: 21.2 %). (**b**) 2025 (Average: 22.6 %; Okinawa: 18.3 %-Yamaguchi 28.3 %). (**c**) 2035 (Average: 23.7 %; Tokyo: 19.3 %-Akita: 32.9 %) (*Source*: IPSSR 2014b, Table II-13. The figures were compiled and constructed by the author)

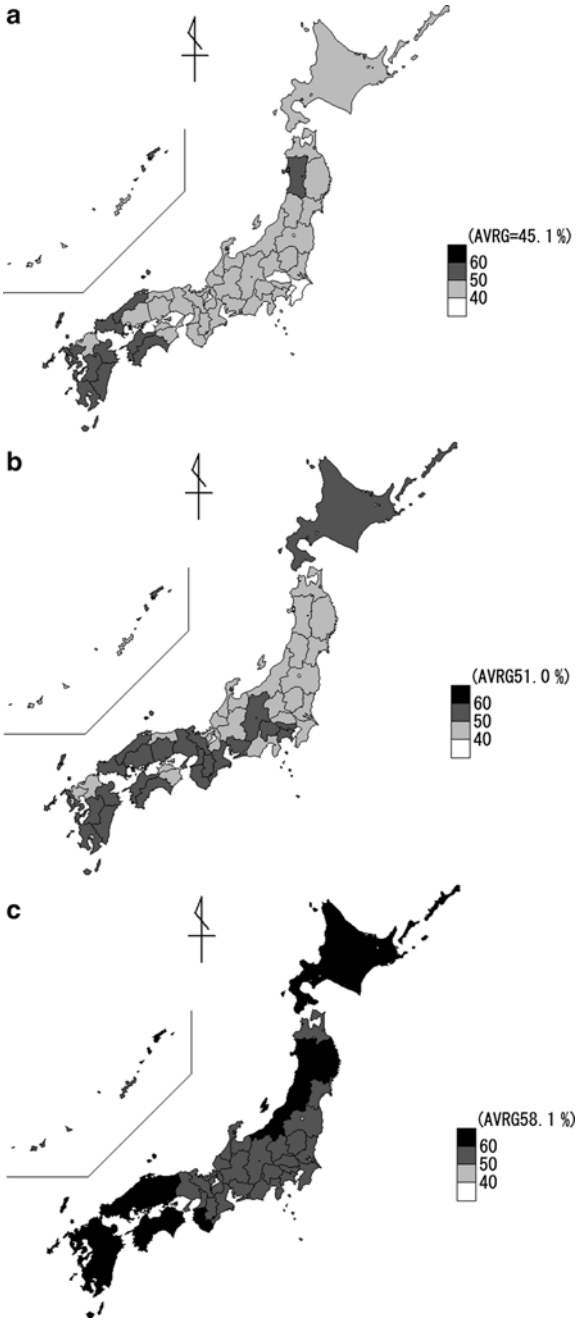

Fig. 7.9 Changes in the proportion (%) of elderly 75 and over headed households of the total elderly-headed households: 2010, 2020, 2035. (**a**) 2010 (Average: 45.1 %; Saitama: 37.0 %-Kagoshima: 56.5 %). (**b**) 2020 (Average 51.0 %; Tochigi: 44.3 %-Kagoshima: 54.6 %). (**c**) 2035 (Average: 58.1 %; Tokyo: 53.9 %-Kagoshima: 65.6 %). (*Source*: IPSSR 2014b, Table II-11-14. The figures were compiled and constructed by the author)

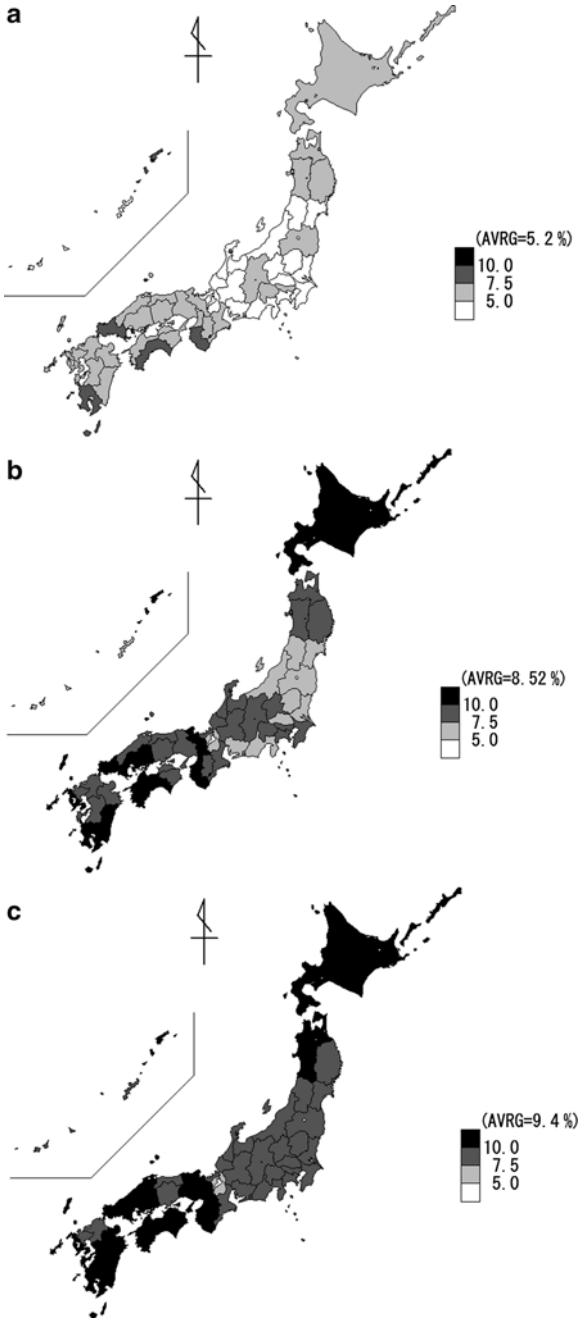

Fig. 7.10 Changes in the proportion (%) of elderly 75 and over living-alone households of the total households: 2010, 2025, 2035. (**a**) 2010 (Average: 5.2 %; Saitama: 3.3 %-Kagoshima: 9.6 %). (**b**) 2025 (Average: 8.5 %; Okinawa: 6.1 %-Kochi: 12.2 %). (**c**) 2035 (Average: 9.4 %; Shiga: 7.3 %-Kagoshima: 13.8 %) (*Source*: IPSSR 2014b, Table II-16-1. The figures were compiled and constructed by the author)

prefectures would be so by 2035 (see Fig. 7.10c) (IPSSR 2014b, Table II-16-1). In addition, of the elderly 75 and over headed households today, more than one-third is those of living alone, and this trend will be accentuated in the future (see Fig. 7.11) (IPSSR 2014b, Table II-17-a).

All of these findings suggest that policies for all the sectors of Japanese life must be reevaluated so that they will meet with the need of unprecedented aging society that Japan confront with in the years to come.

7.3 Yamagata and Kagoshima Prefectures

The contrasting household types that the elderly in Yamagata and Kagoshima adopt need to be investigated in detail. What factors account for these clear differences in the living arrangements of the elderly in Yamagata and Kagoshima? It is a clear example that regional variations in the small island country of Japan are truly significant. Let us then discuss briefly how each of these two prefectures has developed.

7.3.1 Yamagata Prefecture

The Yamagata area was occupied by Ezo tribesmen during the formative years of the Japanese nation. The central government gradually extended its control, and in 712, the area became part of the newly established province of Dewa. During the latter part of the Heian period (794–1185), it came under the domination of the Oshu Fujiwara family, who in turn yielded to a succession of warlords. For most of the feudal period, it was divided into several smaller domains. The present name and borders were established in 1876 after the Meiji Restoration (Kodansha 1983, vol. 8: 293).

A predominantly rural prefecture, it is one of Japan's major rice-producing areas. There are also numerous orchards. Forestry is another major component of the economy. Manufacturing concentrated around the cities of Sakata and Yamagata, centers on food processing, textiles, machinery, woodworking, and chemicals. With the progress of industrialization, the population mobility from rural Yamagata to urban regions in Japan was evident (Kodansha 1983, vol. 8: 293). As a consequence, population decline in Yamagata has been accentuated since 1,354,000 in 1955 to 1,136,000 in 2013 (IPSSR 2014a, Table 12.2; MHLW 2014b, p. 53, Table 2).

7.3.2 Kagoshima Prefecture

Remains of both Jomon (ca 10,000–300 B.C.) and Yayoi (ca 300 B.C.–AD 300) cultures attest to its early settlement. In early historical times, the area was part of Hyuga Province and was inhabited by the Kumaso and Hayato tribes. In the Nara period (710–794), the area was administratively divided into the provinces of

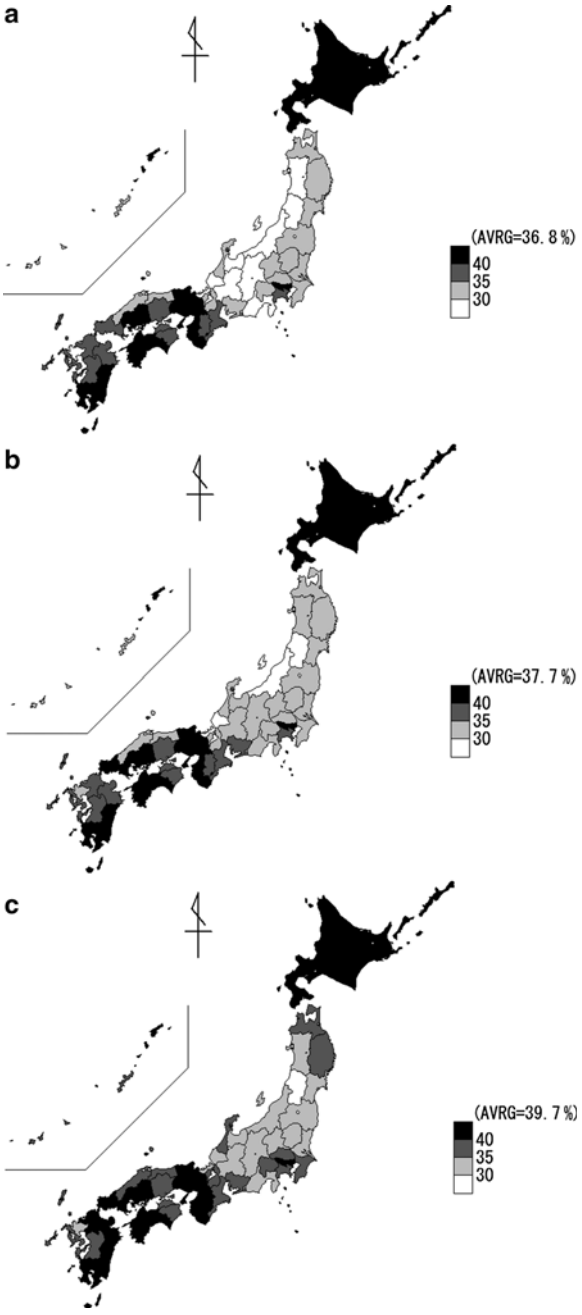

Fig. 7.11 Changes in the proportion (%) of elderly 75 and over living-alone households of the elderly 75 and over headed households: 2010, 2025, 2035. (**a**) 2010 (Average: 36.8 %; Yamagata: 24.8 %-Kagoshima: 45.6 %). (**b**) 2025 (Average: 37.7 %; Yamagata: 27.3 %-Kagoshima: 44.5 %). (**c**) 2035 (Average: 39.7 %; Yamagata: 29.8 %-Kagoshima: 46.1 %) (*Source*: IPSSR 2014b, Table II-17-1. The figures were compiled and constructed by the author)

Satsuma and Osumi. From the latter part of the Heian period (794–1185) until the Meiji Restoration (1868), it was under the control of the Shimazu Family. Because of its location, it was among the first areas in Japan to come into contact with Europeans in the sixteenth century. Its geographical isolation also encouraged a spirit of independence from the Tokugawa Shogunate. Several Satsuma men, such as Saigo Takamori and Okubo Toshimichi, were leaders in the Meiji Restoration and the establishment of the modern Japanese state. The present prefectural boundaries were established in 1896 (Kodansha 1983, vol. 4: 105–106).

Kagoshima's economy remains predominantly agricultural: the main crops are rice, sweet potatoes, and other vegetables. Local specialty crops are sugar cane, citrus fruits, tea, and tobacco. Livestock farming and forestry are also important. General economic stagnation and low-income levels, however, have led to a steady decline in Kagoshima's population since 1955 (2,044,000) to the present (2013: 1,674,000) (IPSSR 2014a, Table 12.2; MHLW 2014b, p. 53, Table 2).

7.3.3 Yamagata: High Rate of Coresidency and Low Rates of Elderly One- and Two-Person Households

Now that we know a brief history of Yamagata prefecture, let us discuss possible reasons for an extremely low rate for their elderly one-person households (8.2 %). Its proportion is less than half of the national average and less than one-third of Kagoshima, its highest counterpart (see Fig. 7.3a. national average, 16.9 %; Kagoshima, 25.1 % discussed earlier) (Kumagai 2011: 40–49).

Six possible reasons could be considered. First, the entire portion of Yamagata prefecture is geographically divided into four distinctive areas, namely, Shonai which faces to the Japan Sea, Mogami adjacent to Akita prefecture, Murayama which faces the northern part of Miyagi prefecture, and Okitama neighboring to the northern part of Miyagi prefecture (Yamagata Prefecture 2013). Except for the Shonai area, all are located in hollows and therefore were geographically isolated from each other until modern times when the public transportation system was developed. Thus, the Hokurikudo under the Goki-Shichido established in 701 under the centralized administration of the *Ritsuryo* system (discussed in *Haihan Chiken* in Chap. 1 of this book) benefited only the Shonai area along the Japan Sea region. Thus, the traditional Japanese farming culture has been maintained strongly in most of Yamagata prefecture.

Second, being located in the traditional farming area, the family system in Yamagata could be described more or less as a traditional stem family, rather than the modified stem family discussed in Chap. 2 of this book (see Fig. 2.5 in Chap. 2 and Fig. 7.12 duplicated in this chapter). Families and households in Yamagata are typical representations of the traditional Tohoku (Northeastern) type of "*ie*" system. In other words, the majority of the elderly households in Yamagata belong to the traditional stem family system, but not to those alternating between the nuclear and

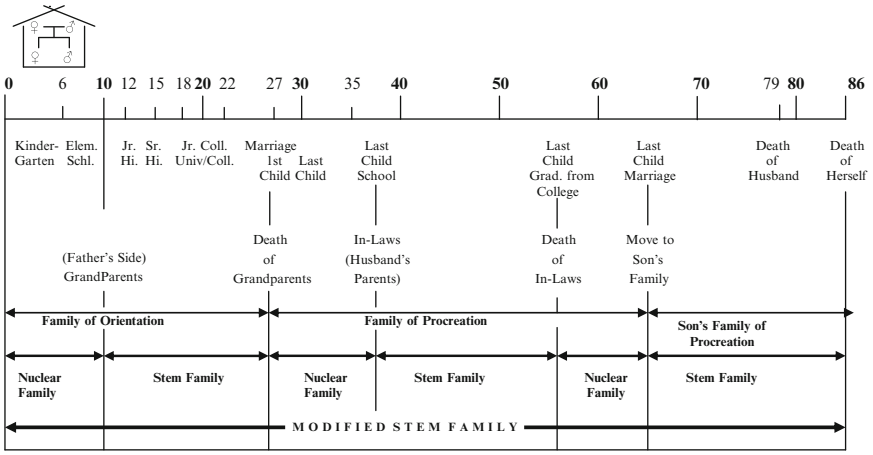

Fig. 7.12 The modified stem family in Japan (*Source*: Kumagai 1984, 1996, 2008, 2010 and MHLW 2014a, b. Data were updated by the author)

stem families. As a consequence, therefore, there is a high rate of coresidency and a low rate of elderly one-person households.

Third, historically for most of the feudal period, Yamagata was divided into several smaller domains and was under the rule of various feudal clans. Thus, the people in Yamagata developed a survival strategy of *Nagai mono niwa makarero* (could be translated as "It is no meddling with our betters.") and were unwilling to change traditional ways. That type of philosophy has encouraged the people in Yamagata to keep the traditional family lifestyle.

Fourth, income for working mothers in Yamagata is the highest of all the 47 prefectures. It is due to the traditional family system that extends the welfare and care of their family members. Elderly are willing to extend their support to their grandchildren while mothers are at work. That relationship may also serve to provide effective strategies to avoid unnecessary frictions between mother in-laws and son's wives (Kumagai and Kato 2007).

Fifth, the proportion of the people in Yamagata who advance to higher education is low among the 47 prefectures in Japan (in 2013, the national average: 53.2 % vs. Yamagata, 44.4 %) (IPSSR 2014a Table 12.60). As a consequence, those who engage in tertiary industries are very limited (in 2010, the national average: 66.5 % vs. Yamagata, 59.5 % ranking at 45th of all the 47 prefectures) (IPSSR 2014a Table 12.55), and their income from work outside of the family tends to be low. Thus, welfare to the elderly needs to be provided by other family members in the household.

Sixth, educated young women in Yamagata tend to move to urban regions. As a consequence, there are a high number of unmarried men in Yamagata. As a strategy to maintain the traditional stem family households, municipal offices in Yamagata

organized opportunities for international marriages for these single males. Therefore, there is unusually high rate for international marriages in this rural farming region. (For more discussion on international marriages, refer to Chap. 4 of this book.)

7.3.4 *Kagoshima: High Rate of Elderly Living-Alone Households*

We found that proportions for both elderly one- and two-person households in Kagoshima are the highest in Japan. On the other hand, the rate for households in which elderly live with their married children in Kagoshima is the lowest.

Families and households in Kagoshima prefecture present a clear contrast to those of their Yamagata counterparts, with a family system called *inkyo*, where parents leave the household in the hands of their married sons. This system prevailed widely in southwestern part of Japan where families are divided by the nuclear unit associated with family assets (Hosaka 1997: 168–170, Shimizu 1992: 47). Thus, the newlywed son's family stays in the parent house, and their parents move to a new dwelling unit along with their unmarried children. Today, *inkyo* is seen most apparently among families in Kagoshima. Then, we come to the question as to why it has developed in Kagoshima? We may like to consider five possible reasons for it (Kumagai 2011, 57–65).

First, the geographic isolation of Kagoshima prefecture enables it to maintain its original culture. Being located in the southernmost of four major islands in Japan, Satsuma (the old name for Kagoshima prefecture) was among the first areas in Japan to come into contact with Europeans in the sixteenth century. More precisely, the first musket was introduced to Japan by Portuguese whose ship was stranded on Tanegashima Island in Kagoshima in 1543 (Kodansha 1983, vol. 7: 340). During the Edo period, while the door for international trade was strictly closed under the Sakoku regulation enforced by the Tokugawa Shogunate, Satsuma-Han feudal domain was actively involved with such activities (Iwanaka 2007: 333).

It is likely, therefore, the people in Kagoshima were exposed to the Western lifestyle of a nuclear family system at that time, rather than the traditional stem family common in the northeastern part of Japan. The newly introduced Western style of family system, perhaps, was changed to adjust to the culture of Satsuma. As a consequence, there emerged a modified nuclear family centering around the parent generation rather than the newlywed family.

Second, the geographical isolation of Kagoshima prefecture encouraged a spirit of independence from the Tokugawa Shogunate during the Edo period. Such independent-mindedness encouraged several Satsuma men to aspire to be leaders in the Meiji Restoration and the establishment of the modern Japanese state (Takemitsu 2003: 224). Thus, the family system in Kagoshima today has been maintained uniquely from other regions of Japan.

Third, the personalities of Kagoshima people differ significantly even from those of Miyazaki, an adjacent prefecture (Takemitsu 2003: 222–223). The people in Miyazaki are more or less relaxed and easy going. Such personalities have much to do with the fertile land of Miyazaki Plain, which brings an abundance of crops and harvest to the local people. (For more detailed discussion on Miyazaki, refer to the Sect. 5.5.2, Chap. 5 of this book.) The land of Kagoshima, on the contrary, has been covered with volcanic ash from Mt. Sakurajima. As the only crops the people of Kagoshima could have are Satsuma (old name for Kagoshima) *imo* (sweet potatoes), millets, and bamboos, they have been obliged to live through economic disadvantages for many years. Due to these natural and environmental surroundings, the people in Kagoshima have acquired personalities of unaffectedness, determination, and stubbornness, leading to independent family lifestyles (Iwanaka 2007: 329–336; Sofue 2000: 295–303; Takemitsu 2003: 224–226).

Fourth, there are a very few Satsuma Hayato who were successful in Tokyo after the Meiji Restoration, a clear contrast to many from Choshu-Yamaguchi prefecture. The unsuccessful return of Saigo Takamori to Kagoshima may have discouraged the descendants of Satsuma Hayato from leaving Kagoshima, so the culture of the Satsuma feudal regime and its unique cultural orientation was continued.

Fifth, upon the marriage of the youngest son, the *inkyo* system in Kagoshima today brings about three alternative lifestyles for elderly parents to choose. They are as follows: coresidency with the family of the youngest married son, moving to the home of one of their other married sons, or choosing to adopt an independent household of their own, either one or two persons (Hosaka 1997). Due to these alternatives, independently oriented elderly in Kagoshima may be most willing to choose a residence apart from their children. As a consequence, we witness an extremely high proportion of elderly one-person households in Kagoshima prefecture today, especially of women (see Fig. 7.6).

Families in Yamagata in which elderly parents live with married children is taken as an example of sustaining the traditional stem families which prevailed throughout the northeastern regions of Japan. On the other hand, families in Kagoshima in which parents reside with unmarried children newly establish the nuclear dwelling unit and could be taken as an example of those which widely existed in southwestern regions of Japan.

7.4 Successful Aging of Japanese Elders Living Alone

7.4.1 Measurements of Successful Aging

The starting point for the study of successful aging would be the development of its measurement. Two major scales for successful aging have been developed by American gerontologists since the 1960s. They were the Life Satisfaction Index

A: LSIA (Neugarten et al. 1961) on one hand, and the Philadelphia Geriatric Center Morale Scale: PGCMS (Lawton 1975) on the other. Adopting and modifying these scales on the subjective well-being of the elderly various research projects have been conducted.

7.4.2 Five Major Factors

Four major factors contributing to the subjective well-being of the elderly have been identified (Fujita et al. 1989; Larson 1978; Maeda, et al. 1979, 1989). They are, namely, health, finances, housing, and social interaction and activities. Furthermore, for the unique historical development of Japanese society, it is essential to add regional/community characteristics for the subjective well-being of Japanese elderly (Kumagai 1997a, b, 2011; Matsuoka 1996; Minato-ward Office Policy Research Institute 2012).

Until recently, however, not enough attention has been placed on the study of the successful well-being of elders living alone in Japan. Fortunately and/or unfortunately, in light of the unprecedented speed of the progress of aging society, and the rapidly increasing number of elderly living-alone households in Japan, governmental and municipal offices have come to realize the pressing needs for assessing the successful well-being of elders living alone.

7.4.3 Elders Living Alone: Yamagata Prefecture

As we have discussed already, the coresidency rate for Yamagata is the highest of all 47 prefectures, and the proportion of the elderly living-alone households has been the lowest (see Fig. 7.3). Given these realities, it would be worthwhile identifying the following four aspects of the elderly living alone in a predominantly multigenerational living environment. They are as follows: first, the current state of subjective well-being; second, reasons for these elders deciding to live alone household; third, reasons for enabling them to live alone; and fourth, the future prospects for their living arrangements.

The followings are taken from the study based on structured interviews (seven females and two males) conducted in 2007 in a small local city[2] nearby the prefecture capital of Yamagata city in Yamagata prefecture (Tsuchida, et al. 2010). Even

[2] According to the national census of 2007, the demographic profile and statistics of the city where the interviews were conducted are as follows: the total population, 43,625; the total households, 12,598; the proportion of the elderly 65 and over, 24.8 % (the national average: 20.1 %); and the elderly living-alone households, 526 (4.86 % of the total elderly population of the city; the national average, 15.1 %; the rate for Yamagata prefecture, 8.1 %, and such rate for the relevant city was quite low and the 8th from the bottom among the total 35 municipal units including cities, towns, and villages.)

in Yamagata prefecture, the city's rate for elderly living-alone households (4.86 %) was significantly lower than the average of Yamagata prefecture (8.1 %). Thus, it is evident that elders who chose to live alone are indeed the minority:

1. The current state of subjective well-being: Three points are expressed by the respondents. They are happy about leading independent and autonomous lives; although they feel lonesome at times, they are quite content with the pleasures of living alone, but when they find no consideration to elders living alone, they feel difficulty in leading such a lifestyle.
2. Reasons for these elders deciding to live alone: They want to continue to live in the same community in which they have been living. (As it has been discussed earlier, cultural milieu of Yamagata prefecture could be divided into four distinctive areas.) It was a natural course of development, i.e., death of the husband and/or children left home to establish their own household.
3. Reasons that enable them to lead their living-alone lifestyle: These elders stated the following six matters—first, a strong determination to lead their lives positively; second, they are always careful about their health; third, they possess strong wills and reasons for living; fourth, they have a suitable housing and pension income; fifth, they want to be independent from their children; and sixth, they keep a close-knit mutual relationship with neighbors and friends who support their independent and autonomous living.
4. The future prospects for their living arrangement: They expressed three views—first, they decide their life plan on their own. Second, they are anxious about their future and do not want to think about it. Third, they are uncertain about their future living arrangement due to a sensitive relationship with their children.

From the above statements based on interview results with the elderly, living alone in a small city where it is not common to live alone, the following three suggestions could be made. First, the thoughts and opinions of the elderly who decide to live alone should be respected and support extended by visits from their children and neighbors. Second, health deterioration is the natural course of aging, and the elderly living alone should be able to receive proper health checkups. Third, appropriate measures need to be provided to the elderly living alone, especially to those who newly moved into the community in their old age, so that they will not be isolated from the mutual aid/support practice inherent in the local community.

7.4.4 Elders Living Alone: Kagoshima Prefecture

As has been noted earlier, there are more elderly persons living alone in Kagoshima prefecture (25.1 %) than any other prefecture. The national average is 16.9 % and the lowest rate is in Yamagata prefecture (8.2 %, all from 2010). The fact that more than a quarter of all the residents 65 and over in Kagoshima prefecture live alone should present quite a different picture on their objective and subjective well-being from their Yamagata counterparts.

The following details are adapted from interview reports of the elderly participants in a community luncheon program (Kato et al. 2012; Furukawa and Honma 2013). The total number of elders who registered for this monthly luncheon program was 54, with 43 responding to the interview request held during the summer of 2011. (Their ages range from 73 to 93 with the average 83 years old.) The study tapped on three issues, the luncheon program, their living environment, and their social network. Let us discuss each of these issues briefly.

1. Luncheon program: The elderly reported enjoying the luncheon program in two ways. First, they appreciated the food served at the luncheon because it was tasty, cheap, nutritious, and prepared especially for them, with homemade cooking and a variety of foods. A handy box lunch was available, but its taste, in general, was more suitable for younger people and lacked a variety of foods.
2. Second, elders enjoy the social network associated with the luncheon program. Not only can they exchange conversation at the luncheon, but they can make friends with each other and extend a relationship to participation in various activities together. Thus, the luncheon program itself has significant meaning for providing the elderly with opportunities to enlarge their social network and activities in the community. It is strongly hoped that the Japanese government and municipal offices would consider providing with financial assistance to the luncheon program and the like.
3. Living environment: As opposed to the elderly living alone in Yamagata, the great majority of Kagoshima counterparts (70 %) rent condominium housing. The condominium housing tends to be more spacious than what elders need, and therefore, some of them have difficulties in keeping their place in order. Although they live alone, children and/or siblings living in the same city are willing to extend assistance when needed.
4. Social and community network: Elders living alone feel it is important to develop a good community network (86 %), and most of them report they have it now (75 %). But elders living alone are apt to be left alone during a natural disaster and lack time-to-time information. Building and enforcing an effective community network would be one of the best solutions.

7.4.5 Elders Living Alone: Tokyo Metropolitan Area (Minato-ward)

Concerning the household type in which people 65 and over reside by prefecture, much attention has been placed on Yamagata for its high rate of family living and on Kagoshima for its high rate of elderly living alone. We should remember, however, when we break down the elderly living-alone population by sex, we come to realize that there exist somewhat different realities. That is, such rates for male elderly in Tokyo have been and would be the highest of all the 47 prefectures and much higher than the Kagoshima counterpart (as shown

in Fig. 7.5). As for the rates for female, they have been and would be the second, next to their Kagoshima counterparts (see Fig. 7.6). This fact indicates that subjective and objective, as well, well-being of the elderly living alone might likely differ by sex.

Furthermore, it is important to remember that within Tokyo, there exist vast regional variations from the islands to the borough's 23 wards. In addition, it may be unbelievable, but significant regional differences can be identified within a single borough due to the historical *han* system.

An extensive report on the life and subjective well-being of the elderly living alone in Minato-ward, Tokyo (Minato-ward Policy Research Institute 2012),[3] identified four issues associated with the elderly living alone. These four issues are as follows: first, life support; second, emergency support; third, social activities/involvement; and fourth, regional variations within Minato-ward. Let us discuss each of these four issues briefly.

1. Life support: Minato-ward being located in the central part of Tokyo, the elderly living there alone face difficulties in shopping in three aspects. First, those who are not in good health are likely to face problems in grocery shopping. They are most likely to possess problems in leading their daily lives. Thus, some comprehensive life support measures for the elderly living alone need to be implemented. Second, some elderly cannot afford a variety of groceries. Thus, support programs commensurate with the financial need of each individual must be developed. Third, Minato-ward is divided into five districts (Shiba, Azabu, Akasaka, Takanawa, and Shibaura-Konan). Each of these five districts has its own history of urban development, and the background of the elderly living alone there differs from one district to the other. Thus, the life support measures for these elders should take into full consideration the nature and characteristics of each district.
2. Emergency support: The study revealed that more than 80 % of the elderly living alone in Minato-ward have people who come to help them during an emergency, but the rest (about 15 % of them) are left alone. Those left alone during an emergency are likely to lack in their social network which is one of the integral elements of subjective well-being. Thus, emergency supports for the elderly living alone need to take into full consideration such factors as their financial and health conditions, and social networking.
3. Social activities/involvement: The study revealed that those who are willing to participate in social activities are likely to show a high level of subjective well-being. Social activities are diverse, such as taking courses at the extension programs of universities and/or colleges, domestic and international traveling,

[3] The report is based on the two-stage research conducted on the topic of the elderly living alone in Minato-ward, Tokyo in 2011 by the Minato-ward Research Institute. The first-stage data collection method was a mail questionnaire sent to all the elderly 65 and over in living alone household in Minato ward in May 2011. There were 3,949 elders responding (response rate: 69.8 %). Of them, 643 elders agreed to cooperate with interview requests, and 70 cases were selected for the interview visits of the second-stage data collection.

volunteer activities, and others. Active participation in social activities enhances social networking of the elderly living alone and, hence, further develops human relationships and communication. At the same time, it is imperative to develop some appropriate measures to get elders living alone with little social involvement more active. It might be due to the problem associated with their health, financial situation, and time factors. Thus, programs for social involvement of these elders need to be reevaluated to make them more accessible and attractive.

4. Regional variations within Minato-ward: For any of social study, it is important to understand the population as a whole. At the same time, we need to pay attention to the distinctive characteristics of subgroups. For Minato-ward, it is the regional variations that give the unique characteristics for each. Thus, let us briefly describe objective and subjective well-beings of those who live in the five districts of Minato-ward:

Azabu district: The average years of residence of the elderly living alone are the longest among these five districts, high rates for living in their own housing, for life satisfaction, for subjective well-being, and for leading stable lives.

Takanawa district: The highest rate for those who rent housing among the five districts, high rates for living in their own housing, for not having life-related problems, and for subjective well-being.

Shiba district: High rates for having difficulties in their grocery shopping, for years of living in the district, and for living in high-rise dwelling units.

Akasaka district: High rates for having difficulties in their grocery shopping, for living in the public housing development, and for having little or no contact with their children, but for having other relationships and communication.

Shibaura-Konan district: Half of the elderly living alone in this district reside in the public housing development, the lowest rate for living in their own housing, high rates for living in their own high-rise dwelling unit, for the young old between 65 and 74 live there (40 % of all the elderly), for financial problems, and the lowest rate for subjective well-being.

Having witnessed differences in the elderly living alone by district, we realize that policies need to be developed in light of the specific need of each district. Such programs as constructing grocery shops and convenience stores and planning transportation development may be needed in each district.

Furthermore, policies for the elderly living alone in such a large city as Tokyo need to reflect the particular characteristics of the district in which community networks tend to be weak. Previous studies reveal that living-alone male elders rather than their female counterparts are likely to lack strong support networks and community relationship and are opt to be isolated socially (Ishida 2007; Oshio 2005; Saito et al. 2010; Shishido 2012). In fact, of the total lonely deaths (*kodokushi* in Japanese) in metropolitan Tokyo area (13,949 cases in 2012), the majority was 65 and over (73.3 %; of them male, 60.0 %; female, 40.0 %) (Tokyo Metropolitan Institute of Medial Affairs Inspection General 2014). Under these circumstances, the financial situation of the elderly living alone relates strongly to their housing

condition, whether they own it or not. Their degree of social involvement functions as a social network that sustains their stable well-being in both the objective and subjective dimensions.

7.5 Policy Recommendations for the Elderly Living Alone

In light of the unprecedented speed of aging society in Japan, it is evident that more and more citizens 65 and over will be living alone. Given these realities, it is imperative to develop programs and policies for them to enhance their objective and subjective well-being while continuing to live in the community they are familiar with. For this reason, various studies have been conducted recently to identify problems associated with the elderly living alone. With this background information at hand, now is the time for us to propose policy recommendations suitable to them.

The author of this book would like to propose the following four recommendations:

First, policies must take into full consideration the life of the elderly living alone as a whole and with a long-range perspective. We tend to look at problems associated with each individual at one point in time. Instead, however, policies for them need to be considered in much longer perspective.

Second, policies for the elderly living alone should be comprehensive, tapping on all the four problem areas that most of them are likely to face. These four areas are health, finances, housing, and social networks. Comprehensive policies must include all these four issues.

Third, as it has been witnessed in the studies of the elderly living alone in Yamagata, Kagoshima, and Minato-ward in Tokyo, policies for them must fit to the specific needs of the elderly residing in the community. Each community has its unique history, culture, and natural environment; hence, the people living there would differ from one another in terms of their social background and lifestyles. Thus, a policy for the elderly living alone should pay due consideration to the regional factors.

Fourth, in this era of the Information Age, the active use of ICT (information and communications technology) should be considered. Kumagai suggests (1999) that the ICT should be actively utilized in the area of distant medicine and the construction of social networking both within and across generations. The elderly living alone today should take an active part in various transactions by way of the ICT, such as internet banking, internet shopping, e-learning, e-books, and others. Thus, policies for the elderly living alone should reflect the rapidly developing nature of the Information Age society.

If and only if all of the abovementioned policy recommendations for the elderly living alone are materialized, they would feel more positive about their objective and subjective well-being.

Conclusion

In an attempt to prove the hypotheses on changes, continuities, and regional variations of Japanese families as a whole and by prefecture, data concerning households were examined. Findings suggest that the institution of the Japanese family currently differs widely from one region to another. At the same time, the study highlighted continuities sustaining the traditional nature of the Japanese family and household, by analyzing the traditional coresidency households in the northern part of the farming region. Similarly, the finding identified a long-existing unique family household type in the southern part of Kyushu, in which one- or two-person households are the predominant types among the elderly. These findings suggest that community and family policies are culturally bound, and therefore, it is essential for each Japanese community to develop family policies best suited to its own needs.

Most Japanese elderly today are healthy, active, and independent (90 % of those 65 and over) (PHP 2013: 17). If that is the case, seniors living by themselves have all the means to lead useful and active lives and to enjoy various lifestyles of their own. To fill these needs for the changing lifestyles of the active elderly, various business sectors in Japan have been offering programs and information about health care, food, adult education, travel, art, music, dance, sports, ICT, and many others.

As for the security of the elderly living alone, various devices such as the SECOM system and Mimamori.net have been well developed to watch their daily activities (Kumagai 2011). In case of an emergency, the network system that connects to the central headquarters will immediately contact a person to be informed. Nursing robots for the elderly help them to perform daily tasks in place of the growing shortage of caregivers. Robot dolls have been also developed to assist communication with lone elders by providing personal conversations and responses.

The onset of Japan's aging society in 1970 came relatively late among Western industrialized nations. Afterward, however, population aging in Japan has been progressing with unprecedented speed, with a substantial increase in elderly living-alone households, and significant regional variations. This progress of the Japanese aging society is quite different from what has been observed in Western nations.

This is not to suggest, however, that the Japanese disregard the family policies of Western nations that are successful in developing countermeasures for the elderly living-alone households. It goes without saying that policies of such countries should be studied carefully. In developing family policies in Japan, it is important to consider the historical and cultural background specific to each region. For this very reason, it is believed that this chapter has

(continued)

significant policy implications not only for the future of the Japanese elderly living alone but also for those in Asia.

Since Japan began its speedy entry into an aging society, there has been a substantial increase in the elderly who live alone throughout Japan, both in rural and urban regions. By the year 2035, more than 40 % of the total number of households in Japan would expect to be headed by the elderly, and one-third of them would be elders living by themselves. Even so, the needs expressed by the elderly living alone differ from one region to the other, from a rural small town in Yamagata, in Kagoshima, and in Minato-ward in central metropolitan Tokyo. Now is the time for us to reevaluate Japanese families critically and to move to the concluding chapter, "*Toward the Globalization of Japanese Families*."

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Chapter 8
Conclusion: Toward Globalization of Japanese Families

8.1 Toward Globalization Through the Field of Family Sociology

Today we live in the Information Age, and the world moves toward a global society. When news of Japan floods the media, events are not necessarily reported correctly. Part of this problem comes from the inability of Japan to clearly state its point of view to the global society. This inability, in turn, is partly because the Japanese people themselves lack a fair knowledge of Japanese history. This book, therefore, is an attempt to alleviate the situation through the field of family sociology.

At international professional meetings and conferences, Japanese professionals are often reticent, even invisible. Such tendencies come from the traditional Japanese culture of a nonverbal communication style, which avoids face-to-face confrontation. The cultural virtues of modesty, respect for others, and politeness in intercultural communication will only be valued if and only if others have a good knowledge and understanding of Japan. Otherwise, the Japanese people are seen as having no opinion of their own and their reticence and modesty is ignored.

Similarly, classical concepts of the "conceptual equivalence and phenomenal identity" need to be remembered and taken into full consideration in global communication settings (Kumagai 1981; Kumagai and Straus 1983; Straus 1969). In other words, the use of identical procedures in different societies for eliciting and quantifying data (phenomenal identity) does not necessarily result in the measurement of the same variable (conceptual equivalence) since the stimuli (questions, tasks, items) used to elicit data are likely to have different meanings and connotations. Thus, even when we use identical communication tools, it is highly likely that we compound miscommunication. In the era of globalization, where people with diverse backgrounds and value orientations interact through cyberspace, we are apt to confront misunderstanding more.

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These problems are also identified among Japanese scholars in the field of demography and the family. In addition to their communication problems, many of these scholars, the younger generations in particular, tend to lack historical perspective and pay little attention to the historically rooted regional variations in Japan. Quantity seems more important than quality. Some scholars simply emphasize that all social phenomena must be measured by totally ignoring the historical and cultural factors, which are difficult to measure anyhow. How could historical and cultural factors be measured and tested? Thus, this study attempts to narrow these gaps by introducing historical and regional community network perspectives.

Some topics such as courtship and marriage and late-life divorce were not viewed through the regional perspective, but Japan as a whole. Even so, the dual structural model—tradition and modernity simultaneously—was highlighted in these issues of Japanese families. At the same time, the existence of continuities sustaining the traditional nature of Japanese family and household was identified.

8.2 Summary of Major Findings, Implications, and Limitations of the Book

In Chap. 1 (*Introduction: A New View on Changes in Japanese Families*), two theoretical frameworks, on which analyses and discussion are based, were introduced. They are the dual structural model of the Japanese family and regional variations of the community network in Japan. Chapter 1 also elaborated historical reasons for the existence of diverse regional variations in the small island nation of Japan. Thus, the hypothesis to be tested in this book is that family issues in Japan vary from region to region. At the same time, it is hoped to find the existence of continuities sustaining the traditional nature of the Japanese family and household. Therefore, family issues in Japan in these areas are studied most effectively and appropriately through these two theoretical frameworks.

Chapter 2 (*Demographic Changes in Japan*) discussed the major demographic characteristics, i.e., fertility decline and population aging, which have been shaping the direction of Japanese family, households, and society as a whole. The traditional nature of the Japanese family and household is highlighted by analyzing traditional coresidency households in Yamagata prefecture in particular. Similarly, Chap. 2 identified a long-existing unique family household type in Kagoshima prefecture called "*inkyo*" where one- and two-person households are the predominant types among the elderly. These analyses support the widely held notion that Japan today is experiencing population aging amid increases in households in which the elderly[1]

[1] The author is fully aware of the recent development among the Western academics that the expression "the elderly" has been considered ageist and has been replaced with "older adults." In fact, that is one of the reasons for a part of this book title says "Older Adults" rather than "the Elderly." However, throughout the text of this book the expression "the elderly" is used instead, referring to the generalized category of people 65 years old and over, but not in a demeaning way.

live alone. Factors accounting for the unique characteristics of households in Yamagata and Kagoshima, respectively, could only be explained through Japanese historical and cultural development. It is traced back to the Ritsuryo system established in 701, which lasted for well over a millennium.

Chapter 3 (*History of Courtship and Marriage in Japan*) found that the marriage pattern in Japan developed from group/horde marriages in primitive times to the *tsumadoi-kon* (in which the groom commuted to the bride's residence), to the *muko-in* (the groom lived with the bride's family) during the aristocracy, and to the *yome-in* (women marrying into men's families) under the Bushi ruling. It was only after the Meiji era that Japanese marriage changed to the *Yoriai* pattern based on the mutual consent of the marriage partners. Today, young Japanese people face difficulty in finding marriage partners, resulting in extremely high rates of Japanese men and women who never marry. Hoping to provide young people with mate selection opportunities, various *kon-katsu* (mate-seeking activities) and *machi-kon* (township group activities which provide meeting opportunities between the sexes) services have been established by local municipal offices with governmental monetary support and commercial matchmaking agencies.

Chapter 4 (*International Marriage in Japan*) highlighted three demographic features of foreign brides in Japan today. First, the total number of foreign spouses has increased dramatically over the years. Second, foreign brides now constitute the majority, rather than foreign grooms. Third, these foreign brides come primarily from three regions in Asia, namely, China, the Philippines, and North and South Korea. In-depth studies of foreign brides in several rural farming municipalities in Yamagata prefecture revealed a high correlation between the proportion of foreign residents and three-generation households. It could be said, therefore, that foreign brides are helping to continue the Japanese stem family, particularly in the farmlands of Yamagata.

Chapter 5 (*Changing Divorce in Japan*) examined regional variations in Japanese divorce using historical, archival, and current national- and prefecture-level statistical data and found wide variations from one region to another. Divorce rates are affected by socioeconomic factors, existing family patterns, urban-rural differences, and cultural idiosyncrasies stemming from historic patterns, all of which make the issue complicated. These findings suggest that there exist changes and continuities in Japanese divorce, but with significant regional variations.

Chapter 6 (*Late-Life Divorce in Japan Revisited*) analyzed late-life divorces in Japan, i.e., by couples married longer than twenty years, and found that they have become increasingly common since the mid-1990s. However, there has not been a surge in late-life divorces since passage of the 2007 pension division law for divorcing couples, which granted women a share of their ex-husband's pension. Some had speculated this would result in a significant increase in late-life divorces, but it did not happen. In fact the introduction of the 2007 pension division law for divorcing couples seems to have had a minimal impact on women seeking a late-life divorce.

Chapter 7 (*Japanese Elders Living Apart*) discussed changing trends of Japanese aging society and found that one of its characteristics is a rapid increase in households of the elderly living alone, but with significant regional variations today. It has

been projected, however, that elderly-headed households will surpass 40 % of the total households by 2035, and of them nearly 40 % will be elders living alone. Rural regions in particular are seeing increases in the number of elderly living alone or as couples, because younger generations are leaving their rural homelands for urban regions in search of job opportunities. This forecasts a clear emergence of structural changes in the Japanese family from the traditional generational stem households to those of one-person dwelling units. Thus, Japanese family policies must also change, to meet the demand of these structural changes.

In short, using historical and demographic data, the study explained different demographic and family trends with emphasis on regional variations, pointing out significant variations in family issues on marriage, divorce, and older adults in what may, at first glance, seem to be a highly homogenous society in Japan. Recognizing these regional and community differences, readers are guided to take a similar approach in analyzing their own societies and families. In other words, dividing the population by region and/or community will enable them to go deep into the true nature of families, oftentimes covered underneath national-level data.

As stated in Chap. 1, historical and cultural factors which yielded regional variations in Japan, namely, the feudal domains stemming from the Ritsuryo system of 701 and the Baku-Han system of Edo Shogunate during the Edo period, are difficult to measure. Therefore, the book was not able to test causal relationship of regional variations through quantitative analysis. Due to these historical developments, many of the prefectures in present-day Japan vary not only among themselves but also within the same prefecture. It is hoped that scientific methods to measure these sensitive characteristics become available in the future.

Another limitation of the book would be that in some area of family issues studied, such as Chap. 6 on late-life divorce, it was not possible to present regional variations. The Secretariat of the Supreme Court of Japan has not made such sensitive statistical data available to the public. As there are significant regional variations in the overall divorce rate, it would also be true for the late-life divorce rate. Perhaps the Secretariat wishes to spare sociologists some time.

8.3 Relating the Dual Structural Model to the Family Issues Discussed

Of the two theoretical models that this book discusses, the dual structural model, on one hand, and the regional variation perspective of Japanese family issues, on the other, the latter, i.e., the regional variation perspective, was critically tied into each issue studied. So let us turn to the dual structural model and family issues in Japan discussed in the book.

The modified stem family discussed in Chap. 1 has been the basis for the traditional family system in Japan, but the number of Japanese living this way has declined dramatically, as was noted in Chap. 2 in regard to the coresidency living

arrangements of the elderly 65 and over. Attrition in the coresidency rate goes hand-in-hand with acute increase in the proportion of the elderly living alone and elderly couples living alone. Thus, we recognize that the dual structural model of Japanese family issues in this regard must be modified.

Even among generational families, it is natural to observe intergenerational conflicts among the elderly and their adult children, especially between married women in the coresidency family pattern and their mothers-in-law. In fact, one of the earlier studies by the author—discussed in Chap. 2 of this book—revealed that women in the traditional intergenerational family household work outside the home as a way to reduce conflict. These married women in the traditional generational households work outside the home not for economic reasons alone, but as a way to avoid disputes with in-laws, particularly the mother-in-law. Here we see the dual structural model of Japanese families transforming its nature from traditional to modern, in that married women in the modern modified stem family work outside the home.

In light of difficulties finding marriage partners today, Japanese young people are using *kon-katsu* services and/or participating in *machi-kon* activities as discussed in Chap. 3 of this book. These developments would fit into the dual structural model of the Japanese family. That is, Japanese young adults today are diverging from the traditional mate selection pattern of *miai* (arranged marriage) or even *ren-ai* (love match), seeking success in the quest for a marriage partner through the modern style of public assistance. Single mothers are not yet an accepted social norm in Japan. Births to unmarried mothers in Japan today are extremely low in comparison to other industrial nations. It could be due to factors within Japanese society and culture. Furthermore, increasing prevalence of *de facto* partnerships may prompt us to say that the coming of the second demographic change in Japan is in order. However, it would be premature to say that the pattern of the partnership formation in Japan has shifted to the second demographic transition with nonmarital cohabitation. It is because the dual structural nature of Japanese society and culture sustains the traditional family culture in the minds of even the young people in Japan today. Upon giving births to their first babies, cohabiting couples are most likely to resolve their cohabiting unions by the traditional marriage.

International marriage in the rural farming area of Yamagata, discussed in Chap. 4 in this study, is taken as an example where the dual structural model of the family has been sustained. Yamagata prefecture has been long known to have a high coresidency rate, in fact, now the highest of all the 47 prefectures in Japan. Men in Yamagata prefecture today, however, find it difficult to meet potential wives, since marriageable Japanese women are leaving, in search of job opportunities in the cities. So several municipalities in Yamagata prefecture established official tour programs for these wishful single men to meet with possible marriage partners from Asian societies such as the Philippines, South Korea, mainland China, and Thailand. Once both parties agreed upon the marriage, these foreign women were brought to Japan to become brides. Foreign brides in the international marriage are the driving force in sustaining the traditional stem family in Yamagata prefecture today. Thus, international marriage in Yamagata today is an example reflecting the dual structure of the Japanese family today.

Chapter 5 of this book analyzed divorce in Japan with special attention to regional variations without due consideration to the dual structural model. Historically the divorce rate in Japan was extremely high; in fact, it was the world's highest at the end of the nineteenth century. Today, however, it is the lowest among modern industrialized nations despite the ease of obtaining a divorce here. However, whether or not Japanese married couples are happy or not is another matter. It is said that marriages without affection between married partners are prevalent in Japan. Generally speaking, Japanese people are concerned about how they are looked on by others; they want to be respected by others, rather than feel satisfied with their marital lives. This is an example which shows the dual structural model of the Japanese family today.

In Chap. 6, late-life divorces in Japan were highlighted. The fact that the majority of late-life divorces today are initiated by wives may reflect their dissatisfaction with the traditional sex role, which deprives them of independence. Married women in "the empty nest" no longer feel obligated to play the role of mother and obedient wife. Many thought the 2007 pension division law for divorcing couples might have led dissatisfied married women to pursue late-life divorce. In actuality, however, with only minimal pension money available, married but dissatisfied women realized that it was not possible for them to lead autonomous lives. Therefore, the 2007 pension revision scheme seems to have played no significant role in increasing late-life divorces. The coexistence of both the modern idea of pursuing late-life divorce, on one hand, and the decision to continue to stay in the traditional family surroundings, on the other, could be interpreted as Japanese women in the dual structural situation.

Japan has been experiencing rapid fertility decline ever since the early 1990s and a population aging with unprecedented speed. Consequently, as discussed in Chap. 7 of this book, the rate for the elderly living apart, as individuals or as couples, has increased dramatically over the years and is projected to grow throughout Japan in the near future. Although we must face the reality of this fading traditional Japanese family system, there should be some measures to keep a semblance of the generational system, while allowing for modern-day living arrangements of the elderly. Although the entire family may not be together physically in the same dwelling units, there must be effective ways to keep intergenerational contact. For example, adult children could make contacts with their elderly parents who are living elsewhere, by visiting or by use of ICT (information and communications technology) effectively. Elderly parents living apart may like to extend their hands to their grandchildren, or grandchildren may like to visit their grandparents, to listen to their stories, historical anecdotes, or just be spoiled. By establishing intergenerational contacts in this manner, grandchildren will be able to foster an interest in the history of their own family, prefecture, or country. Possessing historical perspective of one's own country is essential in the era of global society. Unfortunately, it seems to have been lacking for some time in Japan. It is the wishful thinking of the author that the dual structural perspective of the intergenerational relationship could be introduced effectively by the elderly living alone in Japan.

8.4 The Future of Japanese Families

Now that we know Japanese families are in the midst of fertility decline and population aging, yet with diverse regional variations. The author of this book would like to set three directions for the future of Japanese families, dealing with, first, Japanese families in the era of population decline; second, Japanese families with working mothers; and third, Japanese families and global cooperation. Let us discuss each briefly.

8.4.1 Japanese Families in the Era of Population Decline

We all know that inevitable consequence of fertility decline and population aging is a declining population, which Japanese society has already been experiencing for nearly a decade now. The attrition in the working population 15–64 years old is frightening as it will have significant impact on such areas as the labor force, productivity, and the Japanese economy as a whole. Yet, we know that the impact of population decline in Japan varies from one region to the other, so family policies must be suitable for the needs of each region.

It is inevitable that the need for medical and care programs for the elderly will grow, and the demand for caretakers will increase. Traditionally family members in Japan took care of the elderly at home, so family policies by our society were not regarded as necessary until recently. Now, they are essential.

In light of the shortage of working population in the labor market, active use of such personnel as married women, skilled foreign workers, and healthy elderly should be considered. For the regions where the population drain of young adults is at a critical level, effective measures such as creating work opportunities, to attract them to stay, must be developed. The healthy elderly should be regarded as an integral work force with knowledge and experience to contribute to the aging society effectively. For example, the healthy elderly would be most willing to assist the impaired. Thus, Japanese families in the future will have policies not only to support each other within the community but also be in accord to the needs specific to each region.

8.4.2 Japanese Families with Working Mothers

Today in Japan, it is often the case that married women with toddlers are obliged to stay home even though they may wish to work. But there is an acute shortage of nurseries. Even if working women are lucky enough to place their children in a nursery, they find it difficult to leave their office in time to pick up their children before the nurseries close. Perhaps women and men have to change their attitudes

toward child rearing. At the same time, regulations and social environments at the workplace must change to enable married women to work by providing them with alternative programs such as flextime and working at home.

The healthy elderly could well extend support for the care of children of working mothers through public nursery programs organized by municipal offices. The elderly may not be direct family members, but they likely had experience raising children in the past. The elderly and the families of working mothers with children will form vicarious families and be able to establish an intergenerational relationship by taking care of children.

8.4.3 Japanese Families and Global Cooperation

What does the "globalization of Japanese families" mean? Does it mean that Japanese families should become the same as those of other global societies? No, because Japanese families are unique to Japan with regional variations which are historically rooted. To the author, therefore, the globalization of Japanese families means that family studies should develop with global cooperation.

Regional variations could not be shared with other nations, but demographic changes of Japanese families could be. In other words, if Japan were to overcome the problems of an aging society, she could become a global partner sharing ideas for this difficult issue the world confronts today.

8.5 Japan as a Global Partner

In many Asian societies such as Hong Kong, Korea, Singapore, and others, a declining fertility rate has reached a threatening level, which Japan went through a quarter century ago in the early 1990s (Kumagai 1990). Japan currently has been undergoing the process of population aging with a speed that no other nation has ever experienced. For this reason, therefore, what has been discussed on family issues in Japan on demography, marriage, divorce, and older adults in this book will hopefully become a lesson and a guideline not only to other Asian nations but also to Western societies.

Let us pay well-balanced attention to both quantitative and qualitative analyses for the study of family issues. And, we should ask why it is so and what factors account for what has been found rather than just presenting research results. In so doing, Japan will be a global partner in the scientific community. Thus, it is truly hoped that Japan's quest for globalization may become a process not only of learning from its equally advanced neighbors but also of sharing with them all that it has come to know.

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