

ADOPTION AS AN HEIRSHIP STRATEGY?: A CASE FROM A NORTHEASTERN VILLAGE IN PRE- INDUSTRIAL JAPAN

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Using the longitudinal population registers of Shimomoriya (1716-1869), a village in northeastern Japan, this study attempts to uncover the life courses of adopted sons and examines the common interpretation of adoption as an heirship strategy. Adoption was always common in Shimomoriya during the 150 years of observation. Although this tendency is similar to observations in other villages, the peak age of adoption was early at 15-19. The study also reveals the different mechanisms of heirship strategy, indicated by the geographical mobility and sibling composition, which were the basis of the three different types of adoption — ordinary adopted sons (*futsu-yoshi*), sons-in-law (*muko-yoshi*), and adopted husbands (*nyufu*). Among the adopted sons, 40% made their way to household headship while others died, divorced, or left before becoming heads. Therefore, the way to headship was not automatic. The life table analysis suggests that the first three years for ordinary adopted sons and the first year for adopted husbands were crucial to become heads. Afterwards, their chance of becoming heads decreased, and they might have spent the rest of their lives as peripheral kin of the household. The first seven years were important for sons-in-law and if they passed these years without being divorced, their right to heirship was almost certain, although it might have come slowly. The northeastern pattern of early marriage and frequent remarriage may be also applied to the practice of adoption.

Key words: ADOPTION, STEM FAMILY, TOKUGAWA JAPAN, HISTORICAL DEMOGRAPHY, LIFE TABLE ANALYSIS.

INTRODUCTION

Adoption has always played an important role in Japanese family history. Although the procedure and nature of adoptions vary across social strata, period and region, one of the major functions of adoption has been the provision of an heir. This characteristic is common in Asia and was also evident in ancient Rome, but it disappeared with the emergence of Christianity (Goody 1983, pp. 68-85; Fauve-Chamoux 1996, p. 2). Among peasant families in pre-industrial Japan, adoption was used to ensure heirship when there were no sons in the family (e.g. Narimatsu 1985 and 1992, Hanley 1985, Tsubouchi 1992, Okada 1995, Oto 1996). During the low fertility regime of the pre-industrial period, “the institution of adoption was an indispensable element of the Japanese stem family system under demographic constraints” as it filled the “gap between the ideal of lineal succession and demographic reality” (Kurosu and Ochiai 1995, p. 281).

Despite common agreement regarding the importance of adoption practices among peasants, however, the system of adoption has not been probed in depth. In spite of its role as a major supplement to low fertility on one hand, and a means of redistributing surplus sons on the other

(Kurosu and Ochiai 1995, Hanley 1985), adoption has been examined only as periphery in the studies of fertility among historical demographers. The studies of family sociologists, who have recognized and shown the significance of adoption, have yet to be integrated and further developed due at least to three reasons. First, the scholarly emphasis on succession led to empirical studies of peasant adoption which was treated as a strategy for household succession. Households or heirship were the units of analysis in these studies and the individual experiences within the institution of adoption are largely unknown. Second, there were few legal restrictions, so fewer records exist for peasants as compared to those of warriors in the same period. Third, there appears to be a large regional variation in the institution of adoption. Due to the second and third reasons, there is no clear definition of adoption among peasants. Thus concepts to explain peasant adoption have been borrowed from studies of warriors and civil codes of later periods and gathered from anthropological fieldwork of the early twentieth century. Yet another factor hindering synthetic studies of adoption is the availability of data and method. Since adoption events are not as numerous compared, for example, with marriages, a village study was unable to address issues concerning the life course of adopted sons, particularly because they were observed at the household level.

Using the longitudinal population registers (1716-1869) of Shimomoriya, a village in northeastern Japan, to uncover the life courses of adopted sons before their adoption, I will challenge the common interpretation of adoption as an heirship strategy. The two major questions addressed in this paper are whether sons in Shimomoriya have always been exposed to the risk of adoption over the 150 years of observation and whether they indeed became household heads after being adopted. Based on the observation of adopted sons, I will examine household strategies that might have been at work in the adoption practices of Shimomoriya. I will also attempt to contrast these findings with those from South-Tama, central Japan, in order to determine regional differences (Kurosu and Ochiai 1995; hereafter referred to as the Tama study). Such longitudinal and life course analyses are possible with the use of Ninbetsu-Aratamecho, a population register that covers a period of long duration. Tokugawa Japan is known to be a society with large local differences in demographic patterns, social customs, and socioeconomic developments. The northeastern region is characterized by early marriages, frequent divorces and remarriages, vertical extensions of the household (Narimatsu 1992, Hayami 1985, Shimizu 1995, etc.) and the practice of eldest daughters' succession (*ane-katoku*) in addition to the usual eldest sons' succession. How the institution of adoption has functioned in such a region therefore is of particular interest to this study. Although a study based on one village is not sufficient to provide a general picture about the "Northeastern pattern" of adoption, given the scarcity of individual level approaches to adoption, this study should help to further our understanding on the role of adoption in a Japanese stem family system.

Definition of Adoption

Adoption was frequently used in East Asian countries where lineal succession is important (Befu 1971; Wolf and Huang 1980). However, the Japanese practice is said to contrast with other East Asian countries in two respects. First, adopted sons were taken both from among the kinsmen of the head and his wife and from families who had no kinship relation to the head (Nakane 1967, p. 4). Second, the custom of adopting a son as a husband for one's daughter,

“adopted son-in-law (*muko-yoshi*),” was common in Japan (Nakane 1967, p. 4). The adopted son or adopted son-in-law was “cut off legally from his biological father and the members of his natal household” (Nakane 1967, p. 4), changed his surname and obtained rights to the property of the adopting family (the daughter’s family in the case of a son-in-law), as well as the responsibilities of looking after his adoptive parents in their old age and taking charge of ancestor worship (Takeda 1988, p. 312).

The three classifications for adoption widely used by researchers (e.g., Takeuchi 1969; Otake 1988; Oto 1996) are “ordinary adoption (*futsu-yoshi*),” “adoption of son-in-law (*muko-yoshi*),” and “adoption of husbands (*nyufu*).” The distinction between the latter two is marked by whether the wife is a daughter of the preceding household head or the household head herself. A male son not adopted for the purpose of becoming a daughter’s husband is called an “ordinary adopted son.” If he is adopted to become a daughter’s husband, he is an “adopted son-in-law.” If the adopted son marries a female household head, he is an “adopted husband”. These categories are clearly differentiated in the adoption practices of warriors (Harafuji 1982) and the practices after the Meiji civil code.

Whether or not it is appropriate to employ these general definitions to the adoption practices in the region of the present study is still arguable. Since there is little empirical research and there are few written documents about adoption in this region at this point, I will apply the above general concepts as has been done in previous studies of the peasant families. These types of adoption are not always recorded in the same manner in the population registers and these terms were not always used. Therefore, these types are best distinguished by a combination of information: the timing of adoption and marriage, the relationship of the adopted sons to the household heads, and whether their spouses were natural daughters. In the following analyses, I will refer to the above three types as adopted sons, sons-in-law, and adopted husbands.

SHIMOMORIYA: SETTING AND SOURCE

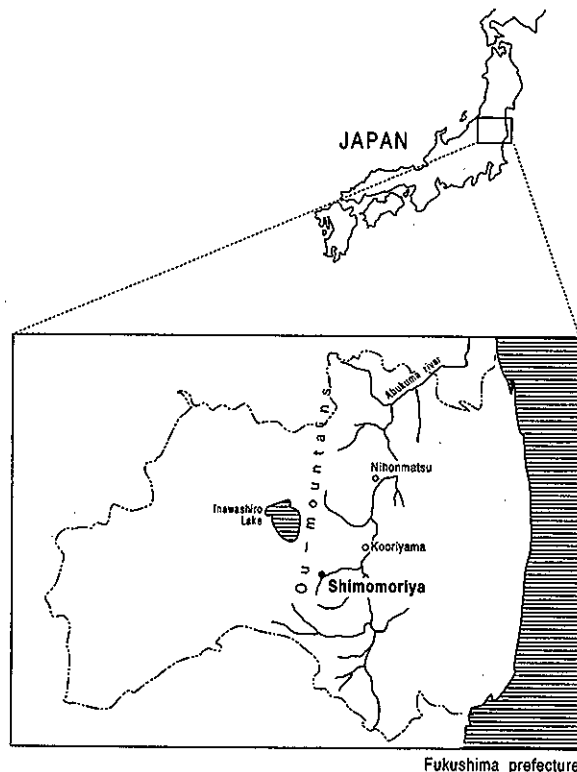
Shimomoriya is a small village located at the foot of the Ou-mountains (See Map 1). It belongs to contemporary Mihota-machi, Koriyama-city, Fukushima prefecture. The center of Koriyama-city, the nearest city, is about 20 km west of Shimomoriya. Although located at the northwest end of Asaka field which is known to be fertile, Shimomoriya was disadvantaged by the cold winds coming down from the mountains, which are more than 1,000m high. From as early as 1594 (Taiko-kenchi), Shimomoriya was recorded as suffering frequent damage from cold weather (Narimatsu 1985, pp. 1-4). During the 65 years of the Kyoho and Anei eras (1716-1780), the village record notes 43 disasters, including 14 droughts, 10 long rains, and 5 cases of severely cold weather (Koriyama-shi-shi vol. 2: Nihonmatsu-ryo disaster calendar). Thus Shimomoriya appears to have been one of the most vulnerable among the Northeastern villages, which experienced unfavorable climate changes.

The hardship of village life in such a climate is recognizable in the drastic decline of the population from the end of the eighteenth century (Appendix 1: Population). At the beginning of the record in 1716 the village population was 419. After 35 years of plateau or a slight increase, the village population started to decline in the early 1760s. This decrease occurred even before the Tenmei crisis (a famine which damaged the northeastern region of Japan around 1785). Some peasants, burdened by taxes, gave up the right for land cultivation by selling their property. The

population did not recover, although somewhat restored during the 1790s-1820s, and further declined hitting the lowest point of record below 250 during the Tempo crisis (another famine which swept through the nation in the late 1830s). The decline of the population was not only a natural one caused by increased mortality but also social including individual work migration and family out-migration, as well as absconding (individual and family) from the burden of taxes. The absconding (*kakeochi*) population was particularly high during the Tenmei and Tempo crises (almost 50 in each era; Narimatsu 1985, pp. 185-7).

The ever declining number of households over the observed period is further evidence of the hardship of village life. Household extinction was not uncommon, resulting from the death of older household heads without any heirs, or out-migration by either family members or an entire family to escape taxation. This was particularly true among households of lower economic status (Okada 1996a and 1996b). The village population recovered after the Tempo crisis and increased toward the end of Tokugawa period, when the number of households also started to improve. At the beginning of the Meiji period (1872) the population was 371. It was around this time that the village overcame the disadvantageous climate with the benefit of canal works (Narimatsu 1985, p. 7).

MAP 1



DATA AND TECHNICAL NOTES

The data employed in this study come from a very poor village. Yet the longitudinal data provided by the village population register is rich and reliable. "Shimomoriya Ninbetsu-aratamecho, Asaka-gun, Mutsu-no-kuni" is a compilation of annual population registers spanning the period 1716-1869. The period covered by this source is more than 150 years, with only 9 years in which records are missing. The original documents were first gathered and organized by Saeko Narimatsu (see Narimatsu 1985 for details) and were later made into a database through projects lead by Akira Hayami. Details of the history of population registers, as well as its reliability, compilation and computerization of the data sets are described elsewhere (Hayami 1979, Ono 1993). In addition, several studies using this data set are currently in progress in the Eurasia Project on Population and Family History. It is my hope to account for the practices and types of adoption in larger demographic and economic models of the northeastern region.

Since the units of analysis vary depending on the purpose of the analysis, I will describe the procedure of analysis in each section. Yet, some general technical notes are in order. Japanese years are translated to western calendar years. Also, individual ages calculated in the conventional Japanese manner (newborns are listed as one year old) are adjusted to contemporary style by subtracting one year. Information on landholdings is used to examine the economic standing of each household. The landholdings are expressed in the measure of rice (*koku*), or in rice equivalents where other crops were grown (Smith 1977, p. 30). One *koku* equals approximately five bushels. The classification of the sum of landholdings and whether landholdings are appropriate to indicate economic status of households are unresolved issues among historical demographers in Japan (Hamano 1996). For now, I will use three categories referring to tenants, independent farmers, and landlords (large share): I refer to villagers who own less than two *koku* as small holders, from two to less than ten *koku* as medium-sized holders, and ten *koku* or more as large holders, respectively.

ANALYSES AND FINDINGS

(1) Adoption trends

First, how common was adoption among peasants in Shimomoriya? Adoption existed in this village from the beginning of the observation period. Figure 1 shows how many of the males present in each year (including natives and migrants) had the status of being adopted in that particular year. Once a son was adopted he kept his status as an adopted son as long as he survived or until he was sent back to his native household. Therefore, this figure shows how many of the males present in Shimomoriya experienced adoption. The average person years lived by adopted sons ages 10-55 (person years of all adopted/ person years of all males) was 0.279. That is, about 28% of the adult males in Shimomoriya experienced adoption. Therefore, adoption was not a rare life course event at any time during the observation period.

The implications of the relationship between population dynamics and adoption are clearer when adoption events are explained by contrasting three migration types: out-going adoption from the village, in-coming adoption to the village, and inter-village adoption (Figure 2). Adoption outside the village showed a clear drop at the period around the Tempo crisis (1831-50). When sons were busily redistributed within the village, there were no excess numbers left

Figure 1: Male Population of Shimomoriya 1716-1869, Adopted vs. Natural Sons

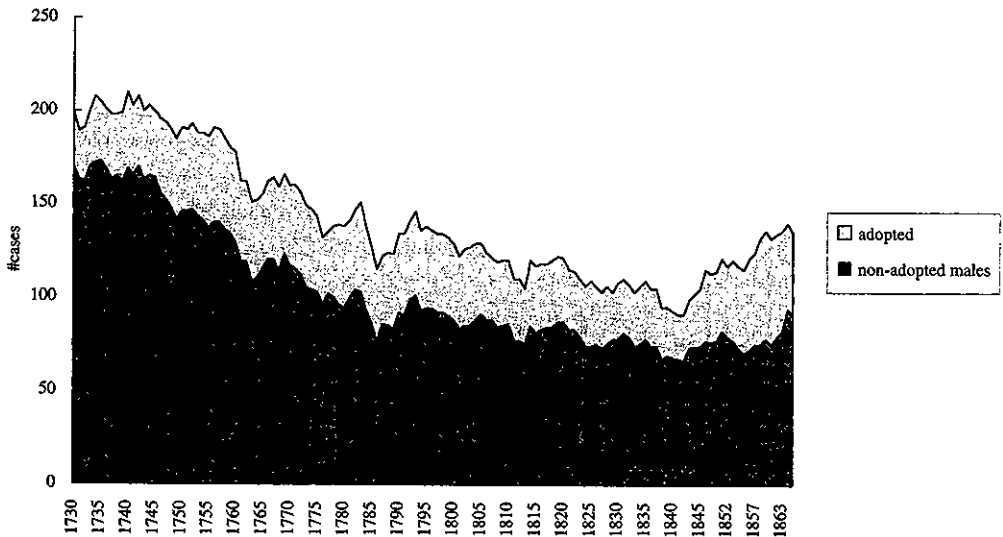
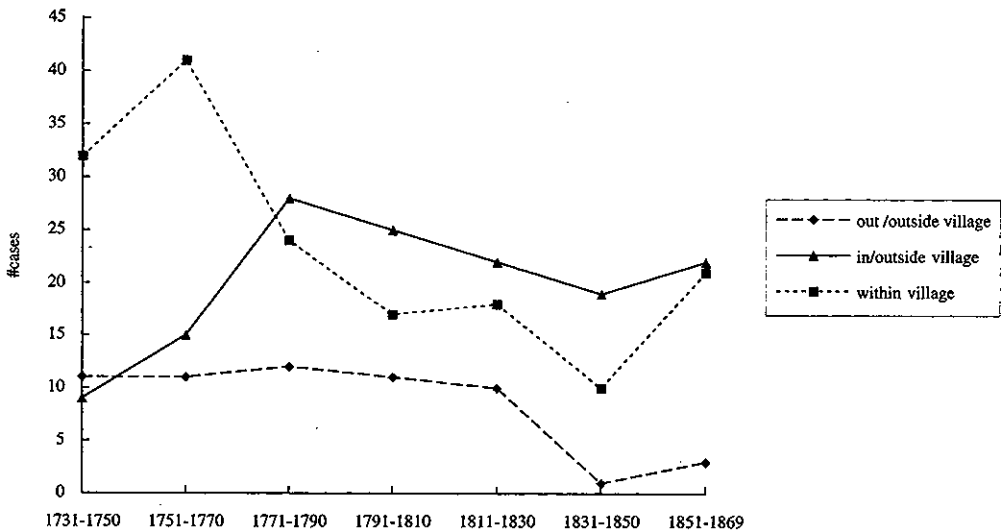


Figure 2: Number of adopted sons from within/outside Shimomoriya, 1731-1869



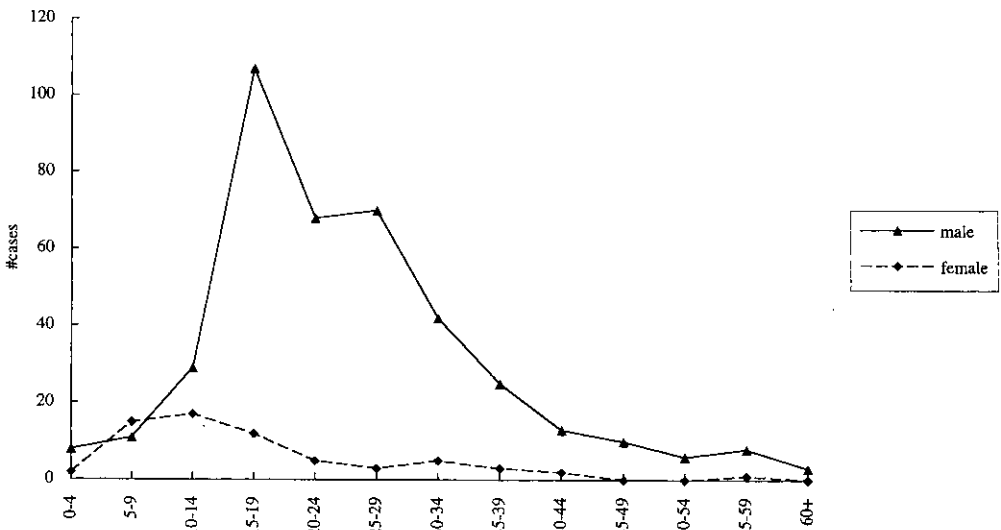
for out-adoption. Adoption from outside the village increased rapidly during the years when the population was decreasing, 1771-1790. Within village adoption was high when the population was stable at the beginning of the observation. During both the Tenmei and Tempo eras, the number of adoptions decreased but resurged at the last period — both eras when the extinction rate of households was high (Okada 1996, Figure 7). In-and out-migration via adoption naturally influenced the population size, but at the same time, the population size might have affected the practice of adoption when the lineal succession of households were involved. If the “redistribution of sons” via adoption was practiced (Kurosu and Ochiai 1995), when population

change was favorable, more adoptions within the village redistributed sons and excess sons were sent outside the village; when population change was not favorable, recruitment by adoption from outside was practiced to fill the gap between the decreasing population and maintenance of the households. As I only intend to show adoption trends in this section, I will stop here and leave more detailed analyses of the relationship between demographic constraint and adoption at the macro level for the future.

(2) Age and Type of Adoption

In the first section, I pointed out that adoption was a common practice among male peasants in Shimomoriya throughout the observation period. In this section, I will examine adoption as an event in the life course of individuals. Ideally, I would like to divide the following analyses into periods of population change. However, since the population for each period is too small to see any statistical trend, I will look at the population of the observation period as a whole. For future reference, I intend to practice similar analyses using a larger sample from this region.

Figure 3: Age distribution when adopted, Shimomoriya 1716-1869



First, I will verify whether or not the general understanding that adult adoption is the major pattern in Japan holds true for this region. Figure 3 shows the age distribution at which adoption took place. Here all the recorded adoptions during the period 1716-1869 were used (400 cases). The number of adopted sons jumps at ages 15-19 with over 100 adoptions recorded. The number decreases to 70 in the following age range, but further and gradual decrease does not happen until the 30s. The vast majority of adoptions, therefore, were adult adoptions. Although the age distribution pattern is similar to the one found in Tama, the peak of adoption in Shimomoriya is about five years earlier than Tama. This confirms the characteristics of marriage at an early age in this region (Narimatsu 1985, p. 85). I would also like to note that 56 cases of female adoption were found during this period. Most of these female adoptions took place during childhood and

not much difference was found in their marriage and fertility behaviors in comparison to natural daughters. The adoption of females requires another line of explanation.

In the above analysis I examined all the cases of adoption that took place in Shimomoriya during the observation. Now I will use adopted sons who came in from other households within or outside the village during the duration of the observation (337 cases) to differentiate the timing of adoption by type. In the population where early marriages and remarriages were common (Narimatsu 1992, p. 81), "re-adoption" was also common. For example, of the 199 adopted sons-in-law, 25 were second (or higher order) husbands for the daughters. Here I will include second (and higher order) adoptions in the three categories as they apply. The second (and higher order) adoptions may slightly shift the age distribution upward. Moreover, the characteristics I will show below do not differ between the first and second (and higher order) adoptions. This suggests that the recruitment of sons-in-law was done quickly and smoothly, and that the second adopted sons-in-law replaced the first ones without any difficulties.

Figure 4: Age distribution when adopted (by adoption type), Shimomoriya 1716-1869

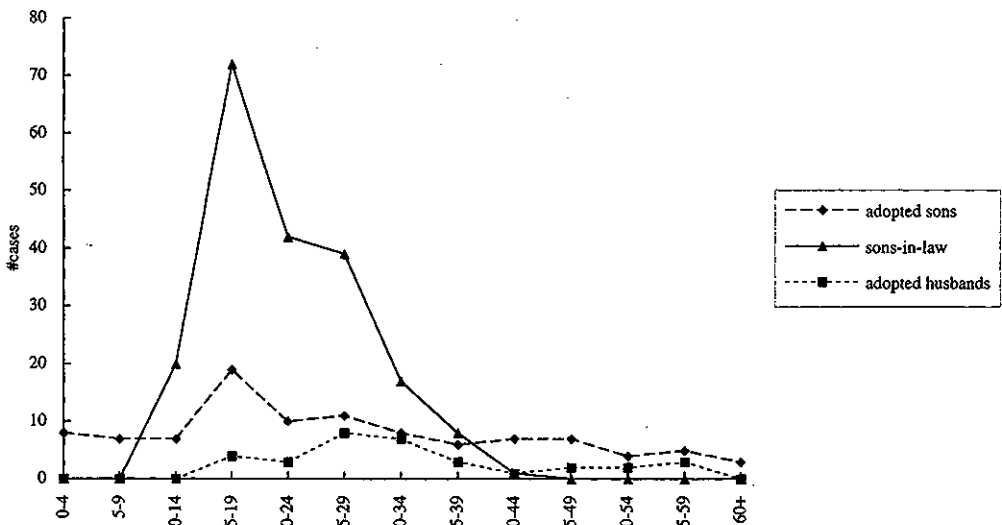


Figure 4 shows the age distribution of sons when they were adopted according to the definition of adoption types: among the 337 cases, 105 were ordinary adoptions, 199 were adoptions of sons-in-law, and 33 were adoptions of husbands. Adoption of sons-in-law, therefore, was the major type of adoption practice in Shimomoriya. This practice is said to be rare and unwelcome in China and Korea (Ueno 1988, Wolf and Huang 1980) although some conflicting findings have also been reported (Pasternak 1972). Figure 4 shows that ordinary adoption starts as early as 0-4 years old while the adoption of sons-in-law starts at 10-14; the latter shows a dramatic peak in the 15-19 age group. The peak of ordinary adoption is in this same age group, but the peak is not as appreciable as adopted sons-in-law and its distribution is more scattered over the life-course. The distribution of adoptions of husbands, which are small in number to begin with, is also scattered with some concentration during the 25-34 age group.

(3) Who became an adopted son?

Among the 548 males who were born in Shimomoriya during the period of observation, 115 (19.7%) were adopted by other households — either within the village or outside the village. When the economic status of the native households was considered, the proportion of households who produced adopted sons was 10.0% for small, 30.3% for middle, and 28.7% for large landholders. Sons born in the households of higher economic status were more likely to be adopted. This confirms the previous findings in Tama. Adopted sons tend to come from families of higher economic status. What about their position in the family? According to the stem family rule in Japan, it is expected that one stays (usually the eldest son) and succeeds the family while the rest of the siblings leave home. A life table analysis reveals that if there was only one child, regardless of the sex, he/she remained in his/her parental household. If there was more than one child, the eldest son remained home (Kurosu 1996a and 1996b). In Shimomoriya, as expected, the proportion of out-adoption among younger sons with older brothers was the largest (39.7%). The adoption of only children and eldest sons, although small in proportion, took place, too (16.6% and 18.5% respectively). It should be noted that the majority of adoptions of the only children happened in families of the lowest economic status where continuation of heirship was not as stable as families of higher status (Okada 1996). Among 115 cases, 28 experienced service (25 went outside of village), on average for 9.9 years (s.d. 6.7) and were adopted afterwards. When sons were adopted after their service experience, it naturally affected the age of adoption. The mean age of adoption was 16.8 for adoption of sons-in-law (46 cases) and 12.8 for ordinary adopted sons (24 cases) who left their native households without any service experience, in contrast to 24.7 for service experienced adopted sons (28 cases). The effect of service therefore is one of the important determining factors of the age when sons were adopted as it was for female marriages (Hayami 1992, Cornell 1987, Narimatsu 1992).

(4) Where are the adopted sons from?

Each type of adoption had a clear pattern of migration. The majority of ordinary adopted sons were from the village in contrast to more than half of the sons-in-law and the majority of adopted husbands who immigrated from outside the village. The adoption study in Tama suggested that the recruitment of adopted sons was more restricted or bound to locality than that of brides: 35.9% adopted sons and 21.3% brides were from within the village. The difference is more striking in Shimomoriya when the migration in each type is compared. Only 14% of adopted sons were from outside the village while 53% of sons-in-law and 79% of adopted husbands were from outside Shimomoriya. Narimatsu found that 51.5% of in-marrying brides were from outside the village (1992, p. 88). This suggests that in Shimomoriya, the geographic mobility of adopted sons-in-law and adopted husbands was similar to that of in-marrying brides while ordinary adopted sons had to be recruited from within the village. Thus “concern about recruiting a stranger as an adopted son, who eventually becomes the household head, and at the same time becomes a formal member of the village (Kurosu and Ochiai 1995, p. 279) only seems to have applied to ordinary adoption. The frequency and the migration pattern of sons-in-law do not seem to support studies of folklore that adopted sons-in-law recruited from outside the village were lower-ranked in the *wakamono-gumi* (a village organization for youth) and *miyaza* (a religious organization in a village), and were treated as newcomers or outsiders (Takeda 1988, pp. 314-315). This was also the case for adopted husbands. First, since the daughters have blood-relations

to the heads, it might not have mattered where the adopted sons-in-law were from. Second, it was preferred that adopted sons-in-law be recruited from within the village, but the decline of the population did not allow the realization of this ideal. Clearly, ordinary adopted sons were Shimomoriyans. The blood or kin relation may also have been important among peasant adoptions. It is a common understanding among researchers that even "a man who has no kinship relation at all to the head" was recruited for adoption in Japan (Nakane 1967, pp. 84-5). This stands in contrast to China and Korea, where patrilineages played important roles. However, this view needs to be revised with some specifications. It was adopted sons-in-law who did not require any kin relations. The analysis here suggests that ordinary adoption might have had more restriction of locality, if not blood relationship, than has been believed.

(5) Sibling composition in the adopting households

Who were in the households when someone was adopted? Table 1 shows the type of siblings present in the households representing three types of adoption. More than half of the ordinary adopted sons did not find any siblings in the household. Siblings of sons-in-law exclude their wives. Therefore, if an adopted son did not have siblings, his wife was the only child (daughter) of the previous generation. The number of younger sisters is more than double that of older sisters. Thus the general tendency found in Tama also applies to Shimomoriya, i.e. adopted sons were recruited when there were no heirs and sons-in-law were adopted where there were daughters. This indicates that the adopted sons tended to marry older sisters although marriages to younger sisters did occur. Husbands were adopted (except two cases) when there were no siblings other than the widow. The composition of siblings present in the households can change every year. Therefore, many of these observed siblings must have left sooner or later according to the stem family rule (Kurosu 1996a and 1996b). The intricate process of having heirs or no heirs and adoption has to be examined more carefully with regards to the timing of the move of siblings.

Table 1: Sibling composition when adopted (by adoption type)

| | adopted sons | | sons-in-law | | adopted husbands | |
|-------------|--------------|-------|-------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| only child | 58 | 55.24 | 37 | 18.97 | 26 | 70.27 |
| 1st/brother | 3 | 2.86 | 11 | 5.64 | 1 | 2.70 |
| 1st/sister | 16 | 15.24 | 87 | 44.62 | 3 | 8.11 |
| young/bro | 10 | 9.52 | 16 | 8.21 | 0 | 0.00 |
| young/sis | 6 | 5.71 | 36 | 18.46 | 0 | 0.00 |
| unknown | 12 | 11.43 | 8 | 4.10 | 7 | 18.92 |
| all | 105 | 100 | 195 | 100 | 37 | 100 |

(6) Marriage of adopted sons

Since adoption of sons can take various forms particularly in relation to marriage, detailed analyses of ordinary adoptions are in order. First, does marriage automatically follow the adoption? In Tama the majority of ordinary sons "took in brides" within the same year or one year after their adoption (70%) and thus ordinary adoption was thought to function similarly to adopted sons-in-law: "The practice of adoption was synonymous to assuring a couple in the succeeding generation." (Kurosu and Ochiai 1995, p. 267) This was not the case in Shimomoriya.

Among the ordinary adoptions, only three cases “took in brides.” There may be regional variations in the function and strategy of the type of adoption.

Some adopted sons were already married when they were adopted. At least 11 cases involved the adoption of a married couple (*fufu-yoshi*). These couples were married and resided in other households. They moved into the adopting households, alone, sometimes with children or even with their father. Although the cases are too few to be conclusive, three patterns emerge. First, the previous household head did not have any children and decided to adopt a couple. The heirship was soon taken over by the adopted son (husband of the couple). Second, their households of origin (and marriage for the brides) either were continued by their relatives or became extinct after their departure. Third, three of these sons were younger brothers of the head. Since his head brother did not have children, these younger brothers were adopted with their wives. This practice is called *jun-yoshi* in Japanese and is believed to have been frequently practiced among warriors (Harafuji 1982).

So far, the adopted sons give the expected picture that sons were adopted when there were no successors. Succession and labor were assured via adoption and the following taking-in of brides. There were, however, cases in which adopted sons did not marry during the observation period (29 cases). No marriage, however, did not mean no succession. Among the 29 cases, 16 eventually took household heirship even without marrying. Marriage therefore was not a necessary pre-condition for assuming the heirship.

(7) Long way to heirship?

Was adoption a life-long commitment? Previous studies suggest that adoption in Japan was practiced to assure an heir. Did adoption mean a life-long commitment for adopted sons to the adopting household, cutting off ties and giving up rights to their native households? Not all of them had an equal chance for heirship. Okada found in a small village in a valley in Aizu, Northeastern Japan, that adopted sons from outside the village did not have a chance for heirship (1995, p. 147). I agree with her contention that adoptions should not all be considered in one category. The common saying that “if you have a modest amount of rice, do not go for adoption” may not be applied to all categories of adoption. Here, I will examine the variations to differentiate the mechanisms of the three types of adoption.

Did the adopted sons eventually become household heads? Were there any differences by adoption types? Among the 337 cases of adoption, about 40% became heads of households. The proportion of adoptions which resulted in heirships was about the same with adopted sons-in-law and sons at about 42%. As for the adoption of husbands, only 30% became heads (Table 2). Interestingly, the mean years required to become head after being adopted were the longest among the sons-in-law — about ten years while it took only five years for adopted sons and two and a half years for adopted husbands.

Table 3 shows how adoptions ended among those who did not become heads of households. Death is the most common reason of the termination of adoption in all three types. The proportion of divorce is about 20-30 % higher among sons-in-law than the other two types. Were sons-in-law easily replaced because natural daughters maintained the family line? The replacement of ordinary sons might not have been so easy since they tended to be taken to the households of non-heirs. Or was a son-in-law easily sent back to his native village because he was an immigrant? Since the majority of ordinary adopted sons came from other households in

Table 2: Proportion of adopted sons who became head

| | adopted sons | | sons-in-law | | adopted husbands | |
|--|--------------|-------|-------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| no | 60 | 57.14 | 115 | 57.79 | 23 | 69.70 |
| yes | 45 | 42.86 | 84 | 42.21 | 10 | 30.30 |
| N | 105 | 100 | 199 | 100 | 33 | 100 |
| Mean years till headship after being adopted | | | | | | |
| mean | 5.13 | | 9.71 | | 2.50 | |
| s.d. | 5.62 | | 7.29 | | 3.06 | |

Table 3: Reasons for the termination of adoption among sons who did not become head

| | adopted sons | | sons-in-law | | adopted husbands | |
|--------------------|--------------|-------|-------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| end of observation | 6 | 10.00 | 11 | 9.57 | 1 | 4.35 |
| death | 25 | 41.67 | 27 | 23.48 | 6 | 26.09 |
| divorce | 14 | 23.33 | 60 | 52.17 | 7 | 30.43 |
| absconding | 4 | 6.67 | 11 | 9.57 | 5 | 21.74 |
| other | 11 | 18.33 | 6 | 5.22 | 4 | 17.39 |
| N | 60 | 100 | 115 | 100 | 23 | 100 |

the same village, sending them back might have meant conflicts between the households. Investigation of the female side revealed that 59 daughters of Shimomoriya were married to adopted sons-in-law more than twice. Some daughters even married five times. The observation of these daughters again suggests that their husbands (sons-in-law) were easily and smoothly replaced.

Thus, for adopted sons, the way to heirship was not automatic. First they had to survive, they could not run away even under the burden of taxation, and they could not be expelled from the adopted households. Only then, did they have the chance of succeeding the households. The last section of this paper uses life table analysis to contrast the duration and patterns of "becoming a household head" among the three adoption types. Rather than comparing the means, I applied the life table method of event history analysis using the 'survival' program in SPSS as a way to give a dynamic view to the duration to heirship. This analysis allows us to understand the process by incorporating all individuals who were at risk and also enables the comparison of subgroups (Blossfeld, Hamerle, and Mayer 1989, p. 122). Figure 5 and Table 4 contrast the patterns among adopted sons, sons-in-law, and adopted husbands.

The survivor function in Figure 5 demonstrates how many adopted sons did not become heads of the household. This takes the risk population into account. Those who died, divorced, or left for other reasons were no longer at risk of becoming heads, or remained as non-heads. Three different schedules of the way to heirship became clear. To be specific, if adopted husbands were to become household heads, they became head from the first year of adoption, taking over the heirship of their wives. Afterwards, the survivor function did not show any appreciable decline. For adopted sons, the first three years were particularly important in their transition to heirship. After the first three years, the chances of becoming head decreased and the survivor function remained constant. As for sons-in-law, the process in the first six years was more gradual compared to the other two types. During this period, half of them had to withdraw themselves

Figure 5: Duration till heirship by adoption type, Shimomoriya:
survivor function of life table analysis

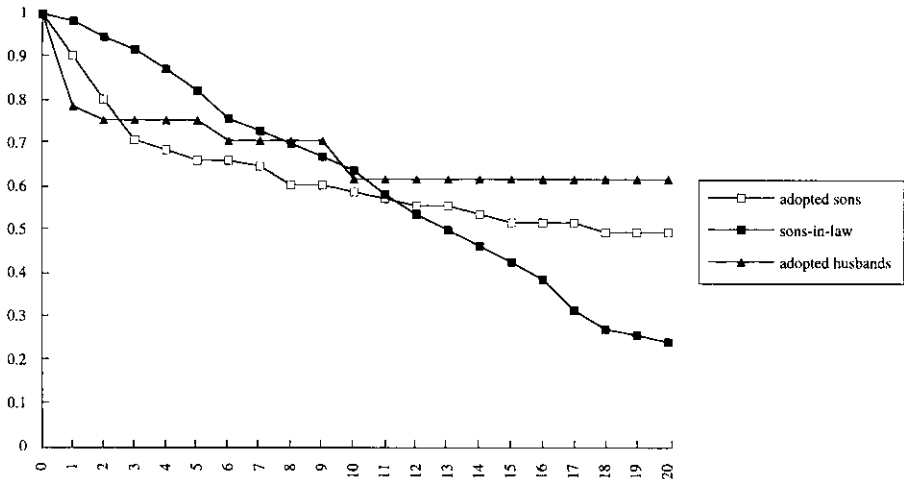


Table 4: Life table analysis of the duration to heirship in the first 7 years by type of adoption

| interval | number entering interval | number withdrawn | number exposed to risk | number terminal events | proportion terminating |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Ordinary adoption | | | | | |
| 0 | 105 | 0 | 105.0 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 1 | 105 | 2 | 104.0 | 10 | 0.10 |
| 2 | 93 | 4 | 91.0 | 10 | 0.11 |
| 3 | 79 | 5 | 76.5 | 9 | 0.12 |
| 4 | 65 | 4 | 63.0 | 2 | 0.03 |
| 5 | 59 | 4 | 57.0 | 2 | 0.04 |
| 6 | 53 | 3 | 51.5 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 7 | 50 | 2 | 49.0 | 1 | 0.02 |
| Adopted sons-in-law | | | | | |
| 0 | 199 | 0 | 199.0 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 1 | 199 | 5 | 196.5 | 3 | 0.02 |
| 2 | 191 | 14 | 184.0 | 7 | 0.04 |
| 3 | 170 | 14 | 163.0 | 5 | 0.03 |
| 4 | 151 | 15 | 143.5 | 7 | 0.05 |
| 5 | 129 | 14 | 122.0 | 7 | 0.06 |
| 6 | 108 | 9 | 103.5 | 8 | 0.08 |
| 7 | 91 | 13 | 84.5 | 3 | 0.04 |
| Adopted husbands | | | | | |
| 0 | 33 | 0 | 33.0 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 1 | 33 | 0 | 33.0 | 7 | 0.21 |
| 2 | 26 | 2 | 25.0 | 1 | 0.04 |
| 3 | 23 | 4 | 21.0 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 4 | 19 | 3 | 17.5 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 5 | 16 | 0 | 16.0 | 0 | 0.00 |
| 6 | 16 | 0 | 16.0 | 1 | 0.06 |
| 7 | 15 | 3 | 13.5 | 0 | 0.00 |

from being at risk. That is, half of the adopted sons-in-law left the households for one reason or another. The majority of them were divorced and returned to their native households or villages. However, once this crucial period — trial period — was over, sons-in-law only needed to wait for the appropriate time of becoming heads. As long as they survived in the adopted households, most of them did become heads. As the survivor function shows, this process was gradual and continued well into the twentieth year of their adoption. Thus the way to heirship for sons-in-law was much longer but more assured than ordinary adopted sons. One's own age, the age of heads and the presence of children are some of the other factors which could have influenced the duration till heirship. These factors can be considered in the model for an event history analysis of adopted sons in the future.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have examined the practice of adoption from the life course point of view of adopted sons, using the longitudinal record of a population register from a northeastern village, Shimomoriya 1716-1869. Who leaves for adoption was largely determined by the sibling composition of the native households. Younger sons with brothers were the favorite candidates as the loss of sons can damage the survival of the native households. Age was an important factor in determining when they were adopted. The vast majority of adoptions were adult adoptions. However, the peak age of adoption at around 15-19 is very early when contrasted to a finding from Tama. The northeastern pattern of early marriage may be also applied to the practice of adoption. Experiences of service delayed sons' age at adoption. But whether they would be recruited as adopted sons-in-law or not was more important in determining the age at adoption.

The contrasting experiences of adopted sons among three types of adoption — ordinary adopted sons (*futsu-yoshi*), sons-in-law (*muko-yoshi*) and adopted husbands (*nyufu*) have further become clear in the migration patterns of the adopted sons. While the majority of adopted sons moved within the village, a large proportion of sons-in-law and adopted husbands came from outside the village. The proportion of sons coming from outside was as large as, or even larger than that of the migration of brides. The majority of them did not find siblings in the households when they were adopted as ordinary adopted sons. This supports the idea that the institution of adoption was used to ensure heirship among childless families. However, some of the adopted sons did find siblings when they were adopted. The presence of younger brothers in the households of adopted sons-in-law may confirm the custom of the eldest daughters' succession in this region. But the age and timing of departures of these siblings must be examined before any conclusions can be made. An intricate relationship between the timing of the siblings' departures from their native homes and the heirs' marriage and the birth of their first child was found in Tama, central Japan (Kurosu 1996). What has been called a "hold and release policy" (Smith 1977), or strategies of the households to maintain their size and composition as required by the size and nature of the family farming (Saito 1996, p. 13), may also have been at work in Shimomoriya.

When sons were adopted, their rights to heirship were not automatic. While about 40% of adopted sons did become head of the households eventually, another half or more died, were sent back to their native households, or left the household without becoming heads. The life table analysis suggested that the first three years were crucial for the ordinary adopted sons to become

heads. Afterwards, their chance of becoming heads decreased, and they might have spent the rest of their lives as peripheral kin of the households. As for adopted husbands, they either took over their wives' heirship from the first year when they entered the households, or spent the rest of their lives without any claims to heirship. The first seven years were important for sons-in-law as they were examined during this period. Half of them were sent back and replaced by new sons-in-law. But if they made it through this initial period, their right to heirship was almost certain, although it might have come slowly.

Although these findings and interpretations were based on observations of one village, they have many implications for future studies. The focus on adopted sons, rather than on household heirship, allows a more dynamic view towards the understanding of the institution of adoption. Adoption has never been rare during the observation of this study. If adoption can be seen as an indicator of the strategy for family survival (i.e. continuation of the family) among peasants in Tokugawa Japan, we can tentatively say that the stem-family ideal existed well from the beginning of the eighteenth century. With the accumulation of data sets from other villages, the clear contrast of different types of adoption found in this study can be tested over the period. Such tests will also allow us to examine the role of adoption in the fertility trend across the Tokugawa period and regions and thereby increase our understanding of the mechanism of low fertility regime in pre-industrial Japan.

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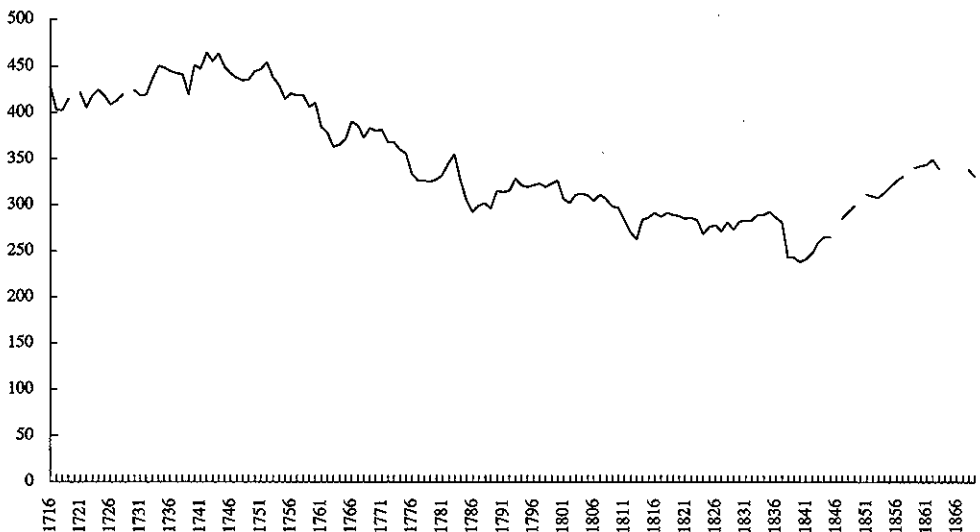
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Appendix: Population of Shimomoriya 1716-1869



「継承戦略としての養子？ 近世東北一農村を中心として」

黒須 里美

要旨：本稿は陸奥国安積郡下守屋村に残る1716-1869年の人別改帳を用い、「養子制度」を個人のライフコース上にとらえ、徳川後期農民の直系家族システムの中で養子がどのような役割を果たしていたかを理解することが目的である。150年間の観察記録中、下守屋村の男子、特に次・三男は日常的に養子を体験した。これは同時期の他村と同じ傾向であるがそのピーク時は15-19歳とかなり早い。また一概に養子といっても、養子先で普通養子となるか、ムコ養子か、あるいは入夫か、その養子のタイプによって移動範囲も、また、養子先のきょうだい構成もかなり違うことが明らかになった。さらに一般的に日本の養子慣行は家の継承のために使われたといわれるが、養子にとられた息子たちは実際みな戸主になったのだろうか。生命表分析で明らかになったことは、養子に入った息子たちの40%はやがてその世帯の戸主になっていったが、他の息子たちは死亡、離縁、離村と継承者への道のりは自動的ではなかったのである。養子のタイプによっても継承者になるまでの過程が違い、例えばムコ養子は養子に入ってから継承者になるまで約8年も要するが、死亡せず、離縁されずにいれば確実に戸主になることが保障された。