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IS JAPAN FOLLOWING EUROPE TOWARDS A SOCIETY OF SINGLES?

Possible impacts of the rapid increase in life expectancy on Japanese social structure— As seen by a European historical-demographer*

Arthur E. IMHOF

I. Introduction
II. The Findings
III. The Theory of a European Historical Demographer
IV. Discussion
V. Conclusions: Is Japan following Europe towards a society of singles?

Abstract: Until around 1900, individual life-spans were very uncertain. To gain a minimum of stability, European as well as Japanese societies developed non-egocentered world-views (type "Gemeinschaft"). With the epidemiologic transition, ages at death and hence life expectancies became higher, more standardized and more reliable. The breakthrough in Europe occurred early in the 20th century, and in Japan after World War II. Both societies then abandoned their old survival strategies and developed more ego-centered world-views. It could be shown, that Japan is following Europe, once again with a time-lag, towards becoming a society of singles (type "Gesellschaft").

I. INTRODUCTION

At present, Japan has the highest life expectancy in the world. According to the Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare, Japanese women passed the threshold

* Summary outline of a series of lectures, given at universities in Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, and Kyoto during a stay as a Visiting Research Fellow of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science at the Keio University Tokyo, January-March 1986. Special thanks are due to my Host Scientist, Professor Akira Hayami, and to the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, the Keio University Tokyo, the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, and the German Research Council (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft), Bonn, for financial support and administrative assistance.

This contribution should also be seen as an answer to the question posed at the end of a *Japan Times*' editorial from February 22, 1986 on "The Aged Living Alone", where it was stated: "For shocking figures on the subject, the most recent indicate that the number of elderly people who are living alone has suddenly begun to increase—alarmingly, it might seem. This strikes one as more significant, in human terms, than the growing size of the aged component in the population. ... What does it mean? What are the problems, if any, to be inferred? There are no answers to these very important questions, for the phenomenon of so many old people living alone, with their number increasing so, is something new to Japanese society." [p. 14]

of eighty years for the first time in 1984 (80.14 years for Japanese women and 74.54 years for Japanese men) [17: 8]. For a long time, European, especially Scandinavian countries, topped the list. This is passé. Can Europeans, then, learn from Japan?

It is here, however, not my intention to broach the fields of medicine, geriatrics, gerontology, life quality, environmental control, etc. and to discuss what the reasons for the sharp increase in life expectancy in Japan are, or might be, or might have been in the past years. I am not the specialist to do this—others are [19; 22].

Since I am merely presenting a summary of thoughts and reflections, I shall not go into the underlying demographic and other statistical details in the following. The most important facts and findings are summarized in Figures 1–4.

To be sure, one must be informed about the drastic changes which occurred in the ratio of "young" to "old" in Japan in the recent past in order to understand the somewhat shocking statement made by a Japanese professor of preventive medicine during a discussion in 1986: "In Japan, we no longer should strive to increase our life expectancy—for the sake of our children and our young people. Instead, we should learn to die again". As can easily be seen in Figure 3, some fifty years ago one-hundred Japanese under the age of sixty-five had to support five persons above that age. Today, they have to support at least ten, and in thirty years from now at least twenty-five. This is indeed much food for thought, not only with regard to preventive medicine, geriatrics or gerontology, but also with regard to economics, the welfare system, psychology, education, the planning of full-size life careers, family and intergenerational relations, housing problems, etc. And as concerns 'learning to die again' the aforementioned professor was alluding to the epidemiologic transition, so well known to every society with a rapid increase in life expectancy. The old type of death and dying, mostly due to infections and parasitic diseases and resulting in a rather low average life expectancy, disappeared making room for a new type of dying, mostly due to chronic incurable illnesses and degenerative ailments, such as malignant neoplasms, heart and cerebrovascular diseases and senility. Thus, in Japan, the annual percentage of deaths caused by "malignant neoplasms" rose from 16.8 % in 1970 to 23.8 % in 1983 [9: 43].

It is true, of course, that in the "bad old days", under the regime of the deadly troika of "Plague—Hunger—and War" many deaths were premature, at age one or even below, at age five, ten, thirty, fifty, etc. But wasn't that type of death and dying more human, because it only lasted a couple of days? Because it was a quick affair, without prolonged suffering? In our day, most deaths are no longer so premature. We have standardized our life expectancy and thus our age at death at a high level, at age sixty, seventy or even higher. But we have to pay for this development. "Chronic" or "incurable" ailments mean that we no longer have to cope with these afflictions only for days, but for weeks, months, or years on end. Dying nowadays is often a burdensome process, an ugly and lengthy struggle. Nobody ever tells us beforehand, how to behave in this uneven battle, which we are all going to lose in the end. Indeed—as the professor put it—we have to learn to die again! It is worth while to think about it in younger years, in "the best years of

life" at the latest, and to prepare ourselves, so as we will not be surprised when we finally enter that last stage of life. We all, without exception, are going in that direction.

This is the subject of the following article. It thus should be seen merely as a stimulus, as food for thought and reflection, and not primarily as a simple presentation of facts and findings. And as we will hopefully see at the end, after having explored various lines of thought, we perhaps no longer have any reason for viewing the future so pessimistically.

II. THE FINDINGS

In historical demography, we differentiate between an average "ecological" and an average "physiological" life expectancy [5: 151–165). By average *ecological life expectancy* we normally mean what would perhaps be better described as the "average age of death" for members of a given population at any given time. For historical populations we always have to indicate carefully whether we are talking about the average life expectancy at birth, thus including the high rate of mortality among infants in their first year of life, or if we are referring to the life expectancy of those who succeeded in reaching adulthood, i.e. an age of twenty or twenty-five years. Considering the fact that until the end of the 19th century two births were normally necessary, in both Europe and Japan, in order to replace one adult life, one can easily imagine the big differences in the "average life expectancies" at different ages.

In Germany, for example, where I could follow a local agrarian population of about 30,000 inhabitants of the Schwalm area (Northern Hesse) from the early 17th until the end of the 19th century, I observed an average total life expectancy at birth oscillatiing between roughly twenty-five and thirty-five years, at age one between roughly forty and forty-five years, and at age twenty-five (i.e. about the age of first marriage and family formation) around sixty years [12; 13].

These findings are not very different from those for the corresponding time period in Japan. A recent survey of the results of about twenty local studies from various parts of Japan shows that the total average life expectancy for adults (here given at age fifteen) was also about fifty-five to sixty years in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries [21: 33]. Even at the beginning of this century the average life expectancies for the German and Japanese populations, which were researched and publicized by the central statistical bureaux of both nations, were remarkably similar. Figure 1 starts by showing that in 1899/1903 Japanese men had a total average life expectancy at birth of 44.0 years, at age twenty of 60.4 years, and at age eighty of 84.4 years. For German men the respective figures for the period 1901/1910 read: 44.8 years at birth, 62.6 years at age twenty, and 84.4 years at age eighty.

This coincidence is not really surprising. One only has to remember that both countries still lived—as did so many others as well—under the old demographic regime and its old mortality pattern determined by the above mentioned troika

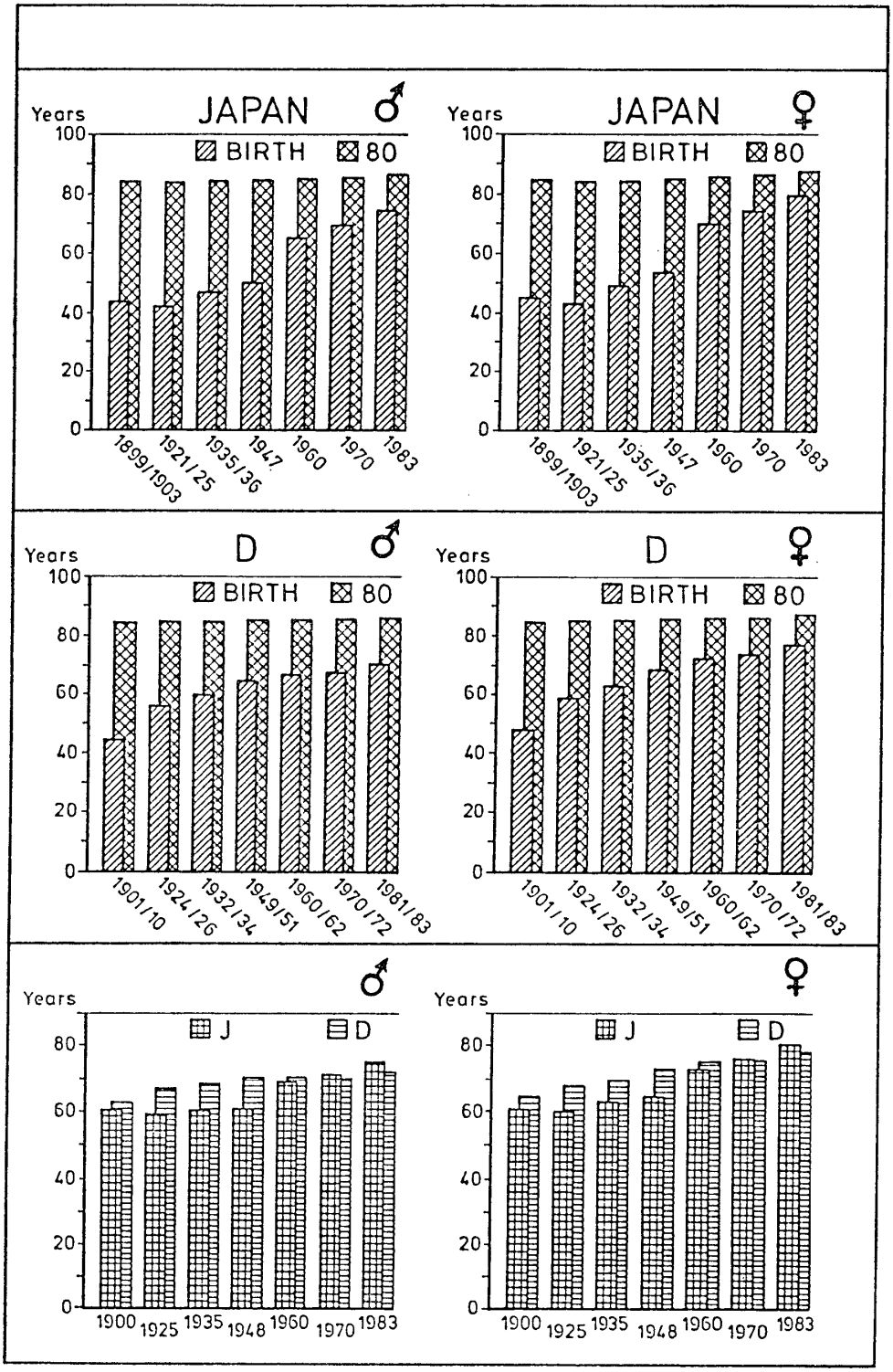
JAPAN
Years
BIRTH
80
1899/1903
1921/25
1935/36
1947
1960
1970
1983
D
1901/10
1924/26
1932/34
1949/51
1960/62
1970/72
1981/83
J
1900
1925
1935
1948

Fig. 1.

Fig. 1. Life Expectancy at Birth, Age 20 and Age 80 (in Years) for Men and Women in Japan 1899/1903–1983 and in Germany 1901/10–1981/83 (until 1934 German Empire; from 1949 Federal Republic of Germany).

Sources: *Japan Statistical Yearbook 1985*, p. 55; *Statistisches Jahrbuch 1985 für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, p. 78.

JAPAN

	1899/1903		1921/1925		1935/1936		1947	
	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f
At Birth	44.0	44.9	42.1	43.2	46.9	49.6	50.1	54.0
at Age 20	60.4	61.1	59.1	60.4	60.4	63.2	60.9	64.9
at Age 80	84.4	84.9	83.9	84.4	84.2	84.7	84.6	85.1

	1960		1970		1983	
	m	f	m	f	m	f
At Birth	65.3	70.2	69.3	74.7	74.2	79.8
at Age 20	69.1	73.4	71.3	76.1	75.3	80.6
at Age 80	84.9	85.9	85.3	86.3	86.4	87.7

GERMANY

	1901/1910		1924/1926		1932/1934		1949/1951	
	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f
At Birth	44.8	48.3	56.0	58.8	59.9	62.8	64.6	68.5
at Age 20	62.6	64.8	66.7	68.1	68.2	69.8	70.3	73.2
at Age 80	84.4	84.7	84.8	85.1	84.8	85.2	85.2	85.6

	1960/1962		1970/1972		1981/1983	
	m	f	m	f	m	f
At Birth	66.9	72.4	67.4	73.8	70.5	77.1
at Age 20	70.3	75.2	70.2	76.0	72.0	78.3
at Age 80	85.2	85.9	85.4	86.2	85.7	87.0

"Plague—Hunger—and War" [7; 6; 16; 20; 39]. More interesting, in our context, than these similarities which will not be discussed in the following, is thevery different development in the course of the twentieth century, as can clearly be seen in Fig. 1.

Tracing the development of the life expectancy bars for Japanese men (top left) and Japanese women (top right) from one period to the next we discern a concave pattern. Repeating the process with the life expectancy bars for German men and women (middle left and right) reveals a convex pattern. In Germany life expectancy at birth increased rapidly in the first half of this century and has only slowly gained ground since the Second World War. In Japan exactly the opposite thing happened with the big jump taking place between 1947 and 1960. For men this meant an increase from 50.1 to 65.3 years and for women from 54.0 to 70.2 years or for both sexes a yearly increase of one additional year of life! In Germany, by contrast, the big jump in life expectancy had taken place more than a generation earlier with the

breakthrough coming between 1901/10 and 1924/26. In that period the life expectancy for men increased from 44.8 to 56.0 years and for women from 48.3 to 58.8 years.

Even if we disregard the infant and child mortality in both countries and consider only the life expectancy for adults at age twenty we still find a concave Japanese pattern and a convex German pattern for men (bottom left) as well as for women (bottom right).

This is to say that the aging process of German society started at least one generation earlier than that of the Japanese. For at least the last fifty years the proportion of people over sixty-five has been substantially higher in Germany than it has traditionally been—or yet is—in Japan.

This fact becomes even more striking if we look at absolute numbers as presented in Fig. 2. The total population of Japan was always by far larger than that of the Federal Republic of Germany. Nevertheless, the number of people aged sixty-five and over has been more or less the same since 1939: 2.9 million Germans were over sixty-five in 1939 and 9.5 million were in 1980, while 3.5 million Japanese were over sixty-five in 1940 and 10.6 million were in 1980. We find this similarity despite the respective total populations of 40.3 and 61.7 million in Germany as opposed to 73.1 and 117.1 million in Japan.

If we are looking for correspondence in the relative proportions of the population aged sixty-five and over in both countries, we will have to wait for the Japanese figures of about thirty years hence, as can be seen in Fig. 3. In Germany, there were 7.8 elderly people per 100 under the age of sixty-five in 1939 and about 18.2 in 1980. In Japan approximately the same ratios held true for 1970 (7.6 per 100) and are likely to hold true in the years 2000 (18.4) and 2010 (24.5). A time-lag of twenty to thirty years seems to be emerging.

In short: in Germany, or for that matter in many other European countries as well, we have had more time to get accustomed to a large proportion of old people, its impacts, implications, consequences for the individual, for the family and for society. In Japan, on the other hand, it came—predominantly in the 1950s, '60s and '70s—as a shock, and many Japanese still seem to be living and behaving under the shock of this more recent drastic increase in life expectancy and of the old age boom.

We have hitherto only discussed the "average ecological life expectancy". Yet, by contrast, we have already mentioned the *average physiological life expectancy*, at times even called the "average maximal life expectancy". What is meant by the latter in historical demography is the average age at which human beings would have died if they had not been subject to premature deaths, as was usually the case in the past, i.e. if they had died a "natural death". Without going into any biological or medical details, or engaging in speculation, I take, as is normally done by historical demographers, the remaining life expectancy of people who survived all epidemics, illnesses and diseases and reached their eightieth birthdays as an approximate measure. As we can see from Figure 1 the remaining years of octo-

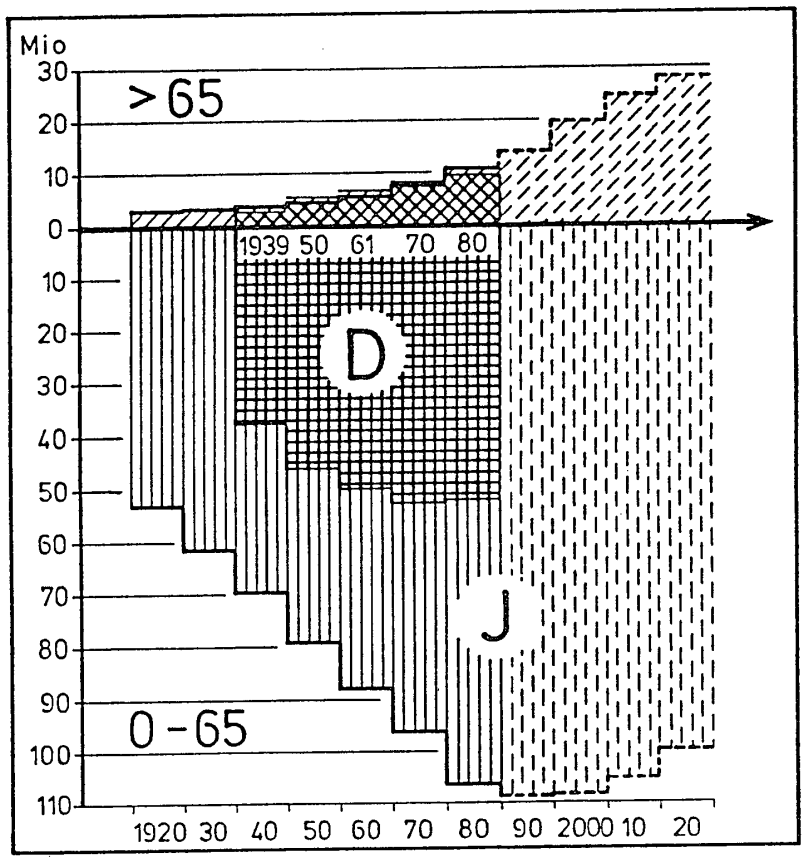

Fig. 2. The Population in Japan 1920–2020 and within the Territory of the present day Federal Republic of Germany 1939–1983 under 65, over 65 and total (in Millions).

Sources: *Japan Statistical Yearbook 1985*, pp. 25, 38; *Bevölkerung und Wirtschaft 1972*, p. 95; *Statistisches Jahrbuch 1982 für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, p. 60; *Statistisches Jahrbuch 1985 für die Bundersepublik Deutschland*, p. 62.

JAPAN				FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY			
Year	0–65	65–	Total	Year	0–65	65–	Total
1920	53.1	2.9	56.0				
1930	61.4	3.1	64.5				
1940	69.9	3.5	73.1	1939	37.4	2.9	40.3
1950	79.1	4.1	83.2	1950	46.0	4.8	50.8
1960	88.0	5.4	93.4	1961	50.0	6.2	56.2
1970	96.4	7.3	103.7	1970	52.7	8.0	60.7
1980	106.5	10.6	117.1	1980	52.2	9.5	61.7
1983	107.8	11.7	119.5	1983	52.3	9.0	61.3
1990	108.5	14.3	122.8				
2000	108.2	19.9	128.1				
2010	105.8	24.5	130.3				
2020	100.1	28.0	128.1				

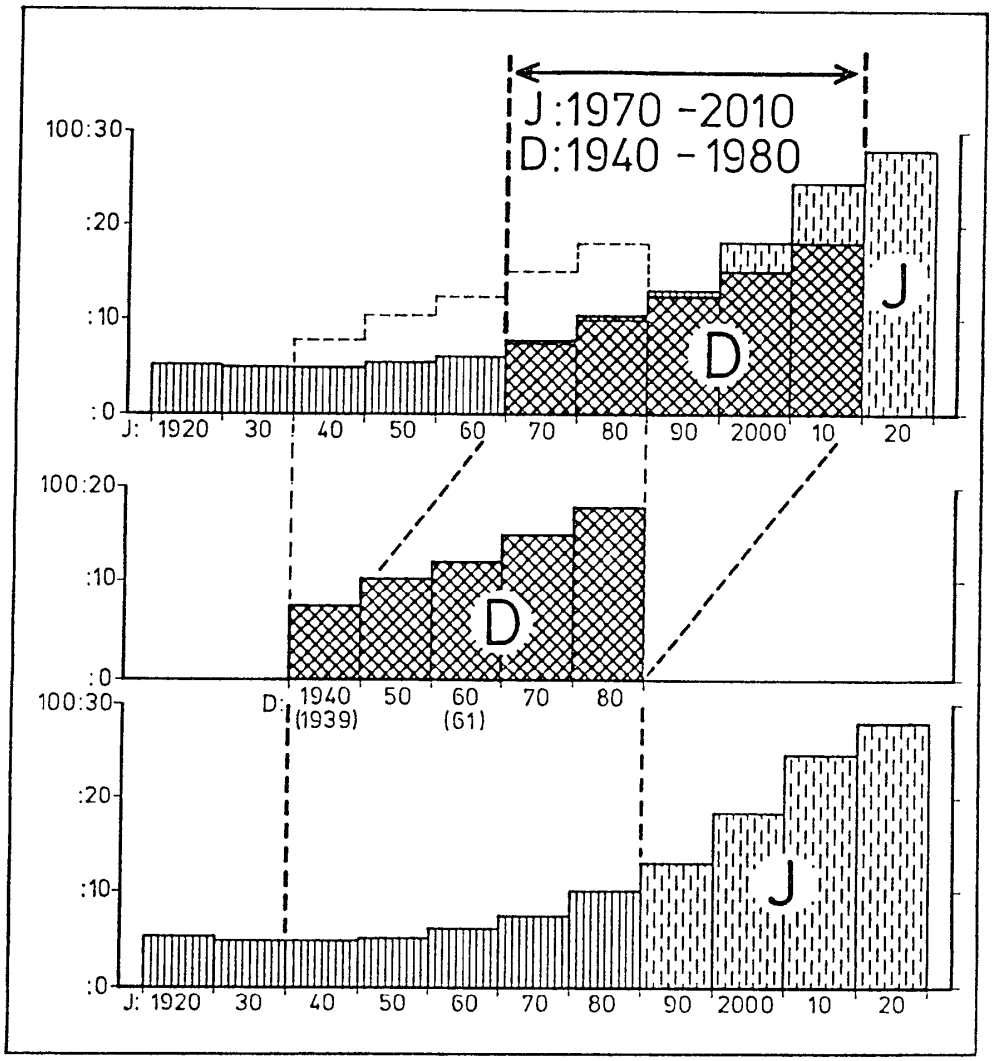

Fig. 3. Japan 1920–2020 and within the Territory of the present day Federal Republic of Germany 1939–1980: The Ratio of those 0–65 Years to those over 65. Represented here are the Number of those over 65 per 100 in the Age Group 0–65 at the given time.

Sources: as for Fig. 2.

JAPAN		FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY	
Year		Year	
1920	5.5		
1930	5.0		
1940	5.0	1939	7.8
1950	5.2	1950	10.4
1960	6.1	1961	12.4
1970	7.6	1970	15.2
1980	10.0	1980	18.2
1990	13.2		
2000	18.4		
2010	24.5		
2020	28.0		

genarians changed relatively little from one decade to another. This holds true for Germany as well as for Japan, for men as well as for women. And it even holds true for the population investigated in the German local study from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. We can thus assume that the total *average* maximal physiological life expectancy lies—and has always lain—somewhere between 85 and 90 years.

The most exciting question against this background is, of course, what will happen when the lengths of these two types of life expectancy become identical? Japan is nearer that crucial point than any other country, and Japanese women are the nearest. But even if their average ecological life expectancy reaches some eighty-five to ninety years, perhaps as early as the year 2000, they will nevertheless remain mortal. One important change, however, will occur then: their death and dying will be imbued with another quality. These women will no longer have to "learn to die". Since they will then be normally reaching their bio-physiological life-span encasement, allotted to human beings by nature, they will usually no longer have to suffer from some long lasting chronic illness before their deaths, but will again die—as our ancestors did at the time of infectious and parasitic disease—a quick death, but this, however, *after* a full-size life-span. It may well be that the decrease in "senility" as a cause of death in Japan from 5.5% to 4.0% between 1970 and 1983 is due to this prolongation of a *sound* physical and mental life [9: 43].

Extensive and, it must be stressed, by no means unanimous literature on this topic exists, but here again I'm not the specialist to comment upon it [3; 26]. In our present context, however, it will suffice to consider one simple fact, namely that every species of animal has its specific "average maximal life expectancy". The shape of the survival curves of groups within these species may differ, according to their surroundings, but no matter whether living in nature or under better conditions, e.g. in zoos, or even under the most ideal laboratory conditions that might exist, their survival curves always come to a close at approximately the same point, i.e. at the conclusion of their bio-physiologically allotted life-span duration, their "average maximal life expectancy" [36].

The implications of the foreseeable closing of the gap between the two kinds of life expectancies are enormous, as will be discussed at the end of this article. Let's only mention at this point that we will no longer need be as afraid of an ugly, painful dying process then, as we often are now, since in future we will live a sound physical and mental life until the very last minute, i.e. a standardized, bio-physiologically *certain, long, and independent* life until the last breath.

III. THE THEORY OF A EUROPEAN HISTORICAL DEMOGRAPHER

My own research work during the last decade or so dealt mostly with the development of Central and Northern European mortality from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries [10; 11; 15]. The most striking difference between what I call

the "old mortality pattern" and the "new" is, that for centuries the fate of individual human lives was very uncertain; today, by contrast, we have a biologically more or less guarranteed life-span of seventy-five or eighty years. In historical times, one person died at age 1, another at age 20, a third at age 70—which makes an "average" life expectancy of thirty years. As is easily understood, this calculation disguises more than it explains. We therefore always have to remember the simple fact that the structure of an historical data set is totally different from that of a modern one. In our days, *after* the duration of our lifespan has been standardized at a high level, it makes sense to speak of an "average" life expectancy of seventy-five or eighty years, since most of us die around that age. Our lives became predictable; this degree of relative certainty was unthinkable in the past.

Consequently, in historical times it would not have been a good idea, to invest too much in any particular single person, to put an EGO in the center of one's *Weltanschauung* (one's world-view, one's microcosm), whether one's own or any other. Life for everybody was just too uncertain.

In order, nevertheless, to attain a minimum of stability in a very insecure world-the sort of stability that seems essential for all human beings, not to mention its importance to society!-our ancestors developed different kinds of survival strategies. They put, for example, values in the center of their (at the time much smaller!) worlds, values which were more stable than uncertain single human lives, for instance a farm, or where the circumstances were more modest, just a family name. I was thus able to trace, on a micro-level, single farms in West Germany which were handed down from generation to generation for more than four centuries, from the middle of the sixteenth to the twentieth. Even if they had more than forty hectares of good arable land for grain cultivation or dairy production and were in a region in which partible inheritance was legally possible and often practiced, these farms were never divided in all these centuries, although there were at times several sons who could have taken over as heirs.

Furthermore, the "proprietors" of these farms handed them over to the next generation at about the age of sixty, even if they lived to be much older, sometimes eighty or ninety. The farm was apparently handed down in accordance with traditional assumptions about "the best years of one's life". For example, there was a saying in that region: "With twenty years a youth, with thirty years a man, with forty years going well, with fifty years standing still, with sixty years starting to age, with seventy years an old man, with eighty years no longer wise, with ninety years sport for children, with a hundred years grace from God". If a single-minded EGO had, however, been in the center of these people's world and Weltanschauung and if the heirs had acted egotistically, then they would, of course, have run the farm until their deaths, even if the one or the other became "an old man" of seventy, "no longer wise" at eighty, or "sport for children" at ninety. But having the FARM and its unimpaired reputation in the center, the "proprietor" ran it only during his "best years in life" and stepped down from his post when he started to age handing it over to the next, physically more fit generation.

It is thus not by chance that I put "proprietor" in quotation marks. If we have a close look at these "proprietors", we discover that they were morally bound and couldn't really act independently. They had to serve the best interest of the farm. It was not their EGO which was all-important, but the best years of their lives when they had to *serve* the farm as "acting director" and to *play* as best they could *the role of the proprietor.*

To further illustrate this fact, we can look at the mode of name-giving on these farms. On one of them "the proprietor" was always called (with one exception) "Johannes Hooss" over 17 generations between 1552 and 1970. How was this possible given the high rate of infant and child mortality in past centuries? Well, the Hooss family always had several sons named "Johannes" who could, however, be differentiated by their second names, for example Johannes-Henrich or Johannes-Clas. In this way, at any time at least one "Johannes" survived until adulthood and could take over the farm, under the "proprietor-role-name" of "Johannes Hooss". In this way, the farm was run by "Johannes Hooss" for four centuries—a truly remarkable stability! [13]

My theory, derived as an historical demographer from such behavior would, very briefly, be that the uncertainty of human life at the time of the old mortality pattern *forced* our ancestors, in view of attaining some sort of stability, to develop survival strategies where not the very uncertain life of any single EGO was at the center of their thoughts and actions, i.e. of their microcosms, but more durable values such as a prosperous farm. Only after the change to the new mortality pattern which brought about a far more certain, more reliable, and far longer life-span and a quasi guaranteed duration of any single EGO—as documented in the jump in life-expectancy in Germany during the first, and in Japan during the second half of the twentieth century—a non-egocentered world could be—and in fact rather quickly was—abandoned and replaced by an EGO-centered one, as has been so predominant in the Western World for many years.

In Japan, on the other hand, where the old mortality pattern lasted several decades longer and where the break-through in the increase in life expectancy occurred only after the Second World War, the non-egocentered Weltanschauung lasted correspondingly longer and the shift towards a more ego-centered world and more individualistic and egotistic behaviour could start only in the second half of this century. But then, the change came about very rapidly, within twenty years or so, especially during 1960–1980, as will be discussed further hereafter.

IV. DISCUSSION

At this point, I would like to stress that even after three visits to Japan, I am in no respect a specialist on things Japanese. The subtitle of this article "*Possible* impacts of the rapid increase in life expectancy on Japanese social structure—*as seen by a European historical demographer*" thus reflects exactly my stand point. It is my intention to stimulate a mutual discussion by pointing out my observations

in Japan and putting them into my theoretical framework, as derived from European historical-demographic evidence.

The main question was posed in the title: "Is Japan Following Europe towards a Society of Singles?" After my discussion here it is, of course, entirely up to the Japanese to accept, to reject, or to modify my theory and my conclusions. I should even add that all my observations in, and with regard to Japan are derived from discussions with Japanese colleagues in a Western language, or from literature by Japanese authors in Western languages or translations, or written by specialists in things Japanese from outside the country. I'm neither able to speak nor to read Japanese. Things may therefore be biased from the outset, and I'm fully aware of this. To counterbalance these biases, at least to some extent, I shall use nearly exclusively material from Japanese authors and scholars and at crucial points make extensive use of quotations from their work, so as to enable readers to be confronted with their thoughts. Only in two cases in the last part am I going to rely heavily upon the findings of two American socio-anthropologists, Edward Norbeck and Robert J. Smith, both of whom did deep-rooted ethnographic field work in rural Japanese villages in the early 1950s—then still under Allied occupation. Both of them returned to their places of research in the middle of the 1970s for follow-up-studies. Albeit specialists in contemporary Japan, with many return visits in between their early and later field work, they remained outsiders and thus were more able to detect the deep transition of Japanese society, of village community life, of village solidarity, of changing vertical and horizontal ties between people, in short the rather quick change from "Gemeinschaft" towards "Gesellschaft", which took place during this short post-war period of a quarter of a century [33; 37].

Chie Nakane and the "Vertical Society"—Japan before the 1960s

Let's start the discussion with the famous analysis by Chie Nakane, professor of social anthropology at Tokyo University. Whereas Japanese colleagues may well know that Professor Nakane (*1926) did the basic field work for her theory of Japanese villages in the 1950s and 1960s and summarized it for the first time in a comprehensive article: "Nihonteki shakai-kozō no hakken" ("A new light on Japanese social structure") in Chuokoron in May 1964, I as a Westerner have to rely upon the book she wrote in English and published only years later, namely in 1970, as "Japanese Society". Even more prone to misunderstanding is the long awaited German translation "Die Struktur der japanischen Gesellschaft" (Suhrkamp Verlag Frankfurt) which only appeared in 1985. A German reader learns there, without any further explanation, that: "In diesem Buch sollen die wesentlichen Elemente zusammengestellt werden, die das *gegenwärtige* [my italics A.E.I.] soziale Leben in Japan bestimmen. Damit wird der Versuch unternommen, ein neues Licht auf die japanische Gesellschaft zu werfen" [31: 7]. This is, of course, a perfectly correct translation of what Nakane wrote in her English version of 1970: "This short work presents a configuration of the important elements to be

found in contemporary Japanese social life, and attempts to shed new light on Japanese society" [30: VII]. But since then one and a half decades have passed—or if we take into account the time of the basic field work which is reflected in "Japanese Society", more than twenty, if not thirty years. It is thus just no longer true that this work represents "contemporary Japanese social life"!

Japanese scholars are, of course, fully aware of the need for an updating of Professor Nakanes important work. As early as 1981, Professor Akira Hayami mentioned in his lengthy review of "Bunmei to shite no ie-shakai" ("The *ie* society as a civilization"), by Yasusuke Murakami et al. (Tokyo 1979): "I should also add, in listing the authors' contributions, that their historical analysis of *ie* society is, in effect, an insightful re-examination of the 'vertical society" first brought to our attention by Nakane Chie" [8: 419]. The younger generation of Japanese intellectuals is meanwhile no longer traumatized by the defeat in the Second World War. For them Nakane and, in a similar sense, Doi Takeo are representatives of an academic "grandparent" generation which is criticized mainly because, as Nakane's colleague at the University of Tokyo, Susumu Nishibe, an economist with an orientation towards intellectual history, puts it: "They oversimplify and exaggerate Japan's peculiarities, and on the other hand the special characteristics of Western countries. In a word, Japanese culture has been characterized as collectivistic, while Western cultures have been regarded as individualistic [32: 83].

This new generation neither analyzes Japanese society vis-à-vis its Western counterpart, nor does it emphasize its uniqueness, but rather describes Japan just as one among many other nations in the world. In order to classify it better, Nishibe developed the enlightening concept of reciprocal and atomistic individualism on a horizontal axis and flexible and rigid collectivism on a vertical axis. He classifies his own country in this system of coordinates as follows: "Japanese culture leans toward a combination of reciprocal individualism and flexible collectivism" [32: 90]. Indeed, it its not difficult for the modern day observer in Japan to note numerous individualistic elements. There are hundreds of examples which show that the Japanese are in no case as collectivistic as it would seem to appear from the extreme standpoint taken by Chie Nakane.

In this article I would like, however, to use Nakane's work in just this historical context. While studying it I was at first surprised, then I began to find more and more support in it for my own theory as described briefly above. Japanese society was quite like the German/European during the centuries when the troika of "Plague—Hunger—and War" determined much of human existence, and individual lives were just as uncertain as they had been in Europe. Consequently, in Japan strategies were also developed which led, despite the many physical uncertainties, to a certain degree of social stability and continuity. *This* is exactly the principle that Nakane describes in the "Vertical Society" and which she was able to capture in her field work in the 1950s and '60s, i.e. at the end of a century-long period of insecurity. It is therefore a wonderful source for European social historians researched so to speak on the basis of the oral history method and per-

taining to conditions which in Europe, even then, lay a number of decades further in the past and are therefore much more difficult to research.

The fact that Nakane arrived at her theory, on the basis of village micro-field studies is also particularly interesting for European social historians and historical demographers who are, at best, usually only able to do micro-regional analyses, because of the time and work involved in evaluating parish register sources. Even when discussing other Japanese entities, such as firms, administrations, schools and universities, she continually refers to the village community and compares, for example, urban group formation with it: "The deep involvment in personal relations within one's work group may have the advantage of giving social and psychological security to those who have moved from a traditional community to become urban residents. ... for in Japan workplace friendships usually extend to private life. A group such as this, based on the workplace, has indeed a very similar function and role to that of a *mura*, a traditional rural village community." [30: 121–122]

In the following I would like to cite further passages from Nakane's work which just as well could have characterized the small worlds I researched in the everyday life of our ancestors in European villages, for example the above mentioned "Johannes Hooss", if only such elegant wording had occurred to me then. In both cases we are concerned with elements of "stability", "security", "non-egocentered Weltanschauung", "continuity extended over generations", "intimacy of the members within a physically very restricted world", in short with elements characterizing societies of the type "Gemeinschaft", and not "Gesellschaft". Incidentally, Nakane used these German terms, which originally come from the work of the German sociologist Ferdinand Toennies (1855–1936): *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* first published in 1887, in her English text.

Six almost arbitrarily chosen examples document this fundamental complex of "stability—security—continuity extended over generations—non-egocentered world and Weltanschauung—lack of individual autonomy etc.":

"A man becomes secure through tightly knit communal activities. In return, he must always adjust himself to group demands and accept the group consensus. ... Within his group he is secure, but his security is maintained at the expense of his individual autonomy" [30: 121–122].

"The social organization which causes an individual to be engrossed so deeply in personal relations at the same time limits the scope of his personal relations. He is well informed about his own group and institution, ... but his activities and concerns rarely extend beyond this world" [30: 130].

"Thus, the localism, which has its roots mainly in the social structure, meets the emotional needs of the individual who seeks security within the group, and compensates for his lack of individual autonomy" [30: 134]

"The power and influence of the group not only affects and enters into the indi-

vidual's actions; it alters even his ideas and ways of thinking. Individual autonomy is minimized. When this happens, the point where group or public life ends and where private life begins no longer can be distinguished." [30: 10]

"The system of ranking by seniority is a simpler and more stable mechanism than the merit system, since, once it is set, it works automatically without need of any form of regulation or check" [30: 29]

"Among traditional agricultural and merchant households, outsiders with not the remotest kinship tie may be invited to be heirs and successors. ... This inclusion must be accepted without reservation to ensure that when a clerk is married to the daughter of the household and becomes an adopted son-in-law the household succession will continue without disruption" [30: 5–6]

I, of course, as an historian cannot blame Nakane for not being an historian herself. She plumbs the depths of Japanese history over centuries for traces of her vertical society, yet her work is not historical nor does it intend to be: "I approach this issue through a structural analysis, not a cultural or historical explanation. ... I am more interested in the truly basic components and their potentiality in society—in other words, in social persistence" [30: X, IX]. As an historian, however, I am convinced of the fact that Nakane's thesis concerning the permanence of the basic vertical structure is too static and therefore ahistorical. Her various "pick-ups" from history only led her to make assumptions about a deep-rooted continuity, i.e. an immutable persistence, an eternally lasting proto-Japanese character element. What Nakane described as the primary and quasi-eternal life sustaining form of the village community of the real "Gemeinschaft"-type had been developed as a strategy for survival and stability as a consequence of historical conditions and prevailed only as long as these conditions which caused insecurity remained the same. Since Nakane is, expressis verbis, not receptive to an historical interpretation, she is neither willing nor able to accept the idea that basic changes in Japanese society are the result of far-reaching alterations in living conditions, as for example expressed in the jump in life expectancy and the consequent change from an uncertain to a certain lifetime [30: 141, 150–151].

Sawako Ariyoshi and the shock of a rapidly increasing life expectancy in Japan during the 1950s, '60s and '70s

Just as I used Nakane's book as an historical source in order to present traditional Japanese social structure in a process of dissolution and to explain this process as a result of the given demographic situation, I would like to introduce a literary work by another famous Japanese authoress into the discussion, in order to sketch conditions in Japan around 1970 which were, to an equal degree, determined by the demographic situation at that time. I am referring to the novel by Sawako Arioyoshi (1931–1984) which was called "Kokotsu no hito" (literally "A man in ecstasy") in the Japanese original from 1972 and published in an English transla-

tion, 1984, under the title "The Twilight Years". Hence there are more than a dozen years between the two publication dates and readers of the English version must again be warned against mistaking the book for a description of conditions in Japan in the 1980s. It concerns itself much more with the conditions in the late 1960s and the early 1970s.

In Japan the book was a sensational success. During a single year over one million copies were sold; in the meantime over two million have been sold. It seems to be in part a result of the tremendous success of this book that a lot of activity has been generated and a number of plans have been realized. In particular, improvements in social programs for the aged were given a push forward. Such programs were one of the main objects of the book's criticism. In 1970, i.e. before the book was published, there were only 1194 institutions for the aged in all of Japan. In 1980, by contrast, there were 3968 [9: 117]. In 1970 only 2223 local communities had specialists for the care of the elderly, in 1980, by contrast, 3189. The number of these specialists increased in the same period from 4746 to 12. 187 [9: 134]. How insufficient this number still is, however, can be seen when one considers the fact that there were 4.1 million Japanese over the age of sixty-five in 1970. In 1980 there were 6.1 million [9: 22]. The ratio had thus been improved from one such helper for every 864 old people to one helper for "only" 501 old people.

The plot of the novel is quickly told. The Tachibana family lives on the outskirts of Tokyo in a modestly comfortable one-family house. The husband, Nobutoshi, is a white collar employee in a trading company. His wife, Akiko, works full time as a secretary in a lawyer's office. Both of them are in their "best years", i.e. in mid-life. They have only one son, Satoshi. He is intensively preparing himself for the college entrance examination. Nobutoshi's parents live in a small house which was built for them in the garden attached to the house. The father, Shigezō, is eighty-four and the mother a decade younger. One day she suddenly dies, without any warning, of a stroke. Only then does it become apparent just how senile Shigezō has become. He is no longer able to take care of himself and needs permanent supervision. Hence, the drama can begin.

In accordance with Japanese tradition it is the duty of the oldest son to take the father into his house and the duty of the daughter-in-law to take care of him. Akiko, however, is very attached to her position and refuses to stay at home. Since Shigezō repeatedly wanders away from home, none of the very few existing homes for the aged is willing to take him in. The only alternative is to put him away forever in a mental asylum, a completely unacceptable thought for Japanese. In the end a solution is found. Akiko begins to work on only three days a week and spends the other four looking after her father-in-law. On the other three days a student couple, who move into the empty garden house, takes charge of Shigezō.

The story can be divided into three strands. Ariyoshi's main intention was to show the dilemma of Japanese working women who come into conflict with traditional expectations concerning the care of the aged. Japan was, of course, only at the beginning of the old age boom in 1970, yet there were already tens of thousands

of Japanese women in similar situations. They quite probably accounted for a high proportion of the unexpectedly large readership. Ariyoshi's social criticism was particularly aimed at the neglect to provide homes for the aged and disabled in her country [1: 161]. Simultaneously she worked towards the tangible goal of raising people's awareness, an obvious need, at the time, in wide circles where people suddenly saw themselves confronted with the same situation. Carefully researched statistical, medical-geriatric, psychological, economic and religious details give the novel a solid foundation. Hence, we find exact references to the course of increasing senility [1: 192]; or concerning police assistance in the search for old people who leave home and wander about lost [1: 212]; or the fact that drugstores and apothecaries don't only stock diapers for infants, but for old people who have become incontinent as well.

One may see through the authoress' didactic intentions or admire how she very subtly describes, step by step, the Tachibana's long and painful learning process and how the mother, Akiko, and the son, Satoshi progress from their original disgust, at the old man's senile expressions, to being able to accept them. It is, in any case, impressive to see how Satoshi's attitude changes, at first aghast pleading "Dad, Mum. Plaese don't live this long!" [1: 132] to finally saying: "I wish Grandpa had lived a little longer" [1: 216]. Even more penetrating is the description of Akiko's metamorphosis, as the person who suffers most, giving in more and more on the path from her original opinion that the situation was "totally unacceptable" (in this case with regard to the idea of her giving up her job, but actually in relation to the entire situation which is unbearable for her [1: 70]); via the heartfelt insight that "She might be troubled at this moment about Shigezō, but was there any guarantee that she herself would not suffer the same sad fate thirty or forty years hence?" [1: 74]; and then in wavering resignation "Things would be infinitely easier for her if Shigezō died! She no longer felt guilty about her secret thought" [1: 110], and finally: "... starting today, she vowed to prolong his life for as long as she possibly could, knowing in her heart that she was the only one in the family who was able to do so" [1: 187]. What is portrayed here is a perfect example of learning through experience, bearing fruit in what the Japanese still call "the philosophy of resignation".

What is decisive with regard to our context is, however, that this novel was written under the shock of the jump in life expectancy in Japanese society, i.e. of the "aging shock" in the late 1960s and '70s and read by hundreds of thousands of Japanese men and women who apparently felt the same. The older generation just no longer died at about sixty or so, as they had in earlier centuries and until after the Second World War (cf. again Figure 1) [1: 71]. But the increase in life expectancy went hand in hand with the change from the old to the new mortality pattern. Gone were the usually sudden deaths due to the old infectious and parasitic diseases; chronic and incurable illnesses, longlasting degenerative ailments, and extended periods of senility became more common. It is also important to consider the fact that we are today no longer, as were our ancestors in a time when

death and dying were omnipresent, acquainted with death. Accordingly, we are quite helpless when confronted with death, as were the Tachibanas when the grandmother died [1: 20].

Here I would again like to cite a number of passages, this time from Ariyoshi's book, which in my opinion pungently outline the situation and the reactions of people confronted with the "aging shock" *at that time* when, for example, they perceived a relative who went on living physically, but much less so mentally. Thus dismayed and speechless, the Tachibanas register the fact that: Shigezō "cries like a baby" [1: 53]. Akiko "was awakened in the middle of the night by a loud animal-like moan" [1: 78]. "All he could say was 'hello', for he had forgotten the rest of his vocabulary" [1: 203]. "Every night the old man got up to empty his bladder. ... he urinated in the garden like a dog" [1: 81].

But their momentary speechlessness is soon overcome and the descriptions of the senile grandfather's behaviour become just as drastic as they are sometimes brutally accurate, particularly those of the man's own son and his grandson. Nobutoshi states coldly: "Dad's turned into a complete idiot. ... Dad is the most wretched example I've ever seen" [1: 78]. "I break out in a cold sweat when I take a close look at him. I just can't stand it" [1: 69]. And Satoshi digs further: "He's not a child. He's an animal" [1: 82].

Yet eventually they all begin to reflect on the situation. Is the increase in life expectancy really a blessing?

The reflection becomes deeper and deeper. What, actually, should we do with so many additional years? Do they really represent a gain? "He had lived too long without finding any pleasure in life. What had he lived for all these years?" [1: 123]. "After all, what's the use of living if you don't know what's going on any more?" [1: 183]. "What did he live for all his life?" [1: 185].

The shock that the Japanese experienced then was based on just that dilemma. They had learned, generation after generation, to live lives of about sixty years and to fill them adequately, but not to live one that suddenly lasted much longer and which went in the end through a hell of chronic ailments and senility. If it were, as was the case earlier, over *suddenly*, although meanwhile at a more advanced age, then it might be acceptable. But as it was? For example the case of the over seventy-year-old grandmother: "She died at once when she had the stroke. Don't you think it was an ideal way to go? She didn't suffer at all" [1: 21]. But the Japanese who were becoming increasingly older in the 1960s and '70s were not able to die at the end of there suddenly extended lives in this "more pleasant" manner: "I imagine when one's bedridden, one isn't happy about living to a ripe old age" [1: 31].

Ariyoshi described such an ideal case of sudden death after a long and fulfilled life; an ideal case today, but perhaps typical of the future?—When Akiko visited a center for the aged one day to see if it was suitable for Shigezō, the ninety-year-old Mister Suzuki had just died after playing his favorite game in perfectly sound body and mind. The old people who were there discussed his death without much con-

cern: "He was lucky never to have known a day's illness all these years and to have died without suffering any pain. ... I wouldn't mind dying like that. ... Every elderly person present viewed the death dispassionately—they even envied the dead man ... a perfect specimen of an old person sound in mind and body" [1: 122–123].

The old people were not afraid of death, but of the more modern phenomenon of not being able to die. Having had enough of life makes them willing to accept death. What they pray for is a quick and benign death like Mister Suzuki's [43]. Ariyoshi's additional lesson is taught through her heroine when she tells us: "Akiko resolved to keep both her mind and body active. She would cultivate various interests to keep her busy in her old age. Growing old should not be someone else's problem" [1: 185].

At the time Ariyoshi wrote the novel (1970), the life expectancy of Japanese men was 69.3 years and 74.7 for women [9: 57]. In 1980, however, it was already 73.4 for men and 78.8 for women [9: 57], and in 1984 74.5 and 80.2 years [18: 406–407]. This rapid increase means that many of the then shocking effects of the aging population have lost some of their frightfulness and will lose even more, the more the gap between ecological and physiological life expectancy comes to a close. We already mentioned the decrease in deaths caused by "senility": from 5.5% of all deaths in 1970 to 4.4% in 1980 and 4.0 in 1983 [9: 43]. Older people are healthy, or at least healthier, for longer today, both physically and mentally. Consequently, Arioyoshi's novel is already somewhat dated. Yet a lot of the deep, existentially philosophical questions that she provokes nevertheless remain very much worth considering and will become even more so in the future. What shall we do with the additional years of our lives?

That brings us, finally, to the central question. Did Ariyoshi allude to the fact—without mentioning it expressly—that even the Japanese are becoming more and more a society of singles, especially at the end of their longer lives: "Growing old should *not* be *someone else*'s problem" [my italics A.E.I.] [1: 185]?

V. CONCLUSIONS: IS JAPAN FOLLOWING EUROPE TOWARDS A SOCIETY OF SINGLES?

Let's start this final discussion with a look at Fig. 4. There the development in the number of households in Japan (upper left) and Germany (upper right) in the last three decades is represented, along with the number of persons per household in each of the countries (middle left and middle right, respectively), and the number of single person households (lower left and lower right, respectively). The development in both countries is marked by a high degree of continuity and seems to be going in the same direction. The important difference, however, is the obvious time-lag. Hence one finds that in both countries the increase in the number of households was more rapid, proportionally, than the overall population growth. This led in the one as well as in the other country to a decrease in the size of these now more numerous households. However, the Federal Republic of Germany had

already reached a point in this development in 1950 that Japan is just now approaching (FRG 1950: 3.0 persons per household, Japan 1980: 3.3). If this parallel course of development continues at the same tempo, then Japan will reach a point in the year 2000 at which Germany found itself in 1970, namely at around 2.7 persons per household, and around a decade later at 2.4. Corresponding data concerning the increasing proportion of single person households—with the same time-lag—can be found at the bottom. As early as 1950 every fifth household in the Federal Republic of Germany was comprised of a single person (19.4%), in 1970 every fourth (25.1%), and in 1982 almost every third household (31.3%). In

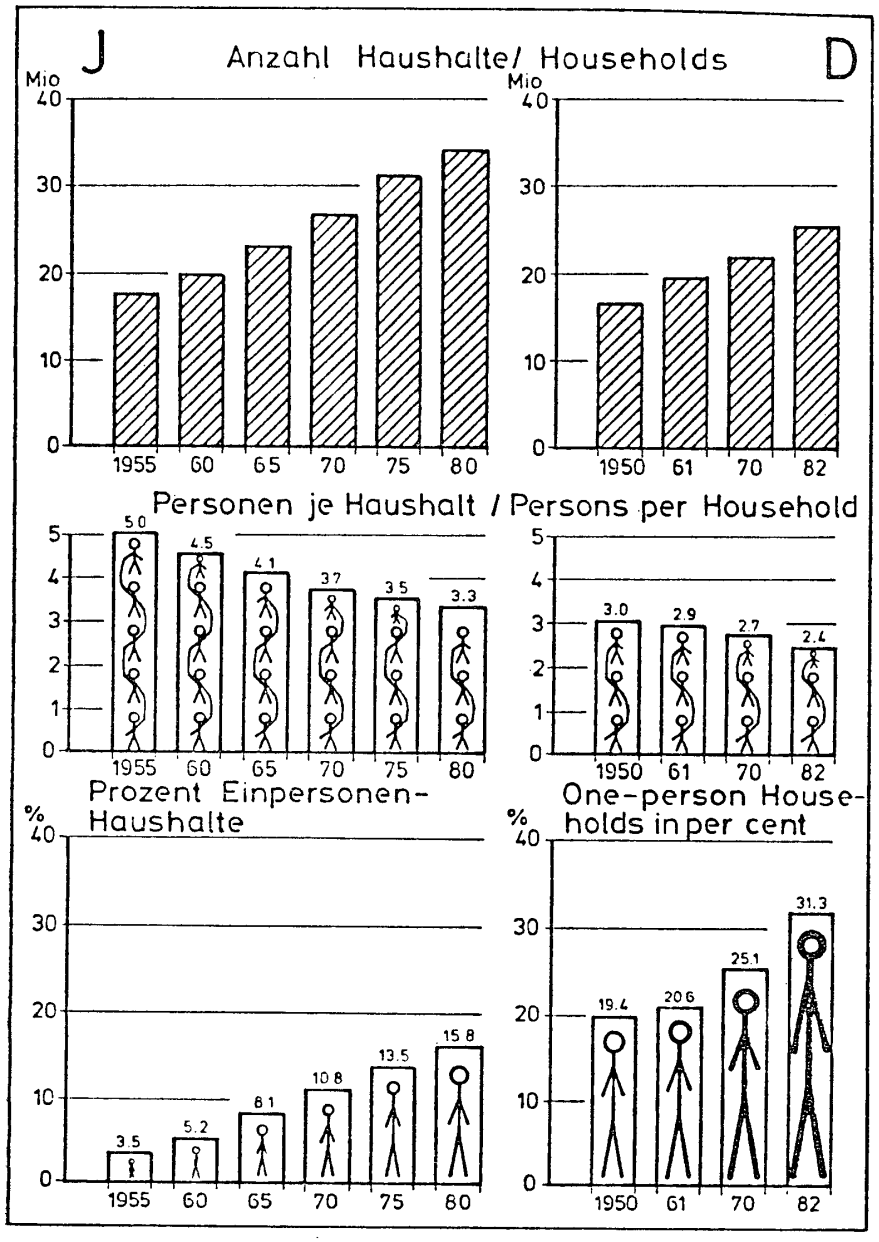

Fig. 4.

Fig. 4. One Person Households in Japan 1955–1980 and in the Federal Republic of Germany 1950–1982.

Sources: *Japan Statistical Yearbook 1985*, pp. 47, 48; *Statistisches Jahrbuch 1985 für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, p. 66.

JAPAN

Year	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980
Number of Households (1000)	17383	19678	23085	26856	31271	34106
One Person Households "	601	1023	1863	2888	4236	5388
in % of all Households	3.5	5.2	8.1	10.8	13.5	15.8
Persons per Household	5.0	4.5	4.1	3.7	3.5	3.3

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

Year	1950	1961	1970	1982
Number of Households (1000)	16650	19460	21991	25336
One Person Households "	3229	4010	5527	7926
in % of all Households	19.4	20.6	25.1	31.3
Persons per Household	3.0	2.9	2.7	2.4

about thirty years Japan is also likely to reach this point, if the development happens to continue on the same course there as well.

It would be easy enough to introduce a whole series of statistics as further evidence indicating in the same direction, namely less "Gemeinschaft", fewer serious commitments, and therefore more singles. For example, in 1970 there were 10 marriages per 1000 Japanese, in 1975 still 8.5, in 1980 6.7 and in 1983 6.4. Simultaneously the number of divorces per thousand rose from 0.93 in 1970 to 1.07 in 1975, then to 1.22 in 1980, and finally to 1.51 in 1983 [9: 37]. Professor Fumie Kumagai from the International University of Japan in Niigata has recently dedicated several studies to this topic and has also published in English on the subject [23: 24; 25]. Another obvious indicator is the drop in the birth rate from 34.3 per thousand after the War (1947) to about half that in 1960 (17.2%), to 13.6 in 1980 and 12.7 in 1983 [9: 43], or that pepole now wait longer before making longterm commitments. In 1970 the average Japanese man married at an age of 26.9 years and women at 24.2 years, in 1975 at 27.0 and 24.7 years, in 1980 at 27.8 and 25.2, and in 1983 at 28.0 and 25.4 years [9: 55].

One of the leading Japanese family sociologists, Professor Kiyomi Morioka, summarized the situation very pertinantly in an as yet unpublished conference-paper from 1985 and in an updated discussion in 1986: "During the two decades from 1960 to 1980, Japan accomplished an unusually high economic growth and the Japanese experienced a large-scale change in various sectors of life. Among major changes are the modernization of family structure as seen in the sudden shrinkage of an average houshold size and the increased prevalence of nuclear forms, the remarkable improvement of quality of life as exemplified by a greater size of housing per person and a wide-spread use of durable consumer goods, the

changing conjugal relations as seen in the predominance of love matches vis-à-vis arranged marriages and an increasing divorce rate. ... the recently rising ratio of non-family population in the old-age brackets suggests an increasing decay of the pattern of family setting career under the *ie* system, and also of the *ie* system itself. ... My analyses of family setting career of the Japanese reveal that in the prewar period people followed the line with the *ie* system and that in contemporary Japan, though still in minority, a new life course pattern has emerged which ends in an extra-familial existence" [27: 7, 9, 16].

In this context we should consider how Tadashi Fukutake characterized the development of Japanese society as moving away from the "Gemeinschaft" and toward the "Gesellschaft" [4] If one examines the explanations in his book "The Japanese Social Structure" a bit more closely, one finds that he registered this development with both a laughing and a crying eye. For him "Gemeinschaft" and "Gesellschaft" have both advantages and disadvantages. In particular he emphasizes, in addition to many positive aspects, the undemocratic and restrictive character of the "bad old community" that many oversee when viewing the past nostalgically [4: 214–215].

While I am able to accept Fukutakes argumentation up to this point, it then takes what seems to me to be a reactionary turn, with which I am no longer able to agree: "The disappearance of these communitarian pressures and the undemocratic constraints they implied has meant at the same time that residents become more egoistic in their behavior and less willing to join together in cooperative activity. ... that is why for the last ten years one has heard people talking of the need to create not *kyodotai*—the Japanese word that we have translated here as "community"—but *komyuniti*. ... The feeling that it is necessary to find new ways of evoking a sense of citizen solidarity and cooperation, is expressed by using the borrowed foreign word. The demand for a new *komyuniti* shows just how far the decline of community has gone in Japan's towns and villages" [4: 137]. Yet, this seems to me to be a deeply mistaken assumption.

Such a nostalgically embellished new *komyuniti* cannot possibly come into being. It would contradict the entire course of historical development, as I have outlined it in this paper. It is therefore not surprising that attempts to realize something along these lines have either seeped away unnoticed or, at best, been successful on a very limited basis.

I am aware of the fact that I, as an historical demographer, have based my argumentation primarily on a demographic phenomenon, namely on the far-reaching change from an uncertain to a certain long and standardized life-span. "Gemeinschaft" was essential as long as the old demographic regime prevailed; today it is no longer a necessity of life. Emancipated single individuals are perfectly able to exist in a noncomittal "Gesellschaft". A high rate of geographic and social mobility is a characteristic of these modern "Gesellschaften". In these societies, it is easier for an individual to move alone, than as part of a entity that would always have to be towed along. In addition, a modern "Gesellschaft" offers a number of

services of which the individual can make use in order to survive all by himself. A family union is no longer necessary, not even in case of illness.

Family sociologists and historians have made this last point the basis of their arguments for the development, which they have also ascertained, away from the "Gemeinschaft" towards the "Gesellschaft", i.e. the increasing unburdening of the family with regard to the number of functions it fulfills, or indeed its loss of these functions, as a result of their ever more expanding assumption by society, the state, or some other organization. Some of these functions are: socialization, education, care, protection and justice, to name a few. Other scholars, with a stronger orientation towards economic history, put rice production, which was predominant in Japan in former times, and necessitated the "Gemeinschaft", at the center. It has, however, outlived its usefulness as a result of the manifold specialization which has taken place in the production and preparation of foodstuffs [4: 34]. The integration into expanding urban markets caused the old village microcosm to burst at the seams [4: 37].

What had seemed to Japanese who stayed in the country, like Fukutake and Morioka, to be rapid changes having taken place in the postwar period, or in the even shorter timespan of two decades, from 1960 to 1980, took on even sharper contours in the eyes of surprised foreign observers. Two telling examples of the rapid dissolution of the "village community" between the 1950s and the 1970s are the village studies by Norbeck and Smith, which I would now—as I mentioned earlier—like to examine in more detail. In the present context their comments concerning the far-reaching changes in the social structure in both of these places during this quarter of a century is of the greatest interest.

Norbeck observed, after a quarter-century, a sudden "increase in nuclear families, and a decrease in extended families, [as well as an] instability of unions of marriage. ... As soon as Takashima people were economically able to do so, they followed the national trend. ... Young men and perhaps particularly, young wives strongly prefer to live separately from their parents or parents-in-law. ... Aged couples, widows, and widowers in Takashima have sometimes also preferred to live alone" [33: 279, 338]. On the whole, however, the 1974 study showed that "the greatest difficulties of every day life today ... [were] ... the problems of what to do with the aged" [33: 339].

In Kurusu, the aged, as studied in 1975, were not dissatisfied with their lot, but as one of them put it in a resigned, perhaps even bitter tone: "They take good care of us alright, but's all gone flat" [37: 200].

Even more eye-opening than these demographic changes, which were typical for the middle of the 1970s, and their effects reaching into the smallest Japanese village are the conclusions drawn by the two external observers concerning the far-reaching change and the dissolution of the old "village-solidarity", i.e. the old, or in Nakane's view "permanent", form of Japanese "Gemeinschaft". In contrast to her, however, Norbeck and Smith had never committed themselves with the same one-sidedness to the aspects of "Gemeinschaft" in Japanese society. On the con-

trary, both of them emphasized, and still emphasize, the fact that there had always been complementary "Gesellschaft"-ties between the residents of the villages.

If one tries to classify Norbeck's and Smith's signs of dissolution within a broader context, then one might say that the Japanese village "Gemeinschaft"—just as had happened previously in many European cases—had finally been overtaken and changed by those basic cultural developments of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries characterized by the following catch-phrases: "industrialization", "urbanization", "modernization", "geographic and social mobility", "growth of egalitarianism and democratization", "the acceleration of scientific development and the dissemination of knowledge among an ever wider segment of the population", "growing national and individual wealth", "reduction in the extent and importance of kinship ties", therefore "increased number and importance of non-kinship social groups", and the "depersonalization and sectoralisation of human relations".

It is exactly the services offered, and the use one makes of them, that keeps the individual from participating as a complete person, but rather only taking part in club activities as a member of a club, or making use of the risk sharing within his insurance group as a paying member in acute cases. Everywhere he is only a "part-time" partner. Even when a club for the elderly meets for half a day once a week in order to undertake some sort of activity, this by no means provides fulfillment, not even for an elderly person. This principle form of partial participation can never lead to the new komyunitis that Fukutake and others, with similar nostalgic leanings, seem to desire. The individual is neither any longer able, nor is he willing to commit himse that deeply. One shouldn't in my opinion, consider the increasing number of elderly people who wan't to live alone as an isolated phenomenon, as the aforementioned editorialist in the Japan Times seems to, but rather as an obvious sign of a general trend towards wanting to be on one's own. When seen against this broader background it no longer seems to be a cause for alarm.

Pointedly, it might be claimed that human beings—regardless of their age—aren't by nature "social creatures" that want to totally immerse themselves in a "Gemeinschaft". Until recently, however, they were forced to adopt such behavior by the uncertain situation in which they found themselves. If, however, human beings do have the opportunity, and when society offers them possibilities for making their way through life on their own, then they do so with ever increasing frequency making use of these opportunities. In this context one should not overlook the fact that the middle-class, which is disposed of the necessary financial resources to actually take advantage of the many services offered, has become much larger both in Europe and Japan.

But this is just the point where we should begin, and not the one at which to resign! Let us remember what Akiko Tachibana promised herself after contemplating the waste of her father-in-law's additional years: "to keep both her mind and body active. She would cultivate various interests to keep her busy in her old age. Growing old should not be someone else's problem" [1: 185]. Only in this way,

on the basis of personal initiative, can that which Fukutake is also aiming at ever be realized: "we must create a situation in which everyone can grow old without regretting his longevity" [4: 219].

In the course of this article I have described how both in Europe as well as—with a time-lag of a few decades—in Japan, the old demographic regime with an uncertain lifetime gave way to the new one with a standardized long and certain life expectancy. As a result thereof, the social structure in both countries moved away from the "Gemeinschaft" where people inevitably lived in microcosms with a lasting and real sense of community, but also under the subordination of their persons to restrictions and control, toward the "Gesellschaft" where they live next to—but not with—each other, as free individuals, but also without many ties. Yet while the "Gemeinschaft" in its day offered every member within its microcosm a completely integrating meaning of life, modern societies with their specialized universal organisations are only able to integrate the emancipated individual partially, categorically or sectorally and no longer personally. But since we obviously still don't seem to be able to come to terms with our lives without some sort of stabilizing meaning of life, everyone has got to try to find one on his own. It is difficult, but necessary. And the older we are going to become, and the longer we are going to lead healthy lives, the more necessary planning and realizing "life-long-full-size-careers" will become. True, one can find "resistance" to this "isolation" in certain scientific treatises (for example Fukutake's) and quite often in one's direct sphere of everyday activity, a nostalgic reorientation toward an improved variant of the "bad old community" of the past, to "komyuniti", to more "tenderness" and to "long engagements" [35]. It would seem to me to be more realistic, however, to accept the tendency of people wanting to be on their own and to develop a new and fulfilling meaning of life as individuals. The goal of such a life-long self-education process should in my view be the development of a strong and fulfilled personality. If more and more of us managed this, then the development toward a society of singles would not have to mean the development of a society of single-minded egoists. Strong and fulfilled personalities can effect others positively, communicate a sense of serenity. They are stable within themselves and able to offer others something, to be there for others, simply as existences, without monopolizing them and without being monopolized or manipulated by others.

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