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REGIONAL DIFFERENTIALS IN THE PATTERNS OF FIRST MARRIAGE IN THE LATTER HALF OF TOKUGAWA JAPAN

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Abstract: Using the local population registers, this study examines and compares the patterns and consequences of first marriages among women in four villages in three regions in the latter half of Tokugawa Japan. The study found clear regional variations in the timing and distribution of women's first marriages though marriage was almost universal in all villages. Marital disruption was more common in the northeast but all regions were beset with the institution of remarriage. Local differences in ecological and socioeconomic settings are discussed in relation to differential patterns of first marriage and remarriage.

1. INTRODUCTION

This study examines and compares the patterns of first marriage among women in the late eighteenth to late nineteenth century rural Japan, focusing on four villages in three different regions—Niita and Shimomoriya in the northeast, Nishijo in the central, and Nomo in the southwest. Using data from the local population registers called

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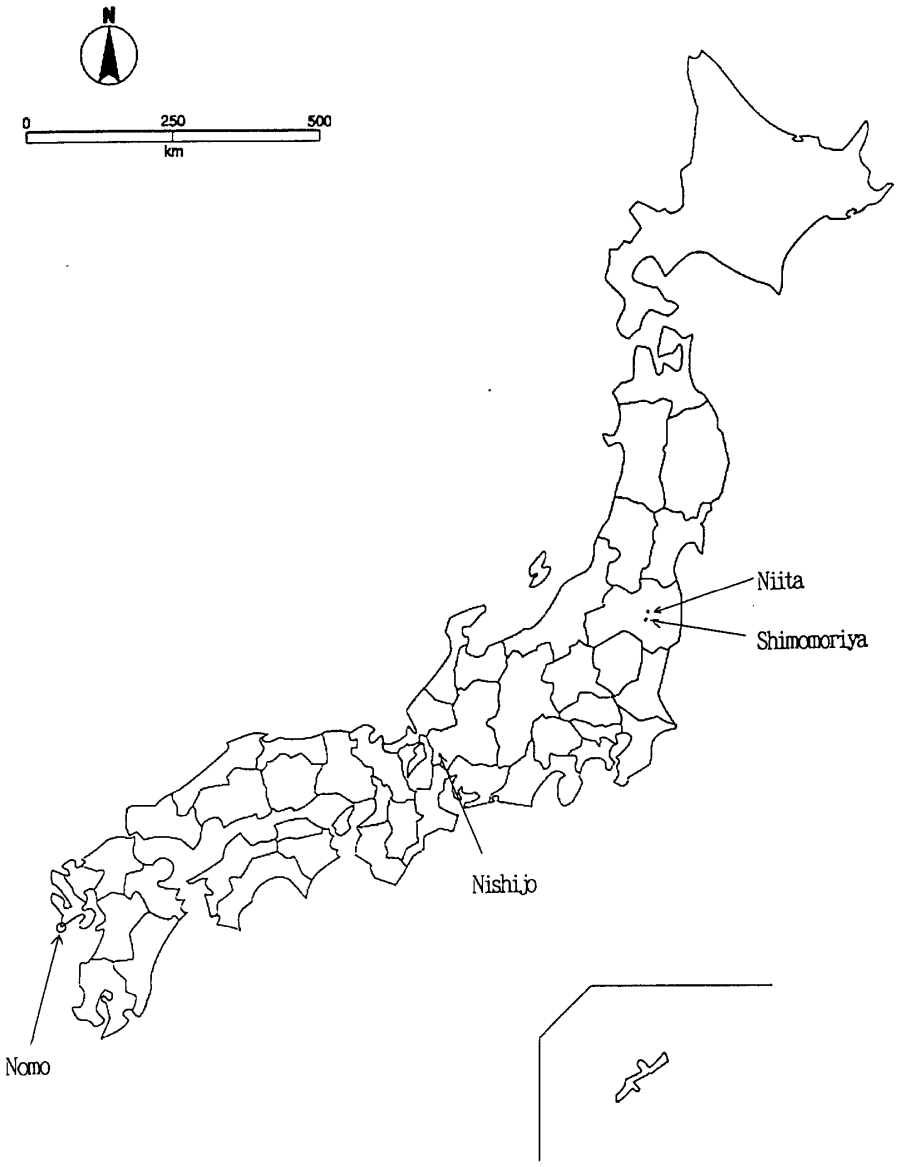
"*shumon-aratame-cho*" or "*ninbetsu-aratame-cho*," we analyze the patterns and consequences of first marriage among women in these villages in the contexts of regional demographic situations, economic developments, and family systems.

Despite accumulating evidence on marriage in Tokugawa Japan, the relationship between regional variations in marriage behavior and the larger demographic and socioeconomic contexts has yet to be fully analyzed. Some studies argue that the marriage pattern in pre-industrial Japan is but a variation of the 'Western European marriage pattern' because age at first marriage in Tokugawa Japan was relatively high and fluctuated in relation to short-term economic stress (Hanley and Yamamura 1977: 248; Wolf and Hanley 1985). First theorized by Hajnal (1965), the Western European marriage pattern has the features of late marriage and a high celibacy rate whereas the Eastern European pattern is characterized by early marriage and a low celibacy rate. Yet, other studies maintain that the Japanese pre-industrial marriage pattern was unique and adhered to neither Western nor Eastern European marriage pattern (Cornell 1987; Saito 1992). According to them, in traditional Japan the celibacy rate was much lower than the levels in pre-industrial Europe though age at marriage was relatively high, compared to other Asian countries such as China and India. This study seeks to examine how the pattern of first marriage in pre-industrial Japan was different from (or similar to) the European and other Asian patterns by comparing four villages in three different regions of Tokugawa Japan. We first look at the geographic and economic conditions of three regions in which the four villages are located. We next explain characteristics of local population registers and trends of overall population changes in the four villages during the latter half of Tokugawa Japan. Focusing on women of reproductive ages, we then analyze the patterns of first marriage. In this analysis, we specifically focus on four points that have not been addressed clearly in previous studies: (1) definition and measurement of age at first marriage beyond simple means; (2) patterns of first marriage by contrasting natives and migrants via marriage; (3) age differences between women and their husbands; and (4) consequences of first marriage—duration of marriage before marital disruption, reasons of marital dissolution, and the likelihood of remarriage.

Tokugawa society was one with enormous local differences in demographic patterns, economic development, and social customs. Although the villages in this study are insufficient to represent the entire regional diversity in the latter half of Tokugawa Japan, our analysis based on rich data sources from these villages allows us to shed light on the nature of the relationship between marriage patterns and local environments. This will, in turn, provide evidence to account for the nature of the nuptiality regime in the Japanese past.

2. GEOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF THE THREE REGIONS

The four villages and three regions examined in this study are shown in Map 1. Two northeastern villages—Niita and Shimomoriya—were farming communities located in present-day Fukushima prefecture. During the Tokugawa period, both belonged to the



Map 1. Locations of the Four Villages.

Nihonmatsu Domain, which governed the central part of the prefecture. Situated at the foot of a mountain range, Shimomoriya was susceptible to cold summers and poor harvests resulting from chilly gusts off the Abukuma Mountains (Narimatsu 1985: 3). Located on a plain between the growing market town of Koriyama and the castle town of Nihonmatsu, Niita enjoyed a better climate for agriculture. Nonetheless, lying on the banks of the Gohyaku River, the village was vulnerable to frequent floods. Both villages depended largely on rice agriculture, supplemented by a number of dry crops (Nagata, Kurosu and Hayami 1998). Given the primitive agricultural technology of the time, the Ou region, in which the two villages were located, was the northernmost boundary of rice farming in Tokugawa Japan. These circumstances often put the vil-

lages at the mercy of fluctuations in agricultural output, driving their living standards to near or below subsistence levels.

Nishijo was a farming village located on the Nobi Plain in central Japan (present-day Gifu prefecture). During the latter half of the Tokugawa era, it belonged to the Ogaki domain. The village lies in the delta of three major rivers—the Kiso, Nagara, and Ibi—known as *waju* (literally, 'in the ring'), derived from its unique topography of hamlets and fields encircled by high embankments. These rivers not only provided major transportation routes connecting the coastal plain with mountainous regions inland, but also produced fertile soil for farming. The local highway, traversing Nishijo and connecting Kyoto and Edo, gave villagers easy access not only to regional administrative centers but also to the nation's major cities (Nagata 1998). Nishijo's chief crop was rice, but cotton, rapeseed, and other cash crops were also cultivated (Hayami 1973).

Although these villages were primarily agricultural, their geographical and economic make-up provides a very different picture for their local economies. For example, there is no evidence that any proto-industry developed in either Shimomoriya or Niita, although some silk textile and lacquer industries developed in the villages nearby. Officially, Nihonmatsu domain authorities discouraged the development of a proto-industry during much of the eighteenth century, and only adopted a new policy for increasing rice production after the Tenmei famine (1783–87). After that time, the authorities started encouraging local production of cash crops, resulting in the development of proto-industries (Nagata, Kurosu and Hayami 1998). In contrast, Nishijo was located in a region of early industrial development with several cities and growing urban communities, and was particularly known for manufacturing paper and cotton textiles. Thus, it is clear that these villages in the northeastern and central regions had very different economic conditions and the villagers were likely to have different expectations toward the quality of life.

The fourth village had yet another type of economic base—fishing. Nomo (currently part of the township of Nomosaki in Nagasaki prefecture) was located at the tip of the Nagasaki peninsula in the southwestern-most island of Kyushu. During the Tokugawa period, Nomo belonged to Sonogi County of Hizen Province, and was in a domain under the direct control of the Tokugawa government from 1638 to the Meiji Restoration in 1868 (Tanaka 1986b: 248–67). Surrounded by the sea on three sides—the Sea of Goto in the northwest, the East China Sea in the south, and the Sea of Amakusa in the southeast—Nomo was predominantly a fishing village (Tanaka 1986a: 1). Though geographically isolated, villagers of Nomo had at least some exposure to foreign culture as merchant ships from the Netherlands and China (the two countries permitted by the Tokugawa government to engage in trade in the city of Nagasaki) had to negotiate the channel facing Nomo to reach port.

Given the great variation in ecological and economic contexts in the three regions under consideration, their family systems are also thought to have varied in response to their respective local environments. For example, transfers of household headship by retirement were more common in the two northeastern villages compared to Nishijo in

which transfers upon heads' deaths were more common (Okada and Kurosu 1998). On a much broader scale, Nakane (1967) identified three types of succession patterns as regional variants of the Japanese stem family system: (a) areas characterized by eldest son succession; (b) areas characterized by youngest son succession; and (c) the rest (succession regardless of birth order). Other studies classified stem family orientations in pre-industrial Japan as the northeastern type (*tohoku-gata*) and conjugal family orientations as the southwestern type (*seinan-gata*) (Takei 1971; Naito 1973).[1] While geographic boundaries for distributions of the northeastern and southwestern types of headship transfer are unclear, their regional categorization overlaps with Nakane's framework. Areas characterized by eldest son succession tend to concentrate in northeastern Japan whereas areas with youngest son succession and succession regardless of birth order are found more frequently in southwestern Japan (Kurosu 1992). The villages in this study belong to each of these variations: Shimomoriya and Niita being the northeastern type and Nomo being the southwestern type. Nishijo is classified as being somewhere between these two but probably closer to the southwestern type. Though we bear these family succession types in mind, a detailed study on the relationships between family systems and marriage is beyond the scope of this paper.

3. DATA SOURCES AND DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXTS

Data Sources

Although geographically distant and economically distinct, all four villages have detailed and undisrupted series of population registers covering the last one hundred years of the Tokugawa era. The registers in Niita and Shimomoriya are called "*ninbetsu-aratame-cho*" (hereafter NAC) while the registers in Nishijo and Nomo are called "*shumon-aratame-cho*" (hereafter SAC). The SAC was initiated in 1638 by the Tokugawa government as a measure to prevent the entry and spread of Christianity (Hayami 1979; Cornell and Hayami 1986). The NAC stemmed out of the SAC, but they do not usually include information on religious affiliation of individual villagers (Nagata, Kurosu and Hayami 1998). Instead, they tend to have detailed information on population and households as northeastern Japan suffered from population decline and dwindling economic output during the latter half of Tokugawa era.

NAC and SAC from these villages have in common two vital advantages as demographic data. First, the annual records of NAC and SAC are nearly unbroken, spanning over one century in the latter half of the Tokugawa period. Surviving NAC registers in Shimomoriya cover 154 years from 1716 to 1869 with only nine years missing (1720, 1726, 1846, 1850, 1858, and 1864–67). In Niita the surviving NAC registers cover the 151-year period form 1720 to 1870, during which there are only five years missing (1742, 1758, 1796, and 1857–58). The SAC registers in Nishijo cover 97 consecutive years from 1773 to 1869 with no years missing. The surviving SAC registers in Nomo

[1] The timing of headship transfer argued by these studies was the opposite of what Okada and Kurosu (1998) found in two of the regions in this study.

span 105 years from 1766 to 1870, during which there are only eight intermittent years (1767, 1770, 1772, 1781, 1782, 1786, 1813, and 1838) for which the records are partially missing.

Second, the population registers in the four villages were all compiled using the principle of current domicile, i.e. data are all '*de facto*.' Registers compiled in this manner give far more exact demographic information than registers based on the principle of legal domicile though the latter '*de jure*' principle seems to have been used far more frequently (Cornell and Hayami 1986). Current domicile records annotate major demographic events such as birth, death, and migration. Registers in Shimomoriya, Niita, and Nomo also include information on the dates (months and years) of occurrence of these demographic events, which are not usually found in Tokugawa population registers. As do the registers of all other Tokugawa villages, the SAC and NAC in these four villages all suffer from the omission of 'unregistered infant deaths,' and nearly all demographic measures are distorted by this defect.[2] Except for the problem of unregistered infant deaths, however, these registers are considered by historians and demographers to be of the highest quality among the surviving local population registers in Tokugawa Japan.

Demographic Contexts

Just as their economic bases varied, the villages differed in their demographic developments during the latter part of the Tokugawa era. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, the population in the northeastern region was on the decline, the central region's had stagnated, and the southwest's had increased (Hayami 1986). Only after the passing of the Tempo famine (1836–38), did the populations in all three regions increase simultaneously until the end of the Tokugawa period.

The population trends in the villages closely follow regional patterns. The populations of Niita and Shimomoriya at the beginning of their registers were 538 and 419, respectively. Except for the first decades of the records during which population growth was stagnant, the population sizes in the two villages were in overall decline. In particular, both villages were devastated by the great Tenmei famine (1783–87) and a long spell of bad weather preceding it (Koriyama-shi 1981: 340–41), and their populations declined to 430 and 286, respectively, in 1786. After the Tenmei famine, the village populations continued to decline further until recovering from the Tempo famine (1836–38). The populations started a gradual upturn afterwards. The population losses before 1840 are explained in part by losses from migration, but more importantly by negative natural increases, resulting from a relatively low birth rate (the Crude Birth Rate being 16 to 25 with the mean of 22 per thousand) and a relatively high death rate (the Crude Death Rate being 18 to 29 with the mean of 24 per thousand). After the 1840s, however, the natural increase became positive with the CBR increasing steadily to over 25 per thousand and the CDR falling to less than 23 per thou-

[2] In Tokugawa population registers, not all births and deaths were recorded—only those who survived from birth to the subsequent registration were entered. Consequently, in most cases, infants who died before the first registration after birth were excluded and never came under observation.

sand.

Nishijo was a relatively small village; its resident population at the beginning of the register in 1773 was 366. During the Tenmei Famine, the population declined from 361 in 1785 to 297 in 1791, an 18 percent decrease in merely 6 years. After the early 1790s, the village population recovered to around 330 and stabilized at 300 to 320 with minor fluctuations until a major downturn caused by the Tempo famine in the late 1830s. After marking the lowest figure of 277 in 1843, the population resumed a gradual but steady increase until the end of the Tokugawa era. The village population at the end of the SAC records in 1869 was 381. Though the difference between the total population at the beginning and the end was small, the average level of fertility in the period 1773–1869 (the CBR of 32 per thousand) was much higher than the corresponding level of mortality (the CDR of 24 per thousand). This means that the stagnant population growth in the village in the latter half of the Tokugawa period was caused mainly by large population losses due to out-migration.

For a Tokugawa village, Nomo was extremely populous; its population was 2,355 at the beginning of the population register in 1766. Over the 105 years covered by the SAC, Nomo's population grew to 3,574 in 1871—an increase of 52 percent in a little over one century (i.e., 0.4 percent annually). This rapid population growth was caused by small net population losses from migration, combined with moderately high natural increases. The natural increases are attributable to relatively high fertility (the CBR of 20 to 33 with the mean of 29 per thousand) and to intermediate mortality (the CDR of 18 to 26 with the mean of around 23 per thousand) (Tsuya 1996).

4. DEFINITION AND MEASUREMENT OF FIRST MARRIAGE

Differing greatly from those in historical European populations governed by strict Christian doctrine, marriage and its registration in pre-industrial Japan were largely contextual, being influenced by local customs and socioeconomic developments. In this study, the timing of marriage is measured, based solely on the NAC and SAC registers. Like the population registers in many other Tokugawa villages, the registers in the four villages of this study do not report the dates (months) of marriages. Consequently, the timing (year) of marriage has to be inferred from an entry of a new household member between two consecutive registration and concomitant information in household relationships.[3] For example, if a woman first appeared in the register of, say, the year 1800 for a given household as wife of head's son, this means that she married the son (and moved into his father's household) sometime after the previous registration of 1799 and before that of 1800.[4] Providing that there is no clear evidence on seasonality of marriages in these villages, we estimate the dates of marriages by taking

[3] In Shimomoriya, Niita, and Nishijo, the annual registration was conducted at the beginning of the third lunar month. In Nomo it was carried out at the beginning of the second lunar month.

[4] It was often the case that new household members were also annotated in the register of previous year by writing these changes between the lines in red ink or writing them on narrow slips of paper (called "harigami") and pasting them in to the register.

the midpoint between two consecutive registrations.

Although the way by which marriage was registered varies by register,[5] we can discern the type of individual movements associated with marriage. For example, in the NAC, annotations of 'calling in' (*yobitori* or *enzuke*) and 'adopting a son-in-law' (*muko-yoshi tori*) identify that in the former a woman, and in the latter a man, married into the household in question. Further, the names of the village and household of origin (i.e. name of previous household head) are usually annotated. In Nishijo's registers, this information was repeated until death was recorded. In a similar manner, women and men were recorded as being 'sent to X' (X *e tsukawasu* or *enzuke*) when they left their natal households to those of marriage. In the case of Nomo, however, entries of new household members and associated changes in household relationships of existing members are the only information available to identify marriages because reasons for movements into and out of households are not recorded in the registers. Fortunately, probably owing to its geographical isolation and the large population size, Nomo was highly endogamous. Thus, we could often match SAC records for households of origin and those of marriage, which helped our inferring individual movements via marriage.

Second, the population registers provide the name of spouse, which helps us identify the type of marriage and intricate changes in household relationships. For example, a new entry of "X's wife" (X *nyobou*) identifies that a woman has become the wife of X. If a woman is recorded in the register to have married an adopted son (*muko-yoshi*), this means that she remained at her natal home and her husband joined the household as an adopted son. When the elder brother died and his widowed wife remarried to his younger brother (which occurred fairly often in pre-industrial Japan), we recognize her remarriage and the name of her new husband by noting the change of her household relationship. In a similar manner, the end of marriage is easily distinguished. SAC and NAC registers usually recorded when women (or men when it is uxorilocal) "returned to their natal home" (*fuen tachikaeri*) due to divorce or to death of spouse. Thus, from population registration records, we can determine at least three major reasons of marital dissolution: spouse death, one's own death, or divorce.

In this study, age at marriage is calculated from the difference between year of birth and year of marriage as defined above. Measurement of age at first marriage is straightforward for individuals who were under constant observation from birth. However, the problem arises for individuals who had already been married when the records began, or for those who first appeared sometime after birth. Especially, it was often the case that women of reproductive ages moved into or out of the villages via marriage; only a small proportion of women continued to stay in their native village throughout their reproductive years (Nomo being the exception). Given the high mo-

[5] A collection of customary law (*Minji Kanrei Ruishu*) in 1880 indicates that there were variations in local customs with regard to the timing of registration of marriage (Shihosho 1976: 58–78). A county near Nomo, for example, had a custom of registering marriages upon or after the birth of first child. This resulted in high levels of bridal pregnancy and premarital childbearing, which were unusual in Tokugawa Japan (Tsuya 1996). Though this practice tends to impose higher age at marriage, we maintain that customary law is a product of local culture shaped by geo-social and economic conditions.

bility of women associated with marriage, it is unwise to limit the computation to native women, for doing so makes the data too small and selective. Thus, we used a less conservative definition than the usual notion of first marriage: if marriages were observed for the first time for individuals who first appeared in the population registers under age 50 with no spouse and no children, they were regarded as 'first' marriages. We decided to impose no age limit on women who first appeared in the register after birth. Such age limits would be arbitrary without any firm theoretical or empirical basis, and they would also introduce selectivity bias toward early age at marriage.

Finally, two clarifications are in order for the comparison of the four villages in three regions. First, we examine the entire periods covered in NAC and SAC registers for Shimomoriya, Niita and Nishijo. For Nomo, however, we focused on women born in the village from 1802–1821 who survived at least until age 15, the beginning of their reproductive years. Because of the large population size (and therefore the large size of its register), and of the difficulties associated with identifying marriages by linking records among different households, data are available for this study only on native women of these 20-year birth cohorts in Nomo. Hence, the less conservative definition of first marriage explained above only applies to the two northeastern villages and Nishijo whereas in Nomo, though data are limited to women, births and first marriages are all observed. In future studies, we will analyze all four villages, using the same definition of marriage and data covering the entire periods for which the SAC/NAC records are available.

Second, the way 'age' was measured differs among villages in our data. 'Age' in Nomo is chronological age (i.e., age according to the Gregorian calendar). In the three other villages age is measured by the variable indicating the number of registrations each individual went through after birth until his/her exit from the universe of observation due to death or emigration (called hereafter "SAC/NAC age").[6] The calculation of chronological age is impossible for Nishijo because information on the dates of birth is unavailable. For Niita and Shimomoriya, it is possible to compute chronological age only for those born in the village, who make up about one third of the records. We plan to use the same age calculation in our future studies. For the time being, we need to exercise caution in comparing ages at marriage among the four villages, as chronological age tends to be slightly lower than NAC/SAC age.[7]

Before turning to the analysis of the patterns of women's first marriage, we look at the age pattern of 'attrition' of women during their reproductive years because it affects the computation. As women's marriages in Niita and Shimomoriya started before

[6] In addition to chronological age and SAC/NAC age, there is also the traditional Japanese method of counting age. It regards a child as age 1 at birth and adds an additional year on each New Year's day thereafter. Consequently, if counted by the traditional Japanese method, most newborns, if they survived, appear in SAC/NAC at the age of two *sai* although in extreme cases they could be on the second day of life. If SAC/NAC registration was conducted on New Year's day (which was rarely the case), traditional Japanese age minus one equal to SAC/NAC age.

[7] If marriages are distributed randomly throughout each chronological year, age at marriage according to the Gregorian calendar is on the average 6 months lower than age at marriage according to SAC/NAC registration.

TABLE 1. The Numbers of Survivors, In-migrants, and Exits: Women in the Villages of Shimomoriya and Niita 1716–1870, Women in the Village of Nishijo 1793–1869, and Cohorts of Native Women in the Village of Nomo Born in 1802–1821.

Age interval	# of survivors at the beginning of interval (N)	In-migrants (N)	Exits due to:			Woman yrs. lived in interval (N)
			Total (N)	Death (%)	Other (%)	
Shimomoriya & Niita						
10–14	4481	240	216	10.2	89.8	4505
15–19	4420	367	306	12.4	87.6	4481
20–24	4311	210	194	21.6	78.4	4327
25–29	4134	146	167	29.3	70.7	4113
30–34	3841	114	140	35.7	64.3	3815
35–39	3545	105	120	35.8	64.2	3530
40–44	3369	89	115	47.0	53.0	3343
45–49	3221	90	78	41.0	59.0	3233
10–49	31322	1361	1336	24.7	75.3	31347
Nishijo						
15–19	1149	125	164	5.5	94.5	1110
20–24	1022	137	110	10.9	89.1	1049
25–29	998	47	39	35.9	64.1	1006
30–34	1000	19	31	48.4	51.6	988
35–39	905	17	17	70.6	29.4	905
40–44	868	14	16	62.5	37.5	866
45–49	843	16	11	72.7	27.3	848
15–49	6785	375	388	20.6	79.4	6772
Nomo						
15–19	553	—	18	77.8	22.2	535
20–24	535	—	37	67.6	32.4	498
25–29	498	—	31	80.6	19.4	467
30–34	467	—	33	88.1	11.9	434
35–39	434	—	42	77.3	22.7	392
40–44	392	—	44	77.3	22.7	348
45–49	348	—	32	90.1	9.9	316
15–49	3227	—	237	77.6	22.4	2990

Note: — Not applicable.

age 15, we included the age category of 10–14 for these two villages as well. Table 1 presents the numbers of survivors, in-migrants, and exits, together with the percentage distribution of exits by reasons (death versus other causes). As shown in the table, there are clear differences among the villages in the reasons for women's exits from the universe of observation. In Nomo, 'exits' were caused mostly by their own deaths whereas emigration accounted for a relatively small portion throughout their reproductive span. Because Nomo's registers give no reason for migration, it is impossible to discern whether emigration was through marriage or service. In contrast, women in Niita and Shimomoriya exited owing to other reasons than deaths throughout their re-

productive span. The reason of migration for women at younger ages was predominantly marriage but, as women became older, it was taken over by service and absconding (*kakeochi*). In Nishijo women exited due to reasons other than death until their early thirties. Only after age 35 did the proportion of exit caused by death became greater than that by other reasons such as marriage and service. We should note that, for women at most marriageable ages (15–24), the volume of migration (both in- and out-migration) in Nishijo is almost twice as large than that in Niita and Shimomoriya. It is also interesting to note that women in the two northeastern villages continued to migrate well into their forties. Thus, these results suggest that overall geographical mobility among women in Niita, Shimomoriya, and Nishijo was high, compared to their counterparts in Nomo. The geographical mobility for women at reproductive ages in Nishijo was especially high, which in turn affected the timing of their marriages (Hayami 1980). Taking this into consideration, we analyze age at first marriage by dividing women into three groups—natives, immigrants, and emigrants.

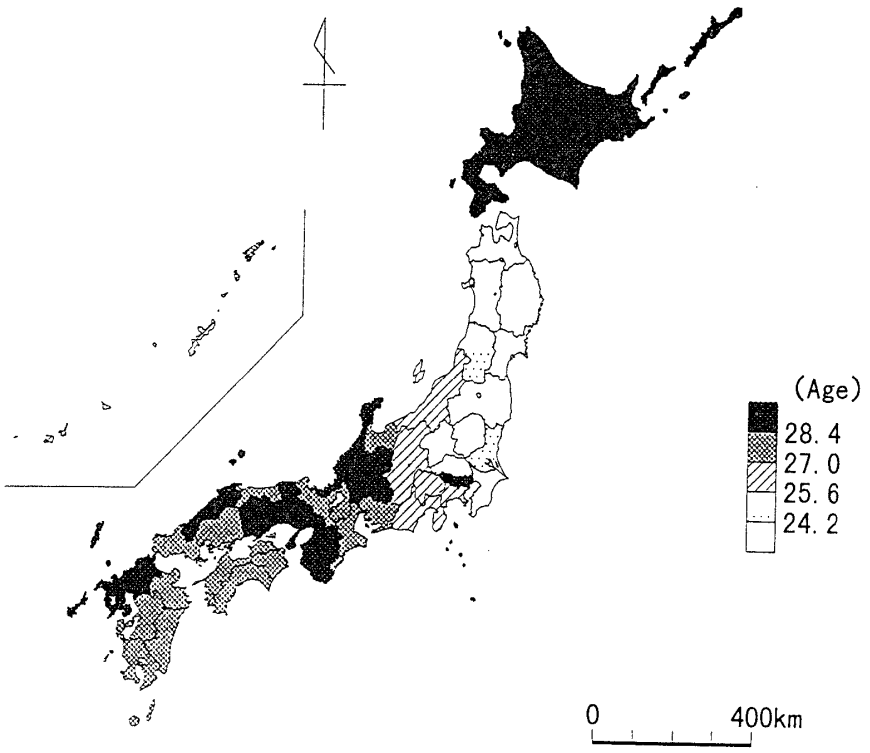
5. THE RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS

Age at First Marriage

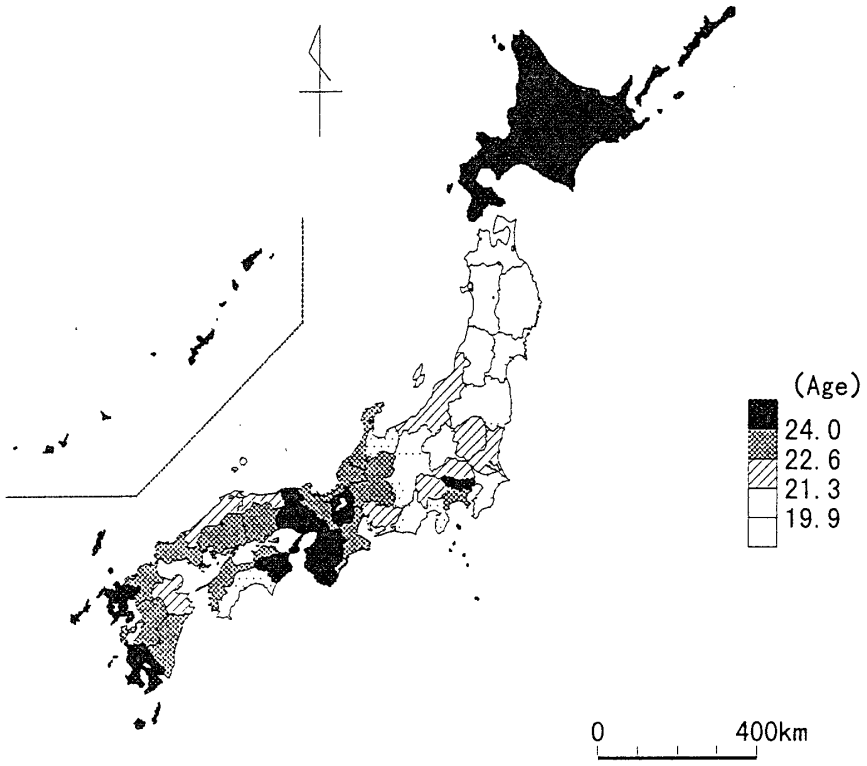
The general consensus emerging from existing studies on the timing of marriage in pre-industrial Japan is one of large inter-village and temporal differentials (e.g., Hamano 1999; Hanley and Yamamura 1977: 240–50; Hayami and Kito 1989; Mosk 1980; Tsuya 1996). Age at first marriage falls in the range of ages 14 to 25 for women, and 17 to 28 for men. The timing of first marriage tended to be later in southwestern Japan than in eastern and northeastern Japan, and these regional patterns continued well into the early Meiji period as shown in Map 2a and 2b.[8] The clear regional contrast between eastern and western Japan gave Hayami (1987) the basis to propose the thesis of "another Fossa Magna," as the regional threshold in age at marriage coincides with a geological Fossa Magna (demarcated by Shizuoka–Gifu–Toyama prefectures).

The villages in this study confirm the regional patterns of the timing of marriage depicted in Maps 2a and 2b. Table 2 presents the mean and the distribution of ages at first marriage for ever-married women in the four villages in three different regions. We can see from the first panel of the table that the mean age at women's first marriage varied greatly among the regions. The mean age at first marriage for women in Niita and Shimomoriya is very low (around age 17), that for women in Nishijo is relatively high (around 23), and women in Nomo being the highest (around 25). The mean in the two northeastern villages and that in Nomo form the two opposite ends of a continuum of ages at first marriage for women in pre-industrial Japan. The low mean age at first marriage in Shimomoriya and Niita is typical of northeastern villages in Tokugawa Japan, being comparable to the corresponding age at first marriage for women in a

[8] Maps are drawn using the data from the Table of Households and Population of Imperial Japan (*Nihon Teikoku Minseki Kokohyo*), compiled on December 31, 1886 by the Meiji government. The table provides the first countrywide statistics on proportions marrying by age for the prefectures of Japan. This table has been virtually ignored by demographers because the data were based on *de jure* population (Hayami 1987).



Map 2a. Estimated median age at marriage: Males 1886.



Map 2b. Estimated median age at marriage: Females 1886.

TABLE 2. The Mean and Quartiles of Age at First Marriage by Sex: Shimomoriya and Niita 1716–1870, Nishijo 1793–1869, and Cohorts of Women Born in 1802–1821 in Nomo.

	Shimomoriya & Nitta		Nishijo		Nomo
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
All Persons:					
Mean	16.7	20.8	22.5	28.8	24.9
S.D.	6.9	7.0	6.1	6.4	5.3
(N)	(1699)	(1311)	(415)	(212)	(373)
Quartiles					
First	13.0	16.0	18.0	24.0	21.9
Second	15.0	19.0	21.0	28.0	23.3
Third	17.0	23.0	26.0	33.0	27.4
Range (1st–3rd)	4.0	7.0	8.0	9.0	5.5
Natives (marriage within village):[a]					
Mean	14.7	19.5	21.0	28.9	24.9
S.D.	4.8	6.1	5.4	6.5	5.3
(N)	(621)	(897)	(59)	(192)	(373)
Quarriles					
First	13.0	16.0	17.0	24.0	21.9
Second	14.0	18.0	20.0	28.0	23.3
Third	15.5	21.0	24.0	33.0	27.4
Range (1st–3rd)	2.5	5.0	7.0	9.0	5.5
Immigrants (via marriage):					
Mean	19.1	23.8	22.5	27.5	—
S.D.	8.5	8.0	5.6	4.8	—
(N)	(728)	(304)	(236)	(20)	(0)
Quarriles					
First	14.0	18.0	18.0	24.0	—
Second	16.0	23.0	22.0	26.5	—
Third	21.0	27.0	25.3	31.0	—
Range (1st–3rd)	7.0	9.0	7.3	7.0	—
Emigrants (via marriage):					
Mean	15.1	22.2	23.1	—	—
S.D.	4.5	8.2	7.1	—	—
(N)	(350)	(110)	(120)	(0)	(0)
Quartiles					
First	13.0	16.0	18.0	—	—
Second	14.0	19.0	22.0	—	—
Third	16.0	26.0	26.0	—	—
Range (1st–3rd)	3.0	10.0	8.0	—	—

Notes: — Not applicable.

[a] Marriages took place within villages to those who were born in the village as well as those who first appeared in the population register well before marriage.

northeastern village in Qing-dynasty China (Lee and Campbell 1997: 88). Providing that ages in Nomo are chronological ages, the mean age at first marriage for Nomo women is probably one of the highest among Tokugawa Japanese villages, nearing the levels in pre-industrial Western European populations (Smith 1977: 86; Tsuya 1996).

Regional variations are seen not only in the average age at first marriage, but also in the distribution of ages at first marriage. In Shimomoriya and Niita women's first marriages were concentrated around age 15 whereas in Nishijo female first marriages spread around age 21 with the range of 8 years between first and third quartiles (see the first panel of Table 2). The median age at first marriage for women in Nomo is higher than that in Nishijo, but first marriages were more concentrated with the range of 5.5 years between first and third quartiles. Hence, first marriages were concentrated in a relatively narrow age band in both the two northeastern villages and Nomo though they were centered on younger ages in Niita and Shimomoriya, but on older ages in Nomo. Interestingly, though there is only a small difference between Nishijo and Nomo in their third quartiles (ages 26 and 27, respectively), women in Nishijo started marrying much earlier, compared to women in Nomo. The first quartile for women in Nishijo is age 19 whereas that for women in Nomo is almost 22. This indicates that, in contrast to the other three villages, women's first marriages in Nishijo spread over a wide age range, owing primarily to the high prevalence of temporary emigration for employment among young women (and men) of poor households in their teens and early twenties.[9]

For Niita, Shimomoriya, and Nishijo, we further contrast the ages at marriage for natives, immigrants, and emigrants (see the bottom three panels of Table 2). 'Native' women and men include individuals who were born in the village as well as those who moved into the village sometime before marriage (because of adoption or moving of their families). If these immigrant women and men migrated out of the village for marriage, they are placed in the category of emigrants. Immigrants are those who appeared in the register upon marriage. As shown in Table 2, in all three villages native women and men have the lowest mean ages at first marriage (men in Nishijo being the exception). Women who married within village were, on the average, 2 years younger in Niita and Shimomoriya and 1.5 years younger in Nishijo than the villages' averages. Emigrants via marriage from Niita and Shimomoriya also have low age at first marriage, concentrating on the median age of 14. In these two northeastern villages, immigrants via marriage have the highest mean age at marriage. This may be because some of remarriages (especially those of women) were included in this category owing to our less conservative definition of first marriage. However, this is not the case in Nishijo where emigrants have a slightly higher mean age at marriage than immigrants.

[9] As shown in the previous section, women in Nishijo had the highest geographical mobility at younger (peak marriage) ages among the four villages in this study. Analyzing class differentials in the timing of marriage and fertility in Nishijo, Hayami (1981) found that the mean age at first marriage for women in landless households was 23.2 *sai* whereas that for women in landlords' households was around 19.4 *sai*. This high mean age at first marriage for daughters of landless peasants is argued to have been due to the high prevalence of labor-related emigration of these women, propelled by financial necessities of their households.

Although the timing of first marriage and its distribution varied greatly among regions, it is true for all four villages that a vast majority of women eventually married by age 50. In Niita and Shimomoriya, the proportion of women ever married was 65 percent at ages 15–19, reaching 99 percent at age 50. In Nishijo the proportion of women ever-married increased from around 67 percent at ages 20–24 to 94 percent at age 50. In Nomo the proportion ever-married increased from around 60 percent at age 27 to 96 percent at age 50. Therefore, these results suggest that if women managed to 'survive' (neither die nor emigrate) through their reproductive years, almost everybody married. This in turn shows that whereas ages at first marriage had large regional differentials, celibacy rate was very low in pre-industrial Japan.

What accounts for such enormous variations in the timing of first marriage across different regions in Tokugawa Japan? Existing evidence indicates that experiences of service (*hoko*) and the timing (ages) at which service occurred influenced the timing of women's first marriage. Hayami (1980, 1992) showed that experiences of service tended to raise women's age at first marriage in villages in central Tokugawa Japan, including Nishijo. He argued that women of lower social status tended to delay their marriage because they were more likely to experience service before marriage. Nagata's more recent study (1998) showed that most (more than 90 percent) of individuals who emigrated from Nishijo for service were single whereas a large majority (75 percent of male and over 90 percent of female) emigrants from Niita and Shimomoriya for service were ever-married.[10] Nagata's study further showed that around 90 percent of the emigrants from Niita and Shimomoriya later returned to the villages, compared to only about one half of the men and only around 15 percent of the women returned to Nishijo. In the fishing village of Nomo, practices of temporary emigration for service was virtually non-existent because the non-agrarian economy made villagers in Nomo less confined to succession and inheritance strategies found in many Tokugawa agricultural villages. Late marriage, high fertility, and more liberal attitudes toward premarital sexual activities in Nomo imply that marriage meant neither a safety valve for population losses nor economic adjustment by the household.[11] Altogether, local variations in the prevalence of service practices among single women and men at younger ages explained at least part of large regional variations in the patterns of first marriage in pre-industrial Japan.

Age Difference between Woman and Her Spouse at First Marriage

As an extension of Hajnal's original characterization (1965), Laslett (1977) included in his generalized European family pattern two features pertaining to age differences between spouses—a relatively small age difference between spouses and a substantial proportion of women older than their husbands. As shown in Table 3, there appear to

[10] Nagata (1998) also delineates the difference in type of service in these two regions as well as long-term changes in light of local policy and economic environment.

[11] Among women born in Nomo during the period from 1802–21 bridal pregnancies and premarital (or out-of-wedlock) childbearing were prevalent and their marital fertility was high with little indication of deliberate fertility control. For details, see Tsuya (1996).

TABLE 3. Mean Age Differences between Woman and Her Spouse at Her First Marriage and the Percentage Distribution of the Mean Age Differences by the Outcome of First Marriage: Ever-Married Women in Shimomoriya and Niita 1716–1870, Ever-Married Women in Nishijo 1773–1869, and Ever-Married Women of Cohorts Born in 1802–1821 in Nomo.

	Shimomoriya & Niita			Nishijo			Nomo		
	All first marriages	First marriage:		All first marriages	First marriage:		All first marriages	First marriage:	
		Completed	Uncompleted		Completed	Uncompleted		Completed	Uncompleted
Age difference									
Mean	4.7	5.4	4.5	8.0	8.7	7.5	6.4	5.4	7.3
S.D.	4.5	4.8	4.4	6.4	6.7	6.3	5.6	5.8	5.3
Percent Distribution:									
Wife older by									
1–4 years	4.8	3.2	5.3	5.1	3.5	6.0	3.7	4.1	3.4
5+ years	0.3	0.6	0.2	1.0	1.8	0.5	2.9	5.3	0.6
Total	5.1	3.9	5.5	6.1	5.3	6.6	6.6	9.4	4.0
Less than 1-yr difference	10.5	8.0	11.2	2.7	0.9	3.8	6.1	7.6	4.5
Husband older by									
1–4 years	40.9	37.9	41.8	23.3	23.0	23.5	26.2	27.1	25.4
5–9 years	30.5	31.5	30.2	31.4	27.4	33.9	37.8	36.5	39.0
10+ years	13.0	18.6	11.4	36.5	43.4	32.2	23.3	19.4	27.1
Total	84.4	88.1	83.3	91.2	93.8	89.6	87.3	83.0	91.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(Number in sample)	(1349)	(311)	(1038)	(296)	(113)	(183)	(347)	(170)	(177)

Notes: Figures above are based on women's first marriages, including both first-married and re-married husbands. Completed first marriages refer to women's first marital unions in which the women reached at least age 50 (age 45 in Nomo) before the end of the marriage.

have been clear regional differences in age difference between woman and her husband at her first marriage in pre-industrial Japan. The figures in the table are based on *women's* first marriages, and thus include both first married and remarried husbands. The mean age difference was smallest (4.7 years for all marriages) in Niita and Shimomoriya; it was larger in Nomo (6.4 years); and in Nishijo it was the largest (8.0 years). The average age gap between spouses in Nomo and Nishijo appears to be substantially larger than those found in English and German villages in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries (Wrigley and Schofield 1981; Knodel 1988: 137–43). Furthermore, although there are some village-level variations, the husband was older in a large majority of women's first marriages in all four villages. Especially in Nishijo and Nomo, first marriage in which the husband was 10 or more years older than the wife was not uncommon. In Nishijo such marriages make up the largest proportion among women's completed marriages. In Shimomoriya and Niita, however, age differences between women and their husbands tended to be much smaller, concentrating on the categories of less than 1-year difference and of husbands older by less than 5 years.

Outcome of First Marriage

Existing studies of marriage in historical populations focused mostly on the timing of marriage and the celibacy rate (i.e., the proportion never married at the end of reproductive span). This may be attributed to the fact that those studies were mostly based on data in which information on marital dissolution and remarriage was limited (Saito and Hamano 1999). In a population with frequent divorces and remarriages, however, the focus on the initial part of marriage history is insufficient. Dissolution of first marriage and the formation of second marital union are important in understanding the institution of marriage.

While our SAC and NAC records provide rich data for studying marital dissolution and remarriage, they are not free from the problem of censoring. That is, not all women were under constant observation (i.e., remained in the universe of observation) until they reached age 50, the end of their reproductive years, because some of them exited owing to their own deaths or emigration. Especially when we compare villages and regions with different propensities of geographical mobility through marriage, we need to exercise caution when analyzing the consequences of first marriage. As an attempt to minimize the effects of censoring, we limit our analysis to 'observed' first marriages, i.e. first marriages recorded in the population registers. We then divide women's first marriages into two groups: completed first marriages (first marriages in which the wife survived until the end of reproductive span) and uncompleted first marriages.[12] For uncompleted first marriages, we look at the types/reasons of marital disruption. Therefore, in all villages except for Nomo, women who emigrated from the villages via marriage and whose observation ended before they reached age 50 are excluded.

[12] The end of women's reproductive span is defined to be 45 years old for the 20-year birth cohorts of women in Nomo. If the end of reproductive span is measured at age 50, instead of age 45, the proportion of completed first marriages decreases slightly. However, this does not change the general pattern.

TABLE 4. The Percentage distribution of Outcome of Women's First Marriages and the Mean Duration (in Years) of Uncompleted First Marriage by Reason of Marital Disruption: Shimomoriya and Nitta 1716–1870, Nishijo 1773–1869, and Birth Cohorts of 1802–1821 in Nomo.

	Shimomoriya & Niita	Nishijo	Nomo
% Distribution of 1st Marriage Outcome:			
Completed first marriages	26.8	43.8	49.1
Uncompleted due to:			
Death of spouse	14.2	22.9	19.8
Own death	18.6	19.8	15.3
Divorce	33.6	9.7	11.3
Abscondong	5.8	0.8	0.0
Other reasons	0.3	0.0	0.0
Unknown	0.6	3.1	4.6
Total	73.2	56.2	50.9
(Number in sample)	(1159)	(258)	(373)
Mean Duration (in Yrs.) of First Marriage:			
All uncompleted marriages	9.9	11.4	9.9
Uncompleted due to:			
Death of spouse	17.0	15.1	12.5
Own death	13.8	11.7	11.3
Divorce	4.5	2.2	5.0
Absconding	11.6	6.0	—
Other reasons	—	—	4.3

Notes: Figures are based on ever-married women whose year of first marriage and its outcome were both recorded in the population registers. The records of 190 women in Shimomoriya and Niita, and 38 women in Nishijo were ended before they reached age 50.

Table 4 presents the percentage distribution of consequences of observed first marriages in the four villages in three regions. As shown in the table, there is a clear difference in the likelihood of completing first marriages between the two northeastern villages, on the one hand, and Nishijo and Nomo on the other. Only 27 percent of first marriages were completed in Niita and Shimomoriya whereas 43 percent of first marriages in Nishijo and almost one half of first marriages in Nomo were completed. The difference between Nishijo and Nomo may be within a similar range at the higher end of distribution. In contrast, the low rate of completion of first marriages in Niita and Shimomoriya is definitely at the lower end of distribution, compared with the rates of other Tokugawa Japanese villages. For example, in the village of Yokouchi in Suwa Province, around one-third of first marriages of women born in 1601–1871 remained intact when the women reached age 50 (Hayami 1973: 209). In six villages in Mino Province in the early seventeenth to late nineteenth century, the corresponding proportion ranged from 13 percent to 29 percent (Hayami 1980).

The percentage distribution of the reasons for dissolution of women's first marriages reveals more regional differences in the nuptiality regime. In Niita and Shimomoriya, divorce was the most common reason for marital dissolution, but widowhood was the

most common reason to end first marriage in Nishijo and Nomo. We should add that marital dissolution due to absconding (*kakeochi*) was not a negligible factor in Niita and Shimomoriya: 6 percent of women's first marriages ended in either her own or her husband's absconding. When a villager disappeared without permission from the local authority (either to escape from tax burden, to travel, or to elope), the missing was reported to have been absconded and then sought out. Customary law of this region held that if a husband absconded without returning for 10 months, his wife was legally allowed to re-marry (Nihonmatsu-Han-Shi Kankokai 1973: 572). In this sense, absconding can be seen as a variation of divorce. Thus, even in Tokugawa Japan where divorce frequently occurred, the northeastern region is remarkable for its high prevalence.

While both the proportion of uncompleted first marriages and the reasons for marital disruption varied between the two northeastern villages on the one hand, and Nishijo and Nomo on the other, the average duration of first marriage before its dissolution was similar among the villages. As shown in the bottom panel of Table 4, the mean duration in all regions was, on the average, around 10 to 11 years. However, there are large differences in the 'longevity' of first marriages according to the reasons of marital disruption. The mean duration of first marriage for women whose marriage ended by divorce was only 5 years or less, whereas the duration for women whose marriage ended by widowhood (husband's death) or their own death was 11 to 17 years. The smallest standard deviations for marital dissolution by divorce in all three regions suggest that divorces tended to have occurred in a relatively short duration after marriage in pre-industrial Japan as a whole. Although the rate of divorce varied by region, the first five years of marriage were crucial in determining the likelihood of continuation of marriage in all regions. This is consistent with the results from a life-table analysis of the duration of first marriage in the two northeastern villages in which the first six years were found to have comprised a testing period (Kurosu 1998).

The role of children in marriage continuity remains inconclusive. In Nomo, the proportion of childless women at the end of first marriage was distinctively higher among divorced women than among women whose first marriages were disrupted by reasons other than divorce. This implies, providing that there was a room for choice, the importance of children to the continuation of marriage. However, we need to be careful in seeing childlessness as the sole reason for divorce, particularly when marriage started when women were very young, as did in Niita and Shimomoriya. According to Kurosu (1998), it was only in the sixth or seventh year of marriage (i.e., when women were in their early twenties) that the proportion of women with children exceeded that of childless women. This implies that a considerable number of young women who married at very young ages were divorced without having had a chance to bear children.

Another area to be explored further is the poor physical and mental health of women who divorced. An analysis on determinants of mortality in Shimomoriya and Niita revealed that divorced women were much more likely to die during adulthood, compared to married women (Tsuya and Kurosu 1999). Given early and universal marriage prevalent in the two villages, this implies a possible 'marriage selection' in which a less healthy subgroup of women had divorced and then subsequently suffered from a

higher likelihood of death than its more robust counterparts. Physical and mental robustness of women must have been an important factor in these villages in which living standards tended to be low. In these circumstances, marriage must have taken place not only to insure family succession but also to obtain stable and inexpensive source of labor for family farming.

Remarriage

What happened after the dissolution of first marriage to those women whose marriage ended incompletely for reasons other than their own death? Table 5 presents selected measures of remarriages for women in the four villages who 'survived' at least five additional years after the dissolution of their first marriage. A large proportion of married women in these villages (with the exception of Nomo) were immigrants, and these immigrant women were likely to leave the village after being divorced or widowed, although some did stay on and remarry. To resolve the issue of selectivity, our analysis of women's remarriage therefore focuses on women who remained in the villages for at least five additional years after the end of their first marriage.[13]

As shown earlier, in all four villages the mean duration of first marriage was much shorter for women whose first marriage was disrupted by divorce, compared to women whose marriage was ended by death of spouse. Accordingly, the mean age at first marital disruption was much lower for divorced women than for widowed women in all villages. However, there are clear regional variations in the *likelihood* of women's remarriage. The proportion remarried (by age 50) among women who 'survived' for at least 5 years after their first marital dissolution was extremely high in Shimomoriya and Niita: around 70 percent. The corresponding proportion was, if not as high as in the two northeastern villages, relatively high among women in Nomo (55 percent), but it was low in Nishijo (25 percent). Providing that the rate of remarriage among women who survived at least 5 additional years after marital disruption was around 21 percent in nineteenth century German villages (Knodel 1988: 169), the likelihood of women's remarriage in Shimomoriya, Niita and Nomo was very high. Though the likelihood of women's remarriage in Nishijo was low as a Tokugawa Japanese village, it was still comparable to those in pre-industrial Europe.

The relatively low proportion of remarriage among women in Nishijo was partly attributable to the fact that women in the village tended to be older when their first marriage ended, compared to women in the other three villages (see Table 5). The mean age at first marital dissolution for women was around 35 in Nishijo whereas the corresponding figures for the northeastern villages and Nomo were around 27 and 33, respectively. The likelihood of women's remarriage is negatively associated with their age at first marital dissolution (Saito and Hamano 1999; Kurosu 1998; Kito 1988). It is especially high among women whose marriage was disrupted when they were at young

[13] Relative to currently married persons, divorced women (and men) were more likely to die because of their poor physical and mental health (Tsuya and Kurosu 1999) and thus would bias the results. The duration of 5 years after marital disruption is considered appropriate to remedy such selectivity. This is also the criterion used by Knodel (1988).

TABLE 5. The Mean Age of Women at the Dissolution of First Marriage, Proportion of Women Remarried by Age 50, and the Mean Duration from First Marital Dissolution to Remarriage: Shimomoriya and Niita 1716–1870, Nishijo 1773–1869, and Birth Cohorts of 1802–1821 in Nomo.

	All women	Reason of marital dissolution:		
		Divorce	Widowhood	Other[a]
Shimomoriya & Niita:				
Age at 1st marital dissolution				
Mean	27.1	18.6	36.6	29.4
S.D.	11.1	3.6	9.2	9.7
(N)	(280)	(134)	(114)	(32)
Percentage remarried by age 50	69.6	94.0	42.1	63.6
Yrs from marital dissolution to remarriage				
Mean	2.5	2.4	2.4	3.7
S.D.	3.4	3.1	4.1	3.5
(N)	(195)	(126)	(48)	(21)
Nishijo:				
Age at 1st marital dissolution				
Mean	35.1	22.3	37.4	36.0
S.D.	9.4	5.5	7.8	11.2
(N)	(56)	(8)	(43)	(5)
Percentage remarried by age 50	25.0	75.0	16.3	20.0
Yrs from marital dissolution to remarriage				
Mean	4.2	5.8	2.9	—
S.D.	3.1	3.4	2.1	—
(N)	(13)	(6)	(7)	
Nomo:				
Age at 1st marital dissolution				
Mean	32.7	28.9	35.8	25.6
S.D.	7.4	6.3	6.5	5.2
(P)	(119)	(37)	(71)	(11)
Percentage remarried by age 50	55.4	67.6	49.3	54.5
Yrs from marital dissolution to remarriage				
Mean	3.6	4.7	2.8	3.3
S.D.	3.5	4.8	2.0	2.6
(N)	(66)	(25)	(35)	(6)

Notes: Figures are based on ever-married women who experienced the dissolution of first marriage before reaching age 50 (age 45 for Nomo). The percentage remarried and the duration from first marital dissolution to remarriage are based on women surviving in the village of observation for at least additional 5 years after the marital dissolution.

[a] Including unknown.

reproductive ages (in their twenties and early thirties).

As shown in Table 5, there are also some regional variations in the tempo of remarriage. Similar to the regional patterns found in the likelihood of women's remarriage, the mean duration from the end of first marriage to remarriage was shortest in Shimomoriya and Niita (2.5 years), longest in Nishijo (4.2 years), and Nomo being in the

middle (3.6 years). This indicates that in the two northeastern villages where the likelihood of women's remarriage was very high, the tempo of remarriage was also rapid. In contrast, in Nishijo where the likelihood of women's remarriage was relatively low, the tempo of remarriage, if occurred, was also slow. Nonetheless, the tempo of remarriage was generally rapid in all villages, as the majority of women's remarriages took place within four years after the dissolution of their first marriage.

On the other hand, however, we see clear regional differences in the tempo of women's remarriage by reasons for their marital disruption. In Shimomoriya and Niita, the mean duration from the dissolution of first marriage to remarriage was equally short (2.4 years) for both divorced and widowed women. This tendency of frequent and quick remarriages among divorced and widowed women in Shimomoriya and Niita demands attention because this suggests that remarriage was an integral part of the marital institution in northeastern Tokugawa Japan in which marriage was easily disrupted despite the regime of early and universal marriage. On the other hand, in Nishijo and Nomo, the mean duration from marital disruption to remarriage was somewhat longer for divorced women (5.8 and 4.7 years, respectively) than for widowed women (2.9 and 2.8 years, respectively).

6. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Our analysis of first marriage in four Tokugawa Japanese villages revealed large and clear regional differentials in the patterns of first marriage. Although marriage was universal in all villages, the timing of first marriage was quite different among regions. In the two northeastern villages of Shimomoriya and Niita, the early marriage regime prevailed—women were likely to marry very early, and their marriage partners (future husband) were also likely to be young. By contrast, in the central Japanese village of Nishijo and the southwestern village of Nomo, women's first marriage tended to be later. Especially in the fishing village of Nomo, we found the late marriage regime, which was almost comparable to that in historical Western Europe. Further, there were clear regional variations in age differences between women and their husbands although the husband was older in a majority of women's first marriages in all four villages.

Returning to the arguments at the outset of this paper, the pre-industrial Japanese marriage pattern is clearly different from the Western European marriage pattern postulated by Hajnal (1965, 1982) in the sense that marriage was universal. However, extremely large regional differentials in women's age at first marriage in Tokugawa Japan suggest that the pre-industrial Japanese marriage pattern consisted of a wide range of marital behavior. The timing of women's first marriage in some parts of Tokugawa Japan—in particular, the central and southwestern regions—was definitely late as a historical Asian population. In this sense, as argued by Saito (1992), we can regard that the pre-industrial Japanese marriage pattern was unique. On the other hand, however, the first marriage pattern in northeastern Tokugawa Japan was clearly of early marriage, reminiscent of pre-modern China and India (Lee and Campbell 1997: 84–90).

This in turn implies that the marriage pattern in northeastern Tokugawa Japan may have adhered more closely to the Eastern European marriage pattern, as argued by Hajnal (1982). Further, generally large age differences between women and their husbands found in pre-industrial Japan are clearly different from the pre-industrial European family pattern characterized by Laslett (1977). However, large regional variations in age differences between spouses in Tokugawa Japan (relatively small in the northeast and large in the central and the southwest) also imply a partial applicability of the historical European pattern. Altogether, our findings suggest that, as argued by Hayami (1996), a multiple number of nuptiality regimes may have co-existed in pre-industrial Japan.

Our analysis also revealed clear regional differences in the outcome of first marriage and also in the likelihood and tempo of remarriage. In the northeastern villages of Shimomoriya and Niita where female marriage was early and universal, the overall likelihood of the dissolution of women's first marriage was extremely high, and it was much more likely that disruption was through divorce than by widowhood. Given that the proportion of marital dissolution by divorce was much higher in these two northeastern villages than in Nishijo and Nomo, their high likelihood of marital disruption is considered to have been due primarily to the high propensity of divorce among women who had married very young. Women in Shimomoriya and Niita were also highly likely to remarry, and remarry quickly after their first marital dissolution. Altogether, these findings imply that despite the instability of first marital unions, many women (and men) in northeastern Tokugawa villages managed to live in the matrix of family relations because its marital institution was flexible and facilitated easy and quick remarriage.

By contrast, in the central village of Nishijo and the southwestern village of Nomo, the likelihood of marital disruption was much lower than in the two northeastern villages. When first marriage was disrupted, it was more likely to have been caused by widowhood than by divorce. The regional differences in the likelihood of women's remarriage were also associated with the tempo of remarriage. In Nishijo where the likelihood of remarriage was very low, the tempo of remarriage was also slowest, whereas in Nomo where the likelihood of remarriage was higher (relatively high as a Tokugawa Japanese village), the speed of remarriage was also more rapid. Altogether, these findings suggest that the institutions of marriage in central and southwestern Tokugawa Japan were not as accommodating as that in northeastern Japan. Given the relatively high stability and longevity of their first marital unions, it may have been socially and economically unnecessary for the marital institutions to be flexible.

Large regional differentials in the patterns of first marriage found by this study raise two important points for consideration. First, the patterns of first marriage were a product of intricate interplay between their geo-political contexts, levels of economic development, and village labor conditions. For example, labor migration was a decisive factor in determining the timing of first marriage. Many residents in Nishijo experienced service before marriage while those in Niita and Shimomoriya did so mostly after marriage. These differences in the prevalence of pre-nuptial labor migration ac-

counted, at least in part, for large regional differentials in women's age at first marriage. The pattern of women's first marriage in Nomo was similar to that of Nishijo, more so than those in the two northeastern villages. However, labor migration was not the issue in determining the timing of women's first marriages in Nomo. Rather, it is the mode of production—fishing—that is thought to have shaped the patterns of first marriage, as fishing was at variance to the agrarian economies in other regions.

Second, the results of our analysis clearly suggest that a simple mean and proportion never married are overly simplified indicators of marriage patterns as they fail to tell the whole story about the social institution of marriage at work. In pre-industrial Western European populations in which 'natural fertility' (i.e., marital fertility without deliberate parity-specific control) prevailed, the timing of women's first marriage was the single most decisive factor in determining the overall level of fertility (family size): the earlier the timing of first marriage, the higher the fertility. If that were the case, very early marriage prevalent in northeastern Tokugawa Japan should have produced very high fertility. On the contrary, however, its level of fertility was one of the lowest among known Tokugawa areas (Tsuya and Kurosu 1998). Therefore, we can only conclude that the relationship between age at marriage and fertility in Tokugawa Japan was not necessarily a straightforward one, which in turn requires a 'multi-dimensional' analysis of marriage behavior.

Further studies are in order on the distribution, duration and consequences of first marriage in pre-industrial Japan. Clearly, marriage was almost imperative for villagers in all regions in Tokugawa Japan as a measure to adapt to the changing economic and geo-social environments. However, the way it mattered—its mechanism—needs to be carefully analyzed. In a society where marriage was universal, the roles of marriage becomes clear only when we go beyond the preoccupation with the formation of first marital unions.

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