

The Japanese Home and Family: Continuity and Transformation

Chair: Joy Hendry, Oxford Brooks University, UK

Japanese homes and families have long been understood in relation to an ideal of the 'Japanese house' as both a spatial structure and model of family organization. The Japanese word '*ie*' denotes both actual houses and the stem-families that are supposed to inhabit them. Moreover, the term has been a powerful rhetorical concept extending beyond family, and is used frequently to explain other forms of relatedness in Japan, such as company life or the national 'family'. The enduring significance of *ie* is visible in how normative imaginings of "Family" have withstood modern social, economic and urban changes. More recently, however, ideologies of, and lived experiences within homes and families have moved more substantially away from previous norms, with household patterns and life-courses becoming increasingly fragmented. Changes in society and the home suggest qualitative transformations in the ways that family membership and ideals are lived. Participants in this panel discuss both changing experiences and resilient features of family and home, focusing on the various dimensions and meanings of *ie*.

The Exclusion of Japanese Single Women in the Housing and Family System

Richard Ronald, OTB Research Institute, Delft University of Technology, Netherlands

In Japan, fertility rates have seen decline along with falling marriage rates in recent decades. There has been a concomitant growth in numbers of adult's remaining in the parental home and single-only households. This has exacerbated an already dramatic trend in societal ageing. Public discourses have been quick to blame feckless younger generations and in particular women, whose failure or reluctance to marry and start their own families has been put down to selfishness, individualism and advancing female career aspirations. However, this paper focuses on the housing situation of young and single Japanese women, identifying the role of the housing system, in combination with features of socioeconomic restructuring in Japan since the 1980s, in emerging patterns of gender inequality and decline in new family households.

Single Women and the Problems of Home and Family in Japan

Lynne Nakano, University of Hong Kong

This paper considers how single women view family. It finds that single women wish for intimate, caring relationships but resist dominant forms of marriage with its gender role division of labor, in-law relationships, and pressures to marry on schedule. Most women wish to wait to meet an appropriate partner defined as someone with whom they feel comfortable and who they love. Women who live with their parents may enjoy home life, but they feel that they should decide between marrying and providing elder care for their parents, and they worry about how to survive emotionally following the passing of their parents. The paper finds that single women feel generally satisfied with their lives even though they lack a clear vision of their future.

‘Sutekina kurashi’ – *Reconsidering Home and Family in Urban Japan*
Anemone Platz, Aarhus University, Denmark

The social and economic changes since the 1990s, on the one hand, and housing and interior trends on the other, are shaping the living styles of people and are affecting thoughts concerning housing and home as well as familial involvement. The paper deals with the Japanese versions of some phenomena also perceptible in other societies such as *homing* and *cocooning*. Quantitative and qualitative data shed light on how these trends have influenced younger generations in their understanding of and concern for their homes and new ways of home space organization, as well as how they have led to a growing interest in questions of interior and homeliness.

Older Residents in Communal Housing in Japan: Meaning of Home and Family
Maren Godzik, DIJ, Tokyo

The ageing of Japan’s society, the transformation of family structures and new lifestyles have caused a diversification of living arrangements of older people. Three-generation-households have been decreasing rapidly since the 1980s, while older-couple-households and elderly-single-households, in contrast, have been steadily increasing. A smaller number of elderly people are pioneering new forms of living: communal housing similar to the co-housing concepts in Europe and the US. This housing form enables older people to lead a relatively independent life while living in surroundings that can be described as being ‘family-like’. On the basis of in-depth interviews with elderly residents of alternative housing projects, conducted in 2009, I try to understand how individual housing histories may account for the residents’ choosing a form of living that differs considerably from common norms of living arrangements. A focus of my research is on the meaning of home and family.

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