



# Masterarbeit

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Demographic Transition and Ageing  
in China and Japan

Traditional Values and Modern Lifestyle

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# 1. Introduction

## *Background*

World populations are on the move. For many centuries now all over the world demographic transformation has become an important issue with astonishing implications on the development of whole countries and regions.

No matter which population trend a region faces, or which phase of the transition it passes, it will have to react as soon as it becomes evident that this will bring about negative consequences and vast changes in social, political and economic life.

While most developing countries still face the problem of overpopulation and high fertility and mortality, the developed world has to cope with a new problem, the rapidly ageing population. Especially in Europe and North America this issue has a great variety of implications and has led to heated discussions and new plans how to react to the greying society. However, as countries in Asia are moving forward in terms of their development, they also seem to be facing new challenges related to the ageing phenomenon, frequently even more drastic than countries in Europe or North America.

## *Purpose and Objectives of the Thesis*

In an effort to understand the process of the continuous demographic transformation and its implications this paper will investigate the historic demographic transition and recent population trends that are evolving in two Asian countries, China<sup>1</sup> and Japan, by comparing their path of population development. This paper, due to length limitations, predominantly refers to the demographic transformation in general using overall data. One however has to keep in mind that this generalisation may not depict the differences that still exist between different regions and between rural and urban areas due to the varying extent of development and modernization, especially in the PRC.

Regional demographic differences have become more pronounced in China as economic stratification deepens following the reform. Differences between urban and rural areas between rich and poor provinces portray a demographic profile that resembles the whole world.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Note: China as used in this work refers to the the People's Republic of China (PRC), the listing of the countries derives from their alphabetical order of their first letter.

<sup>2</sup> Brandt 2008: p.160

To analyse various regions in details would however exceed the scope of this thesis, therefore one has to draw overall assumptions as different regions may still lag behind in an earlier stage compared to the whole country.

The study has the objective to analyze the demographic evolution and study the consequences that will accompany it by first developing the theoretical framework and by then investigating the differences and similarities in the demographic development in the two countries studied. The focus will lie on their process of transition and their reaction to the current situation that they are in and a future where ageing will become a core problem of society.

Therefore, the main research questions that will be essential in this study will be:

(1) How the demographic transition occurred in Japan and China and where similarities and differences can be distinguished and (2) Whether traditional values will remain important enough, offering means to mitigate the problematic situation of a rapidly ageing society and if the government will be able to offer a sufficiently strong social security network.

It is of utmost importance to keep these questions in mind when trying to find out more about the process of demographic transformation that evolved over the decades and whether and how these two countries will be able to cope with the new situation and with the high pressure that will be exerted on society and the state.

### ***Structure of the Thesis***

After an introduction to the topic this paper as a first step will analyse the demographic transition of both states taking the main factors of demographic change — mortality and fertility — into account. Political and economic influences on the development of a population can be astonishing and may evolve as a trigger for different trends within a society. Both the recognizable changes as well as their underlying causes shall be compared. This is vital for a more detailed analysis as China and Japan are two countries that have experienced fundamental changes in their population structure over the past decades, frequently varying in time and magnitude.

After examining the recent population trends and comparing them to one another China and Japan will be analysed with reference to the ageing phenomenon. Many countries all over the world today already have different approaches to coping with the ageing societies. How will East Asia react? Will China and Japan step up to the new demographic challenges and offer a different approach towards these changes? For many years they relied on their traditional values in relation to family, ageing and care; now however, partially influenced by special population planning programmes and the permeating characteristics of economic growth and modern lifestyles, the situation is subject to change.

In the last section of this analysis the presence of traditional values in China and Japan and these two countries' demographic response to modernization and to new challenges arising as a consequence of demographic transition and ageing will be compared. It is claimed that a restoration of traditional values could assist the alleviation of the consequences of rapid ageing. Even though today no one can exactly predict how changes will commence, but still it is vital to take a look at the past and start analysing the possible outcome in order to react appropriately and in time.

### ***Methods and Analytic Approach***

In order to analyze the demographic transition in China and Japan it is first of all necessary to offer a basic overview on the theoretical framework that will be used. The information will be based on available literature on demography and demographic theories.

The main analytic part of this thesis will be a comparative analysis of demographic characteristics, historical developments, results and future trends by using various subject-relevant sources. For the comparative country overview and the projections on future trends statistical data from national census and from international organisations that are compiling data from various reliable sources will be used.

Although statistics will be chosen thoroughly it has to be said that especially in the case of China reliable sources of pre-modern statistical data are rare. One has to be aware when handling statistics that false or underreporting and sample bias can influence the data quality. This however has been questioned before usage. Even though data quality may be inconsistent they may be used to depict long-run trends.



In general the most reliable sources such as the national census from the national bureaus of statistics and the data that is compiled on a regular basis by the UN Population Division will be used which are generally seen as fairly reliable sources. The UN collects data on the basis of vital registers, censuses and surveys carried out by various institutions.

Being aware of the fact that official demographic statistics are frequently affected by incompleteness the Population Division tries to carry out analysis to remove these deficiencies to be able to calculate a population trend by use of the cohort-component method.

World Population Prospects presents estimates for 230 countries and areas. About half of those countries or areas do not report official demographic statistics with the detail necessary for the preparation of cohort-component population projections. The Population Division undertakes its estimation work in order to close those gaps. The availability of data gathered by major survey programmes, such as the Demographic and Health Surveys or the Multiple-Indicator Cluster Surveys, are useful in generating some of the data that is not currently being produced by official statistics.<sup>3</sup>

In China the first national census was carried out in 1953 by the State Statistical Bureau. During this time the quality of the data was influenced by underdeveloped research methods and political constellations. In 1984 the *National Statistics Law*<sup>4</sup> was introduced which since then regulates the collection of data and tries to reduce political interference. In retrospect the censuses for the year 1953 and 1964 were revised making the rough reconstruction of demographic history possible. Since the 1982 census the data published by the National Bureau of Statistics is seen as reliable.<sup>5</sup>

In Japan the statistical system already evolved in 1869. Since then population and economic data was collected by several institutes and ministries. A modern statistical survey system has been in place since 1971 when the Office of Statistics was introduced. Since 1920 the censuses have been conducted every 5 years and are generally seen as very reliable source.

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<sup>3</sup> UN Population Revision 2008

<sup>4</sup> cf. National Bureau of Statistics of China 1983

<sup>5</sup> cf. Banister 1991: p.12 et sequ.

## 2. Demography

Demography is the scientific study of human population, its structure, size, composition, distribution and dynamics.<sup>6</sup> The main factors influencing the already mentioned composition of a country's population are mortality, fertility and migration, which can be further subdivided into special research fields such as age specific or sex specific rates. These have been analysed for many centuries in order to monitor the development of the population as a whole as well as different groups in relation to economic, social and political changes.

### 2.1 The Demographic Transition

Over the centuries, world demography has changed dramatically and a so-called demographic transition has taken place, the basic idea of which having been already introduced by the American demographer Warren Thompson (1887-1973) in 1929 who interpreted 200 years of demographic history.<sup>7</sup> The theory was refined by further demographers such as Adolphe Landry, Frank W. Notestein and A.M. Carr-Saunders. Today we refer to it as the Demographic Transition Model or Theory<sup>8</sup>:

Demographic transition is the most important theoretical idea in social demography [...] the classical theory states that both the mortality and the fertility of a population will decline from high to low levels as a result of socio-economic development.<sup>9</sup> Its major contribution is its utility less as a predictor than as a general description of population change.<sup>10</sup>

The classic theory of demographic change originating from ideas by W. Thompson is based on a four-stage-model from the pre-industrialized to an industrialized society,<sup>11</sup> whereas in the past years further stages have been added to adapt to the changing circumstances.

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<sup>6</sup> cf. Poston / Bouvier 2010: p.3

<sup>7</sup> cf. Singh 1998: p.67

<sup>8</sup> cf. Dudler 1996: p.361 et sequ.

<sup>9</sup> Beaver in Peng 1991: p.4

<sup>10</sup> Poston / Bouvier 2010: p.273

<sup>11</sup> cf. Chesnais 1992: p.1

### ***Stage 1 - High stationary stage***

In the first or pre-transitional phase, which lasts many thousand years, the population is seen as being in a pre-industrial stage marked by high death and birth rates that fluctuate in accordance with natural catastrophes, diseases, food availability or wars.<sup>12</sup> The high death rate derives mainly from non-existence or lack of hygiene, sanitation and medical care. The high birth rate is directly linked to the high infant mortality rate and the need to produce offspring to help in the household, to work on the family's farmland or in the informal sector.<sup>13 14</sup>

### ***Stage 2 – Early expanding stage***

This first transitional stage or early expanding stage is marked by a fall in mortality. The sudden decline in the death rate is influenced by many factors, the most important being the improvement of health care and sanitation.<sup>15</sup>

Particularly changes in infant care reduce mortality drastically. The availability of clean water, sewage systems and certain standards related to food processing also has a positive impact on life expectancy. Furthermore, the ability to augment the food supply with the help of more efficient farming methods and new technologies contribute to the mortality reduction.<sup>16</sup>

In this context the population theory by Thomas Malthus may explain the growing population as he believed that the growth of the food supply can be linked directly to the growth of the population. Malthus stated that a linear growth of food supply results in exponential population growth.<sup>17</sup>

Besides the strong population growth due to reduced mortality, an age structure transition can be identified. As in this phase most of the deaths in the first stage used to be among children, the proportion of the population aged 0-10 years suddenly rises in the second stage. While growing older, more and more of the young survive and enter the reproductive cycle, thus maintaining the high fertility rate. The overall population grows rapidly, especially the lower part of the age pyramid.

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<sup>12</sup> cf. Poston / Bouvier 2010: p.271

<sup>13</sup> cf. Sinha / Zacharia 2009: p.283 et sequ.

<sup>14</sup> cf. Leisinger / Schmitt 1994: p.100

<sup>15</sup> cf. Sinha / Zacharia 2009: p.284 et sequ.

<sup>16</sup> cf. Leisinger / Schmitt 1994: p.58

<sup>17</sup> cf. Malthus 1798

### ***Stage 3 – Late expanding stage***

The main change in the late expanding stage is the fertility reduction. Following the declining death rate, the birth rate starts to fall with a time lag. Factors contributing to this process are:

- Newly introduced contraceptives allowing the parents more freedom in family planning
- Higher education made available for women who later may take on formal employment
- Parents recognising the reduction in the child mortality and thus adjusting the number of children they have accordingly
- Rising costs for children decreasing the wish for more children
- Laws introduced forbidding child labour

The results are clear — the previously large proportion of youth declines while people continue to age, leading to a reduction in the dependency ratio.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Stage 4 – Declining or post-industrial stage***

When birth and death rate are both low and remain constant; the fourth or post-industrial stage is reached. The population is stable but at a high developmental level, allowing a country or region to move towards an advanced industrialized economic system. The demographic transition from the pre-industrialized stage to the stage of a highly industrialized country may lead to further growth and development.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> cf. Leisinger / Schmitt 1994: p.102

<sup>19</sup> cf. Sinha / Zacharia 2009: p.285 et sequ.

## Stage 5

The fifth stage was originally not part of the transition model introduced in 1929, however, rapid changes make further developments in terms of population inevitable. This stage was introduced when countries began to move towards a total fertility rate (TFR) below the replacement rate while the life expectancy continued to rise.<sup>20</sup> Ageing and a continuous population decline is the consequence of this shift.<sup>21</sup>

### Demographic Transition Model

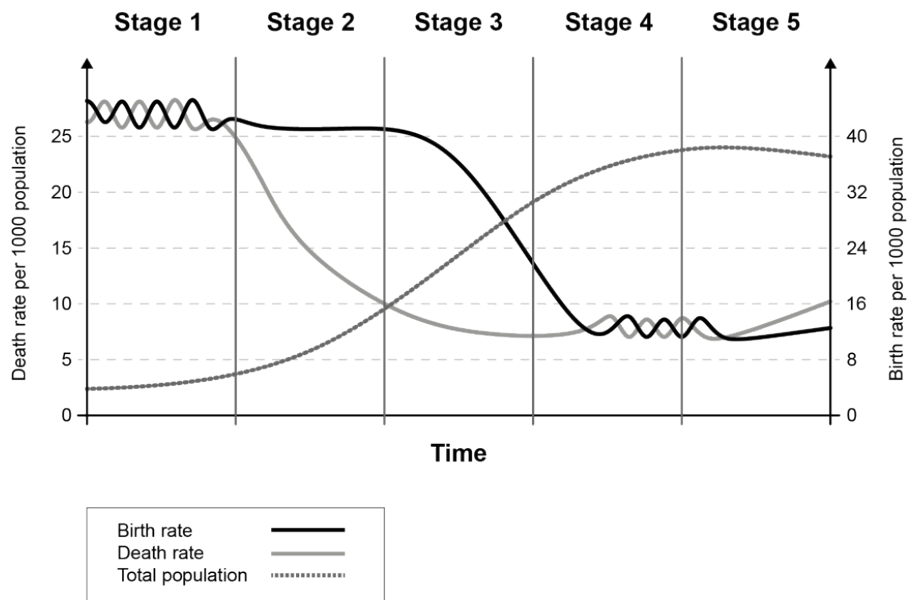


Figure 1: Demographic transition theory (including stage 5)

<sup>20</sup> cf. Blake 1947: p.97 et sequ.

<sup>21</sup> cf. Mirkin / Weinberger 2002: p.43 et sequ.

## 2.2 Transformation in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries

The world experienced a vital transformation of its population in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Never in human history has so wide a range of demographic situations prevailed in different parts of the world as at present, with population decline imminent in many countries, exponential growth still in prospect in many others, and most countries laced somewhere in between.<sup>22</sup>

In many industrialized countries, especially in the West as well as in a few more developed countries in the East, the population structure and composition faced a continuous change. Several factors including positive economic developments in many regions, improvements in health care and hygiene and advancements in food production methods led to previously unknown high growth rates.

While in Europe and North America this demographic transformation started quite early, in less developed countries the process commenced with a time lag. According to the Demographic Transition Theory, the transition from a pre-industrial to an industrialized economic system and therefore from a pre-industrial to an industrialized society, roughly follows the 4 stages earlier mentioned.

Most of the industrialized Western countries already reached stage 3 and 4 by the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the East, some countries especially those with a more western lifestyle, experienced changes in their demography comparable to Western states, while poorer, less developed countries (LDCs) were and often still are stuck in stage 2 or early stage 3.<sup>23</sup> The transition of LDCs characteristically occurs later but also at a higher speed. This, is however, only a rough generalization of a country's population development path as frequently special circumstances lead to deviations from the stage model.

In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century governments and various organisations all over the world began to examine the consequences of these transition changes. Many introduced population planning programmes to control the ongoing developments. Thereby they tried to regulate the composition, size and distribution of their countries' populations. These initiatives were mainly "legislative measures, administrative programmes, and

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<sup>22</sup> Jones 1997: p.2

<sup>23</sup> cf. Poston / Bouvier 2010: p.273

other governmental actions intended to alter or modify existing population trends in the interest of national survival and welfare.”<sup>24</sup>

At that time these regulations seemed necessary to enable and maintain modernization without throwbacks that could result from an extensive population growth. “Individuals and governments swung to view that small families were a good thing and that contraception not only was not obnoxious but on balance was the path of moral and responsible behaviour.”<sup>25</sup>

Starting in the 1960s several countries in the East began to abandon their pronatalist stance and introduced a number of programmes and policies with the intention to stabilize the country’s population growth and thereby remove barriers to economic growth.<sup>26</sup> East Asia at that time was regarded as a very good example for the adoption of population policies and other regulating methods as several countries achieved vast changes within a relatively short period compared to other regions, whether underdeveloped or already industrialized.

Within three decades, 1960-90, they were transformed from an economic backwater to the most dynamic region in the world economy. Countries that were impoverished in 1960 joined the ranks and, in some respects, surpassed the high-income countries of the West.<sup>27</sup>

The greatest shifts emerged in Japan and China, whose population transformation was and still is partially influenced by its population policies and its economic development at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. These two countries were very eager to reach certain goals within a short timeframe and did not shy away from using strict policies, laws and other mechanisms to reach these.

In the following chapters, the population planning methods and policies and the influence of economic growth on the society will be examined and compared in the case of China and Japan to evaluate the magnitude of their influence on population developments in these two East Asian countries.

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<sup>24</sup> Eldridge in Poston / Bouvier 2010: p.338

<sup>25</sup> Jones 1997: p. 21

<sup>26</sup> cf. Mason 2001: p.5

<sup>27</sup> cf. Mason 2001: p.5

## 2.2.1 Population policies in the People's Republic of China

For a long time the dominating belief in many countries in East Asia was that a rising population would result in a strong workforce and therefore lead to high production and rapid economic growth. Abortions were forbidden and birth control was classified as murder. Especially in China this belief was supported in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century while in Japan this notion was already weakening during that time.<sup>28</sup> A rethinking slowly occurred in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century when one started to sympathise with the ideas put forward by Thomas Robert Malthus.

No limits whatever placed to the production of the earth; they may increase forever and be greater than any assignable quantity, yet still the power of population being a power of a superior order, the increase of the human species can only be kept commensurate to the increase of the means of subsistence by the constant operation of the strong law of necessity acting as a check upon the greater power.<sup>29</sup>

As previously mentioned, Malthus believed that in the future populations would start growing more rapidly than the world-wide food supply, leading to stagnation, recessions and social grievances.

In China it took longer to cast off its pronatalist attitude as in 1949, when the Communist Party of China (CCP) founded the People's Republic of China, Mao Zedong was still of the opinion that "even if China's population multiplies many times, she is fully capable of finding a solution, the solution is production."<sup>30</sup>

He saw every member of society as a precious gift and did not listen to early Chinese demographers such as Ma Yinchu who already advocated a "New population theory" which pointed out that fertility control was a necessary means of supporting China's development. "Ma's report was [...] a direct assault on one of the most cherished beliefs of the country's leader."<sup>31</sup>

Apart from this fact, China was far more involved in rebuilding the national economy and showed little interest in population developments.

It was only when the results of the first census in 1953 showed its extreme population growth that Mao Zedong slowly began to change his attitude towards population planning.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> cf. Pearce 2010: chapter 9

<sup>29</sup> Malthus 1798: p.8

<sup>30</sup> Mao in Peng 1991: p.17

<sup>31</sup> Pearce 2010: p.289

<sup>32</sup> cf. Orleans 1957: p.567



One of the catalysts was the sudden reduction of the mortality rate due to improvements in the area of health care, hygiene and food supplies under Mao's leadership. Campaigns were launched to improve the overall health and living standard of the Chinese population and within a decade the mortality rate was nearly halved.<sup>33</sup>

(see figure 2)

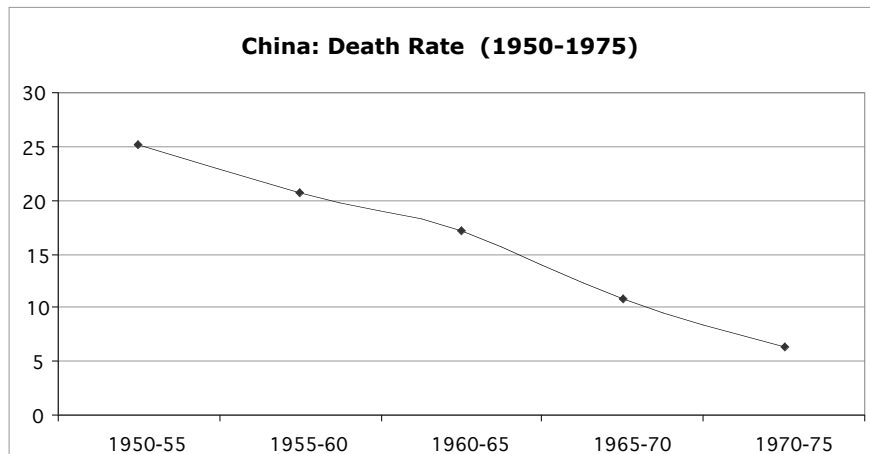


Figure 2: China: Crude Death Rate (deaths per 1000 population) 1950-1975<sup>34</sup>

The result was a population explosion as the fertility rate remained on a high level while the mortality rate dropped continuously. In 1950 a new marriage-law was introduced, but with the goal to improve the role of women in society rather than to influence population developments.<sup>35</sup>

Additionally the first Baby Boom from 1949 to 1957 also became noticeable and the outcome, showing that the population was one third larger than expected shocked the government and led to more engagement in the field of population policies.<sup>36</sup>

Although birth control was introduced to a certain extent in 1956 and the Abortion Act led to the legalisation of abortions, family planning was for a long time not seen as the solution to control the population increase and so the main actions remained the distribution of information material pointing out the positive consequences of a smaller family.<sup>37</sup> Special committees were introduced to spread this information; however, they remained virtually unseen and disappeared soon after their implementation.

<sup>33</sup> cf. Beaglehole / Bonita 1997: p.227 et sequ.

<sup>34</sup> cf. UN Population Revision 2008: Crude Death Rate

<sup>35</sup> cf. Tien 1987: p.442

<sup>36</sup> cf. Zhu 2003: p.463

<sup>37</sup> cf. Poston / Bouvier 2010: p.348

On the whole, the first initiatives announced in the 1950s to control births were introduced with the sole aim to improve maternal and child health and not to control population growth.<sup>38</sup> This assumption is also reflected in the very minor decrease in the birth rate of the 50s and 60s that can be seen in figure 3.

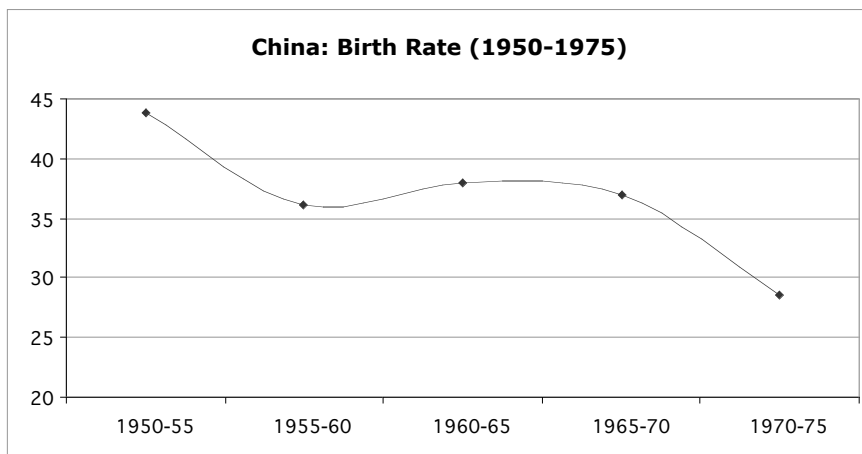


Figure 3: China: Crude Birth Rate (births per 1000 population) 1950-1975<sup>39</sup>

In the 1960s a number of initiatives were realised to influence population growth but it has to be noticed that most of them evolved very slowly and had only a limited impact. In 1961, *late marriage* was set up as the main goal in population planning measures; yet slight success was only reached in urban areas.

In this phase Zhou Enlai was the one who tried very enthusiastically to develop a new family policy following his own principle “one is not too few, two are ideal, and three are too many”<sup>40</sup>. Yet, it seems obvious that due to the establishment of the Commune System in the course of the Great Leap Forward from 1958 to 1961, the Great Famine from 1959 to 1961 and the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976<sup>41</sup> Zhou’s plans remained largely unnoticed as other problems were to tackle. During this phase most of the family planning programmes were postponed to some point in the future.

Another Baby Boom from 1962 to 1970<sup>42</sup>, the logical consequence after such a long time of destruction and suppression, and the more stable situation provided the basis for the introduction of a concrete population policy by the Chinese government..

<sup>38</sup> cf. Peng 1991: p.27

<sup>39</sup> cf. UN Population Revision 2008: Crude Birth Rate

<sup>40</sup> Tien 1987: p.442

<sup>41</sup> cf. Twitchett / Fairbank 1991: p.231 et sequ., p.641 et sequ.

<sup>42</sup> cf. Ma 2012: p.118

It was the time when Mao finally realized the lack of involvement and the need to act. A leading group for family planning was launched and contraceptives were offered free of charge in the whole of China.<sup>43</sup>

Following this basic decisions, Premier Zhou Enlai managed to establish the third and by then largest family policy “Later Longer Fewer” (Wan, Xi, Shao) in 1971, which notably should promote later marriage, longer time spans between births and fewer children.<sup>44</sup>

The original intent of the Chinese government in phasing in family planning policy was two-fold: to face the challenge of feeding its rapidly growing population and to minimize the imbalance between the nation’s economic development and population growth by restricting fertility rates.<sup>45</sup>

During this phase, Ma Yinchu was rehabilitated and his theory was formally accepted as it had proven itself right. He was then made honorary president of Beijing University.<sup>46</sup>

Although there were virtually no coercive sanctions during this time, this policy proved to work very efficiently. From 1970 to 1980 fertility quickly declined, particularly due to the availability of contraceptives and propaganda broadcasting the idea that a smaller family would bring benefits to every member of society. The total fertility rate dropped from 6 to 2.5 children per woman. (see figure 5)

With the end of the Mao Era and the promotion of Deng Xiaoping and his Policy of Reform and Opening the Chinese leadership decided that a too rapidly growing society would be a great burden for the country’s development and its rise to power; therefore they saw the need to step in as a stabilising agent by realising the four modernisations of agriculture, industry, national defence as well as science and technology.<sup>47</sup>

The second census conducted in 1979 and population projections by two scientists, Song Jian and Yu Jingyuan<sup>48</sup>, unearthed the fact that China’s population was approaching one billion (see figure 4). It can be assumed that this number certainly raised fears that the gains that had been achieved in the past years would be reversed.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> cf. Peng 1991: p.23

<sup>44</sup> cf. Tsai 1987: p.569

<sup>45</sup> Chiu 2004: p.5

<sup>46</sup> cf. Li 1995: p. 261

<sup>47</sup> cf. Yuan 2010: p.105

<sup>48</sup> cf. Poston / Dudley 2010: p.349

<sup>49</sup> cf. Greenhalgh 2005/2: p.260 et sequ.

## ***The One-Child-Policy***

This led to the government's decision to intervene with measures that were harsher than ever before to strictly control the growth of China's population. Thereupon, family planning was included in the new Chinese Constitution in 1982 and the One-Child-Policy was introduced.

This new situation represented an incremental development of past policies:

The family planning programme is based on three policies of long standing: those of late marriage, late pregnancy and fewer births. Of these the third element is now being reinterpreted so as to make the one-child family [...] the basic norm.<sup>50</sup>

The main motivation behind this policy was the country's economic growth. At that time statistics forecasted that a drop to a fertility rate of 0.8 and a population of less than 1.2 billion in the year 2000 could keep the population growth under control and make the planned increase of the per capita income from 250 USD in 1979 to about 800-1000 USD at the turn of the century possible.<sup>51</sup> (see figure 4)

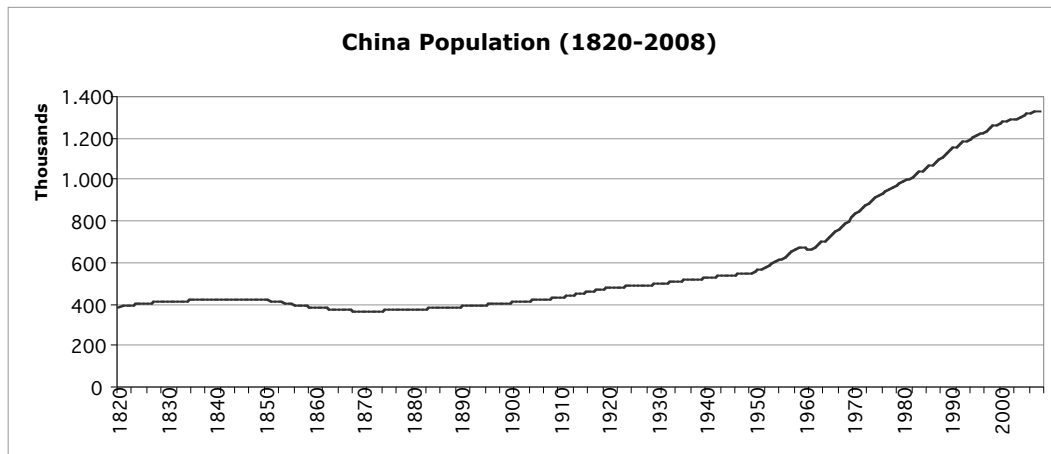


Figure 4: China: Population Growth 1820-2008<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Saith 1982: p.493

<sup>51</sup> cf. Peng 1991: p.24

<sup>52</sup> cf. Maddison 2008

After the introduction of this new family policy every woman was only allowed to have one child. On the one hand the government offered economic incentives such as financial assistance, housing, additional farmland, schooling fee reductions, free medical care, etc. to the parents who followed the new regulations and stressed that the policy must be applied on a voluntary basis. On the other hand the special family planning bureaus at provincial and local levels often did not refrain from using strict measures and even force to implement the new laws and to reach their given quotas. Abortions or sterilisations were enforced; financial sanctions were conducted and if it was already too late, many families also became victims of forced infanticide.<sup>53</sup>

### ***Regional disparities of the population policies***

What is necessary to be mentioned is that the One-Child-Policy however had varying effects and the demographic situation differed in rural and urban areas and from province to province mainly influenced by “socio-cultural factors, the degree of governmental control, and socio economic considerations”.<sup>54</sup> While in urban areas the compliance with the policy was nearly universal, it met substantial resistance in rural areas. Additionally the level of implementation and application of the incentives and punishments mentioned earlier varied.

Most of the families having more than one child live in remote areas as the government could not reach out as easily to control the peasantry, while in the cities regulations were carried out more easily, severe punishments could however be found in both rural and urban areas. In urban areas people also became more obedient as they saw the direct consequences of the rapidly growing population that was not as visible to rural peasants, who in turn felt less pressure to reduce their family size.<sup>55</sup> In rural areas a big family was assumed to provide a more efficient workforce that could offer the family better economic prospects and more support during old age. Additionally the living situation one faced also played a vital role, as especially urban areas became more crowded and one could only afford small flats due to rising housing prices which further lowered the possibilities for families to have more children.<sup>56</sup> The government also faced the hardship of having to step up against long lasting traditions such as the son preference.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> cf. Skalla 2004: p.336, p.346 et sequ.

<sup>54</sup> Snyder 2000: p. 1

<sup>55</sup> cf. Snyder 2000: p.16 et sequ.

<sup>56</sup> cf. Powell / Cook 2007: p.93 et sequ.

<sup>57</sup> cf. Poston et al 2006: p.149

This and the different extent of economic development<sup>58</sup> results in varying rates with regard to mortality and fertility. This also influences the level of demographic transition and its consequences from region to region.

During China's rapid industrialization, state economic development has centred on urban industrial progress. This development has tended to strengthen the infrastructure of services in urban areas at the expense of rural areas.

### ***Phases of the One-Child-Policy***

The One-Child-Policy evolved in five phases.<sup>59</sup> In the first phase, the restrictions were very harsh in terms of quantity. The second phase began in 1984 when the main goal of the policy became quality; parents in particular began to rethink the traditional extended family system and wanted to offer their children better lives. As a result of this change, the government adapted a more human approach and started to allow exceptions from the one child limit for minorities, parents that were single children themselves, who had remarried or in the case of a physically or mentally handicapped first child. The third phase started in the late 1980s when it became clear that the desired results could not be reached. It was agreed on that the policy needed to be enforced even more strictly than before and additional regulative institutions needed to be installed.

In the year 2000, the fourth phase commenced when criticism about China's human rights violations grew rapidly and the One-Child-Policy was classified as one of the harshest population policies worldwide.<sup>60</sup> It is interesting to note that it was only in 2001 that the one child policy was first embodied into national law while it already had such a vast effect as a policy even before the government took this step.<sup>61</sup>

The rapid fertility drop since the 1960s which can partially be traced back to the measures applied during the population planning period becomes clear when analyzing figure 5.

The Chinese central authorities enforce an unpopular birth-control policy by exerting the local authorities to coerce the people and to force them to accept the program's mandates. The pressure continues until opposition becomes so strong that a relaxation of the policy occurs, which itself leads to more new births than can be allowed, thus leading to another wave of coercion. This causes the kinds of fluctuations one sees in China's vacillating fertility rates.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> cf. Poston et al 2006: p.142

<sup>59</sup> cf. Greenhalgh 2005/2: p.212 et sequ.

<sup>60</sup> cf. Skalla 2004: p.334

<sup>61</sup> cf. Greenhalgh 2008: p.319

<sup>62</sup> Aird in Poston / Bouvier 2010: p.349

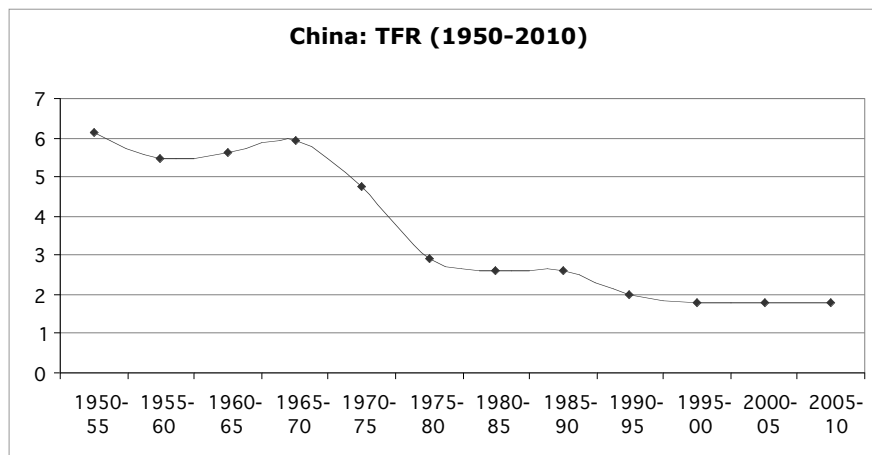


Figure 5: China: Total Fertility Rate (children per woman) 1950-2010<sup>63</sup>

Today the One-Child-Policy is still the core concept of the Chinese population and family planning programme and the population growth is regulated by its binding laws. Yet due to the growing pressure of ageing it is becoming more flexible and slowly moving towards a Two-Child-Policy, allowing most of the families where both parents themselves were only-children or whose first child is a girl to have another child.<sup>64</sup> This can be seen as the start of a new and therefore fifth phase of this policy.

From a certain point of view the policy was a success, as the growth rate slowed down, which was said to enable the further development of the country. Even though the population momentum still keeps the population growing (see figure 4), it is by far slower than it would have been without the Chinese population policy. It is being estimated that without the One-Child-Policy there would have been 300 to 400 million more births within the past 30 to 40 years.<sup>65</sup>

On the other hand, the One-Child-Policy caused much harm and sorrow. Whole generations still suffer from the horrible actions they were forced to undertake. In some areas, especially in the cities, there is less coercion today and more free will involved when reducing the number of offspring while in some remote areas the regulations were and often still are being ignored.<sup>66</sup>

Obviously not only the Chinese people are troubled by the existing family laws; the government too will have to face new challenges arising from its interference. An unnatural gender ratio, too few people in the working class, few school children and of course the problem many countries face nowadays — a rapidly ageing society and an

<sup>63</sup> cf. UN Population Revision 2008: Total Fertility Rate

<sup>64</sup> cf. Sanderson / Tan 1995: p.115 et sequ.

<sup>65</sup> cf. Den Boer / Hudson 2011

<sup>66</sup> cf. Greenhalgh 2005/2: p.232 et sequ.

inadequate pension and support system are just some of the challenges China will be confronted with in the future. These factors will be focused on in a later chapter after taking a closer look at the population evolution in Japan within the last centuries.

## 2.2.2 Population evolution in Japan

In comparison to the vast and still ongoing family planning programmes in China, Japan experienced less coercive and a smaller number of governmentally induced population regulation measures during a brief period of its history — “instead, economic and social pressures produced a strong motivation for fertility control.”<sup>67</sup> Following an observation by Vogt it seems apparent that the rather limited interference within the realm of family life derives from the historical and ideological taboos that have a long tradition in Japan.<sup>68</sup>

The first stage of the Japanese demographic transition characterized by a pre-modern society and a high birth and high death rate can be found in Japan before and during the Tokugawa period (1603–1868). The first immense population growth occurred after the first modernization movement during the Meiji-Restoration in 1868 and paralleled the modernization movement at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The continuous political and economical improvements caused a rapid decline of the death rate and a rise in fertility gradually leading to the second phase of the Japanese demographic transition at the turn of the century.

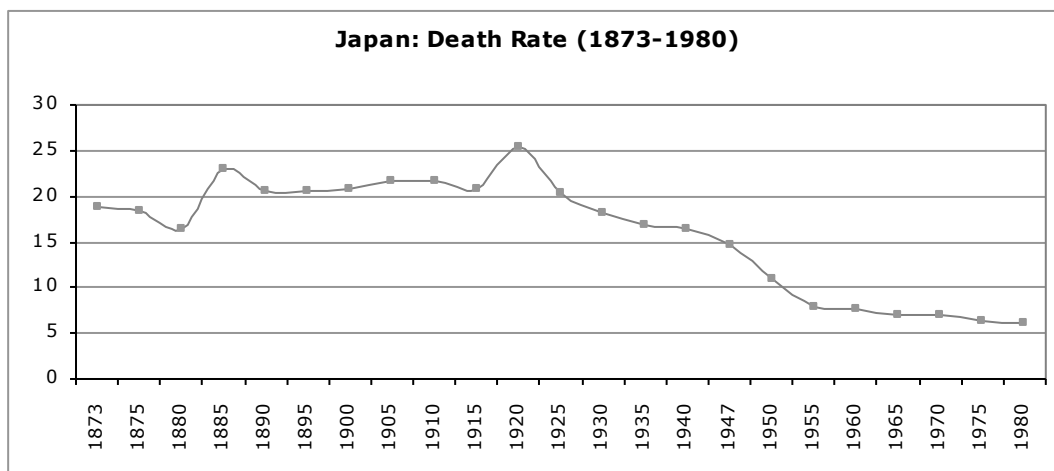


Figure 6: Japan: Crude Death Rate (deaths per 1000 population) 1873-1980<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Kuroda 1987: p.18

<sup>68</sup> cf. Vogt 2008: p.17

<sup>69</sup> cf. Statistic Bureau Japan: Crude Death Rate



The rapid reduction in mortality was largely due to improved nutrition, higher hygiene standards and better overall public health provided by the government.

Especially infant and child mortality declined in part due to the ban of *mabiki* (infanticide) and *datai* (induced abortions) in 1880.<sup>70</sup> All this resulted in a rapidly growing population from 34.98 million in 1873 to 73.9 million in 1943<sup>71</sup>, while the number of live births rose from 809,487 in 1873 to 2,253,535 in 1943.<sup>72</sup>

The government considered this a positive development at first. Until the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Japanese officials also considered a large population favourable for a country's development. In China this pronatalist attitude was maintained several decades longer.

To maintain a high fertility, it took the legislative step of prohibiting abortion and infanticide, which had been widely practiced during the Edo era. In addition, the government prohibited the manufacture and distribution of contraceptive drugs and devices in an effort to suppress birth control.<sup>73</sup>

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a group of scientists began to speculate about the dangerous effects of rapid population growth. In 1927, a *Board of Inquiry on Population and Food Problems* was convened.<sup>74</sup> Unexpectedly, they did not discuss the ongoing population growth but instead debated how food production could be increased to supply the growing Japanese population.

The *Guidelines for Establishing Population Policy* introduced in 1942 continued to support population growth through additional measures supporting pregnant women and nursing mothers and by offering tax benefits to larger families.<sup>75</sup>

While figure 6 illustrates the drop of the crude death rate at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, figure 7 clearly shows the continuous rise in the number of births from 1873 to the 1920s, which is characteristic for the second phase of demographic transition.

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<sup>70</sup> cf. Atoh 2003: p.8

<sup>71</sup> cf. Statistic Bureau Japan

<sup>72</sup> cf. Statistic Bureau Japan

<sup>73</sup> Inoue 2001: p.25

<sup>74</sup> cf. Okazaki in Inoue 2001: p.25

<sup>75</sup> cf. Okazaki in Inoue 2001: p.25

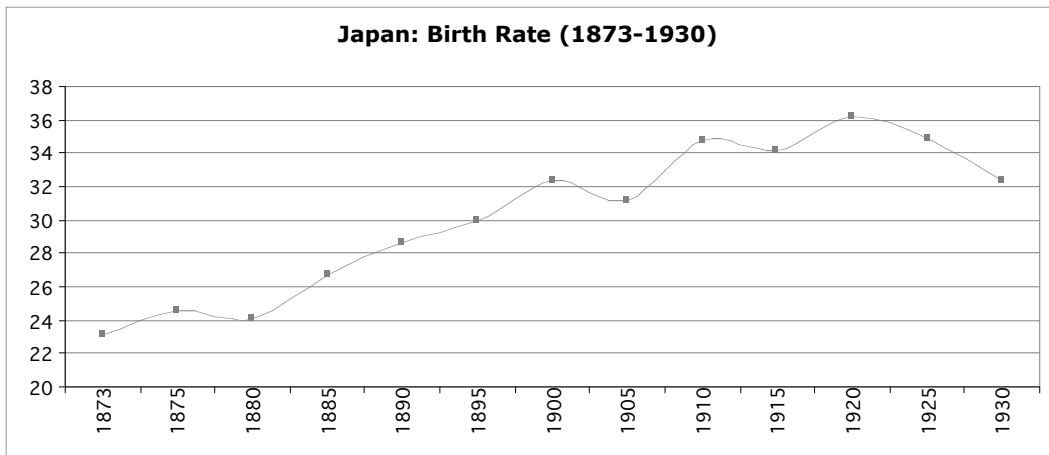


Figure 7: Japan: Crude Birth Rate (births per 1000 population) 1873-1930<sup>76</sup>

As the fertility started to drop especially during the Second World War, the pronatalist attitude was kept up.<sup>77</sup> However, this preference decreased as the longing for a smaller yet economically stronger family grew, paralleled by the rising presence of feminist movements for self-determination, the spreading out of educational possibilities and the reduction of illiteracy.

In the 1930s, Japan moved into the third phase of the demographic transition characterised by a substantial decline of its fertility in the following decades as shown in figure 8.

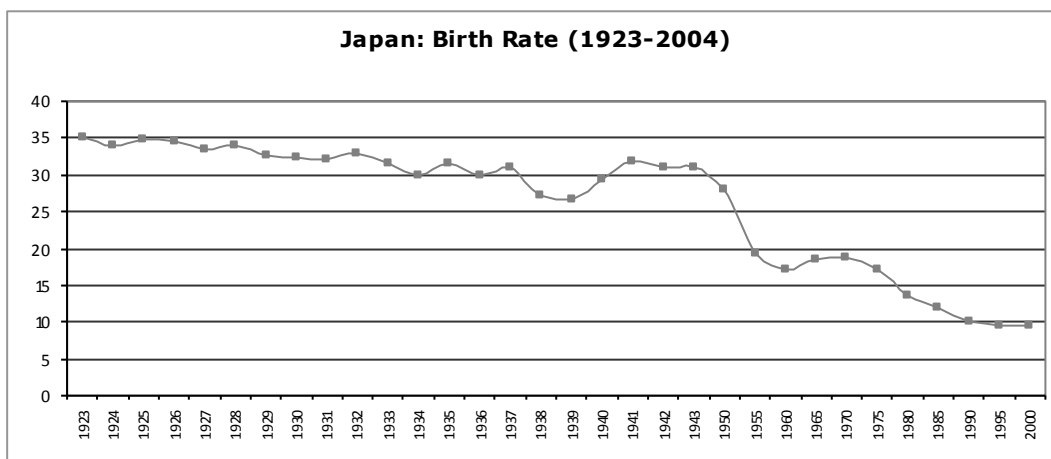


Figure 8: Japan: Crude Birth Rate (births per 1000 population)<sup>78</sup>

<sup>76</sup> cf. Statistic Bureau Japan

<sup>77</sup> cf. Norgren 2001: p.22 et sequ.

<sup>78</sup> cf. Statistic Bureau Japan

Japan experienced a Baby Boom after the Second World War in the years from 1947 to 1949 (see figure 8), this was earlier compared to China where the Baby Boom started in 1949 due to the civil war which lasted from 1945 to 1949. The population growth resulting from these Baby Booms could be felt stronger in Japan than in China as the land reforms, the Great Leap (1958-1960)<sup>79</sup> and the Great Famine (1959-1961) at the same time slowed the growth rate in the PRC (see figure 4).<sup>80</sup>

During the occupation by the allied forces, further pressure to introduce population planning measures was imposed. This finally led to the introduction of various organisations trying to make birth control an accepted method of family planning. The government yet did not let go of its pronatalist stance to support population growth.

In 1951 the Japanese Cabinet and the Ministry of Health and Welfare began to promote birth control. All of a sudden contraceptive production and their usage rose.<sup>81</sup> With the realisation of the new *National Eugenic Protection Law* of 1948 allowing sterilizations and abortions under certain circumstances, Japanese society suddenly had access to a great variety of methods to determine the number of children.<sup>82</sup>

Japan experienced a precipitous decline in fertility during the decade following the postwar baby boom of 1947-49, and then her fertility rates leveled off. The rapid decline in fertility paralleled liberalization of abortion laws and an active campaign to disseminate contraceptive information.<sup>83</sup>

As can be seen in figure 9 the sharpest drop in fertility appeared after the post-war Baby Boom and another one in 1966 which was due to believes in the negative impact of the year of the fire horse *Hinoeuma*<sup>84</sup>. From 1971 to 1974 Japan experienced a second Baby Boom resulting from the first boom. In sum the TFR from 1960 onwards towards the turn of the century was rather stable indicating just a steady and slight decline.

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<sup>79</sup> cf. Yuan et al. 2010: p.100

<sup>80</sup> cf. Ma 2012: p. 117 et sequ.

<sup>81</sup> cf. Inoue 2001: p.30

<sup>82</sup> cf. Masanori in Schultz 1974: p.234

<sup>83</sup> Masanori 1974: p.225

<sup>84</sup> cf. Masanori in Schultz 1974: p.171

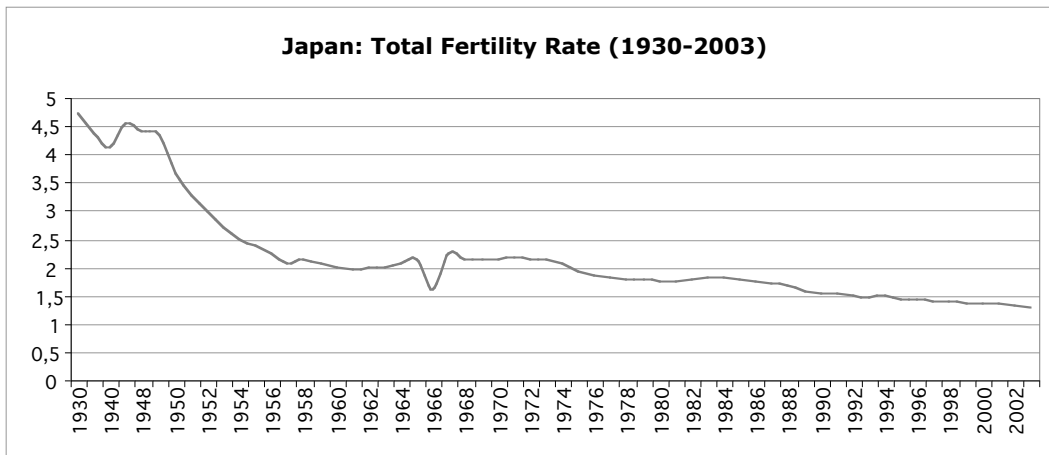


Figure 9: Japan: Total Fertility Rate 1930-2003<sup>85</sup>

It can be assumed that this stability since the 1950s encouraged the government to stop any further activities in the field of family planning, while the economic-slow-down during this phase led to a move away from the pronatalist position. In the ensuing decades the government retreated from any major actions in the field of family planning.<sup>86</sup>

Although demographers in Japan had had keen interest in this below-replacement-fertility phenomenon and tried to analyze its demographic as well as social and economic causes, the Japanese government remained passive during the 1970s and 1980s<sup>87</sup> while the overall population was still growing as shown in figure 10.

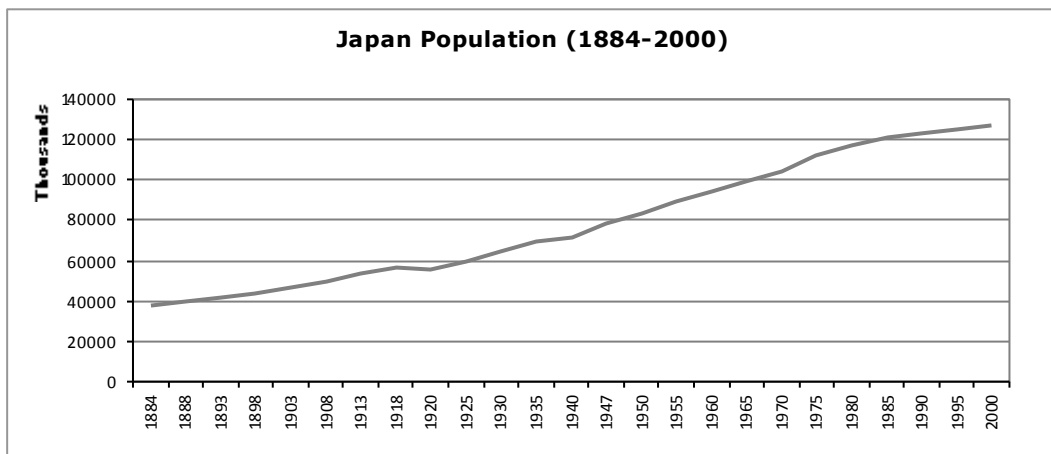


Figure 10: Japan: Population Growth 1884-2000<sup>88</sup>

<sup>85</sup> cf. Statistic Bureau Japan

<sup>86</sup> cf. Inoue 2001: p.31 et sequ.

<sup>87</sup> cf. Atoh / Akachi 2003: p.1

<sup>88</sup> cf. Statistic Bureau Japan

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries Japan took action and introduced policies to induce a better regional distribution and slowly began to react to the appearing population challenges. The aim of these measures was to slow the continuing population growth and to react adequately to the challenges it posed. The variety of factors leading to the continuous fertility reduction and the consequences deriving from it will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters in comparison to the developments in China.

### **2.2.3 Demographic Transformation Compared**

Previous chapters reveal that when taking a closer look at the population development of the Chinese and the Japanese societies it becomes apparent that both underwent a similar population transition in the last two centuries as predicted by the Demographic Transition Model earlier mentioned. As the PRC is characterized by a great regional disparity in its economic and social development some areas are even further in their demographic transition than others, especially remote regions lag behind.

In general terms however the findings suggest that what differs is the speed and magnitude of these two countries' population changes, the timeframe when these changes occurred and especially the extent of government influence and economic advancements.

The analysis shows that while the government and its family planning policies in China put stronger pressure on the society and the PRC's demographic development, in Japan it was rather the rapid and relatively early economic development (improved technologies, higher incomes etc.), the political stability and new ways of thinking and the resulting modern lifestyle (education, contraceptive technology, female empowerment and greater female labour market participation, etc.) that accounted for great changes in its population structure rather than its population policies.<sup>89</sup>

Figures 11 and 12, showing the development of birth and death rates in China and Japan over the last centuries, will be used in this chapter to analyze and compare the demographic transition of these two countries.

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<sup>89</sup> cf. Canning 2011: p.4 et sequ.

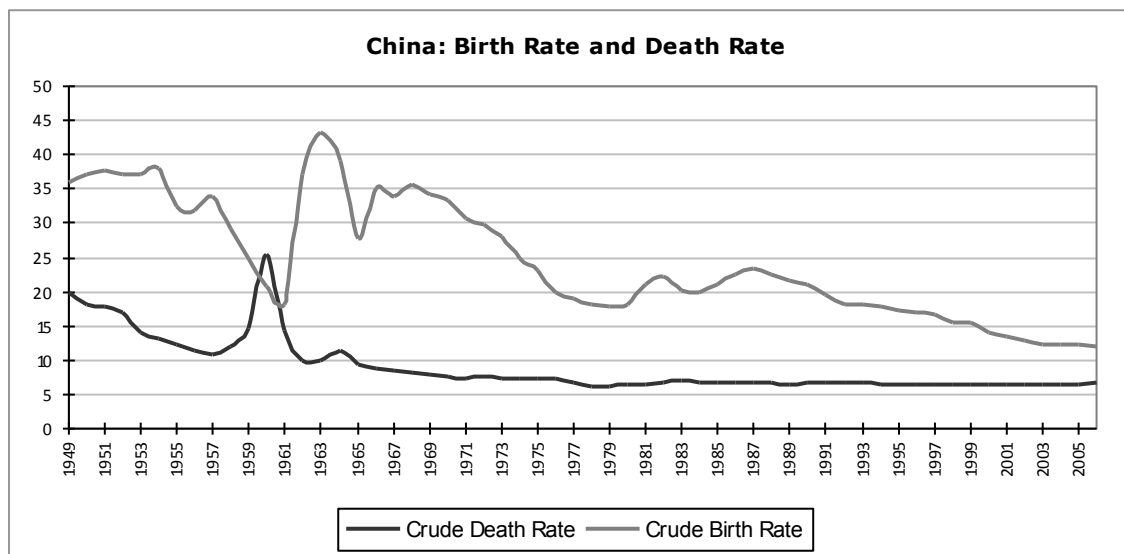


Figure 11: China: Birth and Death Rate (per 1000 population) 1949-2006<sup>90</sup>

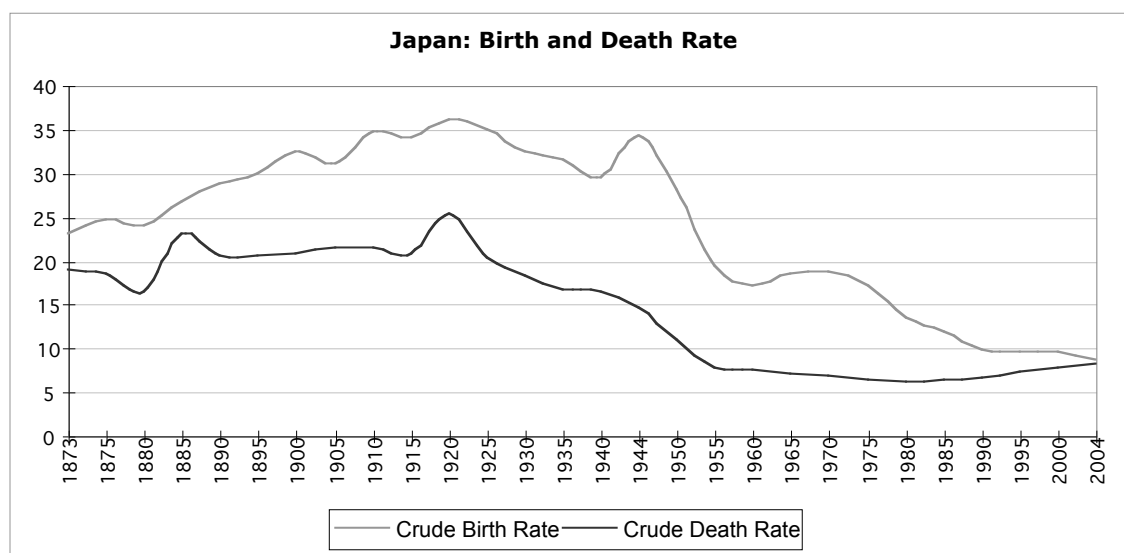


Figure 12: Japan: Crude Birth and Death Rate (per 1000 population) 1873-2004<sup>91</sup>

The first phase consists of a fairly stationary population, characterized by high and slightly fluctuating birth and death rates and a stable population with only slight natural increase. Underdeveloped health care keeps the death rate high, especially for infants, while families are forced to have many children during this pre-industrial phase in order to keep pace with the high demand for labour by its main economic sector of farming. These factors in turn influence the maintenance of a high level fertility rate.

<sup>90</sup> cf. National Bureau of Statistics 2007

<sup>91</sup> cf. Statistic Bureau Japan

It is apparent from figure 12 that the first phase for Japan ranges from before 1873 until the 1920s. For China there is no data regarding death and birth rates at such an early phase since the first Chinese National census was only carried out in 1953. Japan on the other hand had already conducted population estimates and collected regional household and family related data since 1872.<sup>92</sup>

It can be assumed however, taking figure 13 into account that the steady population size in China resulted from relatively stable birth and death rates in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

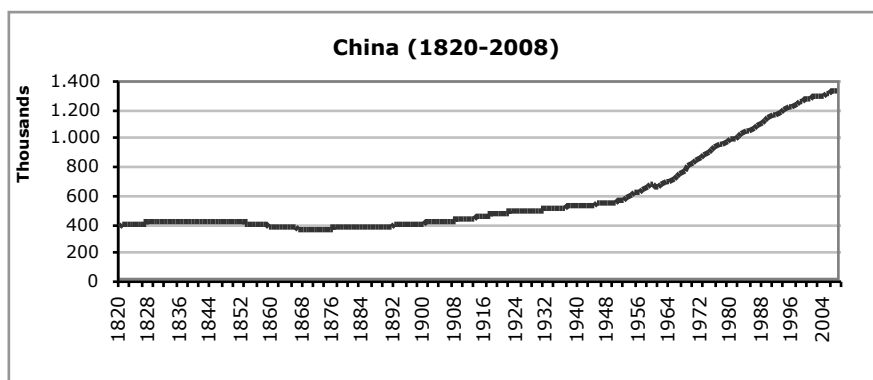


Figure 13: Population China 1820-2008<sup>93</sup>

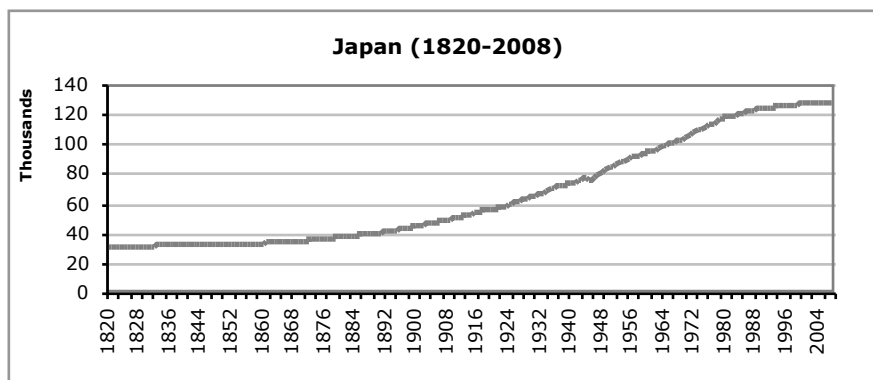


Figure 14: Population Japan 1820-2008<sup>94</sup>

Japan began its second phase of the demographic transition in the 1920s, when the death rate suddenly began to drop sharply while the birth rate remained comparatively high. Here it becomes clear that China had already passed into the second phase with a time lag as its death rate started dropping much later, around the time of the formation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949.

<sup>92</sup> cf. Statistic Bureau Japan no year: p.1 et sequ.

<sup>93</sup> cf. Maddison 2008

<sup>94</sup> cf. Maddison 2008

In Japan the second phase ended in the 1930s when it experienced a sharp drop in its birth rate and the total fertility rate declined continuously from above 4.5 in the late 1940s to about 2 children per women in the early 1960s (see figure 15). In comparison China experienced a decline in the birth rate and therefore the third phase started only in the 1960s with a time lag of about two decades.

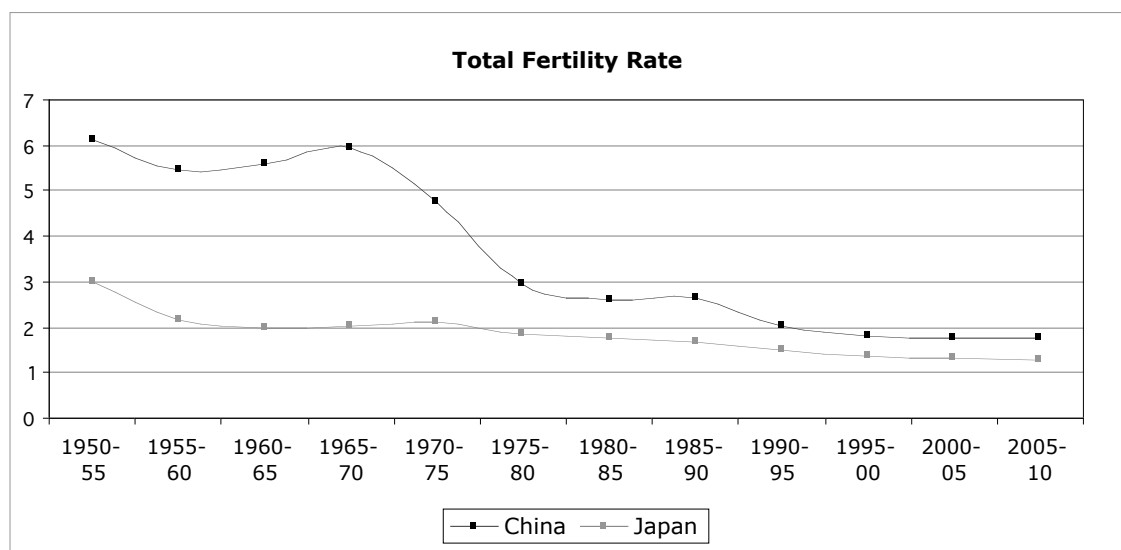


Figure 15: China and Japan: Total Fertility Rate 1950-2010<sup>95</sup>

The only time in the third phase when the fertility rate did not decline was in the early 1960s and in the 1980s in China (see figure 5) and in the late 1940s and the 1960s in Japan after the end of the Second World War (see figure 8). This was due to the Baby Boom generations that frequently follow times of crisis and war.

What also needs to be mentioned in this context is that during times of crisis a trend of rising death rates and falling birth rates resulting from a lack of security may be recognisable for example in both countries during the Second World War or in China during the Great Leap Forward and the famines during this phase. This shows that the transition theory offers just a model of demographic transition, which cannot be seen as a completely linear trend. (see figure 11 and 12)

The stable fourth phase with a low birth and a low death rate that only fluctuates slightly started in Japan in the 1990s and in China only during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

<sup>95</sup> cf. UN Population Revision 2008: Total Fertility Rate



Figures 16 and 17 indicate that Japan, as well as China, are already leaving stage four and moving on to stage five of the demographic transition model as their fertility rates are dropping below the replacement rate.(see figure 14)

This leaves the countries with a very low birth rate while the death rate stays on a continuously low level or declines even further due to a continuous rise in life expectancy. (see figures 16 and 17)

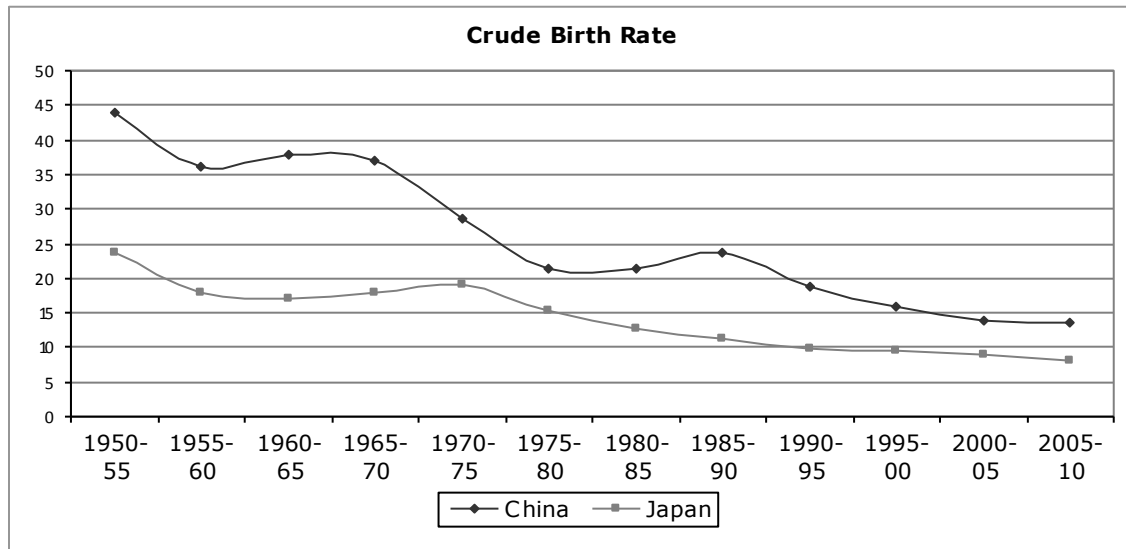


Figure 16: China and Japan: Crude Birth Rate (births per 1000 population) 1950-2010<sup>96</sup>

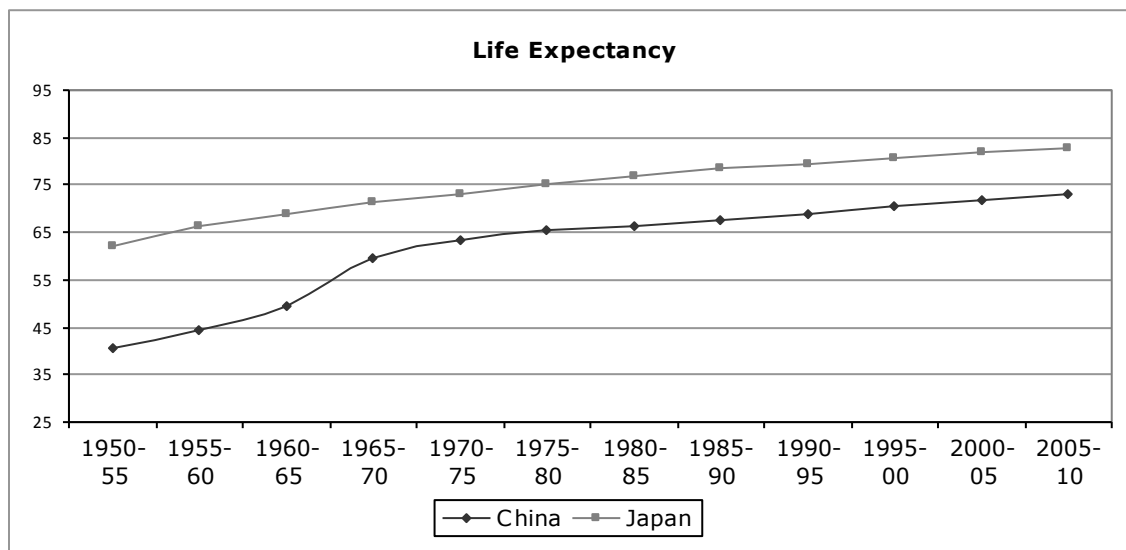


Figure 17: China and Japan: Life Expectancy at birth 1950-2010<sup>97</sup>

<sup>96</sup> cf. UN Population Revision 2008: Crude Birth Rate

<sup>97</sup> cf. UN Population Revision 2008: Life Expectancy

Figure 18 shows the growth rate of these two populations. The graph indicates that both rates are continuously declining, except for the humps marking the Baby Boom generations which follow extreme lows during times of crisis.

While China's growth rate is declining at a slower pace and is still above 0.5 percent between 2000 and 2010, Japan has been experiencing an extreme population decrease since 2005. It is projected that until 2050 Japan will face a population reduction rate of about 1 percent and therefore will experience a depopulation movement resulting from the subsequent declining birth rate and a fertility rate of less than 1.2. It is predicted that in 2050 the population will be 11 percent smaller than in 1990.<sup>98</sup>

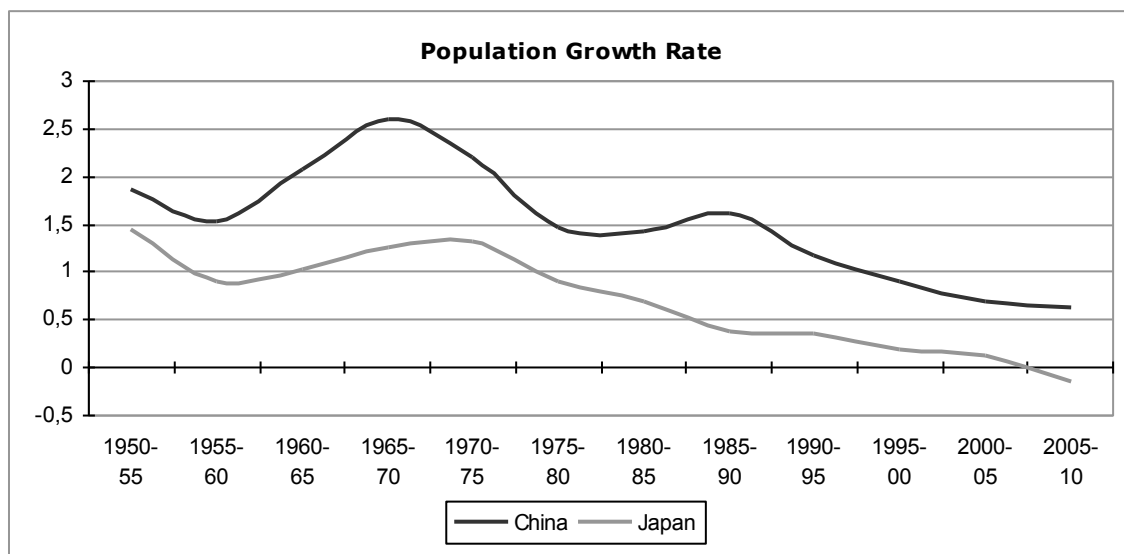


Figure 18: Population Growth Rate (%) 1950-2010<sup>99</sup>

The analysis in chapter two reveals that Japan and China, both underwent a demographic transition from a pre-industrial to an modernised society within a few decades.

It is important to consider the influence of the rate at which countries progress through various stages of the demographic transition [...] while Northern European and North American countries took over 200 years to steadily move through the demographic transition, in east Asia the transition occurred much more rapid.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>98</sup> cf. Mason 2001: p.78

<sup>99</sup> cf. UN Population Revision 2008: Population Growth Rate

<sup>100</sup> Davies / James 2011 : p.95

Overall one notes that China follows a similar pattern as Japan however findings support the presumption that China surpassed certain phases with a time lag of about 20 years. This time span can, in relation to marriage and child bearing age in the PRC, be assumed as one generation. In recent years, however, China and especially the more developed and urban regions are catching up with Japan at a faster pace. (see figure 19) Some regions in the PRC however lag behind further resulting from their lower level of development.

The previous chapters offered an insight into past and present demographic changes in general in China as well as in Japan. It was revealed that as assumed both countries already arrived at stage five of the demographic transition model with rapid ageing becoming a core problem. Chapter three will therefore analyze and compare this process in detail to find out the challenges awaiting these two East Asian countries in the years to come.

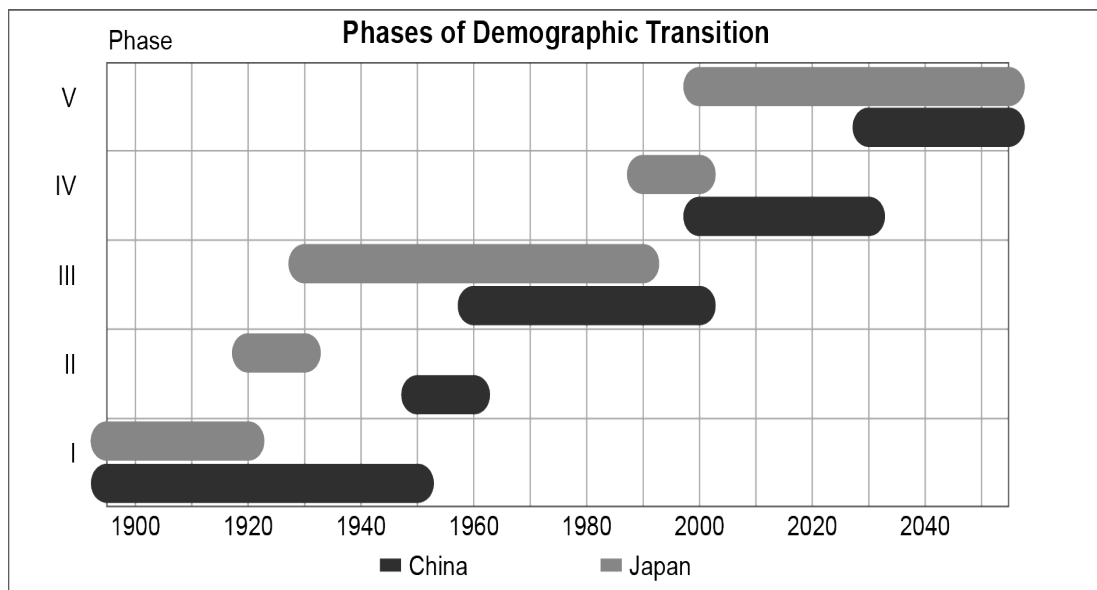


Figure 19: Phases of demographic transition China and Japan

### 3. The Ageing Phenomenon

All over the world many already industrialized countries and emerging economies are starting to experience a new direction in population developments, the ageing phenomenon:

Population ageing, the process whereby older individuals account for a proportionally larger share of the total population, was a key demographic outcome of population trends during the twentieth century and will surely be the distinctive trait of populations during the twenty-first century.<sup>101</sup>

This unprecedented phenomenon is characterized by a society which has passed the fourth demographic transition phase of stable death and birth rates and crossed over into the fifth demographic transition stage where fertility rates drop below the replacement rates, life expectancy rises to an unprecedented high (see figure 20) and a large proportion of the population belongs to the old and the oldest old age groups (see figure 21). Not receiving special attention before the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century ageing became a topic of international interest in the year 1982 when the *Assembly on Ageing* was first held in Vienna to begin examining the phenomenon and its socio-economic ramifications.<sup>102</sup>

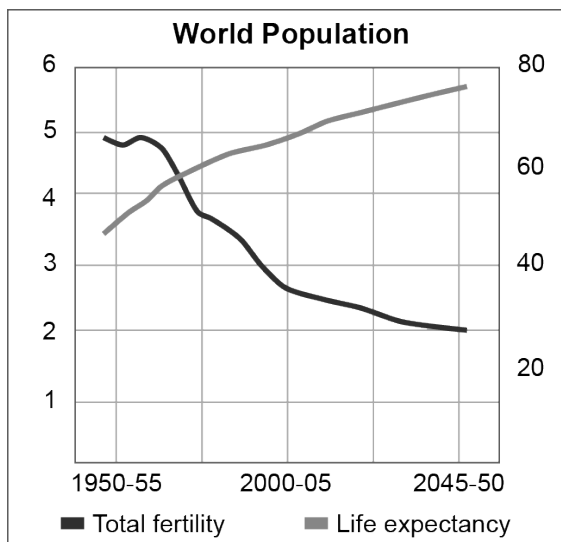


Figure 20: Total Fertility Rate and Life Expectancy at birth: world 1950-2050<sup>103</sup>

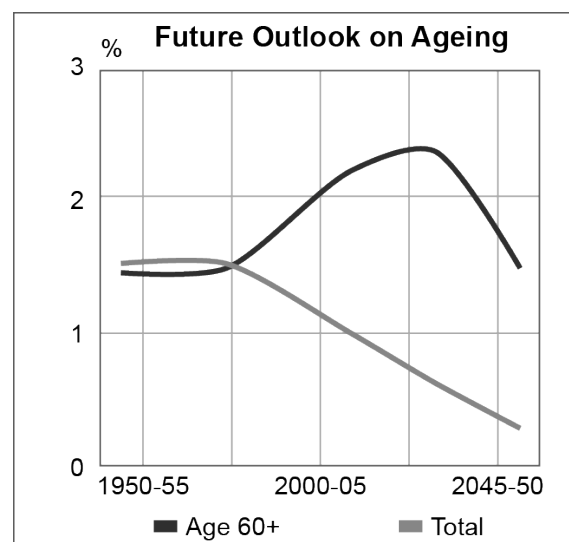


Figure 21: Average annual growth rate total and Population aged 60 or over: world 1950-2050<sup>104</sup>

<sup>101</sup> United Nations Population Division 2010: p.1

<sup>102</sup> cf. UN Programme on Ageing 1982

<sup>103</sup> cf. United Nations Population Division 2010: p.5

<sup>104</sup> cf. United Nations Population Division 2010: p.12

The ageing process and the changes in the age structure vary in terms of extent and pace of change between different countries. Generally, however it can be observed that the greatest demographic shifts are found in more developed and industrialized countries rather than in less developed regions which are still in early phases of industrialization and therefore also in early phases of the demographic transition.(see figure 22)

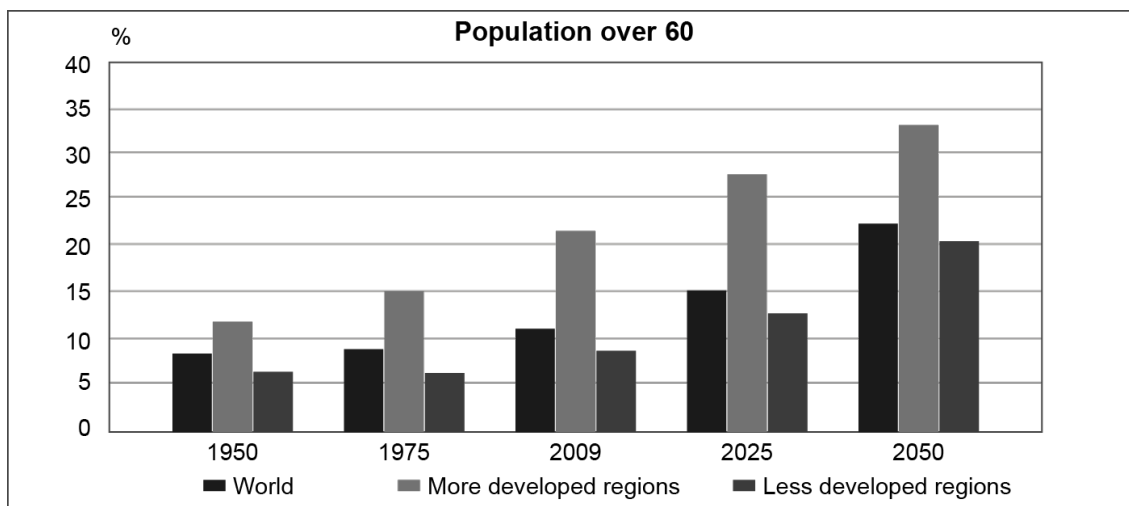


Figure 22: Population proportion aged 60 or over: world and development regions 1950-2050<sup>105</sup>

Regardless of location, when societies grow old, this will reveal consequences that must not be ignored as they may vastly influence a region's future development. Population ageing can have an impact on political, social and economic processes and could inhibit the well-being of a whole nation.

In the developed world, ageing is already widely seen as one of the great challenges in the upcoming decades and the fears of an ageing crisis are definitely noticeable. In the less developed countries, there is still a tendency to take an observant approach when it comes to ageing societies, which may turn out to be a great misjudgement one day.

<sup>105</sup> cf. United Nations Population Division 2010: p.11

### 3.1 Two East Asian Ageing Societies

What makes ageing in East Asia so exceptional and important to analyse is the great speed of this process and the different cultural context. The question of how China and Japan are reacting to the rapid demographic transition having occurred in the past decades, their extent of ageing and the processes accelerating this transition will be elaborated and compared in the chapters to come.

Today, Japan is the country with the oldest population and China the one with the greatest absolute number of elderly. This makes East Asia as a whole the oldest region population wise, with two thirds of the elderly world-wide living there. “The increase in the proportion of the elderly population is expected to proceed at an internationally unprecedented speed and attain levels hitherto never experienced.”<sup>106</sup>

Many scientists refer to today’s ageing phase as one of heavy ageing, especially since the proportion of elderly persons began to exceed the 20 percent margin. This is an alarming development not only for countries such as China and Japan but also for every other nation around the world.

In order to realize the magnitude of the problems societies in East Asia will be facing with a continuously ageing society, it is now necessary to take a look at the future trend and the predictions that can be made.

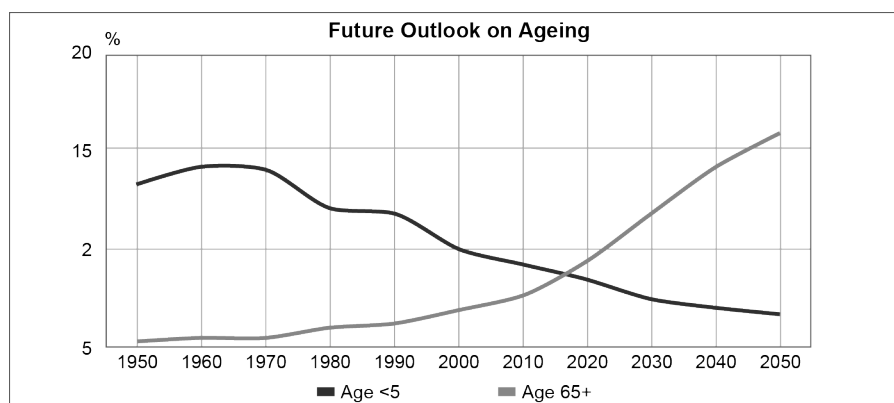


Figure 23: Population below the age of 5 and above 65 years 1950-2050<sup>107</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Kuroda 1987: p.16

<sup>107</sup> cf. National Institute on Aging 2007: p.6

### 3.1.1 Outlook on future population development

As analyzed in the previous sections, it is obvious that the societies in China and Japan both have already moved rapidly towards the fifth stage of demographic transition.

Fewer and fewer children are born and the total fertility rate continues to decline. Both, China as well as Japan have already crossed the line of the replacement rate of 2.1 children per woman that could keep the population stable.

Japan first crossed the 2.1 mark in 1966, the year of the horse, which is said to be a bad year for girls to be born. Yet, in the 1960s this was only an exception. Since 1975, however, Japan has continuously ranged beneath a total fertility rate of 2.1 while China maintained a total fertility rate of above 2.1 until the mid 1990s. By then Japan's fertility rate had already dropped below 1.5. Ever since both countries' total fertility rates have not risen again and even continued to decline further. (see figure 24) As mentioned in the introduction statistical data from the PRC has to be used with care. Especially with regard to the number of children born as underreporting is a frequently used method to bypass national population regulations. Therefore the fertility rate in several regions ranks higher than official statistics say.

Taking the low variant of UN Population Projections into account, China could end up with a TFR of 1.35 and Japan with a TFR of 1.10 in 2050, which would then be one of the lowest, if not the lowest worldwide.<sup>108</sup> Without any countermeasures such an alarming development would obviously lead to a dramatic population decline in both countries.

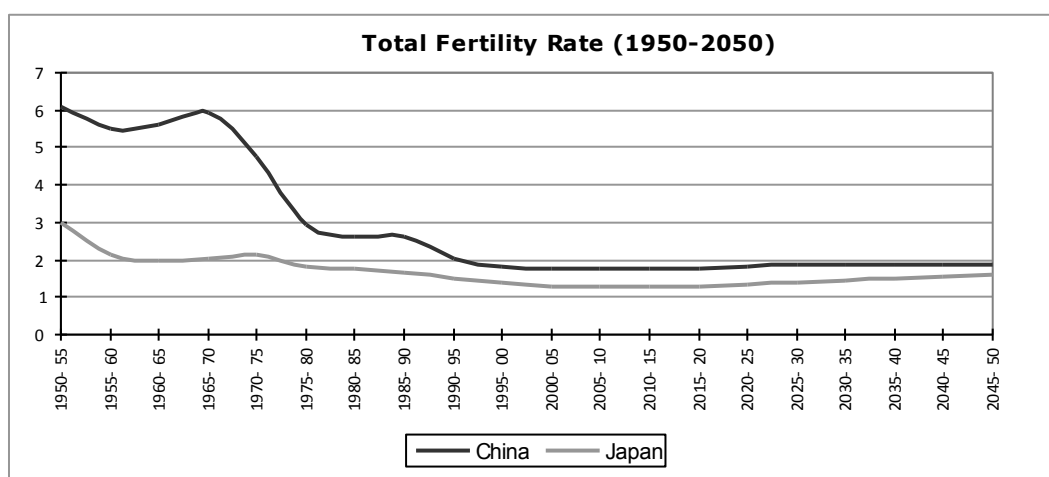


Figure 24: China and Japan: Total Fertility Rate (children per woman); medium variant projections<sup>109</sup>

<sup>108</sup> cf. UN Population Revision 2008: Total Fertility Rate

<sup>109</sup> cf. UN Population Revision 2008: Total Fertility Rate

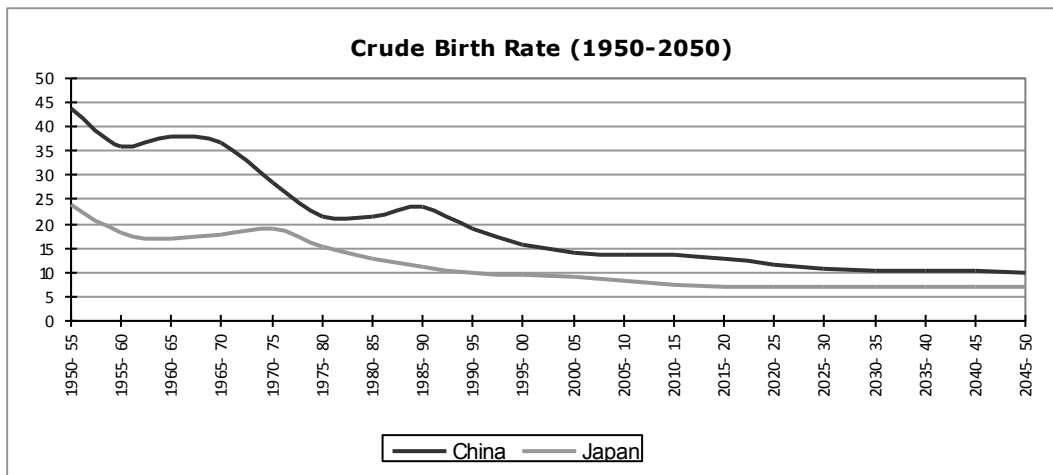


Figure 25: China and Japan: Crude Birth Rate (births per 1000 population) 1950-2050; medium variant projections<sup>110</sup>

Analysis show that not only fewer children are being born (see figure 25), which accelerates the ageing process but also that further reduction in mortality contributes to the situation to a considerable extent. Statistics show that the declining death rates at this stage no longer mainly result from the reduced infant and child mortality but especially from the longer life expectancy of older people. Moreover, this trend is likely to ascend even further in the coming decades as estimates in figure 26 show.

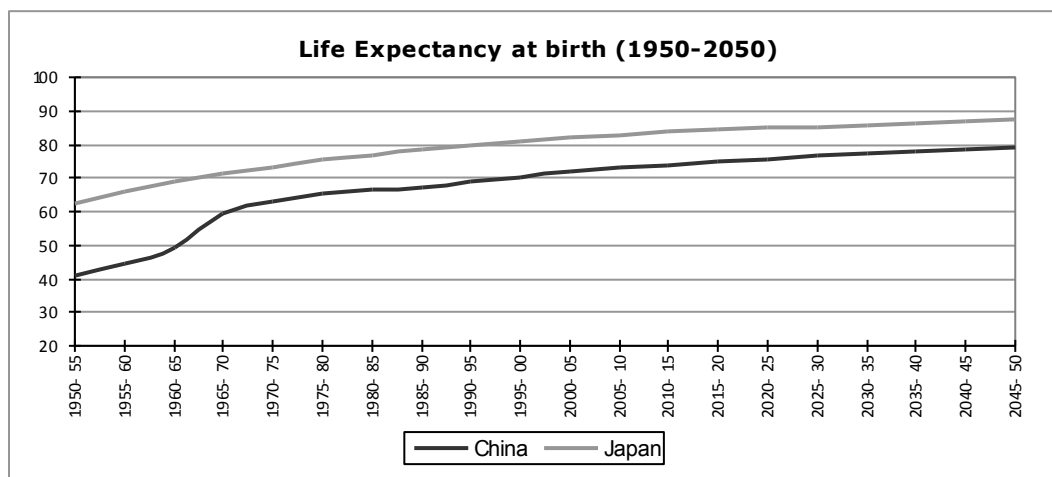


Figure 26: China and Japan: Life Expectancy at birth 1950-2050, medium variant predictions<sup>111</sup>

<sup>110</sup> cf. UN Population Revision 2008: Crude Birth Rate

<sup>111</sup> cf. UN Population Revision 2008: Life Expectancy



Further examination reveals that Japan's Ageing Index<sup>112</sup> has already risen from 14.0 in 1950 to 119.1 in 2000<sup>113</sup> and China's Index rose from 14.6 in 1982 to 30 in the year 2000<sup>114</sup>. And still there are also a considerable number of people in middle-age (50 to 64 years) that will soon be part of the elderly population segment, leading to a further rise of the Ageing Index in the PRC.

Figure 27 reveals another fact that accompanies the expected changes. It shows how the median age of the population will ascend in the coming decades. The medium variant projection estimates that in 2050 Chinese median age will lie around 45, while in Japan this number will be even higher around 55 years.

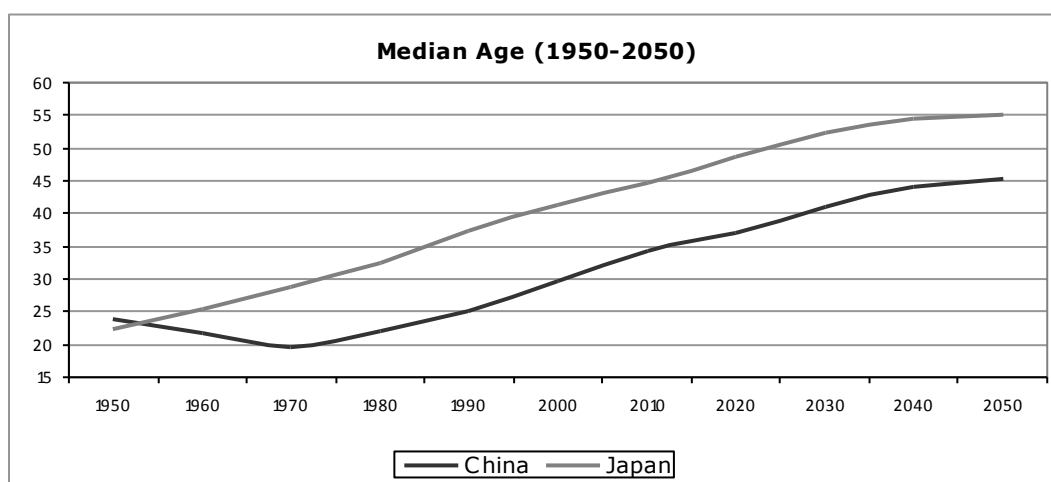


Figure 27: China and Japan: Median Age (years) 1950-2050, medium variant predictions<sup>115</sup>

Looking at the low variant projections, the outcome is even more dramatic with 50.5 for China and 59.8 for Japan, which is close to their retirement ages and once more shows the challenges governments will be confronted with.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>112</sup> Note: Ageing Index = Persons 60 and over per 100 youths under the age of 15 (United Nations Population Division 2001: World Population Ageing 1950-2050 Annex)

<sup>113</sup> cf. Ogawa 2005: p.211

<sup>114</sup> cf. Kuroda 1987: p.11 et sequ.

<sup>115</sup> cf. UN Population Revision 2008: Median Age – medium variant

<sup>116</sup> cf. UN Population Revision 2008: Median Age – low variant

By 2025 the ratio of workers to retirees in Japan who need to be supported will be two to one while by 2010 it was still three to one, additionally its population will shrink from 127.77 million in 2007 to 95.15 million in 2050.<sup>117</sup> China's ratio of working-age to non-working-age population in 2010 was above 2,5 and is expected to drop to 1.6 by 2050.<sup>118</sup>

The two factors of demographic changes, fertility and mortality, are the main determinants that will influence the future population structure in China and Japan. There are, however, other factors affecting these two parameters, such as health care, education, age of marriage, divorce rates, work-life balance, social security etc., that exert further pressure and need to be taken into account.

Even though similar population developments with reference to ageing can be identified in both countries they derive from different backgrounds. While in China the demographic transition is strongly influenced by the government and its population policies that were introduced and are still carried out<sup>119</sup>, in Japan this was not the case, while consequences of modernization such as better health care provision, better educational possibilities and working conditions and an ensuing rise of living standards due to higher incomes were some of the reasons leading to its high elderly ratio.

How will the Chinese and Japanese societies and their population structure develop if the predictions come true or if they evolve even more dramatically?

In order to estimate the outcome we need to take a closer look at the age structure at present but also analyze the future projections to see the extent of the ageing problem.

Focussing on the age groups 65 plus and 80 plus<sup>120</sup>, figures 28 to 31 give a clear insight into the dimensions that the greying of the Chinese and Japanese society could have. Although Japan will remain one step ahead of China and will experience an even earlier ageing process, it is clearly revealed that China is on the way to become a society dominated by a large proportion of people above 65 years of age.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> cf. Lam 2009: p.1

<sup>118</sup> cf. Banister et al. 2010: p.6

<sup>119</sup> cf. Banister et al. 2010: p.1

<sup>120</sup> Note: Following the commonly used definition of aging in social sciences old people are defined as those aged over 65 and the oldest old being those aged over 80. (United Nation Population Division 2001: World Population Ageing 1950 -2050)

<sup>121</sup> cf. Zhou / Liu 2010: p. 563

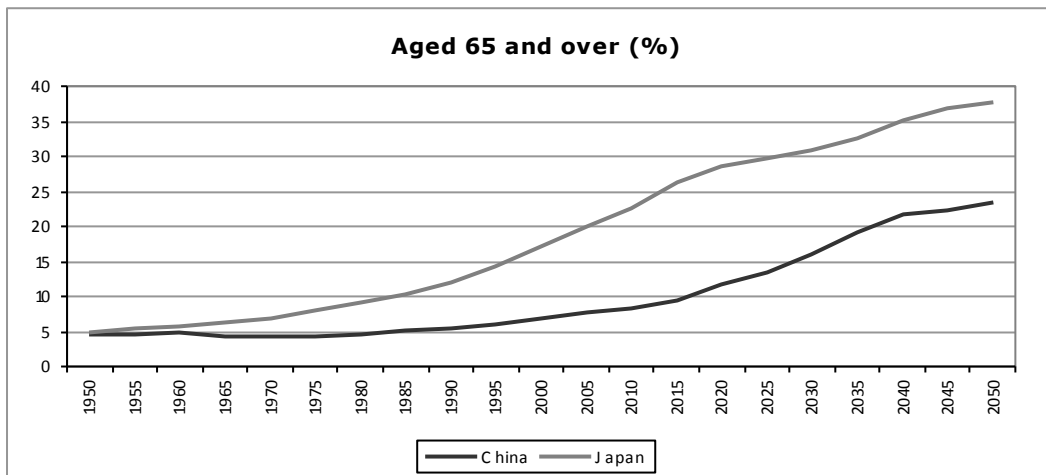


Figure 28: China and Japan: Aged 65 or over (%) 1950-2050, medium variant projections<sup>122</sup>

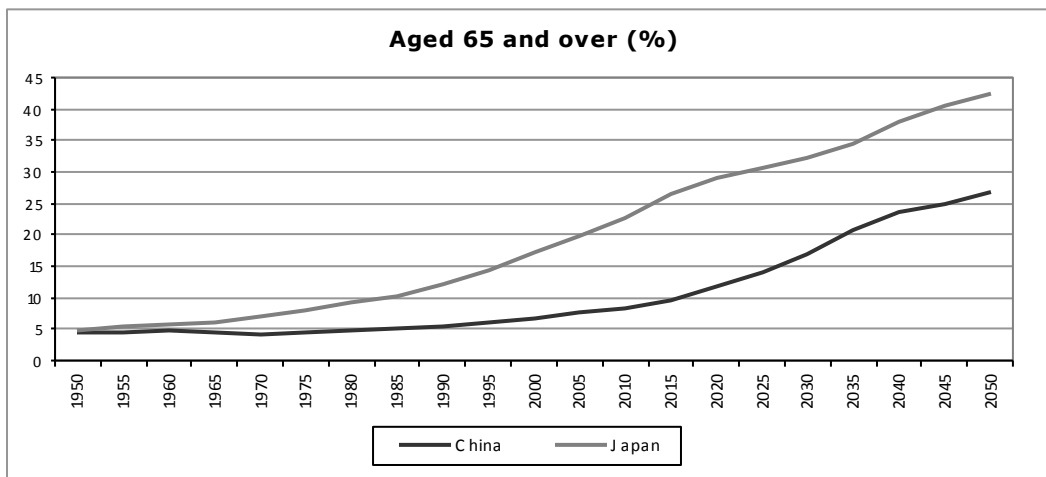


Figure 29: China and Japan: Aged 65 or over (%) 1950-2050, low variant projections<sup>123</sup>

<sup>122</sup> cf. UN Population Revision 2008: Aged 65 or over

<sup>123</sup> cf. UN Population Revision 2008: Aged 65 or over

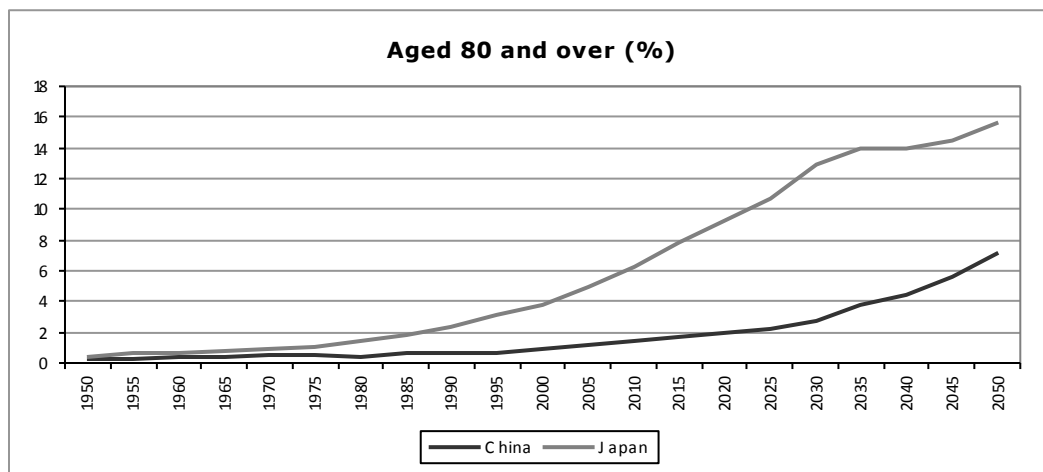


Figure 30: China and Japan: Aged 80 or over (%) 1950-2050, medium variant projections<sup>124</sup>

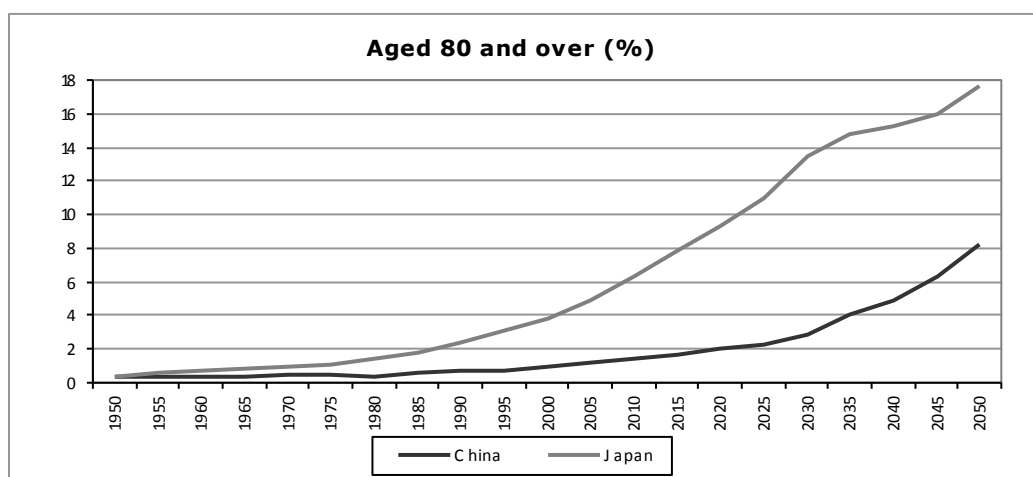


Figure 31: China and Japan: Aged 80 or over (%) 1950-2050, low variant projections<sup>125</sup>

The changes in population structure in China and Japan and the high percentage of old age people and retirees will inevitably result in a broad spectrum of consequences and social tasks governments and institutions will have to undertake. In certain circumstances there may be positive side effects such as a longer life; yet the majority will have a negative impact on society and every single individual.

<sup>124</sup> cf. UN Population Revision 2008: Aged 80 or over

<sup>125</sup> cf. UN Population Revision 2008: Aged 80 or over

## 3.2 New Challenges Arise

The preceding analysis unambiguously reveals the fact that the percentage of old aged people is on the increase in many countries with two undisputable examples being China and Japan. (see figure 19)

Many countries in Asia, particular in East Asia, are now on the edge of drastic demographic changes. Some countries will face demographic challenges related to a declining share of their working populations and an increase in the share of aged dependents as early as 2015-2020. This is expected to have adverse effects on their economic performance and prospects through a decrease in the labor force, and lower saving and investment rates.<sup>126</sup>

However, why is ageing becoming such a great challenge for certain countries more than for others and why is this occurring in different time frames? In reflecting on the current discussion concerning the ageing crisis, it becomes clear that the greying society is especially going to be a defiance to those countries which age at such a high rate and for that reason lack the possibility to prepare adequately and on time for the side effects of the ageing process. Those countries that through population policies interfered with their population development thereby even intensified the already existing transitional forces.

To better understand the urgency with which the ageing crisis has to be handled the most important challenges of ageing shall be observed in the following sections.

### 3.2.1 Population decline and the dependency ratio

Observing the population growth rates of China and Japan (see figure 32), it is clearly revealed that in both countries these rates are decreasing and will be decreasing even further in the future.

In China the population decrease would have been even greater due to the low fertility; however, the population momentum deriving from the second Baby Boom (1962-1970) delayed this development. Japan, on the other hand, already crossed the line of a positive growth rate. In 2005 the growth still accounted for a 0.05 percent annual increase while in 2010 the population shrank already by 0.8 percent.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Nizzamuddin et al. 2006: p.1

<sup>127</sup> cf. Statistical Bureau Japan

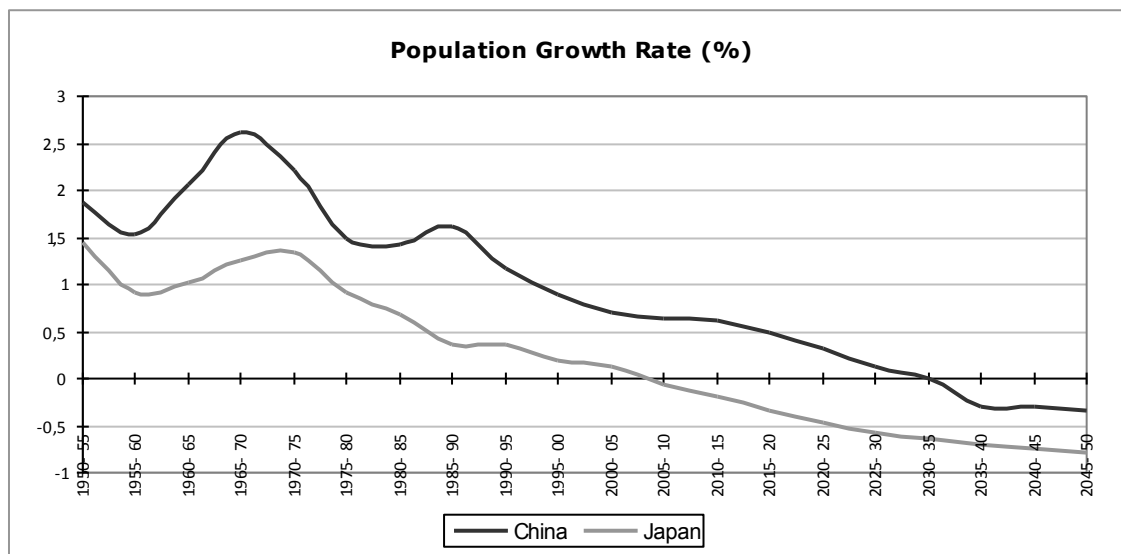


Figure 32: China and Japan: Population Growth Rate (%), medium variant projections<sup>128</sup>

It is significant to mention that in both countries the age group which will decline most will be the one between the ages 0 to 14 years and the segment between 15 and 64 years which consists of the economically active population.

In order to recognize the severe consequences this decline will entail, a closer look has to be taken at the dependency ratio (DR), which is an important aspect concerning “shifts in the balance between working people and the children and elderly whom they support.”<sup>129</sup> It defines the relation of those that are not in the working age (below 14 and over 65) to those in working age (15-64).

When the ratio increases, the pressure on the working population rises as this segment needs to support more and more of the non-working population. Those who belong to the group of actively working people have to pay for the children below the age of 15 that are not yet working-age adults as well as for the group of retirees (double pressure). The reduced number of working-age adults resulting from the birth reduction over the past decades and the rising percentage of elderly due to the higher life expectancy, lead to a growing dependency ratio. This development will turn out more problematic for those states that suddenly lack the money to support the children and the elderly.

Many Asian countries do not yet have the necessary institutions and financial systems in place to provide for a large dependent elderly population. They will need efficient and well-managed pension and health-care programs, capital markets, and accounting and regulatory systems.<sup>130</sup>

<sup>128</sup> cf. UN Population Revision 2008: Population Growth Rate

<sup>129</sup> Westley 2001: p.3

<sup>130</sup> Westley 2001: p.4

Apart from the total dependency ratio one may further distinguish between the juvenile or child dependency ratio and the aged dependency ratio. Figure 33 concentrates on the old-age dependency ratio of China and Japan, which is constantly facing an upwards trend and is predicted to augment steeply in the decades to come. This factor may explain once more the severity of rapid ageing of a population.

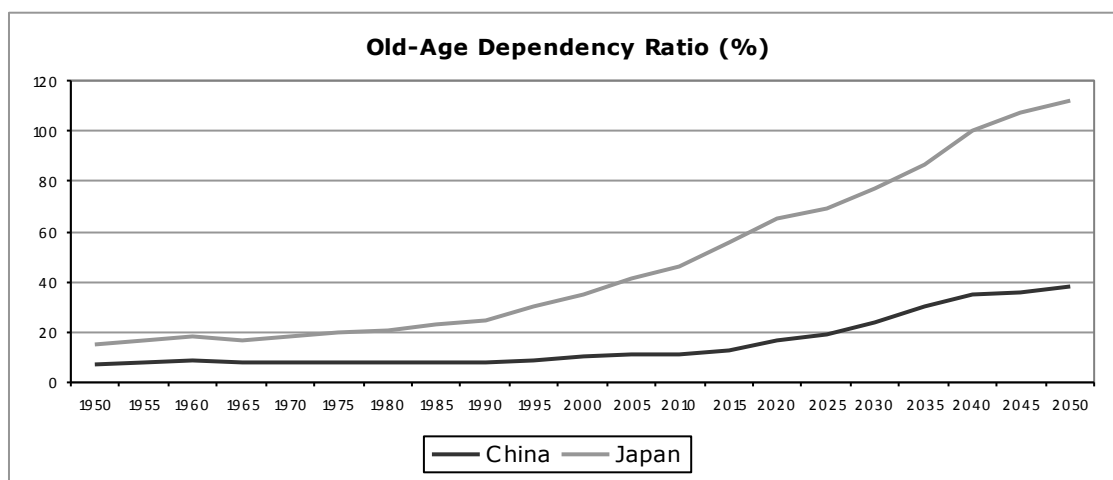


Figure 33: China and Japan: Old Age Dependency Ratio (%) 1950-2050, medium projections<sup>131</sup>

With respect to the previously mentioned population momentum the old-age dependency ratio for China was rising relatively slowly<sup>132</sup>, compared to Japan which has been experiencing an extreme rise since the 1990s as its fertility decline was so spectacular that even the Baby Boom generations and their offspring could not keep the level stable. The future prediction, though, also estimates a catching up by China within the next decades.

Another way of illustrating the changing age structure of a population more precisely is by using population pyramids referring to both age and gender.

<sup>131</sup> cf. UN Population Revision 2008: Old-Age Dependency Ratio

<sup>132</sup> cf. Li et al. 2007: p.19

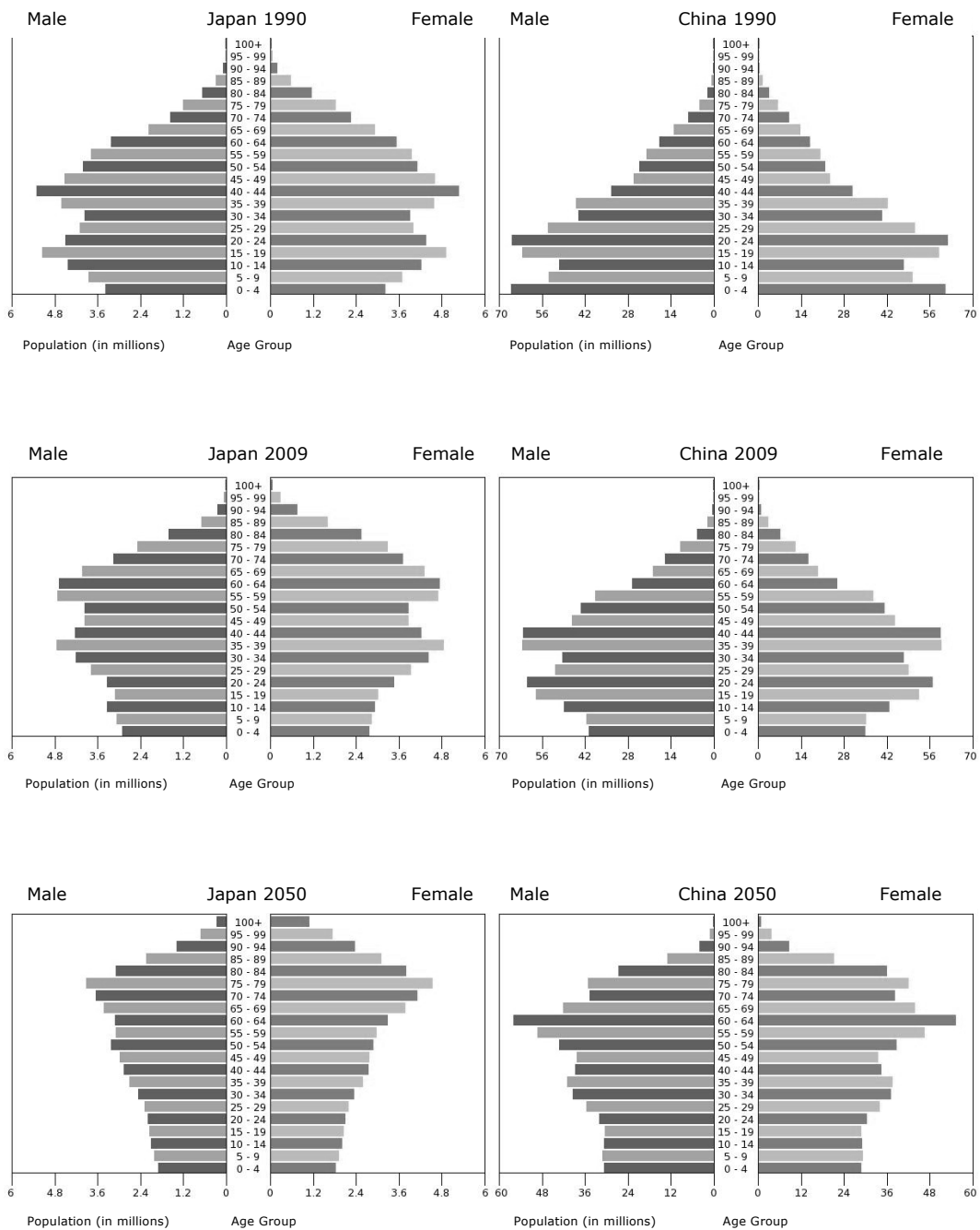


Fig 34: China and Japan: Age Pyramids 1990–2050<sup>133</sup>

<sup>133</sup> cf. United States Census Bureau



In the case of China and Japan the population pyramids for the years 1990, 2009 and 2050 (see figure 34) show clearly the upward movement of the age structure resulting from increasing longevity and the rise of the percentage of the population above the age of 60. This is accompanied by the reduction of fertility which becomes evident when taking a closer look at the narrowing base of the pyramids.

The graphs explicitly illustrate the already obtained finding of a time lag of 20 years between the population transition of China and Japan. Comparing the pyramid of Japan in the year 1990 and China in 2009 a similar pattern and shape can be observed, with the Baby Boom generations being in the age sector of 15 and around 40, the narrowing base of the pyramid resulting from fewer births and the broadening top of the pyramid due to the rising life expectancy.

When looking further into the future, at the pyramids for the year 2050, the quite similar structure shows the Baby Boomers ending up at old age in Japan, and China, catching up in the ageing process as that was already revealed earlier.

### **3.2.2 Living standards and new health risks**

In accordance with the reduction in mortality, many countries around the world experience a rising life expectancy due in particular to improved health care, sanitation, hygiene and nutrition resulting predominantly from economic development. Additionally, it becomes clear that a modern lifestyle that derives from higher incomes and better education allows many older people to raise their living standard and enjoy a high quality of life and a long active phase, which accounts for some of the positive factors of the ageing process.

China and Japan are among these “East Asian populations [which] have witnessed one of the most dramatic increases in the expectation of life in the world in the past 50 years.”<sup>134</sup> In China the transition time of its population’s life expectancy was very short and rapid compared to the relatively long transition time of Japan resulting from the different historical and economic contexts.<sup>135</sup>

While in China the newly issued health programme by the CCP in the 1950s quickly had an impact (medical insurance coverage of 85% in rural areas and 90% in urban areas by 1975<sup>136</sup>), the life expectancy of the Japanese population was already on the rise even before the country had started to encourage new health measures. However, with

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<sup>134</sup> Zhao / Kinfu 2005: p.17

<sup>135</sup> cf. Zhao / Kinfu 2005: p.19

<sup>136</sup> cf. Banister / Hill 2004: p.67

economic growth, Japan also began to invest into health care services to be provided to the population.<sup>137</sup>

Today Japan has the highest life expectancy worldwide with 80 for men and 86 for women and it is even rising further. China's life expectancy still ranges lower with 72 for men and 75 for women.<sup>138</sup>

This assertion implies that better health conditions lead to a higher life expectancy (see figure 26) whereas it also reveals new health risks that come with age and that need to be responded to adequately. In other words, China and Japan on the one hand managed to raise life expectancy, but on the other hand both countries have long ignored the fact that non-communicable diseases such as strokes, heart attacks, diabetes, cancer, dementia etc. associated with old-age will need more governmental attention and official decision making. Furthermore, mental and emotional illnesses are also part of old age and need adequate responses; even if some of them may not be eliminated completely, their effects may be minimized.<sup>139</sup>

### **3.2.3 Inadequate social security and a new financial burden**

Another negative consequence of rapid ageing that needs to be analyzed is the challenge of a proper social security system and the financial burden it will entail. The lack of a reliable support system may exacerbate the burden on society and weaken its stability.

Before the CCP came to power Chinese people relied mainly on kinship and family as a social network. In urban areas this began to change when the government with reference to the growing number of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) introduced a social security system directed mainly at the population working in these companies and at the members of the bureaucracy, known as the *iron rice bowl*. Although it was only a basic system, it met the people's needs.<sup>140</sup> When the economy changed due to the Policy of Reform and Opening, social security was under pressure and the *iron rice bowl* was abolished in 1987. The changing situation, unfamiliar problems and the new lifestyle called for welfare reforms that would no longer hinder economic growth. Figure 35 shows the rising number of pensioners within the past decades supporting the assumption that China has been facing a very rapid transition towards an ageing society which will have different needs the social security system will have to react to.

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<sup>137</sup> cf. Sugiura et al. 2010: p.3

<sup>138</sup> cf. The World Bank Data

<sup>139</sup> cf. National Institute on Aging 2007: p.13

<sup>140</sup> cf. Leung 1994: p.342

The social security reform initiated in the 1990s introduced premium payments by individuals, and divided the responsibility of funding among three entities – companies, individuals, and the state. In addition, the reform seeks to eliminate local disparities by establishing a uniform system nationwide.<sup>141</sup>

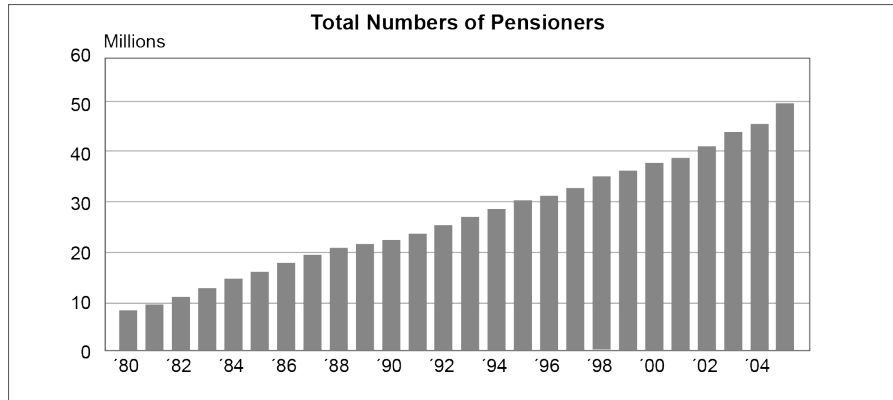


Figure 35: China: Number of Pensioners<sup>142</sup>

In pre-modern Japan, social security was similar as in China, a communal concern without any intervention by the state. It was during the Second World War that the first rudiments of a social security network developed; however, at that time it was mainly an occupation-based system.<sup>143</sup> The Japanese Constitution from 1946 stated in article 25 that : “All people shall have the right to maintain the minimum standards of wholesome and cultured living. [...] The State must make efforts to promote and expand social welfare, social security and public health services to cover every aspect of the life of the people.”<sup>144</sup>

A great turn towards a modern social security network came in 1961 when a universal health insurance and pension system were introduced covering every Japanese citizen. Basic needs in Japan’s welfare system are currently covered by state funding (taxes), assisted by the insurance contribution every working member of society has to pay depending on his or her regular income.

<sup>141</sup> Sha 2007: p.39

<sup>142</sup> cf. United Nations Population Division 2010: p.23

<sup>143</sup> cf. Atoh 2000: p.2

<sup>144</sup> The Constitution of Japan 1946: Article 25

In response to the changes like the rapid ageing, the low fertility rate, the shrinking proportion of productive population and the special needs these problems will bring about new policies such as the *Health Care System for the Elderly* (1982) or the *Long Term Care Insurance* (2000) were introduced.<sup>145</sup>

However, disparities are highly visible and the solutions for such extreme challenges are still limited. To get a deeper insight into the present situation and future outlook on the both countries' social security developments, main changes will be analysed in more detail in chapter 3.4.

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<sup>145</sup> cf. Gauld 2004: p.133

### **3.3 Confucian Values and the Challenges of Ageing and Caring**

So far the present demographic situation of China and Japan with reference to ageing has been analyzed and the main consequences that are going to derive from this population structure changes have been discussed. It became clear that there are several challenges that will have to be met in the future.

In the chapter to come the question whether traditional values that were for a long time essential will be analyzed with regard to ageing and caring as well as the question whether these values still offer opportunities to respond adequately to the problematic situation of a rapidly ageing society will be dealt with.

Do these traditional values still have the potential to overcome problems in times of modernization and the influx of western ideas as tools to reduce the pressure on society and on the government? Or will the future generations face a different way of life to that of their ancestors?

Following a short introduction on the evolution of Confucianism, one of the most important cultural factors influencing the Chinese and to a slightly lower extent also the Japanese society, this chapter will concentrate on exploring the changes in household arrangements, family structures, marriage and newly evolving family patterns within the past decades and their evolution in accordance with the demographic transition and the process of ageing. The main focus will be on the shifts experienced by the old and oldest old population segment.

#### **3.3.1 Confucianism in China and Japan**

##### ***China***

Deriving from the teachings of the Chinese philosopher *Kong Fuzi* or *Kongzi* (Master Kong), who lived from 551 until 478 BC, a collectivist based value system evolved which today is commonly referred to as Confucianism.<sup>146</sup>

There is a broad variety of definitions trying to explain its nature and main content; often Confucianism is classified as a religion, sometimes as a philosophy or even as a political system. The teachings of Confucius and his followers such as Mencius, though,

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<sup>146</sup> cf. Hoobler / Hoobler 2010: p.9

are predominantly defined as a traditional system of living, regulated by moral codes and a social order.<sup>147</sup>

In pre-modern times Confucianism was a vital aspect of culture and everyday life, but even today Confucianism has millions of devotees in many countries<sup>148</sup>, especially however in China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam, where people follow Confucian ideas. The main characteristics of this value system are a moral and social code influencing society and its various forms of relationships and the reliance on ethics, humanity, benevolence, sincerity and love, with the intention to establish harmony<sup>149</sup> and to enable personal cultivation and to follow important rituals in everyday life.<sup>150</sup>

Many in the world desire the same things Confucius sought: an orderly society; a balance between nature and humankind; and a way of conducting oneself with kindness, charity, honesty, and faithfulness. To people such as these Confucius is anything but outdated.<sup>151</sup>

Confucianism was created in China and its values developed further throughout the dynasties while preserving its main essence. Confucian ideas experienced a downturn when the feudal system came under attack at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and were even further reduced during the Maoist era when the influence of traditional values was seen as disadvantageous for the country's economic development. When the CCP gave up trying to replace Confucianism by Maoism, Confucianism developed further under the influence of political developments and the coexistence of other systems of thought such as Buddhism and Daoism. It is an integral part of daily life which however differs from region to region.<sup>152</sup>

## *Japan*

After the emergence and expansion of Confucianism in China it also swept over Japan in the sixth century via Korea. The teachings of Confucius were gradually introduced and adopted by the Japanese state in the following century as teachings of ethics and morality based on the principle of kinship, which similar to China, also partially penetrated the Japanese society.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> cf. Yao 2000: p.4

<sup>148</sup> Note: Varying numbers exist due to different definitions and different degree in allegiance.

<sup>149</sup> cf. Bell 2003: p.18

<sup>150</sup> cf. Chang 2010: p.108

<sup>151</sup> Hoobler / Hoobler 2010: p.137

<sup>152</sup> cf. Yao 2000: p.

<sup>153</sup> cf. Nakajima 2009: p.42

It was at that time, however, mainly interpreted as a foreign culture and an ideology rather than a philosophy like in China and therefore predominantly directed at the political realm and the upper classes and not at the entire population as it was in China.<sup>154</sup> Its essence and influence on society in Japan therefore varied from that in China.

During the Tokugawa Era (Edo 1603-1867) Confucianism in Japan experienced a vast transformation and an unprecedented high, which grew even further during the Meiji Restoration when Neo-Confucian expansion commenced and also began to percolate through society, promoting nationalistic attitudes especially when western influences began to exert growing pressure.<sup>155 156</sup>

Loyalty, nationalism, social collectivism and the belief in authority can be seen as those Confucian values assisting Japan's economic rise and its social transformation.<sup>157</sup>

Although Confucianism was quite common in pre-modern Japan and also partially permeated Japan's legislation, society was in these times also influenced by many other philosophies and religions such as Shintoism, Buddhism and Daoism. This mixture of various influences and local folk culture created a special combination of value systems and a unique Japanese culture differing from those in other countries of the region.<sup>158</sup>

The Confucian influence [...] has been modified to fit in with indigenous ideas, rather than being solely responsible for the Japanese ideology of hierarchy. It is a 'teaching', like Buddhism, so it is accorded status on that basis, but it is much more a moral or ethical system than a system of religious practice, and it has been drawn on to build and support the ethics of both Buddhism and Shinto.<sup>159</sup>

### ***Confucianism today***

The influence of Confucianism on human interaction declined starting in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when people began to view it more critically and state-driven suppression of traditional values took the upper hand.<sup>160</sup> For some time Confucianism was seen as outdated in East Asia and the demand for reforms to adjust to the changing times resulted in the propagation of Neo-Confucianism.

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<sup>154</sup> cf. Rainey 2010: p.156

<sup>155</sup> cf. Yao 2000: p.126

<sup>156</sup> cf. Johnson et al. 2005: p.438 et sequ.

<sup>157</sup> cf. Winston 1992: p.125

<sup>158</sup> cf. Jansen 2002: p.191

<sup>159</sup> Hendry 2003: p.139

<sup>160</sup> cf. Nakajima 2009: p.49

Still it can be emphasized that certain traditional values from Confucian belief survived many wars, reforms, influences by other religions, political systems as well as strong criticism that evolved especially in Japan.

Yet, its composition and significance transformed over the years and a revival of Confucianism in an adapted form has been underway since the mid to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century showing a new dynamism in many countries in East Asia and partially evolving in response to the rising western influence in the area.<sup>161</sup>

In China the government began to loosen its control over religions and philosophies, temples were rebuilt and Confucian institutes were established also abroad; modern China seems to be on the way to revive Confucianism as an indispensable element of Chinese culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well.

Although people living in Japan rarely call themselves followers of Confucianism, certain Confucian values still exist in modern Japan enriching the country through its cultural heritage that still partially influences the social order.<sup>162</sup> Daniel A. Bell even predicts a new trend furthering the revival of certain traditions and ideals.<sup>163</sup>

We might rename this revitalized Confucianism “critical Confucianism”. With roots in the modern experiences of Confucianism in China and Japan, critical Confucianism would critique and open up a new space for discussion on morality and religion. It is therefore important to rethink prewar Japanese discourse on Confucianism and at the same time observe the current restoration of Confucianism in China.<sup>164</sup>

It is often expected that the traditional values will decline, especially in China as the country wants to develop further and may see these traditional values as outdated and hindering.

Concerning the question of how Confucianism evolved over the decades it can be said that even though the traditional values, including the strong hierarchical structure and the classification by categories, are weaker than in previous centuries, there are still collective social norms that apply to the traditional family composition both in China and in Japan.

Families imbued with Confucian values are perhaps still the single most important social institution in impairing ways of learning to be human in East Asian societies. Whether or not we are witnessing the revitalization of the Confucian family a sophisticated appreciation of East Asian culture past and present demands that we understand its psychocultural dynamics.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> cf. Slote 1998: p.24-33

<sup>162</sup> cf. Johnson et al. 2005: p.439 et sequ.

<sup>163</sup> cf. Bell 2003: p.20 et sequ.

<sup>164</sup> Nakajima 2009: p.49

<sup>165</sup> Tu 1998: p.135



As social security and health care provision for elderly is very much dependant on traditional values and on changes relating to family, household, and caring patterns, the following sections will analyse the most important characteristics of the present value system that will influence the composition of and the caring for the ageing populations in China and Japan.

### **3.3.2 Aspects of ageing: Confucian influence and traditions**

#### **3.3.2.1 Family structure and relations**

Despite discussions about the relevance of traditional values today, it remains unquestionable that family is a very important unit in the Chinese as well as the Japanese societies though to a varying extent.

In relation to the discussion on demography and ageing in this paper, the Confucian social and moral code that strongly influenced and partly still influences family life today needs to be analysed since these societies will need to cope with a high percentage of old age people.

When investigating societies in East Asia it rapidly becomes clear that the family was long seen as an institution regulated by a strong hierarchical structure determined by the five hierarchical relationships from ruler to ruled, father to son, husband to wife, elder brother to younger brother and friend to friend<sup>166</sup> and the important values of loyalty and filial piety.<sup>167</sup>

Confucian ideas were shared important foundations of everyday life in traditional China, Japan and Korea. Simultaneously, Confucian ideas emphasized manners in family, relationship in kinship structure, and the customary formalities of family.<sup>168</sup>

Especially the social relationships between parents and their children are an integral part of defining the family centred social structure and its interaction procedures while having profound influence on demographic development and the caring system both in China and Japan. Social ties between blood-related family members and the security that is believed to be brought about with these ties can still be found in countries where people support socio-cultural ideals of Confucianism. Even before Confucianism expanded, the different roles in the family were already fixed and family coherence was

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<sup>166</sup> cf. Tu 1998: p.125

<sup>167</sup> cf. Bell 2008: p.29

<sup>168</sup> Lee in Lee 2010: p.1

of utmost importance and also enforced by the state that transferred various tasks to the family. Confucian values later reinforced these basic concepts.<sup>169 170</sup>

The Confucian family is gradually modifying and adapting itself to an increasingly egalitarian perspective [...] However the substance of Confucianism, particularly in terms of interpersonal relationships and ethical values, is still alive and flourishing.<sup>171</sup>

## ***Hierarchy***

Traditionally the head of family in societies that are influenced by Confucian values was determined by male dominance and the rule of seniority. All members had to show full obedience and follow the decisions taken by the head of the family as they were economically dependent and had no possessions of their own. Women were always subordinate through the three rules of obedience towards father, husband and son.<sup>172</sup> These rules found expression in every aspect of family life.

This points out that in China heritage and lineage is an important issue as family members were born into their position, which automatically granted them certain rights and defined their duties.<sup>173</sup>

On the other hand in Japan, the kinship and heritage regulations were not so strict. After the death of the head of family, the successor was not pre-determined by birth or chosen by bloodline but by analysing the relationships within the group. Therefore the adoption of a son was a popular procedure in Japan while this was a taboo in China where over the years the heir had to prove his ability.<sup>174</sup> With regard to the family possessions, the most common practice in Japan was for the eldest son to take over the leading role in contrast to China where each of the sons inherited part of the possessions.<sup>175</sup>

Age was also a fundamental factor having an impact on the composition of families and on the societal structure. It is noteworthy that seniority was an aspect that affects the extent of respect that was shown towards the hierarchical superior, as great wisdom was related to age that was needed to maintain stability and harmony.<sup>176</sup>

However, in the past decades the Confucian family system has been influenced by modernization, urbanisation and industrialisation and criticism leading to a reduction of

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<sup>169</sup> cf. Slote 1998: p.2 et sequ.

<sup>170</sup> cf. Klein 2007: p.203 et sequ.

<sup>171</sup> Peng 1991: p.38

<sup>172</sup> cf. Linke 1996: p.48 et sequ.

<sup>173</sup> cf. De Vos 1998: p.374

<sup>174</sup> cf. De Vos 1998: p.373

<sup>175</sup> cf. Hsu 1998: p.65

<sup>176</sup> cf. Tu 1998: p.127

hierarchical power. It can be observed that these transformations were additionally accompanied by changing patterns of child-rearing and socialization and shifting practices in relation to obedience.<sup>177</sup>

### ***Filial Piety***

The second main characteristic that is essential to examine when looking at the Confucian family tradition in relation to demographic change and ageing is filial piety (*xiao*). It describes the strong bond between the parents and their children regulated by obedience, respect and loyalty which continues even after the death of the parents. Leaving one's parents was considered as a serious violation act against filial piety, as this would amount to denouncing one's own parents.<sup>178</sup>

Filial piety was supreme beyond any other social or political aspirations or obligations. The true practice of filial piety required giving up one's physical well-being, material interests, public obligations, and political ambitions when such sacrifices were required in order to serve one's parents.<sup>179</sup>

For a long time filial piety was seen as central in both countries, China and Japan. Nevertheless, when it passed over from China to Japan, filial piety was adopted into a different social network whose main difference was the kind of kinship.<sup>180</sup> Although Japanese culture is also strongly based on values such as harmony and collectivism, for a long time not the immediate family was the foremost sphere of attention but it was expanded to people also interconnected by clan, neighbourhood and other external relations. Filial piety in Japan therefore was performed not as meticulously and not only towards the parents but also within the whole kinship framework distinguished by economic status and territorial affiliation.

The Chinese kinship structure, on the other hand, is defined by the connections within the kinship rather than to the outside, and especially by the father-son relationship which is characterised by the son's obedience during the father's life and even after death and support provided by the father to the son. At an earlier time in China a special kind of filial piety was additionally directed towards the emperor, which was likewise connected to various duties.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> cf. Linke 1996: p.13

<sup>178</sup> cf. Linke 1996: p.66

<sup>179</sup> Wang 2004: p.22

<sup>180</sup> cf. Hsu 1998: p.67

<sup>181</sup> cf. Hsu 1998: p.63

Since the beginning of the 20th century critique rose with regard to Confucianism especially concerning the long practiced filial piety. The CCP tried to abolish these principles and replace them by socialist family norms and attempted to redirect this loyalty that was directed at the family towards the nation and the party.

A comprehensive set of institutions was set up to indoctrinate the younger generation into a new set of values. Central to those institutions was an effort to persuade younger people that loyalty to the nation, the CPC, and to Mao should come before loyalty to one's own family [...] the prolonged separations and disruption of family lives continued for many families until after Mao's death in 1976.<sup>182</sup>

As after Mao one returned to a kind of ambivalent tolerance of Confucianism also filial piety could gain strength again.<sup>183</sup> Following the principle of filial piety the PRC introduced the so called *Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly*. It became a binding regulation in October 1996 and pinpoints the necessity of children to care for and look after their parents but also support them by financial means (alimony payments) if personal assistance is not possible. If children refrain from following these regulations a lawsuit may be brought to a People's court.<sup>184</sup> The problem young adults with regard to their obligation to care for their parents face today is the 4-2-1 family structure where four grandparents and two parents rely on the youngest generation for support.

Additionally the situation of filial piety is changing and household division trends are found more frequently, especially in rural areas in China due to rural to urban migration as well as in Japan. Although the main ideals of filial piety are upheld, the way of maintaining these values are changing.<sup>185</sup> The change is gradual and there are indications that "mutual affection rather than one-way obedience"<sup>186</sup> is becoming the dominant practice.

In both Chinese and Japanese societies, Confucian principles of filial piety have been used recurrently in history as a basis of social order, spiritual anchoring, moral conduct, and social control. At the same time, filial piety today is not merely a historical vestige of the "traditional" family, but an ongoing practice of belonging, security and surveillance.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Whyte 2003: p.10

<sup>183</sup> cf. Whyte 2003: p.10 et sequ.

<sup>184</sup> cf. National People's Congress 1996

<sup>185</sup> cf. Ikels 2004: p.17 et sequ.

<sup>186</sup> Tu 1998: p.125

<sup>187</sup> Wang 2004: p.437

Besides filial piety, the special hierarchical system and other traditional values influence family life and care giving in China and Japan. The extent of their potential to influence the social system and caring for the aged within the Japanese and Chinese society will be analysed in the following sections.

It is crucial to find out more about the level of importance these attitudes still have in society to estimate their capability in a phase of rapid ageing. How households and family patterns of the old and oldest old will change and where traditional values lose their stance is going to be vital for future generations and social security planning.

### **3.3.2.2 Household composition and family living arrangements**

An important aspect when analysing the structure of a society and predicting its future development is to look at the predominant living arrangements typical for a country or region.

Living arrangements of the elderly are a key determinant of their needs for socio-economic, physical and psychic assistance, and household projections are therefore critical to understanding challenges in this area.<sup>188</sup>

In both China and Japan it was not the population structure alone that experienced a transition in the past centuries, also the family and the household as a unit were gradually transformed due to various internal and external influences. The greatest changes can be seen in urban Japan while in China the evolution in rural and urban areas differs.<sup>189</sup>

Early household division is a process leading to a gradual decrease in large and multigenerational households. Its structural changes, which have been especially dynamic since the 1970s, resulted in the creation of more and smaller households.<sup>190</sup>

As reasons for this trend the changing intergenerational dynamics and family customs, a weakening of intergenerational relationships and less attraction towards the parental households can be distinguished. The main characteristics of Confucianism, filial piety and the hierarchical patterns were under pressure and began to change their form and adapt to the new situation deriving from socio-economic developments such as globalization, modernization and the move towards a market economy but also political changes. Still, compared to other regions in the world East Asia and especially countries influenced by Confucian values show a continuing tendency of maintaining strong ties

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<sup>188</sup> Jiang / O'Neill 2004: p.51

<sup>189</sup> cf. Wang 2004: p.15

<sup>190</sup> cf. Yi et al. 2008: p.9

to their relatives and exchanging support whenever necessary. Children are still being taught the importance of respect towards the elderly by their parents so that, when the time comes, they will be prepared to support them.<sup>191</sup>

In China, both generations still see the family as central to the operation of society and expect to rely on their children for care and support in old age. Some of the same generational similarities and differences are evident in Japan, [studies however indicate] that the status of Japanese elders has diminished.<sup>192</sup>

## ***China***

China, for many years a traditionally agrarian society, was for over two thousand years dominated by the ideal of an extended multigenerational family (*jia*) (round family= five-generation household<sup>193</sup>), determined by cultural as well as economic factors. Grandparents, parents, their children and other relatives such as married brothers of the head of family and their own families lived together as a large unit regulated by the Confucian relationship rules and strong support for one another.<sup>194</sup> The desire to form an entity was very strong, although the ideal form was rarely reached.

Since the head of the family had full control over the members of the household, their possessions and incomes, other members of the family were obliged to follow the head's instructions. This attitude of furthering family unity across many generations was a very Confucian one.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, family patterns began to change due to new political and economical influences, most notably after the People's Republic was created in 1949 and even further during the Cultural Revolution when tradition was harshly attacked by the state.<sup>195</sup> "In the Maoist era, the attack on ancestor worship and lineage organization struck directly at the cultural and religious core of the extended family."<sup>196</sup>

Since the 1940s only in the areas under CCP control and in the 1950s in whole China state reforms have led to a new more egalitarian social order, the collectivization of the economy and the formation of communes; land was no longer owned by the patriarch, but by the commune. Additionally, new laws concerning civil rights, marriage and extended population policies were introduced giving more attention to the individual

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<sup>191</sup> cf. Formanek 2007 : p.206

<sup>192</sup> United Nations 2011: p.51

<sup>193</sup> cf. La Fleur 2010: p.199

<sup>194</sup> cf. Guthrie 2009: p.74 et sequ.

<sup>195</sup> cf. Worden et al. 1987: p.23

<sup>196</sup> Guthrie 2009: p.77

and no longer to the lineage or household.<sup>197</sup> Simultaneously, younger generations became more and more socio-economically independent.

These impacts were first felt in urban areas while extended family traditions were maintained longer among the peasantry in rural areas.<sup>198</sup>

In light of the deeply rooted traditional Chinese ideology favoring large families, such remarkable changes in family structure could only have been precipitated by significant socioeconomic changes. In prerevolutionary times, well-to-do Chinese made every effort to sustain large multigeneration families so as to safeguard the land and property they had accumulated over generations.<sup>199</sup>

Statistics illustrate the decline of the average size of the Chinese household from 5.21 in 1931 to 4.3 in 1953 reflecting the continuous trend away from the extended household towards smaller household units, which, as can be seen in figure 36, is the dominant size of a Chinese household today.<sup>200</sup> The data (see figure 37) for the year 1982 shows the dominance of 4 and 5 person households while figure 36 illustrates the present average household size of around 3 in urban and 3.6 in rural areas.

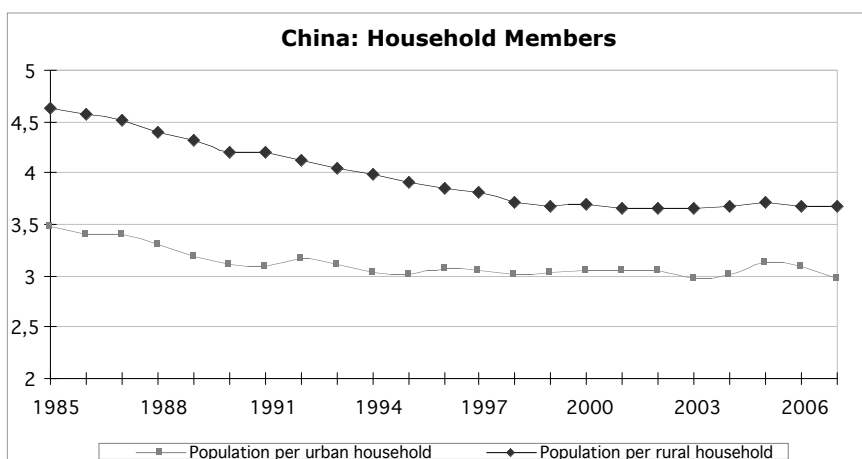


Figure 36: China: household members (urban/rural) 1985-2007<sup>201</sup>

<sup>197</sup> cf. Wang 2004: p.23

<sup>198</sup> cf. Cohen 1992: p.357 et sequ.

<sup>199</sup> Yi 1986: p.676

<sup>200</sup> cf. Yi 1986: p.676 et sequ.

<sup>201</sup> cf. National Bureau of Statistics 2008

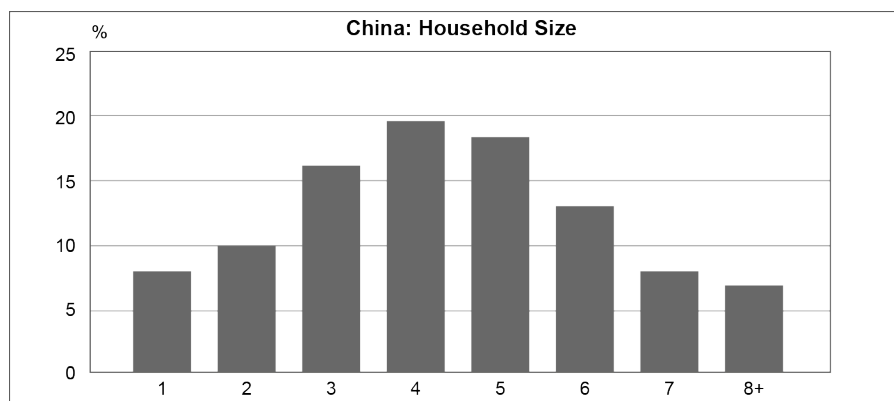


Figure 37: China: Household size (%) 1982 <sup>202</sup>

In recent years a new trend has evolved showing the augmentation of two and single-person households. This can be mainly traced back to the reduced number of children that are being born and to the postponement of marriage. However still the percentage of more generation households remains high.

For example, a government population census in villages in the North of China revealed that while only 2.4 percent lived alone in 1982 already 6.4 percent lived in single households in 1993. Between 1982 and 1993 the percentage of nuclear families rose from 60.2 percent to 68.2 percent.<sup>203</sup> These numbers also reflect the strong internal migration occurring in China especially from rural to urban areas for educational or occupational reasons, leading to smaller households in rural areas. The separation of households does however not automatically mean that children reduce their support for their relatives but that the ways of support are changing. Additionally in the past years return-migration is becoming more popular again especially due to high living costs in urban areas and family responsibilities that exert a strong pull. However migration towards big cities is still holds the upper hand.

They may also return if parents or other relatives become less able to manage the family holding or need health and personal care, or simply to resume contact with their children and other family members. On the other hand, some of those who have migrated may come to see the city as the place which offers the greater opportunities for themselves and their growing children, who may join them to seek secondary education.<sup>204</sup>

<sup>202</sup> Yi et al. 1986: p.682

<sup>203</sup> cf. Zhang 2002: p.119

<sup>204</sup> Chen et al. 2010: p.16



Taking the already mentioned steady decrease of household size in China into account it can be assumed that in the following decades it will decline even further towards the nuclear family with 2 parents and one child. Also many single households are going to be created due to evolving modern attitudes towards cohabitation and marriage. Estimates predict an average household size of 2.67 in 2050 (see figure 38).

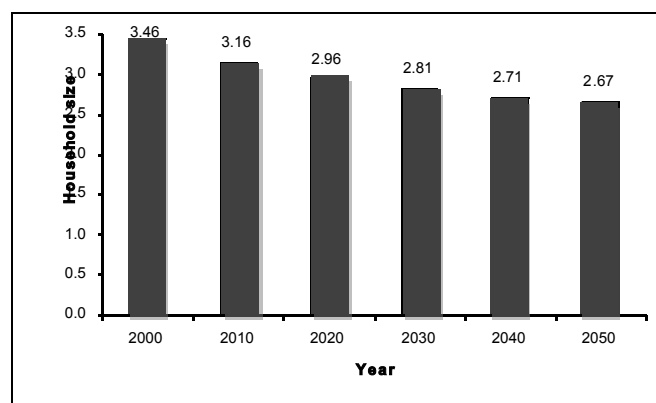


Figure 38: China Household size, medium assumption 2000 -2050<sup>205</sup>

Numerous reasons for developments towards a greater variety of household forms may be observed. While in western societies the permanent departure from the household by children around a certain age, normally around the end of schooling, is widely practised and also accepted, in countries such as China, traditional boundaries reduce the tendency of Chinese children to move out of their childhood homes as long as they are not married. Even after marriage, cohabitation in a multigenerational household is still common, especially in regions where housing prices are high and cohabitation is maintained for financial reasons.

In relation to economic development and traditional consciousness, various reasons for leaving the household may be distinguished. While in urban areas moving out of the parents' household is at present primarily voluntary and often even postponed due to high living costs, young people in rural areas often see no other chance than to leave their home town in the poorer areas of China to support their family by working in the bigger cities. Another factor pulling especially young men away from rural areas is the lack of women that derives from the long practiced one child policy and the son preference.<sup>206</sup>

<sup>205</sup> Yi et al. 2008: p.21

<sup>206</sup> cf. Poston et al. 2006: p.100 et sequ.

A further reason contributing to the change in family and household composition is the attitude towards the leaving of the child. Compared to other countries where both parties see this event as predominantly positive due to the greater independence that is expected by both parents and children, in China it often has negative associations. Moving out of the parents' home was only seen as a positive event when a woman married and moved to her new husband's home. In other cases leaving the parents in the so-called *empty nest* was a very negative act and seen as a loss of parental respect, undermining the traditional family support system.<sup>207</sup>

Among the paths to filial piety in every day life, maintaining a multigenerational large household was one of the most important. Indeed, partitioning the parental household was socially disapproved of and was considered notoriously unfilial.<sup>208</sup>

Owing to the changing lifestyle brought about by modernization, elderly care capacities are reduced due to the continuing household separation. Social security cannot keep up with these rapid developments and so the elderly of the decades to come will face a great threat.<sup>209</sup>

Empty nests threaten the viability of the traditional way of caring for older Chinese. As a result, the traditional pattern of family support as a way of caring for the older Chinese is weakened and will not meet the needs of the booming old population in the upcoming decades.<sup>210</sup>

Today a certain pressure by social values but also by the legal obligation to care for ones parents is still exerted on the young adults today. This is one of the reasons for them to remain in a multigenerational household for a longer period or even forever.<sup>211</sup> In the past decades, however, not only did household size change rapidly, but parallel to changes in family size, household age composition also evolved and poses new challenges for many societies today. Ageing and changes in lifestyle influence the new appearance of households leading to new ways of cohabitation and dependencies. At present most elderly in China are found living in households that are still made up of more generations and only few live in smaller unit households or alone.(see figure 40)

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<sup>207</sup> cf. Loveless / Holmann 2007:p.108 et sequ.

<sup>208</sup> Wang in Ikels 2004: p.19

<sup>209</sup> cf. Yi et al. 2008: p.9

<sup>210</sup> Wan et al. 2008: p.116

<sup>211</sup> cf. Chen / Liu 2009: p 163

China is [a] country where extended family living is more prevalent than it is in the West, despite all the changes of recent decades. The most distinctive feature of Chinese family structure concerns the preference for elderly people to live with one of their children.<sup>212</sup>

Predictions based on the medium fertility and medium mortality assumption of the PRC suggest that the number of households with at least one elderly will increase from 24 percent to over 44 percent until 2050. While in 2000 only 18 percent were multigenerational households this number is expected to rise to over 26 percent by 2050.<sup>213</sup>

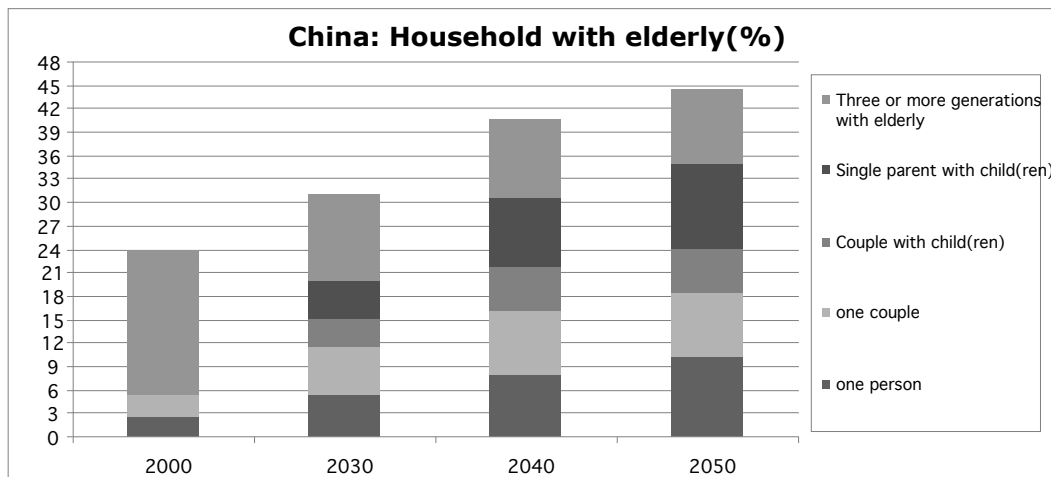


Figure 40: China: Household with elderly (%) 2000-2050<sup>214</sup>

This analysis reveals that the number of multigenerational households will remain high throughout the coming decades on the one hand due to the rising proportion of elderly (see figure 41) on the other hand however also due to the tendency of young adults to remain in their parents household resulting from the tight knit family network and traditional values that are still rooted in society.

<sup>212</sup> Cheal 2008: p. 124

<sup>213</sup> Yi et al. 2008: p.22

<sup>214</sup> Yi et al. 2008: p.22

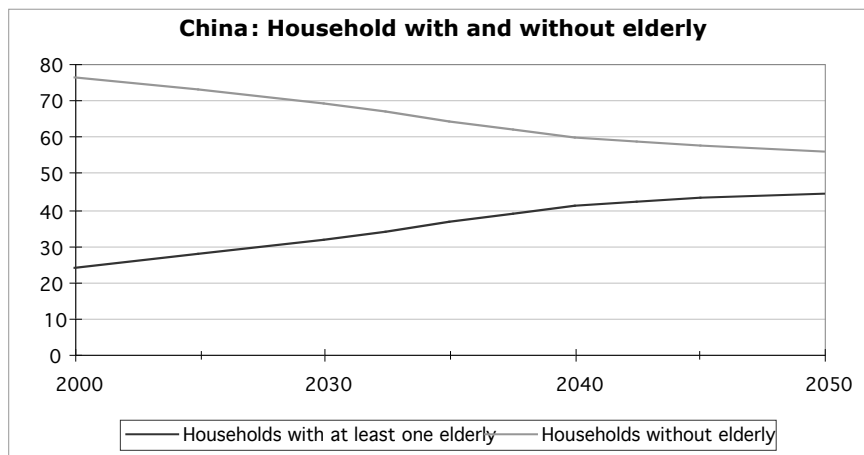


Figure 41: China: Household with and without elderly (%) 2000-2050 <sup>215</sup>

What needs to be kept in mind is that the decreasing number of children due to the declining birth rate will however have a negative impact on the possibility for an elderly to co-reside with his family leading to a spreading of the empty-nest phenomenon. As long as the state does not provide adequate care and nursing facilities, single elderly people will have to cope living alone.

*The rates of institutionalized care in many East Asian societies are significantly lower than in Western nations. The major reason for the disparity is largely due to the cultural emphasis on the practice of filial piety in most East Asian societies, where frail parents are cared for by their children. (...) Currently, the proportion institutionalized among the population aged 65 and over is less than 2 per cent and is only 1 per cent among the oldest-old (aged 80 and over) in China.<sup>216</sup>*

These elderly who lack the chance of receiving family care will face new situations and will have to cope living alone or with their partner. This phenomenon is already found more frequently in remote areas due to the rural to urban migration.

*Rural China is yet to face the impact of the one-child policy, which will substantially reduce the number of children available to share support duty in the next few decades. The unprecedented flow of rural-to-urban migration of the young generation has already created a geographical separation of adult children from their parents and thus may limit children's capacity to fulfil their filial duties.<sup>217</sup>*

<sup>215</sup> cf. Yi et al. 2008: p.22

<sup>216</sup> Chen / Liu 2009: p. 164

<sup>217</sup> Chen / Liu 2009: p. 164

If, however, living together with their adult children is possible, cohabitation with a married couple and their child or children will be the dominating form. The forecasts clearly show that as household composition changes percentage-wise, the overall number of households with at least one elderly will continue to rise as a result of the rising proportion of elderly<sup>218</sup>.

## Japan

In Japan the patriarchal founding family (*ie*) is the traditional family model. Compared to the Chinese family the Japanese one is characterised by the fact that only one son inherited the household and succeeded the former head of the family while his brothers missed out; women on the other hand, generally held a lower position than men. Even though living together as a multiple generation family in the past was long seen as the ideal household structure, this model was even then not penetrating all areas and “classes”<sup>219</sup>.

In modern times, however, the Japanese household composition has rapidly changed, influenced by various factors that correlate with modern lifestyle, leading to a steady decline in household size as can be seen in figures 42 and 43.

In particular the number of three- and two-person households has risen significantly in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Since 2007 one-person households are taking over a very important role while households including more than five people and multiple generation households, which still dominated until 1955, are becoming a rare occurrence.<sup>220</sup> (see figure 42)

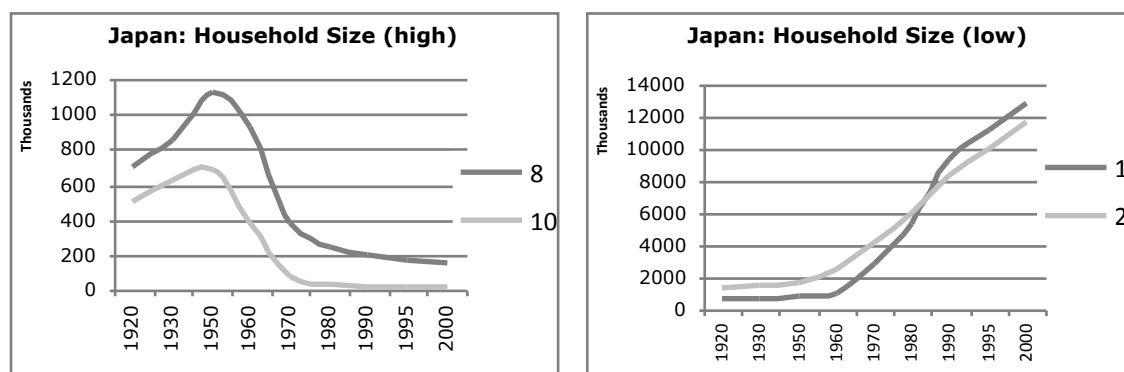


Figure 42: Japan household members 1920-2002 (8/10/1/2 members)<sup>221</sup>

<sup>218</sup> cf. Yi et al. 2008: p.22

<sup>219</sup> cf. Formanek 2007: p.190 et sequ.

<sup>220</sup> cf. Yoshio 2002: p.185

<sup>221</sup> cf. Japan Statistic Bureau

Household changes such as the increasing propensity among the elderly to live alone, the growth in the number of one-parent family households, and the rising tendency of young adults to stay longer in their parental households, are of great concern for the future security of the Japanese society.

The remaining of young adults within the parental household results mainly from the longer educational phase due to new possibilities opening up especially for women due to modernization, but also from the resulting marriage delay. Of course rising living costs are also a factor attaching the young adults to their home.<sup>222</sup>

Schooling, employment, and marriage are major life events corresponding to the occurrences of leaving home in Japan. The timings, occurrences, and proximities of these life events and nest-leaving strongly affect the levels and timing of leaving home within each cohort.<sup>223</sup>

Another factor that becomes more relevant in Japan these days is the necessity for parents who both are integrated into working life to find an affordable way for their children to be looked after. There the “extended family still fits well into modern aspects of family life in Japanese society, where housing is expensive and public supports for childcare are scarce.”<sup>224</sup>

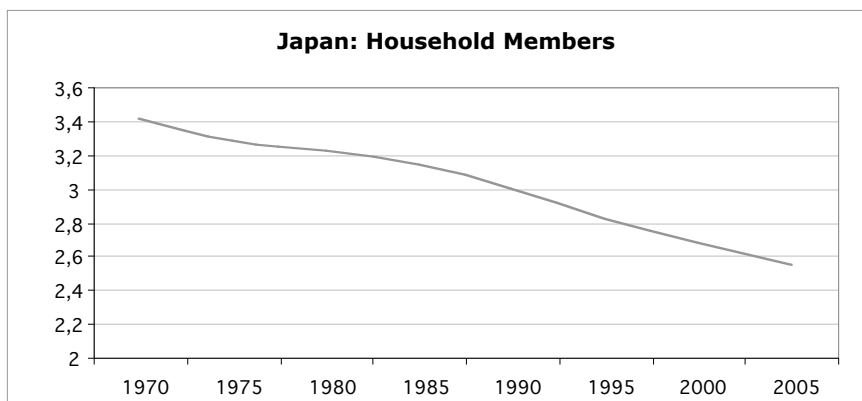


Figure 43: Japan: average household members 1970-2005<sup>225</sup>

Figure 43 shows the household size reduction trend which is very likely to continue even further in the future and will lead to significant impacts on the society as a whole and its future development.

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<sup>222</sup> cf. Fukuda 2010: p.2 et sequ.

<sup>223</sup> Fukuda 2010: p.9

<sup>224</sup> Fukuda 2010: p.7

<sup>225</sup> cf. Japan Statistic Bureau

The total number of households has been increasing as it can be seen in figure 44. However while nuclear and one-person households have rise the number of three-generation households has remained about the same as over 40 years ago. This is a very special development for a highly developed country as Japan. The eralier mentioned increasing number of young adults remaining in their parents home can be distinguished as part of the nuclear households.

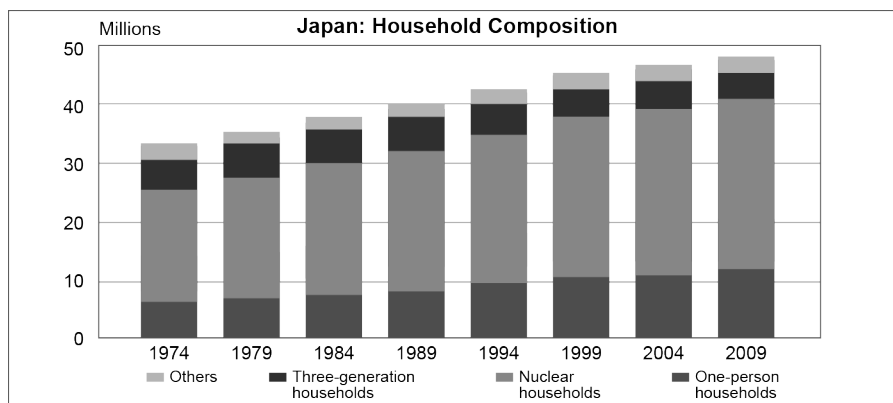


Figure 44: Japan: changes in household composition 1974-2009<sup>226</sup>

Further projections indicate that the main changes taking place in household size relate to greater independence and more autonomy paralleled by changes in overall and long-practiced values. Less and less attention is given to activities within the household network as the terms alternative lifestyles and individual choices of life are used more frequently. Furthermore, a broader diversity in the ways family life is being practised will evolve.<sup>227</sup>

In relation to the ageing process, households in Japan also tend to consist of more and more elderly. Figures 45 and 46 show clearly the rapid rise of households of the aged since the 1980s compared to the overall increase of households. However, not only the total number increases but also the forms of households elderly live in are changing.

<sup>226</sup> cf. Japan Statistic Bureau

<sup>227</sup> cf. Yoshio 2002: p.185

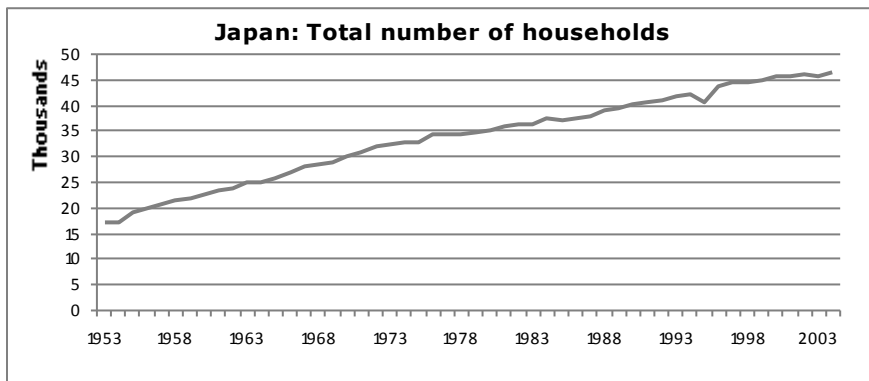


Figure 45: Japan: Households (total)<sup>228 229</sup>

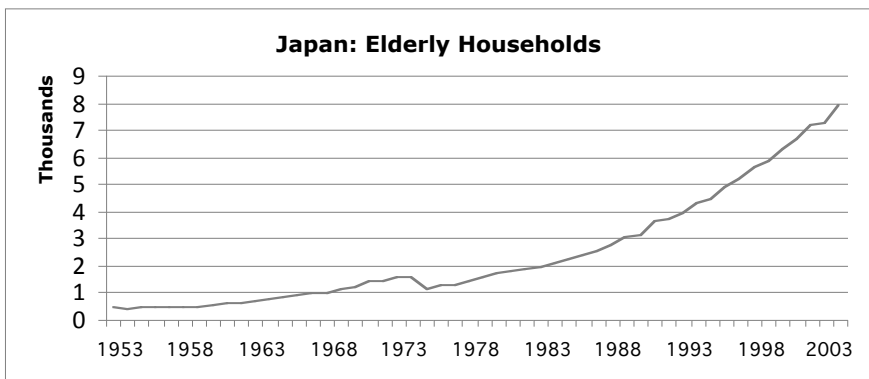


Figure 46: Japan: Households (aged)<sup>230 231</sup>

Although this cannot be seen distinctly in the age group above 70, as former generations still followed traditional values more strictly, those below this age face new situations in relation to their living situation. On the other hand elderly above the age of 80 may no longer live without receiving help from others.

What becomes evident when looking at the age structure of households in Japan is the rising number of elderly that live alone or only with their spouse and no longer within a big family network. This percentage rose extremely rapidly in the past decades while the number of elderly living in a multi-generational household dropped from 77 percent in 1970 to 52 percent in 1997.<sup>232</sup>

The number of households consisting of 3 generations already decreased starting in 1985 and was already comparably low in 2000 while 2 generation households are increasing.(see figure 47)

<sup>228</sup> cf. Japan Statistic Bureau

<sup>229</sup> cf. United Nations 2001/2002

<sup>230</sup> cf. Japan Statistic Bureau

<sup>231</sup> cf. United Nations 2001/2002

<sup>232</sup> cf. Jones 2007/1: p.83



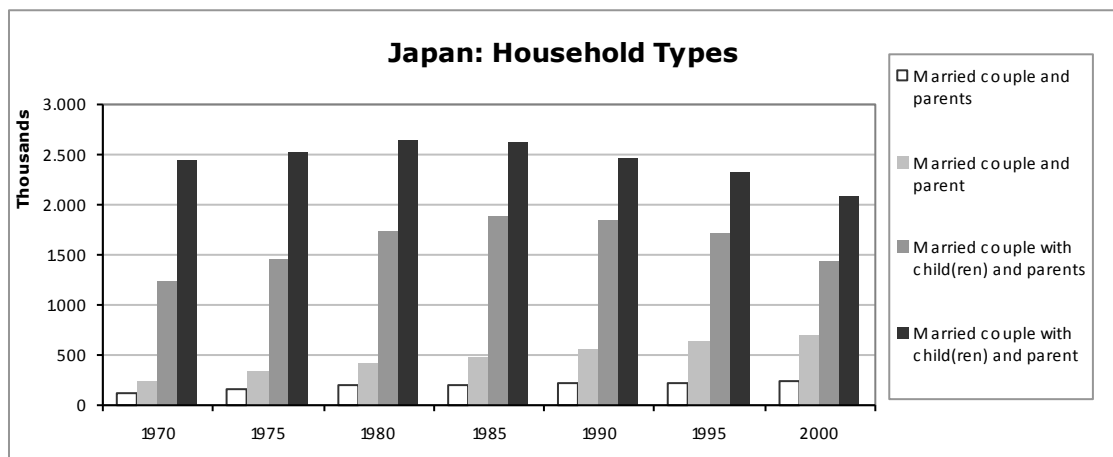


Figure 47: Japan: Elderly household types 1970-2000<sup>233</sup>

It can be assumed that the new chances for young people due to modernization such as new education possibilities and the evolution from an agrarian and subsistence society to an industrialised society are the main reasons for this separation of generations.

The desire for young people to become independent plays another key role in this process. Further factors such as the value of marriage and the new self-confidence of women add to these changes.<sup>234</sup>

What also becomes evident when analysing households in Japan is that separated households of the elderly are mainly found in better income families. This trend reveals another characteristic of traditional multigenerational families – the sharing of a household in order to pool the resources of its members. Today this approach can also be found with increasing frequency in low income families.<sup>235</sup>

At the same time, the proportion of adults above the age of 50 who have a child above 18 is steadily decreasing, correlating with the overall decreasing number of children and leading to the already mentioned lack of caregivers.<sup>236</sup>

<sup>233</sup> cf. Japan Statistic Bureau

<sup>234</sup> cf. Retherford et al 2001: p.65 et sequ.

<sup>235</sup> cf. Nishioka 2000: p.222

<sup>236</sup> cf. Nishioka 2000: p.240

### 3.3.2.3 Marriage and traditional family patterns

Marriage, divorce and the female position in society are additional important factors determining the development of a population and its composition and are also influenced by modernization and state policies on population intervention.

Marriage in both China and Japan is an important issue and strongly influences demographic composition and the situation old age people are and will be facing in the future. Previously there was no other way of leaving one's family than by getting married, and even then in countries such as China and Japan leaving the parents' household was often postponed and more generations remained living under one roof. Most marriages were arranged by the parents or family elders, often long before the children even reached the age of marriage.

The mindset that marriage is something universal, permanent and necessary to maintain the natural order put forward by traditional values such as Confucianism was unquestioned in China and Japan for a long time.<sup>237</sup> The belief that every woman and man should be married continues to be a very dominant one.

What, however, is striking in China as well as in Japan, is the rapid change in the marriage age as interest in marriage in early adulthood is declining and due to the changing position of women in society, new job opportunities and better education possibilities are becoming more attractive.<sup>238</sup> These changes result in a lack of caregivers, who traditionally were women within the family, and require alternatives if the growing elderly population is to be cared for.

#### *China*

As mentioned earlier, China has a long and deep-rooted tradition of marriage and especially early marriage (*zaohun*). However, when the government began to establish family planning programmes, it also tried to influence population composition and size by regulating marriage and predominantly marriage age, which until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century was relatively low at about 14 years for women and 16 years for men.<sup>239</sup>

It was believed that later marriage would lead to later childbearing and therefore to a shrinking population. While the freedom of marriage and the free choice of partners was already defined in the first marriage law in 1950, the second marriage law in 1980 had ten amendments of which a major was the enforcement of the delay of marriage and

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<sup>237</sup> cf. Engel 1984: p.955

<sup>238</sup> cf. Suzuki 2001: p.23

<sup>239</sup> cf. Zhang 1991

childbirth by raising the legal marriage age to 20 years for women and 22 years for men. Even if arranged and earlier marriages still existed during that time and continued to this day, predominantly in remote areas, the increase of the legal marriage age was an innovation that fitted China's modernisation movement.<sup>240</sup>

What further increased marriage age were new living arrangements that evolved as the strong patriarchal pressure was reduced, education possibilities augmented and women began to experience more autonomy.<sup>241</sup> Figure 48 shows the rapid drop in the early marriage of young men and women between the ages of 15 and 19 within the short period of only 10 years.

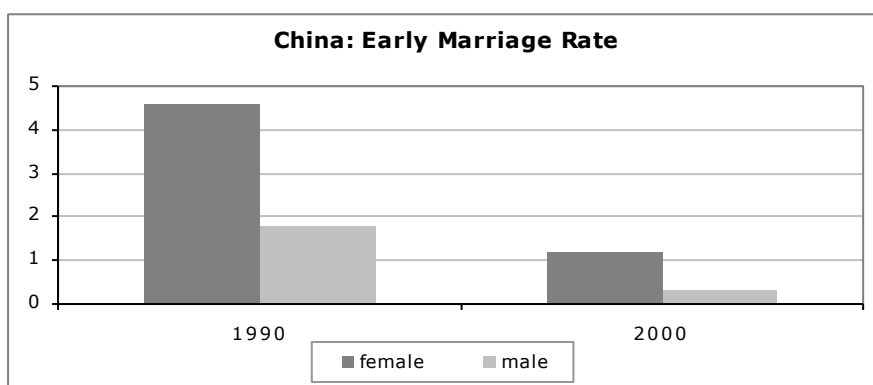


Figure 48: Early marriage of population aged 15-19 (%)<sup>242</sup>

While late and non-marriage was seen as an aberration in the past, the divorce numbers today show a steady increase, putting further pressure on the family centred traditional caring system. (see figure 49)



Figure 49: China: Divorce rate 1978-2007<sup>243</sup>

<sup>240</sup> cf. Banister 1991: p.159

<sup>241</sup> cf. Suzuki 2001: p.24 et sequ.

<sup>242</sup> cf. National Bureau of Statistics 2004

It is widely recognized in the region that the rise in female non-marriage represents a major break with the past, and that it poses challenges to traditional culture, to relationships within the family, and to official policy.<sup>244</sup>

The marriage rate is further reduced by the lack of women due to the one child policy and the infanticide of girls due to the son preference that has been practiced for decades and now shows its devastating results. It is becoming harder and harder for men to find a woman to marry especially in remote areas due to increasing urbanisation and gender imbalance.<sup>245</sup>

## Japan

Similarly to China, Japan is also experiencing new marriage trends. The time span of young people residing with older generations is getting shorter while first marriage age is being delayed, so although the younger generations are moving out earlier, most of them do not do so by getting married.

While in 1975 the average marriage age for women was 24 years, it increased to 28 years by 1995 and for men from 28 to 31 (see figure 50) while the percentage of arranged marriages fell from 64 percent to 7 percent between 1955 and 1998.<sup>246</sup>

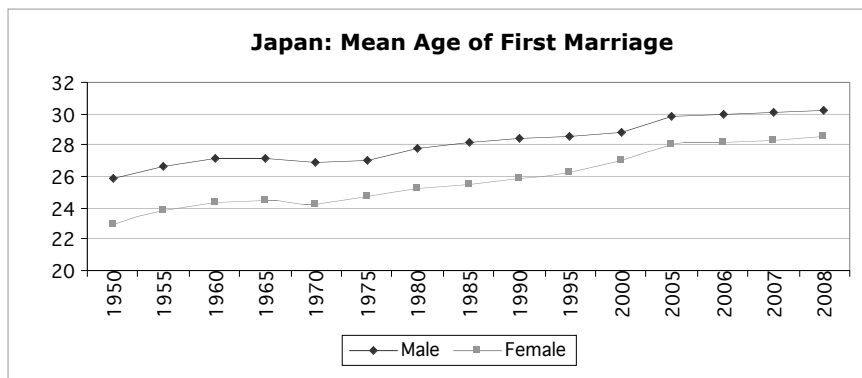


Figure 50: Japan: Mean Marriage Age 1950-2008<sup>247</sup>

The Japanese government has been increasingly concerned about the trends toward late marriage and less marriage, especially because these trends are a major cause contributing to Japan's very low fertility.<sup>248</sup>

<sup>243</sup> cf. National Bureau of Statistics 2003/2008

<sup>244</sup> Jones 1997: p.64

<sup>245</sup> cf. England 2005: p. 24 et sequ.

<sup>246</sup> cf. East-West Center 2002: p.32 et sequ.

<sup>247</sup> East-West Center 2002: p.32 et sequ.

<sup>248</sup> cf. East-West Center 2002: p.34

The activities initiated by the government to reverse this trend to avoid further shortcomings in the social security system and to reduce the costs rapid ageing would bring about appear very ineffectual as the number of unmarried men and women is continuously rising similar to the divorce rate. In China this rate is still lagging behind as it has long been considered as a taboo to get divorced.<sup>249</sup>

Figure 51 shows a continuous drop in the number of marriages since a peak in 1970 while the number of divorces is rising steadily in the past decades.

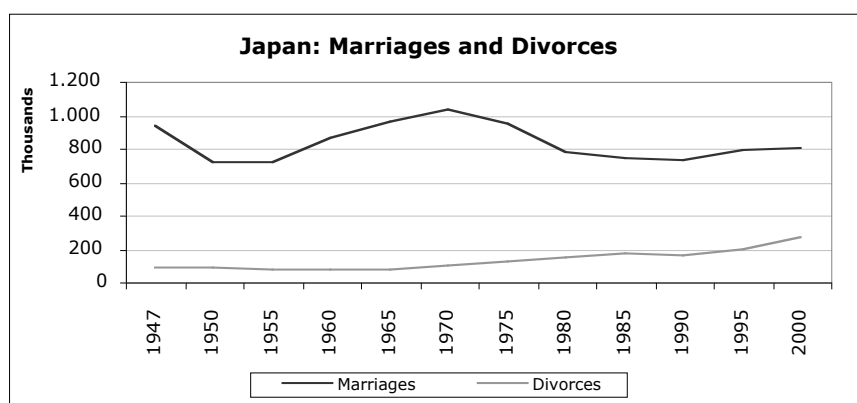


Figure 51: Japan: Marriages and Divorces (1947-2000)<sup>250</sup>

It can be assumed that in Japan the rapid development and its consequent influences on population and social life such as new educational possibilities, the decline in arranged marriages, the longing for more freedom and the search for happiness and emotional fulfilment within a marriage were factors influencing the drop in the marriage rate and the rise in the marriage age.<sup>251</sup> Even though marriage is often seen as offering few gains and rather hindering career advancement leading to a delay in marriage (bankonka)<sup>252</sup>, Japan “compared to some industrialized countries in the west [...] can still be regarded as a ‘kaikon shakai’ where marriage is the norm”<sup>253</sup> and one can find little avoidance of marriage.

<sup>249</sup> cf. Clesse 2004: p.91 et sequ.

<sup>250</sup> cf. Japan Statistic Bureau

<sup>251</sup> cf. Fukuda 2009: p.1 et sequ.

<sup>252</sup> cf. Tokuhiro 2010: p.2

<sup>253</sup> Tokuhiro 2010: p.23

### 3.4 Social Security Reforms, Health and Family Care

Factors of demographic transition and ageing, mentioned earlier, give us a vision of how various changes in past decades will influence the future development of East Asian demography and show unquestionably the necessity of a reliable and flexible social security system that can prevent tensions and civil unrest from arising in the future. The Global Ageing Index (GAP) predicts that the amount of public benefits for the ageing society will be immense as will be the burden it will pose. China is expected to need 8 percent of its GDP in 2040 to support the elderly, while Japan is predicted to need 18.4 percent of its GDP. The GAP also points out that today 25 percent of the elderly in China and 22 percent in Japan already live in poverty.<sup>254</sup>

In order to assess the extent to which social security and health care will have to adapt in the upcoming decades and to measure the influence traditional values still have in China and Japan, the social security systems of the two countries will be analysed in this chapter and future prospects for dealing with the ageing societies will be pointed out.

#### *China*

All around the world many countries still lack an efficient and universal social security system and this lack will pose a burden for the ageing societies in the future.

It is recognisable that in China the establishment of support and care that is taken over by the state is still weak and therefore other mechanisms have evolved trying to step in to reduce some of the rising pressure. As a result, more and more non-profit organisations and private social care facilities have been launched in the past few years to meet the continuously rising need for assistance.<sup>255</sup> These private initiatives and civil organisations on the one hand offer services the government may not provide and lead to higher competitiveness thereby improving the quality of such institutions. On the other hand they lead to high costs for the people who lack sufficient financial means or family support to afford private social care.

During the times when social security was not a topic of state concern, China's support for the elderly was mainly guaranteed by ones relatives and support was mainly a responsibility of the adult children attached to their parents by filial piety.

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<sup>254</sup> cf. Global Ageing Index 2010

<sup>255</sup> cf. Cai / Wang 2006: p.623 et sequ.

For a long time children in China were raised with the understanding that they would guarantee the livelihood of their parents in the years to come. This reduced the states responsibility as it was passed on to the society. Therefore the state did not feel the need to actively support care of old people.

Traditional patterns of parent care have been widely attributed to the deeply rooted cultural belief of xiao, or filial piety, which has been long believed to be the essential element holding together the Chinese familial system of care, determining who is likely to be a care provider, and deciding the types and amount of care that are provided.<sup>256</sup>

However, due to various changes in the last decades and the family planning mechanisms that were implemented, the badly organised state institutions came under pressure but still have not adapted adequately to the new situation they face.<sup>257</sup> Fewer and fewer adult children are able to care for their parents who often live far away in the countryside, and even if support is provided, the 4-2-1 family pattern that has evolved leaving one child supporting two parents and four grandparents as well as rising life expectancy have made it impossible to maintain the traditional support system of pre-modern times.

In the 1980s, China even tried to revive the traditional caring system by introducing the so-called “Family Support Agreement” (FSA) which would guarantee the support of parents by their children by signing a contract. This contract could be signed on a voluntary basis; if broken, however, penalty payments had to be paid. In 2005 over 13 million Chinese in the rural areas had signed these contracts.<sup>258</sup> This shows that family support is still seen as an important issue yet based on an inadequate social security system.

Seeing these changes that underline the need for a stable social security support and elderly care system financed and run by the state, it becomes clear that the government will be confronted with a great challenge in the future.

In 2005 China had to admit that the reforms of the past decades had lead to no vital improvements in the field of social security offered to the people. However the government waited until 2009 to undertake the next reforms with ageing identified as one of the priorities.

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<sup>256</sup> Zhan / Montgomery 2003: p.210

<sup>257</sup> cf. Zhan / Montgomery 2003: p.209 et sequ.

<sup>258</sup> cf. Chou 2011: p.4 et sequ.

The first great step was taken in social security in the PRC came in 2010 when the plan for a new *Social Insurance Law* (SIL) was announced and then implemented in July 2011 as basic insurance for all employees in the PRC. This system requires every employee within the PRC to take part in 5 main insurance schemes for pensions, health care, injuries related to work, unemployment and maternity leave.<sup>259</sup> The first three contribution payments need to be paid for by both employer and employee, the latter ones are only funded by the employer.<sup>260</sup> This law has a main aim of introducing pension and medical care insurance for rural and urban residents by introducing new systems for those who until then have not been part of the former systems (article 20, 24 and 25<sup>261</sup>).

One of the main problems which did not vanish with the introduction of this law is the lack of uniformity; the contributions that have to be paid still vary from region to region and also in urban and rural areas and the coordination of four pension sub plans and three medical sub plans reveal additional difficulties.<sup>262</sup>

It is, however, too early to measure the positive or negative influence these changes of legislation will have on the social security network over the long term, especially in relation to affordability, transparency and funding.

### ***Pension System***

The first national pension system was introduced in China in the 1950s as a Pay-As-You-Go system which disintegrated during the time of the Cultural Revolution. Since then the Chinese pension system presented itself as a very fragmented one and could not be unified during the following decades.

The All China Federation of Trade Unions managed the system until 1966. After the abolition of this federation during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), supervisory responsibility was then transferred to the local labour bureaus, while the task of distributing benefits was passed on to SOEs. As a consequence of the Cultural Revolution, limited administrative capacity prevented the Chinese state from managing a coherent and centrally regulated public pension system. Considering the high level of fragmentation prevailing both at the administrative and the provision levels, the central state, through, its different ministries, only issued general orders from time to time.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> cf. Ligorner et al. 2011

<sup>260</sup> cf. Siu / Sun 2011

<sup>261</sup> cf. National Peoples Congress 2010

<sup>262</sup> cf. Wang 2011

<sup>263</sup> Beland / Ka 2004: p.273



In 1998 however a new system was introduced that after a long time brought about noticeable changes that were not accomplished before. This system that is still in use today was however transformed in 2006 in an effort of trying to create a scheme that would cover the whole population, which is a difficult task with over 774.8 million (2008) employed in this big country.<sup>264</sup>

The Chinese pension system is split into two main sections, the basic pension and individual accounts. The first is paid by the employer, the second by the employee. Additionally, there are supplementary plans that can be used by big employers.<sup>265</sup> Within this system the normal pension age for men is 60 and for women 50.<sup>266</sup>

Even though since 2009 the number of people covered by the government's pensions has risen tremendously there is lots of room for improvements with regard to the broadening of the coverage of the national pension system even further especially in the rural areas. "Today only 55% of employees in urban areas are covered and most of the rural population are not covered at all."<sup>267</sup> There are initiatives that in conjunction with the rebuilding of new socialist villages try to initiate a pension system also in rural areas. If the coverage extends the problem still remains that the basic pension payments are very low particularly in rural areas and state pensions still have to be supplemented by the pensioners by individual contributions, mandatory contributions are high while the management of the funds is decentralized and fragmented.<sup>268</sup>

### *Health Care System*

Until the 1970s and 1980s China's health care system was financed by the government and was then rather stable. It was made up of three main pillars – a cooperative system in rural areas, the government insurance system and the labor insurance system. The latter two covered almost 100 percent of the urban population and 85 percent of the rural population in 1975.<sup>269</sup>

However, during the time of decentralization and privatization, financial means were reduced and the old system collapsed while privatization was on the move. This led to strong protests in the population against the government's focus on economic issues and the rising lack of health care in vast areas.<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> cf. National Bureau of Statistics Japan

<sup>265</sup> cf. Jiang 2011: p.3

<sup>266</sup> cf. OECD 2011: p.332

<sup>267</sup> Oksanen 2010: p.8

<sup>268</sup> cf. Chen / Liu 2009: p. 167 et sequ.

<sup>269</sup> cf. Chu / Rask 2001: p.2

<sup>270</sup> cf. Ho 2011: p.2

After a decade and a half of economic reform, the central government's role in financing healthcare diminished to half of what it used to be; patient out-of-pocket payments more than doubled as a share of national health expenditures; and the rural cooperative medical system virtually ceased to exist.<sup>271</sup>

As a result, the private health care sector rose from 36 percent to 68 percent between 1980 and 2002 while government support dropped from 32 percent to 15 percent from 1978 to 2002, which makes the extent of change clear. During this time, only 10 percent of the rural and 50 percent of urban populations were covered by the health care scheme.<sup>272</sup>

One of the first steps to improve health care again was the *Implementation Plan for Deepening Pharmaceutical and Health System Reform 2009-2011*. Huge sums were said to be invested into this plan with the goal of making progress especially in the area of affordability and accessibility of health care.

However, the uneven distribution of health care facilities is still a big threat, especially to older people in remote areas who are not able to travel far anymore and need these institutions close to their homes. Furthermore, more well-educated medical experts are needed throughout the PRC to establish support where the traditional caring system is getting weaker – a huge financial challenge for the Chinese government in the years to come.

Most rural areas don't have adequate medical facilities. This affects nearly 60 percent of the Chinese population. Establishment of adequate public medical facilities is a top agenda item for the Chinese government. But the medical facilities in China are primarily operated under a government controlled system. Unfortunately the government system cannot bear all the costs of establishing medical systems in rural areas.<sup>273</sup>

Although especially success in the insurance coverage of the population with nearly 100 percent can be seen today, this system is still out of reach for a large percentage of the population due to the limitation of health care for only 25 defined types of major illnesses leading to a reimbursement rate of only 60 to 70 percent while the ceiling coverage for medical expenses of 60.000 yuan in rural areas is low compared to 150.000 yuan in urban areas.<sup>274</sup> In this respect it was argued that the next five year plan from 2011-2015 would lead to even further improvements and resolve outstanding problems.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> Chu / Rask 2001: p.2

<sup>272</sup> cf. United Nations Health Partners Group in China 2005

<sup>273</sup> Wang 2011: p.3

<sup>274</sup> cf. Lan 2012

<sup>275</sup> cf. Sullivan / Foster 2012: p.4

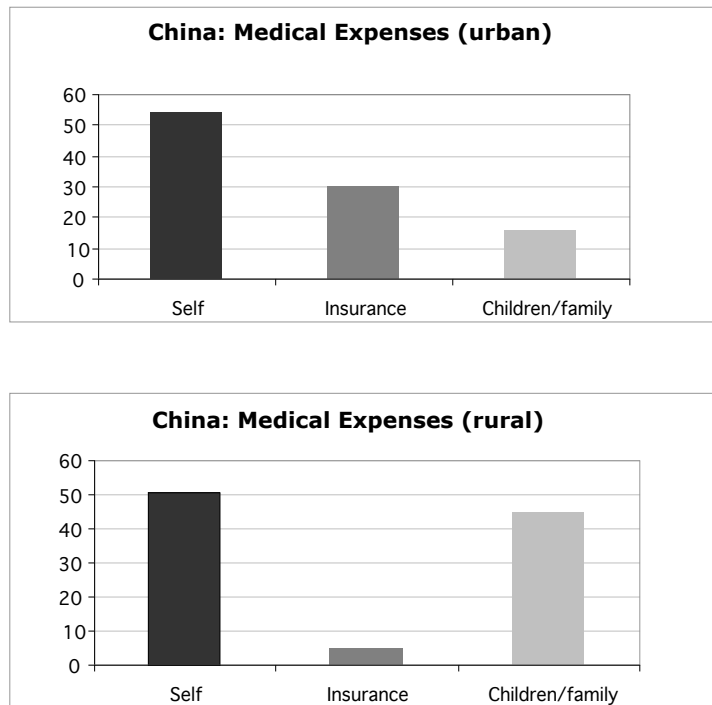


Figure 52: China: medical expenses (%) for population aged over 60 (urban/rural) 2000<sup>276</sup>

What can be seen clearly, however, is the rise in overall annual healthcare expenditures in the past decade. Yet compared to other countries China still lags far behind, spending just 138.7 USD per capita in 2009 compared to 3,137.8 USD per capita in Japan.<sup>277</sup> This lack of financial means has a very negative impact on the development of new necessary institutions for the ageing Chinese society. Figure 53 shows the growth of annual healthcare expenditures that will have to be invested by the Chinese state in the years to come.

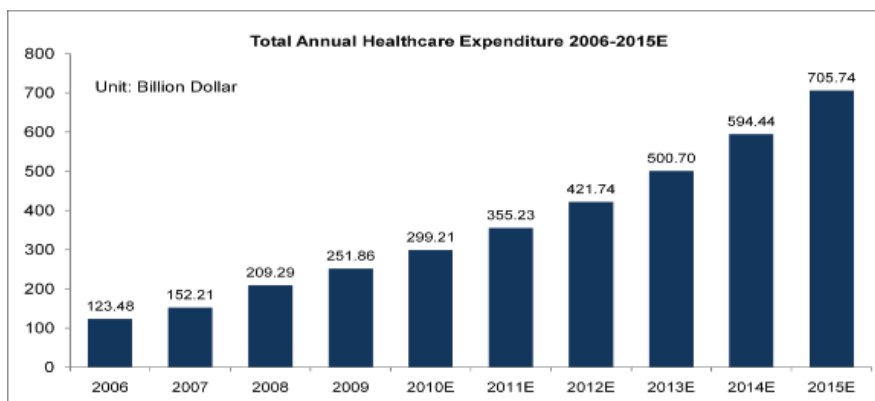


Figure 53: China's annual health care expenditure<sup>278</sup>

<sup>276</sup> cf. United Nations 2001/2002

<sup>277</sup> KPMG Report 2009

<sup>278</sup> Sullivan / Foster 2012: p.4

In conclusion it may be stated that the planned social security reforms were a step forward especially after their final formal introduction took place only a few years ago as part of the 11<sup>th</sup> five-year plan in 2009 by the National Development and Reform Commission.<sup>279</sup> It was further updated in 2011 and these changes will also be incorporated into the 12<sup>th</sup> five-year plan.

The system is expected by the government to work fully by the year 2020 guaranteeing full coverage for all citizens.<sup>280</sup> Today, some goals have been accomplished already but others, mainly in the sector of full coverage of all age groups and urban as well as rural people, are still lagging behind, while the ageing phenomenon will trigger further challenges.

## *Japan*

In Japan the shift away from a social security system relying solely on family care started in the 1980s when the attitude towards assisting one's parents during their retirement was no longer seen predominantly as an honour but often rather as a burden by the caregivers. At the same time co-habitation as well as intergenerational ties were weakened.<sup>281</sup>

Household separation accompanied by the detachment of work and income can be seen as the main reasons for the continuous drop in family support and care described in the previous sections.

The state recognised its need to take responsibility. What complicated the evolvement of general social security, though, was the lack of capital for a sudden increase in social support. Although the percentage of GDP used to finance the social security system rose from 5 percent in 1965 to 12 percent in 1987, the amount is relatively low when observing the high percentage of old age people in Japan today.<sup>282</sup> The social security scheme's huge deficit led to a reform of the whole system in the 1990s.

Pension and health insurance system reforms were implemented, and the Long-Term Care Insurance Act was introduced to address the aging society. Enhancement of childcare services and financial support are being promoted to assist child rearing. In addition, due to changes in the employment situation and widening difference in economy, employment policies have also become important.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> cf. Wang 2011: p.3

<sup>280</sup> cf. Ho 2011: p.2

<sup>281</sup> cf. Ogawa / Retherford 1993: p.585

<sup>282</sup> cf. Ogawa / Rehertford 1993: p.586 et sequ.

<sup>283</sup> Nishimura 2011: p.3

Figure 54 shows the steady rise in social security expenditures especially in the area of pensions and medical care since the late 1980s.

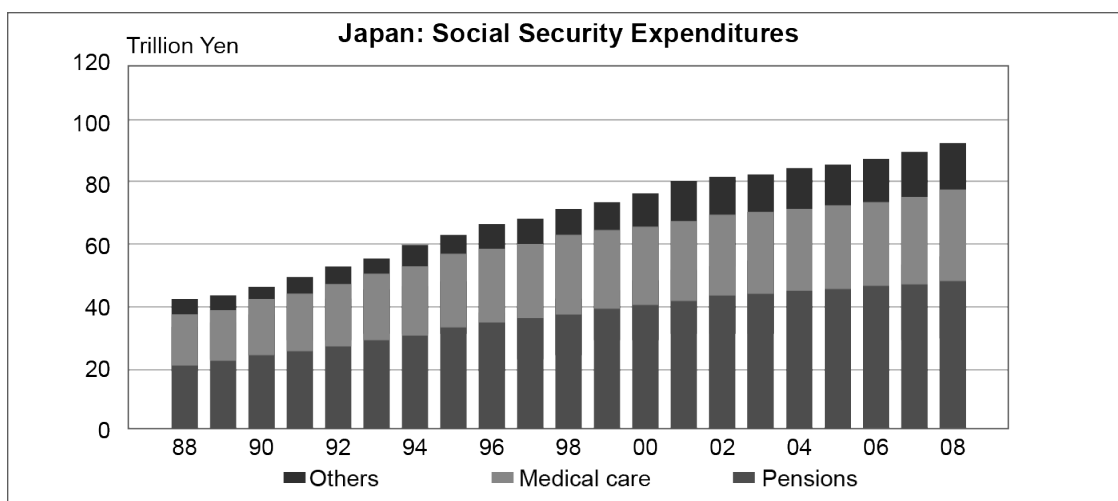


Figure 54: Japan Social Security Benefits Expenditures 1988-2008<sup>284</sup>

### *Pension System*

In Japan there are two pension schemes — the *Employees' Pension Scheme* (EPS) launched in 1941 and the *National Pension Scheme* (NPS) set up in 1961. These two schemes cover about 90 percent of the workers while the rest is covered by mutual aid association schemes.<sup>285</sup> The EPS is mainly used by bigger companies while NPS is applied by smaller companies and the self-employed. With EPS the monthly payments are split 50-50 between employer and employee, while workers contributing to the NPS have to pay the full fee to the government. In 1986 reforms took place and all employed now have to be enrolled in the NPS but many participate in another scheme voluntarily. Due to the rising number of pensioners and the lack of money to support those who still paid a minor amount into the scheme, as well as those to come, the level of contributions was questioned and since reforms in 1994 public pension premiums are being gradually elevated from 14.5 percent to the target of 29 percent of the wages by the year 2025 to meet the higher needs and to make up for inflation and other economic factors.<sup>286</sup>

<sup>284</sup> cf. Japan Statistic Bureau

<sup>285</sup> cf. Ogawa in Uhlenberg 2009: p.138

<sup>286</sup> cf. MacKellar et al. 2004: p.64 et sequ.

## *Health Care System*

Besides pension insurance medical insurance is also becoming more important for the older generations. In 1874 Japan introduced the *Jyukkyu Kisoku*, a law deriving from the poor law in England and the social security system in Germany in the time of Bismarck. The first social insurance in Japan however was the public health insurance it was however only introduced in 1922.<sup>287</sup>

In the first years of its existence, however, it faced various problems and it took until 1938 when the Ministry of Health and Welfare was established to introduce a *National Health Insurance* (NHI). During the war and post-war eras the system was not reformed and remained rather inefficient until the goal of a universal health insurance was set in 1961. Ever since additional improvements have been made.<sup>288</sup>

Today Japan offers two main medical insurance plans, the *Employee Health Insurance* (EHI) and the *National Health Insurance* (NHI). About 60 percent are enrolled in the first, the remaining 40 percent in the second insurance plan as membership is mandatory for every citizen.<sup>289</sup> However, payments by the population are insufficient and the two options must also be subsidised by the government. Additionally, the insured has to pay for about 10 percent to 30 percent of the medical costs, which becomes even a greater burden when health care expenditures rise due to age. This clearly shows the necessity to stabilize the health care system to meet the needs of the future.

As costs rise, needs are also growing further and financial support by the state cannot be guaranteed. The government has to look out for new ways to cope with its changing population structure. Family care is often seen as the logical consequence for many pensioners who lack the financial support by the state to continue living independently. Therefore the Golden Plan was introduced in 1989 for the old and oldest old as a way to expand certain facilities such as home helps that would enable family members to care for their relatives while still being able to work and earn enough income to pay for the family's expenditures.<sup>290</sup>

Following the Golden Plan, the mandatory *Long-Term Care Insurance Law* (LTCI) was introduced in 1997, further adapting to the needs of the elderly. This should give elderly and pensioners that meet the eligibility criteria the possibility of social welfare services, such as home help services, places at nursing homes, medical services etc. .

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<sup>287</sup> cf. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2012

<sup>288</sup> cf. Fukawa 2002: p.4 et sequ.

<sup>289</sup> cf. Squires 2011: p.73

<sup>290</sup> cf. Ihara 2000: p.2

There are two types of insured; the first category of insured who are 65+, and the second category of insured that is between the age of 40 and 64. The first category of insured is asked to pay a premium deducted from pension or direct payment for insurer according to their pension status. In the case of the second category of insured, his or her premium is withheld from the medical insurance premium.<sup>291</sup>

Experts see a quite positive move being started by the introduction of the LTCI as the number of service providers rose from 95,892 in 2001 to 152,264 in 2005. At the same time, the number of service users rose from 1.49 million in 2000 to 2.39 million in 2005. Since then the LTCI was reformed in 2005 and in 2011.<sup>292</sup>

Still there is the need for improvement as the quality of support is often criticized especially as it is lagging behind compared to family care. Although various measures were introduced to extend the medical safety of the population the number of care facilities statistics still show a negative trend.

There is no question that in the past few years expenditures in relation to national income have not risen adequately, and have in relation to overall medical care even have been stagnating for the latter elderly. (see figure 55)

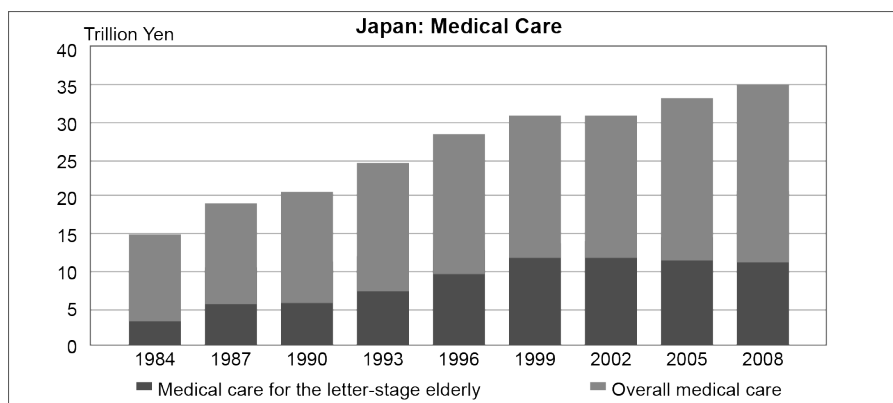


Figure 55: Trends in Medical Care Expenditures 1984-2008<sup>293</sup>

Regarding this lack of capital, this is where the government has attempted to reach back to the traditional value system in trying to get family members more involved and shifting the responsibility back to family care. Although Japan is attempting to tackle the problem the level of support for the elder has still required elderly support is by far not reached today.

<sup>291</sup> Matsuda 2001: p.5

<sup>292</sup> cf. Ministry of Health Labour and Welfare 2006

<sup>293</sup> cf. Japan Statistic Bureau

## 4. Conclusion

In this paper demographic developments within the past decades in China and in Japan were analyzed from various perspectives taking population policies and modernization movements that exerted vast influence on these changes into account.

Following an evaluation of demographic transitions in general, and ageing in particular as a main consequence of changes in structure and size of a population, attention was focused on the situation of the two East Asian countries, China and Japan.

Demographic core values such as fertility, mortality and life expectancy were singled out to analyse the population trends both countries surpassed in the past decades and to offer an insight into their transition.

The results suggest that China as well as Japan have progressed through various stages of demographic evolution very rapidly reaching a phase of low birth rates, low death rates and an overall declining population. What however needs to be pointed out is, that China and Japan both progressed through the stages of demographic development with a certain time lag. The analysis reveals that for several decades this time lag can roughly be defined as a time span of 20 years, which in countries such as China and Japan, where early marriage and motherhood was widespread in the past, can be referred to as one generation.

When looking at the present and into the future this time lag seems to be decreasing with China rapidly catching up with Japan. This derives mainly from its recent economic growth and its modernization movement and is intensified by its family planning mechanisms that were already introduced decades ago and have not been mitigated despite the fact that ageing is already perceptible. China and Japan are two countries that have experienced the most rapid ageing throughout the world, with China being said to age before becoming rich.

Japan completed the demographic transition first in East Asia and is now experiencing the most rapidly ageing population among developed economies. [...] With the implementation of family-planning programs, China has undergone demographic transition more rapidly than most industrial economies. [...] The adjustment of population policies is needed to prevent the Chinese population from ageing too rapidly.<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> Cai / Wang 2005: p.4 et sequ.



Even though the historic and economic development and the laws and regulations involved during population evolution in China and Japan differed, both countries appear to be trapped in a situation of a rapidly ageing society. The fact that people reach a higher age is not a negative aspect as such, but the consequences that are involved when this extension of life expectancy is related to a huge percentage of a population are significant especially when a country is not preparing in time to meet this challenge.

Analyses show that at present China can be defined as the country with the highest number of elderly, while Japan can be seen as the “oldest” state population-wise with the highest life expectancy worldwide.

After the analysis of the past, current and also future demographic transition and the comparison of the shifts experienced by the populations, one can draw the conclusion that in both countries ageing is already a crucial issue and is becoming a defiance. It is going to lead to a broad variety of consequences that may become an even greater threat to stability than previously expected.

This paper drew the attention to the main problems associated with extreme ageing such as population decline and dependency ratio, changing living standards and new health risks and the inadequate social security and the growing financial burden.

Without an adequate response one has to be aware of the fact that the consequences of these demographic changes can result in a very dangerous situation for the economic stability and the wellbeing of the people in both countries.

Having carried out a thorough analysis of population transition and trends in the PRC and Japan, Confucian values, that in the past were able to keep a certain social order and stability, were used as reference for analysing the extent tradition had and still has on the society.

Taking the analysis in chapter 3.3.1 into account and considering the shift away from a traditional support system, Japan is, compared to world-wide statistics for family co-residence in relation to the extent of ageing a country where one still can find a high number of co-residing family members, which “partly reflects the persistence of Confucian moral prescriptions about filial obligations to parents. These moral prescriptions, which are reinforced by a “shame culture” characterized by deep sensitivity to social approval, emphasize descent within stem families”<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> Kending in Ogawa / Retherford 1993: p.588

The deeply rooted tradition of filial piety existed for centuries in China [and] despite its erosion in recent years, it is implausible that it will disintegrate any time in the near future [...] further, the government is making publicized efforts to preserve the traditional values and reinforce the family obligations.<sup>296</sup>

The natural obligation to care, in China as well as in Japan, still seems part of the culture and hard to repel which is why state still seems to try to reduce its responsibility and thereby its expenditures for elderly care demanding support from the elderly's relatives in the attempt to pass on responsibility making family support unavoidable again for the less well-off who cannot afford to pay for private social security.

The Global Ageing Index China still ranks second in world-wide statistics on the extent of family support and Japan ranks third showing the still existing relatively strong family ties compared to other countries.<sup>297</sup> However the analysis shows that although still strong, these networks may not keep up with the speed of ageing and the reduction in the percentage of younger generations.

The idea how the old aged expect to live in their retirement time changed too. Recent developments appear to lead to future generations that no longer anticipate to be cared for by their children but rather resign to the fact that they will have to care for themselves working longer and facing the need to keep fit longer. As a consequence it becomes evident that more and more pensioners may look after themselves longer than in the past as the improved health care keeps them fitter. One may however not forget diseases such as old age dementia, arthritis and other new chronic diseases that will render the caring for oneself impossible. Not basic care but specialized help will then be needed either in a suitable institution or by educated care attendants.

Often the best old aged can hope for from their children is intimacy at a distance, which is becoming more popular these days among the young adults having parents who no longer have the authority they used to have following former traditional patterns. The outlook on sporadic visits and humble financial support by the children leads to rising rates of saving during working age and investments into private insurances. Many people who now already face severe lack of support, such as the childless, realize that only the return into employment may save them from indigence. As prices and costs for living a decent life as a pensioner are rising, especially due to expenditures for health and fitness the pressure on the state and the population is growing.

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<sup>296</sup> Chen / Liu 2009: p.170

<sup>297</sup> cf. Global Ageing Index 2010

Analyses disclosed that traditional values, deriving mainly from Confucianism especially in the area of family care, are of a very special kind and not comparable to those in other countries, it is questionable whether they will remain strong enough and therefore be able to mitigate the problems of extreme ageing. In both cases the penetration of the society by traditional values seems to still be a vital aspect however it is unclear whether they will be able to absorb all the negative consequences deriving from the ageing of the whole society.

During this analysis it became clear that both countries lack the capacities and also the regulations to guarantee the support for old age people to create a situation where old age people may spend their retirement in dignity and without the danger of ending up in extreme poverty. Today already 22 percent of the aged in Japan and 25 percent of the elderly in China live in poverty.<sup>298</sup>

After a close illustration of the main population shifts in the past and analyzing the main factors that make these shifts clear one may state that more responsibility is definitely needed on side of the people but especially on side of the government that needs to care for its population. The main challenge for both China and Japan will be to establish methods of securing the life of the aged so they have the possibility to also enjoy it without fearing poverty, illness and abandonment when reaching higher age.

Although in the past few years small reactions to the ageing problem were felt and new laws were launched their success is questionable. While in some areas especially remote rural regions in China family care still exists as a mean of securing old age support, the intergenerational support rate is shrinking.

Japan already experiences a move away from reliable traditional family ties towards a life that is depending on the support by a formal support network earlier. Educational levels and female activity rate are rising leaving less females with time to support their family at home. Especially emotional support is hard to be taken over by strangers, who often are poorly trained, in countries that have for so long been cared for by their offspring.

The sustainability of social security, pension support and health and daily care facilities are still in question while main programmes are still in their infancy. One will need to try to find an adequate balance between government-provided care and the help that is needed from family members to create the best support mechanisms for the elderly.

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<sup>298</sup> cf. Global Ageing Index 2010

Summarizing this analysis it can be stated that China and Japan with regard to their population structure will need to plan ahead and introduce long-term solutions as soon as possible, as demographic transition is continuing and ageing is very rapidly becoming a core problem of society. Negative impacts are already felt today; while at the moment they are still more severe in Japan than in China, the PRC is expected to catch up soon.

China and Japan still belong to the top 3 countries when it comes to the strength of their family ties, however it is expected that family structures will continue to change in the decades to come which will reduce the availability of informal social networks to care for the high percentage of elderly. A tight social security network that may absorb newly arising tensions and that is flexible enough to react to sudden changes is needed. The earlier one reacts to the new burdens population ageing will create, the easier it will be to get along with this new demographic reality.

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# Der Demographische Übergang und Alterung in China und Japan

## Traditionelle Werte und Moderner Lebensstil

### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Gesellschaften auf der ganzen Welt unterliegen vielerlei Veränderungen, vor allem in Bezug auf ihre demographische Zusammensetzung. Die Analyse des demographischen Wandels wird zunehmend bedeutsamer, da eine große Anzahl an Implikationen mit diesem verbunden sind.

Vor allem die Demographie der Länder Ostasiens entwickeln sich sehr rasch und so werden diese sich mit vielerlei neuen Herausforderungen konfrontiert sehen, von welchen eine der gravierendsten die Alterung sein wird.

Diese Masterarbeit wird im Zuge einer komparativen Analyse der Länder China und Japan, welche schon einige Phasen der demographischen Entwicklung passiert haben und zu einer dynamischen Region wurden, die historische demographische Entwicklung und die Faktoren, die mit dieser raschen Veränderungen der Bevölkerung einhergehen, untersuchen. Es ist von großer Bedeutung den Einfluss der Bevölkerungsplanungsmechanismen und des wirtschaftlichen Aufschwungs auf die Bevölkerungsentwicklung in der Region zu untersuchen, um einen Vergleich zu ermöglichen. China und Japan zählen zu den Ländern, deren Bevölkerung heute schon von einem sehr hohen Prozentsatz an Pensionisten dominiert wird. Diese rasche Alterung wird unter dem Aspekt einer steigenden Abhängigkeitsrate, veränderter Lebensstandards, neuer Gesundheitsrisiken, neuer Herausforderungen für die soziale Absicherung und demzufolge fehlenden finanziellen Mitteln für die Altersversorgung analysiert werden. Darüber hinaus werden traditionelle Werte, vor allem jene des Konfuzianismus und deren früherer und gegenwärtiger Einfluss auf Familienformen, Lebenssituation und informelle Pflege durch Familienangehörige untersucht, um herauszufinden, welche Möglichkeiten zur Abschwächung der Herausforderung einer rasch alternden Gesellschaft vorhanden sind.

# Demographic Transition and Ageing in China and Japan

## Traditional Values and Modern Lifestyle

### **ABSTRACT**

World populations are on the move and demographic transformation has become an important issue with astonishing implications on the development of entire countries and regions. Especially in East Asia countries are moving forward in terms of their development and will have to face new challenges that evolve due to their demographic transition, one of the most defying being the ageing phenomenon.

This paper investigates the historic demographic transition and the different factors that have influenced the rapid population changes of China and Japan, two countries that have already passed various stages of the demographic transition and became a very dynamic region. The population planning methods and policies and the influence of economic growth on the society will be examined and compared to evaluate the magnitude of their influence on population developments.

China and Japan as two countries that are already facing heavy ageing will be analyzed with regard to the main challenges of population decline, a changing dependency ration, living standards, new health risks, social security and the financial burden of an increasing percentage of pensioners. The traditional values, especially those of Confucianism, which have a considerable impact on family patterns, living arrangements and informal care for the elderly, will be under study to work out their influence on society and their possibilities to mitigate the defiances resulting from the rapidly ageing population.

# Curriculum Vitae

## ***Personal information***

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Name: Julia Werner  
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## ***Education and training***

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Since 2008 Student at the University of Vienna  
- Economy and Society of East Asia Master Degree Program

Since 2005 Student at the University of Vienna  
- Chinese Studies (graduated Bachelor 08/2008)  
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1997 - 2005 Grammar school

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## ***Language skills***

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*Mother tongue:*  
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2011 Assistant at Institute of East Asian Studies – University of Vienna  
2010 2-month internship United Nations Information Service (UNIS)  
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