

# Japanese Population Politics as Viewed through Fertility Surveys in the 1940s and 1950s

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**Abstract** | This article traces the trajectory of discourses on population through fertility surveys administered in Japan in the 1940s and 1950s and unpacks their political significance. During this period, the frame through which Japan viewed population evolved rapidly from “overpopulation theory” to “declining population society theory/ population resource theory” to “birth control theory.” Until the 1930s, the problem of overpopulation in rural areas was severe, and the Japanese state attempted to resolve the issue through industrialization and overseas immigration. However, the Japanese government did not consider birth control as an alternative measure by which to address the problem. During this era, following the First World War, there was a notion of the period as the “total-war era,” in which populations were identified as a physical resource. Additionally, eyeing European states that had transitioned into societies with declining populations and deeming their powers weakened by this development, Japan endeavored to learn from their perceived mistakes. In 1940, Japan’s Ministry of Health and Welfare observed differences in fertility across the urban-rural divide, as well as differences between careers, via a fertility survey. The Population Policy Establishment Guidelines (*Jinkō seisaku kakuritsu yōkō*, 1941) were enacted on the basis of this survey. However, during the US occupation period, the population discourse in Japan quickly transitioned toward one of population control via birth control. With the return of populations from the Asian mainland and a baby boom following defeat in the Second World War, Japanese society faced the twin problems of unemployment and poverty. Birth control emerged as a direct means of resolving these problems. Furthermore, birth control was envisioned as a virtue of civil subjectivity that could guarantee the “quality” of the population while also determining a rational family size. By subsidizing the research costs incurred by conducting fertility surveys, as well as expanding scholarly exchanges for Japanese demographic researchers, private US foundations, headed by the Rockefeller Foundation, played a crucial role in the transition of population discourses in Japan. Meanwhile, an obsession with racial “purity” and the supposed superiority of the Japanese national population has always existed as a part of population discourses in Japan. Prior to 1945, the results of Japan’s fertility surveys were subject to comparisons with those in China, the USSR, and India, and utilized in a manner that prompted a security crisis. A sense of crisis concerning high fertility rates

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among colonized populations was also acute. This spurred attempts by the Japanese state to remove minority populations following 1945. It is necessary to re-examine the grand life-cycle of the Japanese populace from an overpopulated society to a low-birth-rate, aging society within the historical context of “population discourse/political constructions of representation.”

*Keywords* | politics of population, fertility survey, fertility control/birth control, Population Policy Establishment Guidelines (1941), General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (GHQ/SCAP), Rockefeller Foundation, ethnic minority groups

## Introduction

Practices, discourses, and politics related to fertility in East Asian countries underwent monumental change throughout the twentieth century. In the not-so-distant past, the daily lives of societies and countries in the region were inundated with the campaigns that constantly warned of the crisis of overpopulation and impediments to economic development, and promoted population control by means of contraception. In the present day, in which crises of low fertility and aging societies abound, it is hard not to be astonished by just how much has changed over the past century.

The first survey to focus on behaviors involving reproduction and fertility in East Asia, and to attempt to intervene, was a fertility survey<sup>1</sup> conducted systematically and on a nationwide scale in Japan in 1940. Its goal was comprehensively to collect data on births, which up until that point had been quantified in only a limited fashion through the national census (*kokusei chōsa*, first conducted in 1920). Although of course academic interest was a factor behind the undertaking, a practical interest in observing demographic phenomena within the Japanese empire’s territories in order to regulate them through law and to be able to respond to problems in reality was also at the root of it. Numerous social and historical contexts, such as securing the political status of the Japanese “ethnic population,” the handling of rural populations, which had been drawing

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1. Fertility survey: A survey for the purpose of studying the level of fertility of a country and region, or for uncovering factors which may be affecting levels of fertility in said country or region. Surveys are taken of either married women or couples, and consist of questions on basic demographic information regarding date of birth, date of marriage, as well as questions about socio-economic attributes such as levels of education and career, and questions regarding value consciousness toward children, dates of birth of children, and methods of birth control, among others.

attention as a social issue, the mobilization of population resources during the “total-war era,” as well as the reproduction of that population, and “democratic civil subjectivity” and population control following the Second World War, all acted as crucial external factors affecting the survey. It was only possible because the findings of the fertility survey were acknowledged as the baseline data from which long-term demographic inferences could be made. This suggests that the data also became the foundation for political and policy action that would transform real-world practices and customs.

Numerous studies of the history of birth control and population control conducted by scholars in Japan confirm this. Most prominently, while highlighting the significance of the women’s birth control movement (bodily autonomy/the choice to reproduce), Fujime Yuki (2004, 358) arrived at the overall conclusion that “if Japan’s wartime population policy (pro-natalist policy) could be said to be ‘Nazi Germanization,’ then the birth control movement and changes in population policy following the war were [Japan’s] ‘Americanization.’” One could say that Fujime reconstructed the state’s sexual/reproductive regulations from a gender perspective. Later, Ogino Miho (2008) investigated the intersections of perspectives of the state, the individual, and the foreign states involved in birth control from an actor’s level. In doing so, Ogino brought to light the political significance of birth control, originating in an individual’s “free choice.” However, these two pieces of research not only paid insufficient attention to the significance of fertility surveys, which formed the basis of the birth control movement and policies, but also failed to comprehend accurately the existence of an ethno-politics based on population—in particular, the political significance of colonial populations living within the empire’s territory at the time.

There is a dearth of research on this subject in Korean academia. It goes without saying that studies of Japan’s fertility surveys are limited, but even studies that analyze the significance of surveying and measuring populations at the time are very hard to come by. For example, Pak Myōng-gyu and Sō Ho-chōl’s (2003) study of the census of colonial Korea is the only one of its kind. In it, Pak and Sō identify the significance of the exercise as a “civilizing enterprise” by the Japanese Governor-General of Korea. Their article shares a similar perspective with Satō Masahiro’s (2002) research, which views Japan’s census as an act of “proving it to be a civilized nation” in order to revise its unequal treaties with Euro-American powers. Next, there is Yi Chōng-sōn’s (2013) research, which delineates just how unions between members of different ethnic groups—for example, Japanese and Korean—including issues of “international marriage” and “miscegenation” were understood in the realm of eugenics at the time. Addition-

ally, we have So Hyŏn-suk's (2000) research, which uncovers traces of birth control discourses in colonial Korea. Overall, it is not hard to see that the studies are severely limited to research tracing Japan's population politics only in respect of colonial Korea, or research focusing on the eugenic aspects of population politics.

This article seeks to demystify the historical momentum—for example, the entrance into total war and the transition in perceptions of demographics, as well as the reordering of perceptions of demographics following Japan's defeat in 1945 and the introduction of the General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (GHQ/SCAP) and private foundations—which exists within the life-cycle of Japan's population politics, and to shed light on its significance. Specifically, it intends to situate at the center of its analysis the agenda of reproducing the population, an idea which was raised amid intense interest at the time, and in particular, various surveys and policy actions related to the field of fertility. As previously mentioned, fertility surveys were an attempt to obtain information that could not be acquired through alternative official demographic statistics. Their purpose was to regularly survey the circumstances and background factors regarding marriage and couples' fertility, and to obtain baseline data necessary for comprehending demographic trends, including related measures and future demographic estimates. The fertility surveys conducted in Japan during the 1940s and 1950s are vastly important in that they provided the baseline data from which their executors were able to gauge and forecast the directions in which the entirety of the population would be moving in the future.

The resources which this article makes use of are discussions found in the *Journal of Population Problems* (*Jinkō mondai kenkyū*), published by the Institute of Population Problems (Jinkō Mondai Kenkyūjo), as well as its various other publications. The Institute of Populations Problems was both an organization housed under the Ministry of Health and Welfare and also the supervising institution of the fertility surveys, in addition to being the assembly point for Japanese demographers of the time. Utilizing these sources, I will reveal in clear terms how Japan's population politics transformed over different eras, from the perspective of birth control. Additionally, given that Japan's population politics are deeply interrelated to issues of managing colonial populations, I will provide analysis and discussion of these issues as well.

## War and Transitions in Perceptions of Population

### 1. “Rural Overpopulation Theory” in Japan and its Alternatives

Demographics first began to be recognized as a social issue in modern Japan with the Rice Riots (*Kome Sōdō*) of 1918. Although population theories such as “race improvement theory” and “settler migration theory” had been discussed among the intelligentsia from the beginnings of the Meiji era, these were simple overpopulation theories stemming from a dense population living on a limited area of land. However, following 1918, population problems began to be expressed as overpopulation theory in connection with issues of food production and unemployment (Takazawa 1992, 104). During this era, the Committee for the Inquiry into the Population’s Food Problems (*Jinkō Shokuryō Mondai Chōsakai*, 1927-30) was established by the government, and took as its core agenda the enactment of immigration measures, adjustments to the supply and demand of labor, population regulation measures, measures to increase production, and the establishment of the Ministry of Social Affairs. This institution’s mission was continued with the setting up of the Research Association for Population Problems (*Jinkō Mondai Kenkyūkai*, est. 1933). The Research Association for Population Problems conducted preliminary surveys of demographic phenomena, made predictions on population outcomes, and surveyed the distribution of citizen’s incomes, as well as immigration and population control (Sugita 2013, 98).

Primarily, Japanese demographers exhibited a clear interest in rural populations. Measures such as fortifying industry, fostering migration to urban areas and abroad, and birth control were repeatedly brought up as means by which to absorb excess rural populations. In particular, as urban unemployment and rural poverty grew acute during the recession following the late 1920s, population problems were underscored. Referring to population problems as an issue associated with the foundation of a national life, commercialist population theorist Ueda Teijirō claimed: “The problem of overpopulation can be resolved through further accelerating the process of industrialization. We must integrate the youth population who have left rural areas by expanding the labor market.” He once even said that rural areas were the “nurseries and nursing homes for the modern city” (Adachi 2013, 75). Eminent agricultural policy scholar Nasu Shiroshi shared the opinion that overpopulation in rural areas could be dealt with by increasing the employment capacity of businesses through industrial development. That said, he was concerned that if such a change were to happen, it would be inevitable that the number of agricultural workers would shrink,

leading to a decline in agricultural production. That is, he was concerned that a food shortage could arise (Cho Chŏng-u 2014, 26-27).

Up until this point, measures that would intervene in fertility—birth control—had failed to gain much interest from either state institutions or scholars. This was due to their being an overwhelmingly private affair, and thus giving little assurance that they could achieve their desired ends through government intervention. In addition, this disinterest in birth control owed much to the dominant view of the time, which understood the demographic phenomena ascertained through the results of the census not from the viewpoint of the future of industry, but from a demographic perspective concerned with long-term effects. In particular, the latter adopted a view of “demographic transition,”<sup>2</sup> which claimed that population growth would, at some point, stagnate due to the death rate and declining birth rates, after which point the overall population would begin to decline. Given declining birth rates in a number of European countries following the First World War, concerns that Japan was headed in the same direction (“declining population theory”) deepened. Changes in birth rates recorded following the first national census (1920) were widely discussed as the basis for these concerns. This perspective became the basis of the Ministry of Health and Welfare’s Wartime Population Policy (Adachi 2013, 76).

As population issues took on a new meaning with the advent of the total-war era following the First World War, this perspective was further fortified. As is widely known, “total war” refers to large-scale war mobilization, which of course includes dispatching mass armies to battlefields, and also the mobilization of all national, social, and economic resources for the sole purpose of war (Förster and Gessler 2005, 56). Japan experienced the First World War in the capacity of limited battles against German troops in the European power’s Chinese colony of Qingdao. Additionally, it experienced the conflict in the form of the colossal profits made by dominating the market for wartime supplies in the midst of the “battlefieldization of all of Europe.” And with the establishment of the Temporary Military Investigative Commission (Rinji Gunji Chōsa Inkaishi) within the Ministry of War in late 1915, Japan collected systematic information regarding the events unfolding on European battlefields. For the collection of information on the war, army major-generals were dispatched to European nations as military observers. The chief strategist of this era was Nagata Tetsuzan,

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2. In Korean academic circles, this phenomenon is referred to as demographic transition (*in'gu pyŏnch'ŏn*). In demographic transition theory, concerns about population decline are not prominent. However, in mid-1930s Japan, the development of demographic changes that corresponded to this “demographic transition” appear within a particular moment of crisis. For the sake of clarity, I have chosen to use the term “demographic transition” (*in'gu chŏnhwan*).

who was often referred to as the brain of the Control Faction (*Tōseiha*). He authored the *Opinion on Total Mobilization* (*Kokka sōdōin ni kansuru ikensho*, 1920) which comprised the overall opinion of the Temporary Military Investigative Commission. In this text, he emphasized the total mobilization of physical and material resources. He stipulated that in the concept of total mobilization, the distinctions between people and resources, spiritual and material, metaphysical and physical were dissolved, and that humans were subject to mobilization as a type of material resource. The assignment of regulations to all resources, functions, and facilities identified by state powers was the central task of the times, and population emerged as the central subject of this mobilization (Kim In-soo 2016, 96-99; Umemori 1999, 35-39). Increasing the population was a task of utmost urgency necessitated by the era of total war, in which a war of attrition was inevitable.

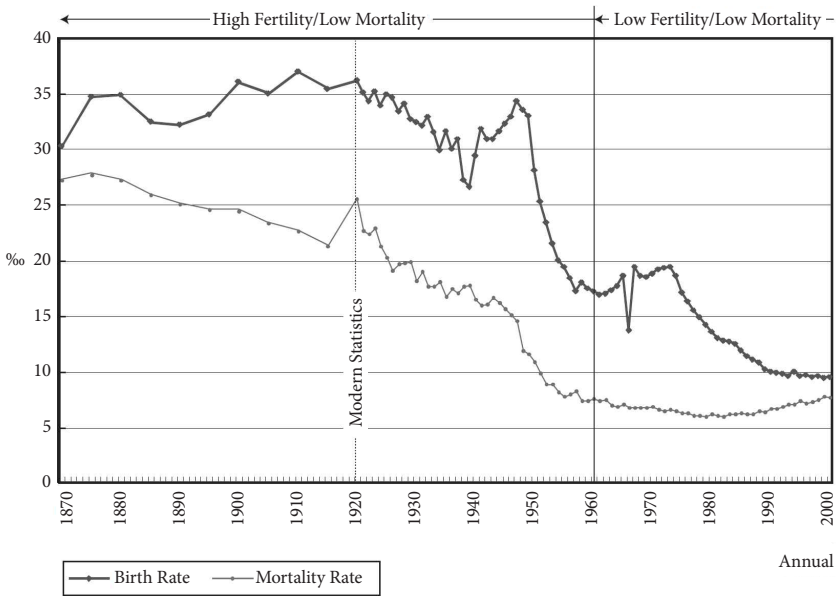
It appears that colonial Korea, where the problem of rural overpopulation was even more acute than in Japan, had no particular stance on birth control. Rather, various limitations implicit in Korea's agricultural production, such as the small allocations of cultivation acreage, the crudeness of the organic composition of agricultural capital (which was labor-intensive in comparison to the introduction of mechanical capital), and an overdependency on intensive labor performed by hand, were considered the essential problems. At this time, the "surplus population" found in rural colonial Korea signified the "over-concentration of the labor capacity of family members of a farming family invested in the agricultural sector, as made apparent by the meager acreages for cultivation and low standards of technology" (Yukiyama 1943, 41). Almost no agenda had been proposed regarding fertility in colonial Korea,<sup>3</sup> and birth control was excluded from measures to relieve population pressures.

## 2. The Crisis of Reproducing the Population: Social Implications of Fertility Surveys

In order to regulate and manage the quality and quantity of human resources, Japan's Ministry of Health and Welfare was established at the request of the military in January 1938. The Research Association for Population Problems, which had been set up in 1933, was reborn under the auspices of the Ministry of

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3. Examples of fertility surveys conducted in colonial Korea are extremely rare. Attesting to this, there were two fertility surveys: one conducted on February 6, 1944 in five prefectures (*fu*); and one conducted between February and March of the same year in five villages. For information regarding the contents of the surveys, see Chōsen Sōtoku Kanbō Chōsaka (1944a, 45-60; 1944b, 57-77).



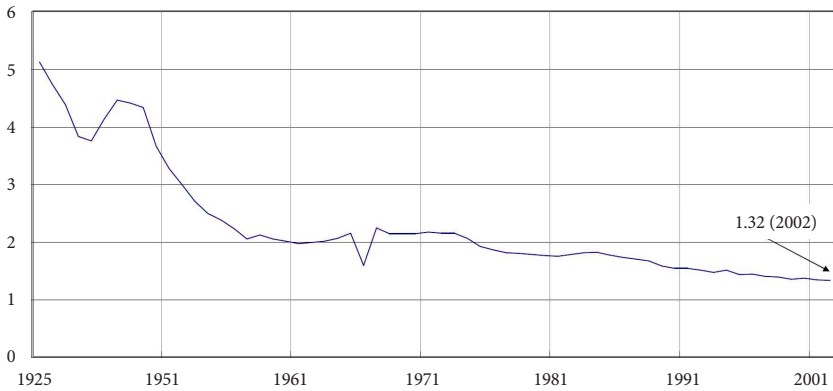
Source: Okazaki (1995); Statistics and Information Department, Cabinet Secretariat, Ministry of Health and Welfare (n.d.), as quoted in Institute for International Cooperation Japan International Cooperation Agency (2003, 18).

Figure 1. Japan's demographic transition

Health and Welfare as the Institute of Population Problems (August 25, 1939; Imperial order No. 603).<sup>4</sup> Within the Bureau of Prevention (Yōbōkyoku) at the Ministry of Health and Welfare, a Eugenic Section (Yūseika) was opened, and in addition to this, the Racial Hygiene Study Group (Minzoku Eisei Kenkyūkai), which introduced various eugenic measures, was also created. In 1942, the Institute of Population Problems was merged with the public health service and other research institutions within the Ministry of Health and Welfare into the Ministry of Health and Welfare Research Institute (Kōseishō Kenkyūjo), under

4. According to the Administrative Regulations and Bylaws of the Institute of Population Problems (*Jinkō mondai kenkyūjo jimu bunshō kisoku saisoku*, October 18, 1939), the Research Department (Chōsabu) was made up of three groups. The first was in charge of demographic theory, demographic history, population policy, demographic statistics, the circumstances of populations living abroad, as well as survey research for policy. The second group was in charge of theories of race as well as survey research on ethnic policies from both the social sciences and natural sciences perspectives. The third group was in charge of sociological, economic, geographical, and social policy survey research on population problems (*Jinkō mondai kenkyūjo kansei* 1940, 69).





Source: Date and Shimizutani (2004). This chart was created using data published in the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (Kokuritsu Shakai Hoshō-Jinkō Mondai Kenkyūjo) publication the *Journal of Population Problems* (*Jinkō mondai kenkyū*) combined with data published each year in the Statistics and Information Department, Ministry of Health and Welfare (Kōsei Rōdōshō Tōkei Jōhōbu) publication *Vital Statistics* (*Jinkō dōtai tōkei*).

**Figure 2.** Japan's total fertility rate trends\*

\*Total Fertility Rate (TFR): An index of the average number of children a woman is expected to give birth to in her lifetime. If the fertility rate of a certain period in time for a certain age is applied to a woman throughout her childbearing years, it is an indicator of the number of children that she will give birth to before reaching menopause.

which they were reorganized into the Population and Race Section (*Jinkō Minzokubu*). During this time, a number of laws related to the management of people's reproduction were enacted between 1940 and 1941. Of these, one was the National Eugenic Act (proclaimed in 1940, enacted in July 1941); another was the Population Policy Establishment Guidelines (*Jinkō seisaku kakuritsu yōkō*), decided upon by the cabinet on January 22, 1941 (Ogino 2008, 112-14; Fujime 2004, 332). In accordance with these laws—save for instances of genetic disorders—birth control (i.e. contraception and abortion) was banned. Additionally, in order for a doctor to perform sterilization surgery or induce an abortion, s/he had to submit prior notice. Fertility control was characterized as an anti-national act.

Figure 1 depicts Japan's birth and mortality rates. The steady climb of the birth rate in the 1940s is striking. It is a well-documented fact that between 1947 and 1949, nearly 8,060,000 babies were born, in what is called the "*dankai sedai*" or "baby-boomer" generation. However, the fact that even during the war,

between 1940 and Japan's defeat in 1945, the birth rate showed growth had not been given sufficient attention.

As shown in figure 2, following the 1920s, the total fertility rate in Japan was in general decline. The welfare authority interpreted this as an indication that an overall stagnation in population was transitioning into a decline, and that in the long-term, this would engender an aging society. At this point in time, France was on everyone's lips as an example of a country with low birth rates in which there were "more elderly than youths," and its early defeat at the hands of Nazi Germany, which itself had instituted a fierce population growth policy, reinforced the belief that the stature of a nation's population was directly linked to its survival (Ogino 2008, 117). The Population Policy Establishment Guidelines (1941) were established on the basis of this crisis surrounding population decline.

The Population Policy Establishment Guidelines proposed an objective of reaching a population of 100 million ethnic Japanese by 1960. This figure for the policy-planned "target population" was based on projections made by the Research Department at the Institute of Population Problems in 1940. According to those estimates, by 1950 Japan's population would reach around 85 million, and by 2000 it would reach 120 million, after which it would begin to decline. Here we can see that there was not only a recognition of the total-war era in which population was consumed as a resource, but also that the need to actively rectify the "transition to a declining population society" was very much present. A policy measure that would lower the age of marriage by about three years over a decade, raising the number of children that couples would have to five, and encouraging the establishment of public health clinics in order to drastically reduce the infant mortality rate, was advanced.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, curiously, a "forty

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5. These were the principle contents of the "measures to increase births" portion of Section Four: Measures for Population Increase in the Population Policy Establishment Guidelines. The following were also included.

- The maintenance/reinforcement of a wholesome family institution
- The vitalization of marriage mediation by organizations and public institutions
- The alleviation of the costs of getting married and the establishment of a system of lending for marriage funds
- The interlocking of the in-progress school system reforms with population policy
- The strengthening of knowledge/technological education regarding sanitation and childbearing, as well as instilling the national calling of motherhood in girls' high schools and schools for young women (fostering healthy motherhood)
- The regulation of employment of female workers over twenty years of age, and the improvement of employment requirements which become a hindrance to marriage
- The alleviation of tax burdens on those with many dependents, while simultaneously increasing the tax burden on those who are single
- The establishment of a family allowance system (creation of a Family Burden Control Financial System [working title])

percent agricultural population theory” (*nōgyō jinkō yon wari teiyū ron*)<sup>6</sup> was promoted, in which the farming population was to be maintained at forty percent of the total population. Foremost, there was a need to increase food production by means of guaranteeing secure agricultural production capacity. Second, because rural areas exhibited higher fertility than urban areas in multiple fertility surveys, maintaining and bolstering rural areas’ capacity to increase the population was viewed as a necessity (Adachi 2013, 77-78).

It can be judged that the data undergirding the Population Policy Establishment Guidelines were the results of the fertility survey administered in 1940 by the Institution of Population Problems.<sup>7</sup> To be more specific, as a differential fertility survey, it measured birth rates, birth rates by age, birth rates by occupation, birth rates by income class, birth rates by education level, and birth rates by region. As of “Present: January 20, 1940 12:00 AM” the Institute of Population Problems had sampled 100,000 couples who were salaried workers such as government workers or bankers, wage laborers in the manufacturing/mining/transportation sectors, rural residents, small and mid-sized business owners, and those belonging to the “card class” (*kādo kaikyū*),<sup>8</sup> and distributed questionnaires (figure 3) to them, administering the fertility survey (“Shussanryoku chōsa no shikō” 1940, 72).

The results of this survey were published in July of the same year, in the

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- The consideration for commendations, priority distribution of goods, and other various methods of appropriate prioritization for multiple-child families
  - The expansion of maternity hospitals (*san'in*) and nurseries, and the distribution of sanitary materials for childbirth
  - The banning and prevention of artificial birth control methods such as contraception and abortion, and the simultaneous eradication of venereal diseases

6. This is enumerated in Section Five: Measures for the Increase of Talent in the Population Policy Establishment Guidelines. This article established the objective of promoting the rationalization of the population’s composition and distribution through land planning. In particular, it suggested that it must disperse populations by removal from large metropolitan areas. The dispersal of schools to rural areas was an example policy. Additionally, in view of the reality in which rural areas were the unparalleled sources of both troops and laborers, this gave rise to measures under which the rural population within Japan would be kept at a certain level, while securing forty percent of the Japanese population in Japan/Manchuria/Northern China for agriculture: the so-called “forty percent agricultural population theory.”

7. As for nationwide fertility surveys, the first was conducted in 1940, followed by the second in 1952, after which they began to be conducted every five years under the name “Fertility Survey.” Following 1992, the name was changed to “Basic Survey on Birth Trends,” and it continues to be conducted to this day (Kokuritsu Shakai Hoshō-Jinkō Mondai Kenkyūjo 2017, 1).

8. The term “card class” come from the document in the form of a card on which the poor were listed by local social welfare committees (*hōmen iin*): the urban underclass who were recipients of official aid.

昭和十五年一月二十日発表  
出生力調査票

調査の目的 調査の意義

この調査は出生動態、出生率、結婚制度及び人口の増減と  
出生率との関係を知るためである。出生率の増減は、出生力調査の  
目的に直接関係するものである。出生力調査の結果は、出生率の増減  
の傾向を知るに役立つものである。

(1) 出生率の増減を知るためである。  
(2) 出生率の増減を知るためである。  
(3) 出生率の増減を知るためである。

姓	名	性別	年齢	職業	出生力
(1) 姓	(2) 名	(3) 性別	(4) 年齢	(5) 職業	(6) 出生力
(7) 出生力	(8) 出生力	(9) 出生力	(10) 出生力	(11) 出生力	(12) 出生力
(13) 出生力	(14) 出生力	(15) 出生力	(16) 出生力	(17) 出生力	(18) 出生力
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(139) 出生力	(140) 出生力	(141) 出生力	(142) 出生力	(143) 出生力	(144) 出生力
(145) 出生力	(146) 出生力	(147) 出生力	(148) 出生力	(149) 出生力	(150) 出生力

Figure 3. Fertility questionnaire schedule (confidential)

unable to collect information on rural areas, and (2) due to it being a survey administered to the parents of primary school children, it had been completely unable to ascertain information on the status of infertile couples. If one examines the “number of children birthed by women who are no longer of a childbearing age (over forty-five)” section of the survey (table 1), the overall average was 4.64, exhibiting differences based on the occupation of the head of the family (the husband).

If we were to exclude the most impoverished of these classes, the card class, farmers registered the highest birth rate—4.98. Despite their residence in rural areas, salaried workers and wage laborers registered numbers at the lower end of the scale. Additionally, the results of a survey of the “number of children by the wife’s occupation” led to the conclusion that “wives with occupations, particularly as teachers, office clerks, or those wives participating in factory work, have a severely deficient fertility rate, and thus from the perspective of the measures for population increase, it is not advisable for wives to work in these types of occupations” (Okazaki 1940, 21).

Still, according to a report from the Institute of Population Problems in 1941

*Journal of Population Problems* (Okazaki 1940). There were 126,627 questionnaires distributed in total, and the number of questionnaires returned was 80,638. Among these, valid questionnaires (excluding partially completed questionnaires and the like) came to 71,606, or eighty-nine percent. While explaining that survey data from a differentiated fertility survey of couples was absolutely necessary for the establishment of a population policy, but that no such survey had been conducted in Japan up to that point, the author of this text, Okazaki Ayanori, revealed that it was “the first systematic survey on a nationwide scale.” There had once been a survey administered in a restricted manner in the Tokyo region, but he added that there had been limitations in that (1) it had been

**Table 1.** Average total number of children given birth to by women no longer of childbearing age, by class

Typical salaried worker	4.10
Rural salaried worker	4.06
Rural wage laborer	4.36
Farmer	4.98
Typical small to mid-sized business owner	4.17
Rural small to midsize business owner	4.00
Affluent class	4.53
Card class	5.18

Source: Okazaki (1940, 6).

(Kōseishō Jinkō Mondai Kenkyūjo 1941), cities were showing lower standardized birth rates in comparison with rural areas, with even lower numbers the larger the city was. Moreover, as time passed, this disparity between cities and rural areas widened, particularly when the scale of cities was taken into account. In general, the standardized birth rate of the industrial population showed parallels with that of cities, and the same trend was also confirmed in the so-called “cultural leisure class,” most accurately described as the “radio-listening generation.” In this manner, the report came to the conclusion that “in each region, the most decisive factor in the disparity of the capacity to increase population is fertility, rather than mortality, and we must acknowledge that the degree of culture has an inverse relationship with the capacity for population increase” (“Preface”).

In these fertility surveys and reports, there was a recognition of the disparities in regional fertility between urban and rural areas, while at the same time there was a displacement and reassessment of the significance of rural populations, which had been thought of as a social issue until the end of the war; that was, a transition in values is apparent. The most representative figure in this transformation was Tachi Minoru<sup>9</sup> of the Institute of Population Problems. Tachi was a proponent of taking the demographic perspective of the Population Policy Establishment Guidelines to the extreme. Assessing that the Japanese state’s land

9. Tachi Minoru (1906-72): Tokyo Imperial University graduate. Entered the Ministry of Health and Welfare’s Institute of Population Problems in 1939 and became its head in 1959. Member of the United Nations Population Commission, served successively on the boards for the International Population Association and the International Statistics Association (<https://kotobank.jp/word/%E9%A4%A8%E7%A8%94-1089559>). Accessed: March 14, 2018).

planning was too narrowly concentrated on “national security demands” or “the amplification of production capacity” and other types of “material aspects,” he asserted that land-planning policies must be subsumed and subordinate to the ultimate goal of population increase. Noticing the regional elements of demographic phenomena, he suggested that there was a negative correlation between urbanization and fertility.<sup>10</sup> With these results as the groundwork, he went so far as to say that, for the sake of population increase, it was necessary to introduce anti-urbanization, anti-industrialization policies (Adachi 2013, 81-83).

### 3. The Crisis of Primacy of the Japanese Population: The Ethno-political Implications of Fertility Surveys

It is noteworthy about the Japanese government’s understanding of fertility that by comparing the country’s own birth rates with those of other nations—the USSR, China, and India—in the region in which Japan had declared itself the leading power, it strengthened the sense of crisis surrounding the decline of Japan’s ethnic population. Figure 4 is taken from a pamphlet put out at the time by the Ministry of Health and Welfare’s Bureau of Prevention. When we consider why it did not compare Japan’s population with those of Germany, France, or other European nations, it becomes apparent that it was the author’s intent to juxtapose birth rates of countries vying for hegemony over the East Asian region: China, the USSR, and India. It emphasizes that, compared with Japan’s birth rate of 26.7 per 1,000 in 1938, China boasted a rate of 45.0 (estimated value) while the USSR had a rate of 43.3 (*Kōseishō Yobōkyoku* 1941, 18).

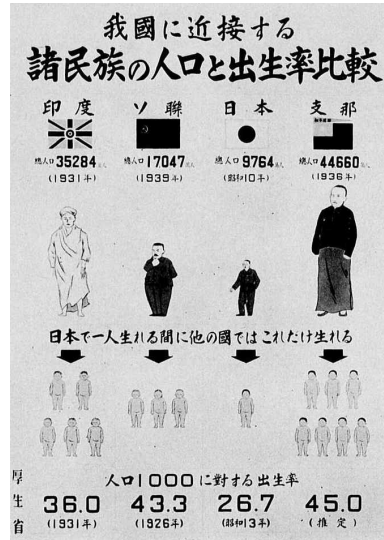
In the first volume of *Population Problem Data* (*Kōseishō Jinkō Mondai Kenkyūjo* n.d.), put out by the Institute of Population Problems, we can confirm the belief that because population is “the driving force for the nation and country’s prosperity, for Japan, which will become the leader of the East Asian nations, increasing their population is an urgent task” (7). The text’s author stresses that Japan must emulate the population policies of Nazi Germany and achieve population increase “through a spiritual movement based on a comprehensive notion of the ethnic nation” (13). Additionally, they made clear the underlying relevance and significance of the Population Policy Establishment

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10. “The capacity for growth in towns accounts for only two-fifths of the standardized natural increase rate in rural areas. This means that the capacity for population increase in towns is only two-fifths of that in rural areas ... The death rates in urban and rural areas are nearly at the same level, but because the birth rates in cities are far lower, this large disparity in the capacity for increase requires our attention. In short, this disparity in the capacity for increase between urban and rural areas stems from the differences in birth rates” (Tachi 1943, 215).

Guidelines by stating: “First, we must become conscious of the fact that the Japanese nation is one which must always be developing; second, we must reject a worldview built on the basis of the individual, and instead thoroughly promote the establishment of a worldview built on the basis of the home (*ie*) and the nation; third, we must realize our pride and obligations as the leader in the establishment and development of the East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere; fourth, we must thoroughly recognize that the accomplishment of the Empire’s missions can only be fulfilled on the basic condition of the rapid development of the Japanese (*Naichijin*) population both quantitatively and qualitatively” (14).

It is imperative here to pay attention to what exactly the “rapid development of the native population” means. “Pure-blood racial theory” (*junketsu minzoku ron*) had a fierce hold over the minds of bureaucrats in the Ministry of Health and Welfare. Among those actively working at the Institute of Population Problems was Koya Yoshio (1890-1974), a professor at Kanazawa Medical University who played an instrumental role in making sure the activities of the Racial Hygiene Study Group were reflected in policies. He sympathized deeply with the ethnic and racial policies of the Nazis. Koya entered the Ministry of Health and Welfare in 1939, where he served as the head of the National Physical Fitness Section (*Kokumin Tairyokubu-chō*) at the Institute of Welfare Science (*Kōsei Kagaku Kenkyūjo*) as well as the head of the Science Division (*Kagakubu*) at the Ministry of Health and Welfare Research Institute, and took on the role of director of the Institute of Public Hygiene (*Kōshū Eiseiinshō*) following Japan’s defeat in the Second World War. Regarding Japanese colonies such as Taiwan and Korea, he asserted that they should not pursue “national assimilation” via miscegenation, but instead that Japanese settlers should be dispatched to construct Japanese rural areas on a large scale, so that Japanese farmers would “reoccupy” these places. For him and others in the eugenics sphere, the high rate of population increase in Korea was a cause for concern. They even considered the coercive name-change policy of



Source: Kōseishō Yōbōkyoku (1941, 19).

Figure 4. Comparison of population and birth rates in India, the USSR, Japan, and China

the Governor-General of Korea and the wartime mobilization of Korean people to Japan something that should be avoided to the greatest extent possible (Koya 1939a, 1939b, as quoted in Oguma 2003, 325-27). As shown in the “East Asian Ethnic Population Policy” of the *Examination of World Policy with Yamato Nation at the Center* (*Yamato minzoku o chūkaku to suru sekai seisaku no kentō*, 1943), published by the Ethnic Population Division (Jinkō Minzokubu) at the Ministry of Health and Welfare Research Institute, these thinkers considered it a problem that despite the high birth rates in Taiwan and Korea, their people were still not being assimilated. The following five measures were proposed to address this:

1. Koreans residing within Japan should be repatriated following the end of the war, with a clear conception of temporary work away from home (*dekasegi*).
2. If Koreans living along the border of east Manchuria in northern Korea begin a relationship with the USSR and pose a threat, they should be moved to a different location and Japanese should be moved there collectively.
3. Koreans should be sent to “wastelands” such as New Guinea to pioneer.
4. It should be engineered that native Japanese comprise at least ten percent of the population in Korea and Taiwan.
5. As the governing policy of unity of Mainland Asia and Korea (*Naisen ittai ron*) in the transition period is resulting in native Japanese being pressured by Koreans, this should be rectified. (Oguma 2003, 331-32)

The Japanese government, and in particular the Ministry of Health and Welfare bureaucrats who understood population problems as a pressing issue needing to be addressed, not only exhibited a sense of crisis directed abroad, but displayed an allergic reaction to the increase and migration of colonial populations. Here we can verify their plan not only to achieve racial purity within Japan, but also to preserve the superior status of ethnically Japanese populations in their colonies as well.

In relation to this, the Ministry of Health and Welfare had collected survey data on the fertility of the Korean population living in Japan (administered August 1, 1940). This survey, completed in cooperation with the Central Concordia Association (Chūō Kyōwakai), had the purpose of “surveying what relationship one’s age of marriage, occupation, education level, income, and period of residency in Japan has with fertility.” The regions surveyed included the prefectures of Hokkaido, Tokyo, Kanagawa, Toyama, Aichi, Osaka, Yamaguchi, and Fukuoka, among other areas where many Koreans resided in Japan. In its survey methods, it operated on the principle of surveying for and recording common-law marriages (*de facto* marriages) and bigamy (in the case of having a wife in Korea) in the same category (“Naichi zaijū Chōsenjin



shussanryoku chōsa no shikō” 1940, 71). Marriages between Japanese and Korean people were a commonly witnessed social practice among the Korean community residing in Japan. This, of course, was desperately required attention from the perspective of the Ministry of Health and Welfare, which was fixated on the purity of Japanese ethnicity.

Fertility surveys were also completed in colonial Korea. Between February and March 1944, the Governor-General of Korea surveyed the fertility of both Japanese settlers in colonial Korea (*Zaichō Nihonjin*) as well as native Koreans in five urban areas (Kyōngsōng-bu, P’yōngyang-bu, Pusan-bu, Taegu-bu, and Hamhūng-bu) and seven rural areas (Kyōnggi-do P’yōngt’aek-gun Songt’an-myōn, Chōnbuk Namwōn-gun Unbong-myōn, Kyōngbuk Yōngchōn-gun Kūmho-myōn<sup>11</sup> Kyōngnam Kimhae-gun Kimhae-ūp Naedong-ri, Hwanghae-do Sōhūng-gun Yongp’yōng-myōn Wōlt’an-ri, P’yōngbuk Kusōng-gun Sōsan-myōn Ipsōk-dong, and Hamnam Chōngp’yōng-gun Shinsang-myōn). As a sample survey, the fertility survey of urban areas was carried out by distributing questionnaires on fertility statistics to households with children in grades five and six of primary school and having their guardians fill them out. Additionally, as for its aim and purpose, it asserted: “Not only is the state of fertility of Japanese residing in Korea important from the perspective of the national project for population, but shedding light on the increasing Korean population, which will take charge of an aspect (*ittan*) of our great calling to erect the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere, has a greater significance beyond merely comparison with the fertility of our compatriots” (Chōsen Sōtoku Kanbō Chōsaka 1944b, 57). What is remarkable here comes from the comparison of the survey’s results (e.g., average age at first marriage) with six Japanese cities (Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, Kyoto, Kobe, and Yokohama). In table 2, we can see that Korean natives were marrying at an earlier age than Japanese residing in either Korea or Japan (63).

Next, the fertility survey investigating rural areas used an interview methodology in which full-time researchers visited sites, conducted interviews and listened to respondents. As it was conducted in the villages and surrounding areas in which a survey on household finances was also conducted, the survey region was defined as a purely rural region in which there were approximately 150 domiciles. We can see in the results of this survey that the average age at the time of men’s first marriage was 21.15, and 17.01 for women, which clearly supports other findings regarding the prevalence of early marriage. Through comparison with the average found in six northeastern provinces in Japan (1938

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11. At first, only a survey of Kyōngbuk Yōngchōn-gun Pūgan-myōn was planned, but due to traffic restrictions owing to the outbreak of a communicable disease, it was changed to Kūmho-myōn.

**Table 2.** Average age at the time of first marriage

	Husband	Wife
1. Six cities (Japan, 1938)	30.14 (Overall Japan 28.39)	25.76 (Overall Japan 24.41)
2. Survey of Japanese (1944)	26.53	21.58
3. Survey of Koreans (1944)	21.14	18.12

survey, men: 26.62; women: 23.37) we can confirm that the age at the time of first marriage in Korea was markedly earlier than that in Japan (Chōsen Sōtoku Kanbō Chōsaka 1944a, 46-53). As the surveys examined above placed their focus on the fertility of Korean people, through this report—rough as it was—we are able to see that, through early marriages, Korean people were exhibiting “a likelihood of fecundity” in comparison with the Japanese.

In short, we can be certain that population problems began to be discussed on a drastically different horizon than the past recognition of overpopulation as a crisis during the total-war period. Also, we can glean that for the bureaucrats at the Ministry of Health and Welfare, who had been proselytizing “Japanese racial purity,” the active growth of populations in the colonies was regarded with a renewed sense of crisis.

## US Occupation and Transitions in the Perception of Populations

### 1. Promotion of Birth Control: “Pressure” from Foreign Foundations

As we saw in figure 1, Japan experienced a bump in population in the late 1940s following the end of the war. In the years between 1947 and 1949, approximately 8,060,000 babies were born. This was the so-called *dankai sedai* (baby-boomer generation). The dissemination of vaccines had extraordinary effectiveness in lowering the infant mortality rate. Nearly seven million people repatriated (*hikiage*) from the battlefields and colonies following the end of the Second World War. Large-scale famines were prevalent in cities.

In the midst of this, the occupying authorities, the GHQ/SCAP, and their commander, General Douglas MacArthur, began to develop an interest in Japan’s population problems. First, an order was given by the GHQ/SCAP to conduct six population dynamic surveys between 1945 and 1950,<sup>12</sup> and each

12. These were conducted at the following times: September 1945, November 1945, October 1947,

year demographics were also compiled and reported on in Japanese newspapers. There were multiple reasons that the GHQ/SCAP began to scrutinize Japan's population problems. First, it had to prevent malnutrition stemming from a scarcity of food and the spread of any infections due to famine (a problem that could also affect the occupying troops). Second, there was a worry that the food crisis could lead to hostility toward occupying troops or riots, and become a burden on occupational rule. Third, there was the influence of Warren S. Thompson's theory, which viewed the pressures of overpopulation as a central reason for Japan's imperialist conquests (Ogino 2008, 142-43). In a text he wrote in 1950, Thompson (1950, 33) warned that Japanese imperialism would resurge within a single generation. Urging that Japan had to forgo the practices of foreign expansion or immigration to which it had grown accustomed, Thompson claimed that the best policy to achieve this would be fertility control (Homei 2016, 228).

The GHQ/SCAP adhered to a policy of "neutrality" regarding Japan's population problems and took a position of autonomy in the matter.<sup>13</sup> There were a number of factors and developing contexts that influenced this decision. First among them was that the entire world was entranced by the ongoing Nuremberg trials in Germany, particularly as the Nazis' inhumane racial policies and sterilization policies were coming to light. In this context, the GHQ/SCAP wanted to avoid any suspicions that it was forcing birth control on Japan, for fear it would only invite comparison to genocide. Another interesting background to this decision was the objections that those of Catholic faith had to birth control, both in the US and Japan. And finally, the US was committed to "not providing an excuse" to the USSR that could be used against them in their negotiations now that the Cold War was getting under way (Ogino 2008, 145; Oakley 1978, 625).

Although progress was slow because of this "neutrality" on the part of the GHQ/SCAP and "proxy observation" through the Japanese, the parties that began actually to impose some pressure were private US foundations and demographers interested in Japan. American demographers and social science experts including Marshall C. Balfour, Roger F. Evans, Frank W. Notestein, and Irene B. Taeuber visited Japan in September 1948 as members of the 1948 Rockefeller Mission on Public Health in the Far East. Besides Japan, this mission was to visit and conduct observations in Korea, Taiwan, China, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Following two weeks of observation conducted all around

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August 1948, and October 1950 (Oakley 1978, 622).

13. Oakley (1978) defined the GHQ/SCAP's position as one of "protective neutralism."

Japan, they released a report (Balfour et al. 1950). In their report, these scholars and professionals claimed that Japan held fast to its “nostalgia for imperialism” and unconsciously regarded an increase in population as a signifier of the nation’s wellbeing or vitality. The report delineated this attitude of the Japanese, stating that “eugenic fears were widespread; it was often stated that reduction in fertility would occur first in the ‘better’ classes and so would jeopardize the ‘quality’ of the ‘race,’” and that “the majority of the Japanese appear unable or unwilling to face the magnitude of the population problem,” as well as claiming that “there was hesitation concerning birth control as an immediate solution.” Despite expressing their criticism in the harshest terms, because the involvement of “a military conqueror” in the birth rates of an occupied nation could precipitate political misgivings, they conceded that any actions by which they could approach these problems would inevitably be complex (Balfour et al. 1950, 35, 43).

Among those visiting Japan for the sake of research were Notestein and Taeuber, both of whom worked at the Office of Population Research (OPR)<sup>14</sup> at Princeton University. Notestein and Taeuber, along with two other demographers, Kingsley Davis<sup>15</sup> and Dudley Kirk, were famous for coming up with a model of historical demographic transition<sup>16</sup> that fitted within the framework of modernization theory. Predicting a “population explosion in Asia” in 1945, Davis

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14. The OPR was the recipient of large grants from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Carnegie Institute, the World Bank, and the US State Department, among other sources.

15. Kingsley Davis (1908-97): An American demographer, Davis earned his Ph.D. in Sociology at Harvard University in 1936, after which he lectured at Pennsylvania State University, Princeton University, Columbia University, and the University of California at Berkeley, among others. Alongside his student—and later, wife—Judith Blake, he emphasized that human fertility was intimately related to social structures. He suggested a set of eleven intermediate variables which mediated the relationship between social structure and fertility. Enumerating this in his study (Davis and Blake 1956), he claimed that because the motivation for, and values placed on, giving birth are closely interrelated with social structures, the enterprise of family planning, which proposes to provide information, knowledge, and services related to contraception to individuals in order to change their actions related to fertility without consideration of changes in social structure, social transformation, or development, achieves less than satisfactory results in comparison to the efforts and costs which are required of them (Han’guk In’gu Hakhoe 2006, 74-75).

16. Demographic Transition Theory: A model first put forth by Notestein in 1953, and subsequently modified by numerous other scholars, it is a theory which posits the demographic changes that occurred in the West following the industrial revolution as the general model. This theory focuses on the fact that the patterns of population growth undergo changes according to the apparent lag between fertility rates and death rates, depending on the development of science and technology, and the progress of industrialization. That is to say, populations transform in a pattern of “high death rates/high fertility rates → low death rates/high fertility rates → low death rates/low fertility rates.” But in particular, this theory emphasizes that during the “low death rates/high fertility rates” period, which is brought about thanks to the development of medical technology, there will be a temporary explosion in population (Kwŏn Tae-hwan and Kim Tu-sŏp 2002).

claimed that once Asian populations were able to enjoy a modern life, Europe would become a casualty of this change. That is to say, as non-Western regions began to adopt the technologies of the West, the tendency of continued population growth would worsen. This was already a phenomenon being witnessed in places such as Java and Malaysia, and one that was incipient in Iran, China, and Brunei. In the eyes of these scholars, the only actionable means of stopping an explosion of population in these countries were economic development, urbanization, and industrialization, and they believed that in pursuing these goals, they could transform the traditional values surrounding the family.<sup>17</sup>

However, with the arrival of the late 1940s, this attitude, which viewed fertility as a dependent variable of modernization, was rejected, and a more aggressive, interventionist approach toward modifying reproduction was beginning to gain recognition. After completing his observations in Asia, Notestein noted in 1948 that contraception was an incredibly decisive and powerful means of population control and therefore there was no better choice. At the time, US policy officials, private foundations, non-governmental organizations, and research institute employees viewed the rapid growth of populations as preventing economic development and thus exacerbating poverty—and thus possibly precipitating a communist insurrection. There were concerns that population growth in the Third World could displace and metastasize the East-West Cold War into a North-South struggle between the rich and poor (Latham 2011, 95-99). However, as population control in the Third World being enacted by the US provided sufficient grounds to invite a backlash calling out imperialism or racism, intermediary organizations such as the Rockefeller Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Population Council, and the International Planned Parenthood Federation<sup>18</sup>

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17. Brigadier General Crawford Sams, who was serving as the chief of the Public Health and Welfare Division, was among those at GHQ/SCAP who actively voiced this opinion. He criticized the policy of suppressing postwar Japan's industrialization—that is, the degrading of Japan into an agricultural country beneath even the level of Korea, China, or the Philippines—as had been put in place by the GHQ, and asserted that in order to regulate the population, the authorities should be moving in the direction of approving of Japanese industrialization (Ogino, 2008, 144-45). This assertion was a part of the expanding US plan to transform Japan into a stable capitalist country, making it a bulwark of anti-communism in Asia. This came as there was mounting crisis surrounding the US occupation of Asia in the form of anti-Americanism, communization, and people's liberation struggles occurring on the Korean peninsula, in mainland China, and in Indonesia (Fujime 2004, 343-44).

18. Due to population control being an extremely sensitive topic, rather than directly taking action in its own name, the Rockefeller Foundation created an executive organ that it funded monetarily. In 1952, a seminar on population problems was hosted at the Rockefeller Foundation, a meeting that resulted in the establishment of the Population Council in 1953. During this era, alongside concerns surrounding rapid population growth, there was an ongoing, complex discussion of the ethical concerns surrounding the use of contraceptives and family planning as a concept, as well as

took over important duties on behalf of the US government (Ogino 2008, 179).

## 2. Realignments of Perceptions and Conflicts Surrounding Population Control

This plan to resolve Japan's population problems through fertility control, however, did not trigger a particular sensation at first. In many instances, thinkers with a background in academia suggested plans other than fertility control. For example, there were those who advocated immigration, reindustrialization, and agricultural policy reform as solutions. Figures such as Minoguchi Tokijirō, who approached the issue from an industrial perspective, argued that Japan needed to focus on the revitalization of industry rather than fertility control. From eugenicists and medical doctors there were cries concerning eugenic reverse-selection and biological atrophy. For example, Okazaki, who was head of the Institute for Population Problems, published a book in 1946 entitled *Population of Worry* (*Kumon no jinkō*), in which he posited the idea that although it was easy to see birth control as a remedy for overpopulation and food shortages, by carrying out birth control Japan would lose potential populations that possessed talents and aptitudes, and would thus arrive at the "suicide of the ethnicity," which Japan must absolutely avoid. Furthermore, there were many who understood fertility control in postwar Japan as being linked with the "underdeveloping" of the country following the loss of its colonies, and opposed it on those grounds (Homei 2016, 229; Ogino 2008, 157).

It was in this context that the young bureaucrats and demographers at the Ministry of Health and Welfare emerged, calling for the introduction of fertility control. Ironic as it may be, these young bureaucrats included Tachi Minoru, Kitaoka Juitsu, and Koya Yoshio, who had worked for the Institute of Population Problems and the Ministry of Health and Welfare Research Institute during the war, and who had participated in the enactment and realization of the Population Policy Establishment Guidelines. Following the Second World War, these scholars aligned with Warren Thompson and other GHQ/SCAP advisers, and began to receive assistance from various US foundations, continuing down the path toward the introduction of birth control policy in Japan.<sup>19</sup> In short,

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the eugenic considerations relating to birth control. In the midst of this, the Population Council took charge of disseminating the scientific results of medical, public health, and social research to governments and individuals in various countries (Hanguk Ingu Hakhoe 2006, 56-64, 325-26).

19. Warren Thompson stayed in Japan for three months as a consultant for the Natural Resources Section of the GHQ/SCAP. At the time, he was the director of the Scripps Foundation for Research in Population Problems. He worked in collaboration with the vice-director of the foundation, P.K. Whelpton, who remained in Japan for three months after Thompson had returned to the US

there was a remarkable “conversion.” Koya even went so far as to remark that it was inevitable that he would be the subject of all sorts of criticism for his 180-degree reversal of position, and that he would not attempt to make the excuse of having been blinded by military propaganda and anticipating victory in the war (Fujime 2004, 345-46).

Although he was one of the figures who had participated in the inception of the National Eugenic Act, Koya had also played a key role in the drafting of the Eugenic Protection Act. A decisive part of the reason why Koya came to accept fertility control as a viable alternative was that he understood population as no longer an issue of quantity, but an issue of quality. Though he was of course concerned that fertility control would bring about reverse-selection, in the process of participating in the drawing up of the Eugenic Protection Act his views were changed. Through the concept of differential fertility, he advocated the view that there was a necessity to carry out population control on the lower social strata. Koya, who was employed as the director of the National Institute of Public Health (NIPH) following 1946, received funding from the Rockefeller Foundation as well as Clarence J. Gamble,<sup>20</sup> and along with a research team from the NIPH, began an ambitious project. Starting in early 1950 with three model villages, his team surveyed 6,936 people about birth control over seven years. Providing contraception at low prices or even for free, they explored the relationship between practicing contraception and declines in birth rates (conception control survey [jutai chōsetsu chōsa]), observing a fall in the crude birth rate of 26.7 per thousand people to 13.6 per thousand. Koya utilized the findings of this survey as justifying data for the introduction of birth control policy (Homei 2016, 235; Ogino 2008, 180).

It is plain to see that US civic organizations, with the Rockefeller Foundation at the head, took a significant interest in broadening the activities of Japanese researchers and empowering their voices. The Rockefeller research group introduced above suggested the following:

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(Balfour et al. 1950, 49). Understanding the influence of Thompson and Whelpton on GHQ/SCAP and Japanese scholars requires further analysis.

20. Clarence J. Gamble: Executive at Ivory Soap (Procter & Gamble) and pharmacologist. Founder of Pathfinder International. Gamble funded the Ministry of Health and Welfare's Institute for Population Problems' Shinojaki Nobuo's fact-finding survey on birth control and donated the publication funds for the journal of the Japanese Population Association (est. 1949). Additionally, although it was ultimately unsuccessful, he suggested that Koya Yoshio, Tachi Minoru, and Kitaoka Juitsu apply for a grant of US\$1,000,000 from the Ford Foundation for the purpose of population control research. In this way, he was a patron of, and advisor on, population policy and the family-planning movement in postwar Japan.

The direct role of SCAP and the American government is limited, for the population problem is fundamentally the responsibility of the Japanese. Thus, cooperation with them becomes crucial. The techniques for achieving that cooperation are similar to those in other aspects of culture today in which there are active program [*sic*] of technical assistance and intellectual interchange ... The selection of individual scholar [*sic*] for study in the United States and the extension of government training programs to include Japanese students would contribute to the extension of technical knowledge and diffuse the concept of research as an aid in the formulation of policy. (Balfour et al. 1950, 48)

This knowledge transplantation pattern, which comprised the dissemination of population control technologies and an expansion of knowledge achieved by sending the local intellectual elite to study abroad, (re)education, and aiding their research was repeated in the same manner in other East Asian countries and territories, such as Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong (Kim In-soo 2015; Huang 2009).

### 3. Postwar Fertility Surveys and Transitions in Understandings of Population

As I have shown above, private US foundations wielded great influence, both directly and indirectly, over the fertility control policies of postwar Japan. These policies were in large measure evidence-based, using data collected in observations and through surveys. During this era, the *Journal of Population Problems* published abridged versions of the findings of various types of surveys, but among these, the most important to note are the Rural Population Capacity Survey (“Nōson jinkō shūyōryoku ni kansuru chōsa” 1947), the Fact-Finding Survey on Contraception,<sup>21</sup> and the Fact-Finding Survey on Birth Control<sup>22</sup> (Shinozaki, Kaneko, and Kobayashi 1948), as well as public opinion

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21. According to its investigators, this was the first survey to study contraception use in Japan. If we turn our attention to the “questions regarding contraception,” we can learn that those surveyed were asked about the fertility (or sterility) of couples, whether they had ever undergone a sterilization operation or X-rays on their reproductive organs, whether they had practiced contraception, why they had practiced contraception, the method of contraception that they had practiced, the extent to which they had practiced contraception, the period and time in which they had practiced contraception, the extent of their knowledge of contraception, whether or not contraception had been successful, whether they had hoped to use contraception, whether they had asked for information regarding methods of contraception, their opinions on how many children a couple could raise, as well as asking those who were currently pregnant whether they wished to induce abortions, and why or why not that was the case (“Hinin jittai chōsa no shikō” 1947, 53).

22. This is covered in the first report, which analyzed the results of information gathered in January and April 1947.



surveys on birth control.<sup>23</sup> However, central among these was the fertility survey.

A nationwide survey of fertility was conducted in 1952, the second of its kind since the first was completed in 1940. The survey was administered as of the “Present: July 1, 1952,” and it was suggested that, “As this survey is being completed ten years following the fertility survey administered in January of 1940, we must be sure to obtain a more representative national sample in comparison with the earlier round [in 1940], through a sample survey.” Additionally, it was special in that it would “be administered alongside the labor capacity survey of the Bureau of Statistics of the Office of the Prime Minister.” Taking into account the various extreme circumstances of the previous ten years spanning the war and following it, the guidelines for the survey (April 30, 1952) focused on revealing the trends and reality of fertility between over the past ten years (“Shōwa 27-nendo shussanryoku chōsa no shikō” 1952, 58).

In the findings of this survey (1952), we can see that there was a crucial change in the fertility trends in Japan’s population. Prior to the war, the more affluent a Japanese farmer was, the more likely they were to have many children, and the less affluent, the more that poverty and overwork put pressure on fertility (“pre-modern configuration”). The following are the average numbers of children borne by farming couples, as categorized by the size of their landholdings, from the survey conducted in 1940.

The 1952 survey divided these classes not by the area of the land that they

**Table 3.** Average number of children of farming couples by area of cultivation

Less than 5 <i>tanbu</i> <sup>24</sup>	4.32
5 <i>tanbu</i> – 1 <i>chōbu</i>	4.92
1 <i>chōbu</i> – 2 <i>chōbu</i>	5.47
2 <i>chōbu</i> – 3 <i>chōbu</i>	5.96
Greater than 5 <i>chōbu</i>	6.18

Source: Honda (1957, 8).

23. The Population Problem Investigative Committee of the Mainichi Newspaper Co. Ltd., established in July 1949, carried out a “Public Opinion Survey on the Correction of Overpopulation” in April 1950. Minoguchi Tokijirō, Tachi Minoru, and Kosaka Hiromi were among those who participated in this investigation. The results were published in Honda (1951). For outcomes, see page 80.

24. One *chōbu* is equal to approximately 9917.4 m<sup>2</sup> and one *tanbu* corresponds to one-tenth of one *chōbu*.

**Table 4.** Differential fertility prewar and postwar

	Total	Upper class	Middle class	Lower class	Poverty class
Prewar (1940)	5.34	6.00	5.37	4.66	4.35
Postwar (1952)	4.13	4.62	4.64	3.32	3.92
Quotient					
Prewar (1940)	100	100	100	100	100
Postwar (1952)	77	77	86	71	90

Source: Honda (1957, 10).

tilled, but by the total amount of monthly out-of-pocket spending. Table 4 is a comparison of the differential fertility of couples before and after the war.

The author of this report remarked: “We can be certain that birth control was adopted at a remarkable level even within the upper class of farmers following the war,” going on to say that by comparing the population trends of prewar Japan with prewar China and eighteenth-century German rural areas, Japan during that era could be classified as having “premodern differential fertility” (Honda 1957, 10-11). Later in the report, the author compares postwar population trends with those in the UK, Sweden, and America’s fertility by occupation, and highlights the fact that Japan was gradually aligning with the population trends of US and European developed nations, in which the more affluent a couple, the more they calculate and plan for a reasonable family size (12-16). Assessing Sweden’s differential fertility model as the final endpoint of modern differential fertility, the author claims that this endpoint is characterized by a relatively low disparity between fertility among social classes, and overall lower fertility within a society where there is a high quality of life and a comparatively equitable distribution of social class achieved through the development of capitalism. He expressed the view that this was an indicator of the capacity for self-regulation possessed by modern citizens, and the ideal population dynamic of a democratic society (19).

This discussion outlines clearly how Japanese demographers of the time understood the fertility trends of their society, as well as how they accorded meaning to them. For instance, prewar Japan was in the “premodern configuration,” in which the upper classes experienced high fertility, while the lower classes experienced low fertility. In comparison with this, postwar Japan gradually exhibited rational regulation and standardization, which was taken as surely signaling the birth of a civil subject of postwar democracy. This begs the question: What if we were to understand this as evidence that the politics of

birth control enacted under the “mutual assistance” of the GHQ/SCAP and private foundations was being gradually internalized in Japan?

## Closing Remarks

Population politics have undergone fundamental transformations over the course of history in Japan. From the establishment and formation of a modern nation following the Meiji era to imperialist invasions and colonization, from total war and mass mobilization to defeat and the US occupation, and finally to postwar democracy. The fortification of a healthy and vibrant new ethnic population, that is, the comprehension and management of fertility, was at the core of these population politics. Through the discussion in the body of this article, I have made clear the following two points.

The first is that the frame through which Japan viewed population in the earlier half of the twentieth century underwent a series of transformations, starting with “overpopulation theory,” which gave way to “declining population society theory/resource population theory,” and finally, “birth control theory.” The problem of rural overpopulation was understood in relation to the issues of food shortages and unemployment, and thus industrialization and foreign immigration were seen as its solution, yet birth control was always excluded as an option in the fight against overpopulation. The thought that overpopulation could be resolved through immigration to Japanese colonies was prevalent, stemming both from the notion of regarding population as a type of material resource during the era of total war, as well as the concerned attempt to learn from the mistakes of European nations that were transitioning into societies characterized by population decline. Japan’s administration, as represented by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, observed and analyzed fertility patterns in relation to urban/rural residency as well as occupation, and used the findings of these surveys as the basis for the enactment of the Population Policy Establishment Guidelines, continuing down the route of population increase. The transition from a population policy firmly invested in population growth to one of population control by means of birth control came about during the era of occupation by the GHQ/SCAP between 1945 and 1952. Both internally and externally, the GHQ/SCAP purported to remain neutral on the issue of Japan’s population problems due to the optics of interference, but in their stead and supplement were private US foundations. In particular, the Rockefeller Foundation operated under the assumption that rapid population growth would exacerbate poverty, which could prompt a communist revolution. Thus, these

foundations played an active role in intervening in the population problems of East Asia, with Japan being a central subject of their involvement in the region. It would be inaccurate to say that there was no resistance to birth control among the general public or professionals within Japan, but as Japanese scholars, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, took up surveys monitoring fertility, among other things, opinion gradually turned toward an acceptance of birth control. Birth control, involving contraception and abortion, was practiced in everyday life, and as a result, Japan's fertility rapidly declined as the country entered the 1950s.

Second, an obsession with the racial purity and the supposed supremacy of the Japanese ethnic population was always at the heart of Japan's population politics. By occasionally comparing the results of Japan's fertility surveys with nearby Asian nations such as India, the USSR, and China, the country's low fertility rates were consumed in a manner that manufactured a security crisis. Population concerned bureaucrats and scholars, who recognized Japan's low fertility rates in comparison with other nations, as well as the continued decline in birth rates following the 1920s, as a crisis. Similarly, the high fertility rates of colonized populations were spoken of with a sense of urgency. The Japanese state, alongside its colonial authorities, conducted surveys of the fertility of Korean people living in Japan, as well as Japanese living in Korea and Korean locals in an attempt to track and observe the degree of growth in these population groups. This disposition on the part of Japan led to the "politics of expulsion of Koreans residing in Japan" by the Japanese state following 1945. That is, it would not be an overstatement to claim that while the unemployment issues prevalent in the community of Koreans residing in Japan were established as a deep-seated and enduring problem for which the Japanese state and society abandoned responsibility, they became the backdrop for their attempt to "relieve" themselves of Koreans residing in Japan via "humanitarian repatriation" to North Korea (Kim In-soo 2017).

There is a need to re-examine the grand lifecycle of Japan's population fluctuations, which have moved from "overpopulation" to a "low-fertility, aging society," from the perspective of the "political construction of population discourse." My hope is that the analysis presented here can be of some value to us now in inspecting the significance of population problems and discourses of population in a more detailed manner in Korea—and more broadly, East Asia—which finds itself on the horns of a similar dilemma.

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