



*Routledge Studies in the Modern History of Asia*

# **HISTORIES OF CHILDREN AND CHILDHOOD IN MEIJI JAPAN**

Edited by  
Christian Galan and Harald Salomon



# Histories of Children and Childhood in Meiji Japan

This book bridges the gap between historical research on Japan and the field of childhood history by writing children and childhood into the general historical record of the Meiji period.

To explore the widely varying circumstances of childhood during the Japanese transition to modernity, the volume presents survey studies and “snapshots” of historical moments by authors from Europe, Japan, and North America. These *histories* of children and childhood address various thematic aspects, from birth and child-rearing to the representation of childhood in literary works, and these are approached from differing angles, in terms of theoretical perspectives and methodology. The contributions display a particular awareness for the problem of sources in writing the history of childhood and youth. In doing so, they provide precious insights into children’s living circumstances and notions of childhood, also beyond the urban centres of evolving modern Japan.

Exploring a wealth of sources including autobiographies, educational essays, government documents, children’s literature, youth journals and medical manuals, this will be a valuable resource to students and scholars of Japanese history, children’s studies, the history of education, and social policy more broadly.

**Christian Galan** is a Professor of Japanese Studies at the University Toulouse-Jean Jaurès, France, Researcher at the French Research Institute on East Asia in Paris, and the co-director of the Collection Japon at Belles Lettres.

**Harald Salomon** is the Director of the Mori Ogai Center and a Senior Lecturer in the Institute of Asian and African Studies at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany.

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# **Histories of Children and Childhood in Meiji Japan**

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Christian Galan and  
Harald Salomon**

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# Contributors

**Christian Galan** is a Professor of Japanese Studies at the University Toulouse-Jean Jaurès, researcher at the French Research Institute on East Asia in Paris and the co-director of the Collection Japon at Belles Lettres. He specializes in the history of education in Japan and the Japanese educational system. Publications include *L'Enseignement de la lecture au Japon* (Teaching How to Read in Japan, 2001) and, with Anne Gonon, *Occupy Tōkyō – SEALDs, le mouvement oublié* (2021; translated in English under the title *Occupy Tōkyō – SEALDs, the forgotten movement*, 2023). As co-editor, he published *Langue, lecture et école au Japon* (Language, Reading and School in Japan, 2006, with Jacques Fijalkow), *La Famille japonaise moderne (1868–1926): Discours et débats* (The Japanese Modern Family (1868–1926): Discourses and Debates, 2011, with Emmanuel Lozerand), *Language Life in Japan* (Routledge, 2011, with Patrick Heinrich), *Individu-s et démocratie au Japon* (Individual-s and Democracy in Japan, 2015, with Jean-Pierre Giraud), *Histoire du & au Japon* (History of & in Japan, 2016 with Jean-Marc Olivier), *Being Young in Super-Aging Japan: Formative Events and Cultural Reactions* (Routledge, 2018, with Patrick Heinrich) and *Loyauté et patriotisme (le retour) – Éducation et néo-conservatisme dans le Japon du xxie siècle* (Loyalty and Patriotism (The Return) – Education and Neo-Conservatism in Twenty-first Century Japan, 2023, with Yves Cadot and Aline Henninger). He has also translated into French Fukuzawa Yukichi's *Gakumon no susume* (*L'Appel à l'étude*, 2018).

**Michael Kinski** is a Professor of Japanese Studies at Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main and specializes in the history of ideas and cultural history. His research focuses on political thought, the norms of social interaction, the history of medicine and nutrition, and childhood topics. Publications include “*Riten*” *beginnen bei “Essen und Trinken”* (2013), *Knochen des Weges. Katayama Kenzan als Vertreter des eklektischen Konfuzianismus im Japan des 18. Jahrhunderts* (1996), “*Materia Medica* in Edo-Period Japan. The Case of Mummy,” in *Japonica Humboldtiana* 9 (2005): 55–170. Together with Harald Salomon and Eike Großmann, he edited *Childhood in Japanese History. Concepts and Experiences/Kindheit in der japanischen Geschichte. Vorstellungen und Erfahrungen* (2016). He is a co-editor of the periodical *Japonica Humboldtiana* (Harrassowitz).

**Isabelle Konuma** is a Professor at the National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilizations (INALCO) and a researcher at the French Research Institute on East Asia in Paris where she is the co-director of the projects “Japanese Populations” and “Migrations in and from Asia”. She specializes in family law and reproductive policy from the Meiji period to the present. She edited special issues of the *French Review of Japanese Studies* *Cipango* on “Eugénisme dans le Japon moderne et contemporain” (Eugenism in Modern and Contemporary Japan, issue 24) and on “Reproduction et migration au Japon” (Reproduction and Migration in Japan) (forthcoming issue 25). Her main recent papers on children and childhood include (with Chantal Claudel) “Nommer l’enfant dans la Convention internationale des droits de l’enfant en japonais” (Naming the Child in the International Convention on the Rights of the Child in Japanese), in *L’Enfant et ses droits. La “Convention internationale des droits de l’enfant” à travers les langues et les cultures* (The Child and His Rights. The “International Convention on the Rights of the Child” Across Languages and Cultures), ed. Jullion, Marie-Christine, Tréguer-Felten, Geneviève (2017): 117–135; “Projets d’enfants (Japon, XX<sup>e</sup> siècle)” (Children’s Projects (Japan, Twentieth Century), in *Les Projets. Une histoire politique (xvi<sup>e</sup> –xx<sup>e</sup> siècles)* (The Projects. A Political History (Sixteenth to Twentieth Centuries), ed. Frédéric Graber and Martin Giraudeau (2018): 95–106; “Avortement, décriminalisation et droit à la vie du fœtus : le cas coréen au prisme de l’exemple japonais” (Abortion, Decriminalization and the Right to Life of the Fetus: the Korean Case in the Light of the Japanese Example), *Tracés – Revue de sciences humaines* 17 (2017): 237–245.

**L. Halliday Piel** received a PhD from the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa in 2007, completing a dissertation on the history of childhood in Japan. While teaching history at Lasell College in the United States, Piel was a Research Associate with the University of Manchester project, “Remembering and Recording Childhood, Education, and Youth in Imperial Japan, 1925–1945,” directed by Peter Cave. Her peer-reviewed papers include: “Food Rationing and Children’s Self-Reliance in Japan, 1942–1952,” *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 5, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 393–418; “The Family State and Forced Youth Migrations in Wartime Japan, 1937–1945,” *Revue d’histoire de l’enfance irrégulière*, no. 15 (October 2013), online; “Japanese Adolescents and the War-time Labor Service 1941–1945: Service or Exploitation?” *Japanese Studies* 36, no. 3 (2016): 361–381; “The School Diary in Wartime Japan: Cultivating Morale and Self-discipline through Writing,” *Modern Asian Studies* 53, no. 4 (July 2019): 1004–1037. Piel’s contributions to anthologies include “Outdoor Play in Wartime Japan,” in *Child’s Play: Multi-sensory Histories of Children and Childhood in Japan*, ed. Sabine Frühstück and Anne Walthall (2017): 160–180; and “Recruiting Japanese Boys for the Pioneer Youth Core of Manchuria and Mongolia,” in *More than Victims: War and Childhood in the Age of the World Wars*, ed. Mischa Honek and James Marten (2019): 53–70.

**Harald Salomon** is the Director of the Mori Ogai Center and a Senior Lecturer in the Institute of Asian and African Studies at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. His research interests focus on the history of family and childhood in Japan, the history of interactions between Japan and Europe during the transition to modernity, and Japanese film and literature. His publications include *Views of the Dark Valley: Japanese Cinema and the Culture of Nationalism, 1937–45* (2011). He co-edited the volume *Kindheit in der japanischen Geschichte: Vorstellungen und Erfahrungen/Childhood in Japanese History: Concepts and Experiences* (2016. German & English. With Michael Kinski and Eike Grossmann). His peer-reviewed papers include: “‘A Paradise of Children’: Western Perceptions of Childhood in Meiji Japan (1868–1912),” *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 11, no.3 (Fall 2018): 341–362; “Children in the Wind: Reexamining the Golden Age of Childhood Film in Wartime Japan,” in *Child’s Play: Multi-Sensory Histories of Children and Childhood in Japan*, ed. Sabine Frühstück and Anne Walthall (2017): 102–120.

**Sawayama Mikako** received a doctorate from Ochanomizu University and was a Professor at Junsei Junior College. Presently, she is affiliated with the Research Institute for the Dynamics of Civilizations, Okayama University. Her groundbreaking research focuses on women’s history, the history of reproduction, and the history of childhood in early modern Japan. Her numerous monographs, co-edited volumes, and articles include the monograph *Shussan toshintai no kinsei* (Childbirth and the Body in Early Modern Japan, 1998) that received the prestigious Aoyama Nao Award for women’s history. In 2013, *Kindai kazoku to kosodate* (The Modern Family and Child-rearing) was published by Yoshikawa Kōbunkan.

**Tajima Hajime** received a doctorate from the University of Tokyo and was a Professor in the Graduate School of Education at Kokugakuin University until 2018. He specializes in educational evaluation and the history of youth education. His numerous publications also include contributions to the history of educational science and the social history of Japanese education. In 2013, he contributed to the collection of essays *Gendai Nihon kyōiku shi*, vol. 4: *Kodomo, kazoku to kyōiku* (The History of Education in Contemporary Japan, vol. 4: Children, Family, and Education). His monograph ‘*Shōnen*’ to ‘*seinen*’ no kindai Nihon: *Ningen keisei to kyōiku no shakai shi* (‘Youth’ and ‘Young Adults’ in Modern Japan: The Social History of Personality Formation and Education) was published in 2016.

**Yakuwa Tomohiro** received a doctorate from Tōhoku University and is a professor at the Graduate School of Education of Tōhoku University. He specializes in the philosophy of educational science and the history of education. His numerous publications focus in particular on the social history of education and the issue of literacy in early modern and Meiji Japan. He is a co-editor of the journal *Nihon no kyōiku shi gaku* (Studies in the Japanese History of Education). In 2014,

he co-edited the volume *Shikiji to manabi no shakaishi: Nihon ni okeru rit-erashii no shosō* (The Social History of Literacy and Learning. Various Aspects of Literacy in Japan). Recently, he contributed the chapter “Minshū kyōiku ni okeru Meiji ishin” (Popular Education and the Meiji Restoration) to the multi-volume collection *Kōza Meiji ishin* (Lectures on the Meiji Restoration), edited by the Society for the Study of the Meiji Restoration’s History (Meiji Ishin Shi Gakkai, vol. 10: 2016).



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Christian Galan and Harald Salomon



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## **Note on Japanese names and terms**

Japanese names are rendered in the traditional order, family name first and given name second. Transliterations follow the modified Hepburn system. Macrons indicate long vowels. However, they are omitted from proper nouns and other terms that have been adopted into English (e.g., Tokyo or shogun). In addition, squared brackets are used in cases where the reading of Japanese words could not be verified.



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# Introduction

*Christian Galan and Harald Salomon*

Meiji Japan was a youthful country, a country full of children. Over the forty-year period from 1872 to 1912, the annual number of live births more than tripled from 593,000 to 1.82 million, and the Japanese population grew by 45 percent from 34.81 million to 50.58 million inhabitants. By 1884, children and youth up to 14 years of age accounted for about 32 percent of the total population. By the end of the Meiji period (1868–1912), this share had increased to 35 percent.<sup>1</sup>

These demographic trends intersected with a growing awareness of childhood as a separate age category. Increasingly, the early years of life were understood as distinct from adulthood, and as exhibiting particular needs and requiring particular forms of attention. In turn, these young age groups detached themselves rapidly and profoundly from the rest of the population and began to exist by and for themselves. Egle Becchi's comments in her contribution to *Histoire de l'enfance en Occident* (History of Childhood in the West) similarly apply to Japanese history:

[In] the second half of the century, scientific advances, new theoretical hypotheses on the nature and history of the world, the generalisation of efficient, non-wasteful education systems, the care families took with small children, and the decrease in infant mortality, all converged to give the child a new place: that of a being who must be observed, defined and explained within a framework that is not solely that of the human.<sup>2</sup>

As a window of opportunity to mould future adults, and, in turn, the future of the nation, childhood came to be perceived as an essential factor in Japan's transition to modernity. Informed by global flows of knowledge, child-centred debates regarding education, health, hygiene, work, and other issues unfolded and corresponding public policies and private initiatives ensued. Thus in 1869, the first communal, tax-funded elementary schools opened in Kyoto; in 1876, the first national model kindergarten was established in Tokyo. The first elementary school readers appeared in 1872 and introduced vocabulary of the new age. In 1895, the publisher Hakubunkan launched the period's representative magazine for children and youth (*Shōnen sekai*). Before the turn to the twentieth century, Japan's first paediatric hospital was established, and the Home Ministry enacted the "Regulations for midwives" (*Sanba kisoku*). At the same time, the young were opportunistically

reevaluated as a workforce by families and entrepreneurs, frequently disregarding children's need for protection. Therefore, the Meiji years were also fraught with new obligations and pressures for girls and boys, many of whom were sent to labour far from their parents in industrial and agricultural settings of modern Japan.<sup>3</sup>

These processes represent important chapters in Japan's modern history, and their repercussions are still felt today. However, historical research has frequently marginalized the experience of children and youth, and the societal debates regarding their living circumstances are also absent in the general historical record of the period.<sup>4</sup> This is all the more surprising as historians have generally considered the Meiji era to be the most thoroughly and widely examined period in Japanese history, for decades. When Harvard University hosted a major conference on Meiji Studies, in May 1994, more than one hundred speakers received invitations to explore new directions and to cover "every discipline and a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches". Nevertheless, this "collective assault on the entirety of Meiji Japan" left childhood and youth almost unexplored.<sup>5</sup> This assessment is not only limited to research in Western languages but also applies to Japanese language scholarship. Even the twelve-volume collection of *Lectures on the Meiji Restoration (Kōza Meiji ishin)*, edited by the Society for the Study of the Meiji Restoration's History (Meiji Ishin Shi Gakkai), relegates the young generations to issues of reproduction and education.<sup>6</sup>

Certainly, the long absence of children and youth from the historical record also reflects the state of childhood history as a subfield of historical study. The early appearance of Ariès' much quoted work in 1960 notwithstanding, the field has only flourished since the beginning of the twenty-first century, when among other developments the inauguration of the Society for the History of Children and Youth took place. In Japan, Ariès' seminal study appeared late in 1980 as *The Birth of the "Child": The Child and Family Life during the Ancien Régime*.<sup>7</sup> Although a number of pioneering works even preceded it, among them the seven-volume compendium *A History of Children in Japan*,<sup>8</sup> research on the history of Japanese childhood and youth only began to thrive as recently as the early 2000s. Since then, publications by Kathleen Uno (1999), David Ambaras (2006), Aya Homei (2006), L. Halliday Piel (2007), Mark Jones (2010), Christian Galan and Emmanuel Lozerand (2011), Michael Kinski et al. (2016), Aaron Moore (2016), Harald Salomon (2016, 2018), Sabine Frühstück (2017), and others suggest that a dynamic field of international scholarly endeavour has been staked out.

Regarding the history of childhood in Meiji Japan, it is generally accepted that the era marked the advent of a dominating new figure of the child, the schoolchild. In fact, Meiji children have long been studied through the prism of the institution of school. As a result, the institutional images of schoolgirls and schoolboys frequently obscure the actual historical children "behind them" and conceal other notions of childhood which may have moulded their experience. By comparison, this volume is based on the premise that the "scholarisation" of childhood was arguably the common goal of many Meiji period politicians and social reformers – a goal, however, that was not truly met until the early Shōwa period dawned in the late 1920s. The place of childhood and the places devoted to childhood

varied significantly in Meiji Japan, as did the material culture associated with the young. Family relations, homes, types of schools, workplaces, nutrition, books, magazines, toys, games, and playgrounds displayed significant diversity according to gender, social status, and geographical setting. When these variables are broken down chronologically, a multitude of partly overlapping, partly differing, and partly contradictory notions and experiences evolve.

To explore the widely varying circumstances of childhood during the Japanese transition to modernity, this volume presents survey studies and “snapshots” of historical moments by European, Japanese, and American authors. These *histories* of children and childhood address various thematic aspects and are approached from differing angles, also in terms of theoretical background and methodology. The line-up of chapters combines chronological and thematic considerations: from the middle of the nineteenth century to the aftermath of the Meiji period, and from birth to the representation of childhood in literary works. To our knowledge, this is the first edited volume in a Western language devoted to the living circumstances of the young in Meiji Japan, and we are particularly pleased to showcase innovative research of Japanese historians. The works of Sawayama Mikako, Tajima Hajime, and Yakuwa Tomohiro provide precious insights into children’s lives, also beyond Japan’s urban centres.

As diverse as the chapters may seem, they do share a concern for a number of basic issues, among them the issue of sources. The contributors display a particular sensitivity toward the problem of sources in writing the history of childhood and youth, aptly described by Egle Becchi as a “wordless history”. In fact, comparatively few materials are written by children themselves, and even less material has been preserved by literate adults who – more frequently – remember and relate their experiences retrospectively, making meaning of “their” own personal (his)stories. Conscious of these issues, the contributors explore a surprising wealth of approaches to circumnavigate the lack and the nature of sources. Such creatively used sources include autobiographical writing, children’s literature, diaries, educational essays, gift-exchange registers, government documents, medical manuals, early modern population registers, teacher manuals, textbooks, youth journals, visual materials, and, not least, the results of early childhood research from the Meiji period.

The first chapter, a translation of a recent contribution by Sawayama Mikako to volume nine of *Kōza Meiji ishin* (Lectures on the Meiji Restoration, 2015), focuses on the question of how childbearing and child-rearing changed during the formative period of the modern nation state in the 1880s. To this end, the author examines a variety of sources, including the writings on family and home of the enlightenment thinker Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901) and father of nine children on the one hand, and collections of regional folklore and government materials that were compiled since the 1870s on the other. As a result, the official Meiji narrative of a swift linear transition from the low birth rates of the “house” (*ie*) to the high birth rates of the nurturing “home” (*katei*) is significantly qualified. Rural areas in particular displayed diverse patterns of change. Many ‘traditional’ customs related to birth and child-rearing were transmitted far into the Meiji period and resistance to government regulations can be observed.



The second chapter by Yakuwa Tomohiro is a translation of a much-quoted contribution to the journal *Nihon no kyōikushigaku* (History of Education in Japan), which originally appeared in 2002. The author's case study draws on sources such as religious registration registers and diaries from present-day Fukui and Niigata prefectures. It sheds light on the actual extent and the diverse nature of children's contributions to work in families and communities, immediately before the transformations of the Meiji period set in. In doing so, the article demonstrates that a clear gender-based division of work developed early in the life of children, even if villages did not maintain this division during the harvesting seasons. Interestingly, before the advent of compulsory education, the compilers of the sources classified learning to read and write as part of vocational training, i.e. work.

In the third chapter, Christian Galan shows that the Meiji era was not linear and that, as far as childhood and education are concerned, at least two distinct yet interdependent periods and processes must be considered. The first process corresponds to the intention of early Meiji authorities to expand education as a means and proof of the country's "civilisation". This came about due to the importance accorded to family education at the time as opposed to school education, which was mainly perceived as a compensation for the educational shortcomings of families. This period, from 1868 to around 1879–1881, saw the emergence of the first of the two processes involved in redefining the status of the child throughout the entire Meiji era, namely, an attempt to change children from "savage" to "civilised". The second period, from around 1879–1881 to 1912, corresponds to the use of the newly created national education system and mandatory schooling to transform "civilised" Japanese into "modern" subjects, that is – to borrow Foucault's terms – to produce "docile" and "useful" bodies. Children no longer belonged solely to their parents but also to the nation and the state. The chapter examines these two periods and the corresponding evolutions brought about regarding the history of childhood in Japan.

The two following chapters authored by Michael Kinski turn to the introduction of physical education in Meiji period schools and its implementation as a regular subject of the curriculum. While Japanese scholars of sport studies and sport history have paid considerable attention to this topic, it has been widely neglected in international research. In Edo Japan, physical exercise for its own sake was rarely debated and even rejected by some samurai in the last stage of Tokugawa rule. It is all the more astonishing that a lively discussion concerning physical education in public schools unfolded during the early Meiji years. However, the adoption of this new subject proved exceedingly difficult due to insufficient infrastructure and lack of qualified teachers. A new phase only began with the appointment of Mori Arinori as Minister of Education in 1885. Mori was familiar with Western notions of physical education based on military training. By implementing this concept in the primary and secondary schools of Meiji Japan, his administration contributed to the global uniformity of social institutions and lifestyles that took shape during the late nineteenth century.

As shown by Christian Galan in the sixth chapter, for anyone interested in how discourse on children and parents evolved in Meiji Japan (1868–1912), morality

textbooks represent an ideal object of study and a precious source of information. Beginning in the early 1870s, these textbooks came under close scrutiny from educators and intellectuals concerned with the modernization of Japan, as well as from officials at the newly created Department of Education. As such, they paint a reliable picture not only of the debates of the day but also of the conflicts and fault lines dividing the country's elite at the time. The chapter examines the textbooks chronologically with two specific objectives in mind. The first was to see if any quantitative changes were visible in the use of terms designating the family, in particular, *ie*, *kazoku* and *katei* – which might be revealing regarding evolving parent–child relations. Further, the way each term was used and whether this usage varied according to semantic field or context was also studied. The second objective was to systematically examine the illustrations depicting families to establish whether pictorial representations of the family evolved over time, and if so, what such evolutions might tell us about the wider changes influencing the official view of parent–child relations throughout the Meiji period.

The seventh chapter turns to the topic of law. Isabelle Konuma shows that the family law introduced in 1898 in Japan's first Civil Code (the Meiji Civil Code) was a reflection of a solid, steadfast, and formal institution. The law drew strength from both its patriarchal characteristics and a stiff adherence to legal norms. The *ie* – the “household” as defined in the 1898 Civil Code – cannot exist without its “head”, who has authority over the other family members. Compared with this “head of the family” status, which has an undeniable historical weight, the status of the “father” has been relatively understudied. The entrenched family institution became more nuanced as drafters sought to define both the status of the child and parental authority, at a time when child's interests were represented in the form of emerging legal concepts. Those responsible for drafting the laws showed a degree of caution when faced with the complexity of reorganizing and defining the function of the “traditional” Japanese family, all the more so as they were tasked with introducing Western legal thought into the process. This complexity is particularly evident in the way the child was defined, through the way filiation was organized, and within the framework of parental authority.

In the eighth chapter, Harald Salomon sheds light on the conflicting demands of school and work which became increasingly characteristic of the daily life of children during the Meiji period. According to global historians of childhood, a fundamental transformation of childhood took shape with the implementation of compulsory education. During the transition from an agricultural to an industrial economy, schooling replaced work as the “primary social obligation” (P. Stearns). In examining how this global “pattern” compared to the historical development in Japan, historians have elaborated on a narrative of swift governmental success. To contribute to a more systematic examination, the author turns to children in a variety of settings and examines the problems that family faced, when confronted with the need to negotiate official pressure to enrol their offspring in national schools, or with their financial situation, and the ambitions of their children. Harald Salomon argues that – far into the Meiji period – the majority of school-aged children faced the “dual primary obligation” of work *and* school education. Frequently, they were

caught in grey areas where distinctions between child labour and school attendance were not apparent.

The ninth chapter by Tajima Hajime addresses the emergence of the notion of *shōnen*, or “youth”, and the appearance of a corresponding concept of “childhood”. In this frequently quoted article, first published in *Kokugakuin zasshi* (The Journal of Kokugakuin University), the author examines the question of how the emerging notion of “youth” structured the early phase in life more clearly, since the mid-1890s. At this point, journalism complemented school and family as a major force in the definition of childhood and youth. A prominent example is the journal *Shōnen sekai* (The Youth’s World) first published in 1895 by Hakubunkan for young readers from six to seventeen years of age. The author examines the development of male and female readership more closely and elaborates upon how editors and journalists defined exemplary youth, against the background of rising patriotism during the wars against China and Russia.

In the tenth and final chapter, L. Halliday Piel analyses Higuchi Ichiyō’s (1872–1896) novella *Takekurabe*. This text opens a window into the mindset and cultural life of late childhood or early adolescence in a poor neighbourhood northeast of Tokyo in 1893. Through its description of children preparing to participate in a Shinto shrine festival, it shows how their play and competition for social validation were shaped mainly by the local tutelary shrine, with its agrarian origins under pressure from urbanization, and the Yoshiwara Pleasure Quarters, which provided employment to their parents. These premodern institutions insulated children from new forms of transnational thinking about childhood underlying the Meiji modernization program. This chapter compares the portrayal of childhood in *Takekurabe* with journalist Yokoyama Gennosuke’s *Nihon no kasō shakai* (Japan’s Underclass, 1899), writer Tanizaki Jun’ichirō’s *Yōshō jidai* (Childhood Years: A Memoir, 1955–1956), and sociologist Takeuchi Toshimi’s 1941 report of a children’s festival in Nagano prefecture. L. Halliday Piel argues that the tutelary shrine system, although in decline under Meiji reforms, continued to provide ordinary children with an outdoor play space, a cultural outlet for their expression, a place for peer-based socialization and coming of age in communities outside the world of the elites who were driving political, institutional, and intellectual change before the twentieth century.

This book project was inspired by the 150th anniversary of the Meiji restoration in 2018. The COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on academia delayed and shaped its final realization. As editors of the volume, we are aware of its strengths and its limitations. These ten histories of children and childhood in Meiji Japan are not endpoints in an exhaustive treatment of the topic but are new avenues of study that show rich potential for further exploration. Untreated themes need to be identified and deserve attention. One of these is the issue of gender. Although most of the contributions in this volume include gender as an aspect of their topic, the gendered nature of children’s living circumstances in Meiji Japan certainly requires more systematic study. Nevertheless, we hope that the chapters will contribute to writing children and youth into the general record of modern Japanese history and that they will open up future research perspectives for scholars young and old alike. Evolving perspectives arising from the work on this volume are sketched in the following.

The chapters shed light on the interactions between the social history of growing up and the “shifting set of ideas” about childhood in modern Japan.<sup>9</sup> In discussing these interactions, it is important to elaborate upon Meiji Japan’s place in the transnational circulation of childhood-related knowledge, commodities, institutions, and practices.<sup>10</sup> These developments should not be understood as exceptional or as emulations of Western patterns, but rather as situated within processes that occurred simultaneously in Europe and North America.

Also in this volume, the history of *childhood* is emphasized more than the history of *children*, since “adult opinions about, and representations of, children” receive more attention than “the opinions and responses of children and youth themselves on their own experiences”.<sup>11</sup> In bringing the voices of young Japanese to the fore, it will be essential to position them not only as “objects to be acted upon or manipulated”, but also as “agents who acted in and on the world”.<sup>12</sup>

Lastly, it is essential to historicize notions of childhood and the experiences of children carefully. Research should address the whole duration of the Meiji era and not simply equate aspects of a given moment with general developments from the late 1860s to the early 1910s. The fact that historical change is not linear and involves diverse trajectories, ruptures, and setbacks needs further attention. As the contributions to this book show, a line of continuity between Meiji and its historical antecedent the Edo period extends far into the new era and should be accounted for. Especially in rural areas, child-related practices persisted for some time and change occurred only after lengthy negotiation. In the same vein, processes that evolved during the Meiji period and their corollaries are important. Frequently, Meiji events such as the advent of the schoolchild represent beginnings and not final outcomes: they relate to processes that emerged in clearly defined social milieus during the Meiji era and eventually transformed the living circumstances of the young population in both urban and rural settings, in the decades that followed.

## Notes

- 1 By way of comparison, in 2009, their share comprised only 13.7 percent of the population. See the tables “Population by Sex, Population Increase and Decrease, Population Density (1872–2009)” and “Population by Single Years of Age and Sex (1884–2005)” in Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Statistics Bureau Japan, *Historical Statistics of Japan* (Chapter 2: Population and Households). Archived on WARP Web Archiving Project. <https://warp.da.ndl.go.jp>.
- 2 Egle Becchi, “Le XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle”, in *Histoire de l’enfance en Occident*, vol. 2, ed. Egle Becchi and Dominique Julia (Paris: Seuil, 2004), 153.
- 3 Shimokawa Kōshi, *Kindai kodomoshi nenpyō: Meiji–Taishō 1868–1926 hen* (Chronological Tables of Modern Childhood History: Meiji–Taishō Periods, 1868–1926) (Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 2002), 20, 49, 64, 150, 181, 200. Aya Hōmei, “Sanba and Their Clients: Midwives and the Medicalization of Childbirth in Japan 1868 to 1920”, in *New Directions in Nursing History: International Perspectives*, ed. Barbara Mortimer and Susan McGann (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 68–85.
- 4 Cf. Julia Grant, “Children versus Childhood: Writing Children into the Historical Record, or Reflections on Paula Fass’s ‘Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society’”, *History of Education Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (2005): 468–490.
- 5 Helen Hardacre, ed., *New Directions in the Study of Meiji Japan* (Leiden et al.: Brill, 1997), xiii, xvii.

- 6 Meiji Ishin Shi Gakkai, ed., *Kōza Meiji ishin* (Lectures on the Meiji Restoration), 12 vols., (Tokyo: Yūshisha, 2010–2016).
- 7 Translation by Sugiyama Mitsunobu and Sugiyama Emiko. “*Kodomo*” *no tanjō: anshian rejīmu no kodomo to kazoku seikatsu* (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobō, 1980).
- 8 *Nihon kodomo no rekishi* (The History of Japanese Children), 7 vols., (Tokyo: Daiichi Hōki Shuppan, 1977).
- 9 Cf. Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society since 1500* (London and New York: Routledge 2005 [1995]).
- 10 See also Sheldon Garon, “Transnational History and Japan’s ‘Comparative Advantage,’” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 43, no. 1 (2017): 65–92.
- 11 Mona Gleason, “Avoiding the Agency Trap: Caveats for Historians of Children, Youth and Education,” *History of Education* 45, no. 4 (2016): 451.
- 12 Deborah Levison, Mary Jo Maynes, and Frances Vavrus, “Children and Youth as Subjects, Objects, Agents: An Introduction,” in *Children and Youth as Subjects, Objects, Agents: Innovative Approaches to Research Across Space and Time*, ed. Deborah Levison, Mary Jo Maynes, and Frances Vavrus (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan 2021), 2.

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# 1 Childbirth and child-rearing in modern Japan

*Sawayama Mikako*<sup>1</sup>

*Translated by Harald Salomon and Karen Grimwade*

What were childbirth and child-rearing (*umisodateru koto*) like for people in modern Japan? This chapter examines the question from the perspective of rural families, with a particular focus on the 1880s, a period of great transition in which the framework of the modern Japanese state and society was formed.<sup>2</sup> In fact, exploring child-rearing practices during this time of dramatic change, as the country transitioned from the early modern to the modern period, essentially means exploring the impact of the Meiji Restoration and modernization process in the realm of sexuality and reproduction.

After the Restoration, the modern nation state immediately set out to tackle the customary norms and legal system surrounding sexuality and reproduction. However, folk customs so deeply bound up with the issue of life could not be altered easily, even with prohibitive decrees. It seems likely that various discrepancies arose between traditional child-rearing practices, which withstood the change in the political system, and the modern state's attempts to interfere with people's sexual and reproductive lives. These discrepancies may well offer important clues about the meaning of the Meiji Restoration for the population of the day. This assumption informs my examination of child-rearing in late nineteenth-century Japan throughout the following pages.

## **Debates on child-rearing during the transition period: *The Story of My Children by Fukuzawa Yukichi***

### *An early Meiji record of child-rearing*

One of the symbolic works to capture the transformation of birthing and child-rearing practices during the Edo-to-Meiji transition is *The Story of My Children by Fukuzawa Yukichi* (*Fukuzawa Yukichi Shijo no den*), authored in 1876. According to the anthology *Child-rearing Manuals* (*Kosodate no sho*), a collection of publications from the early modern to the modern period, renowned educator and philosopher Fukuzawa Yukichi constantly strove to create a family model suited to Japanese society. As part of these efforts, he merged

the European notion of the home [*katei*], centred on a monogamous couple in which the educated mother raises her children with intelligence and love,



with the ‘house’ [*ie*] of the lower ranking samurai from the late Tokugawa period, in which he himself grew up.<sup>3</sup>

His text is seen as representative of “child-rearing discourse in the modern period, and the transition period in particular,” because it advocates creating a home environment in which to raise children and sets out actual methods of child-rearing.<sup>4</sup>

*The Story of My Children* describes the birth and upbringing of Fukuzawa’s two sons and four daughters, beginning in 1863 when Fukuzawa was 30 and his wife was 19. It starts with their firstborn son Ichitarō before turning to Sutejirō (1865), San (later Sato, 1868), Fusa (1870), Shun (1870) and Taki (1876). It also includes information on a stillborn girl delivered prematurely at eight months (1872) and boy-girl twins who died following a difficult birth (1877).

Fukuzawa went on to father another daughter, Mitsu (1879), and two more sons, Sanpachi (1881) and Daishirō (1883) – making a total of nine children. In his autobiography (1898–1899), he wrote:

Fortunately, all nine of them grew up healthy after their birth and not a single one is missing. Five of them were breastfed by their mother and the remaining four by a wet nurse, in order to protect the health of their prolific mother.<sup>5</sup>

Vaccination played an important role in ensuring the well-being of Fukuzawa’s children. According to *The Story of My Children*, all but Ichitarō – the firstborn – were vaccinated.

In the transition period between late Edo and the Meiji Restoration, Fukuzawa with his nine children would have been considered prolific. However, in the modern state born of the Restoration, the whole of Japan was becoming prolific. Similarly, Fukuzawa later became an opponent of wet nursing, despite having raised four of his children this way. In fact, as modernization progressed, the use of wet nurses was increasingly rejected and breastfeeding became the symbol of motherly love. In this respect too, *The Story of My Children* exemplifies the modern experience of child-rearing.

### *A rising birth rate*

Fukuzawa was one of five children. As he himself noted, lower class samurai could not make ends meet without doing home-based piecemeal work.<sup>6</sup> Life was simply too harsh for families to have a large number of children. Even in Ichinoseki Domain, a subsidiary of the Sendai Domain located in an area of fertile land, it is estimated that samurai and peasant families both had an average of five members, including three children.<sup>7</sup> The Fukuzawas were thus a comparatively large family.

There are three main explanations for the increased birth rate and rising number of large families in the Meiji period. The first explanation emphasizes the population policies introduced by the Meiji government. These measures, known collectively as the “criminalized abortion system” (*dataizai taisei*), included the early Meiji prohibition on midwives’ selling medicine and performing abortions, the