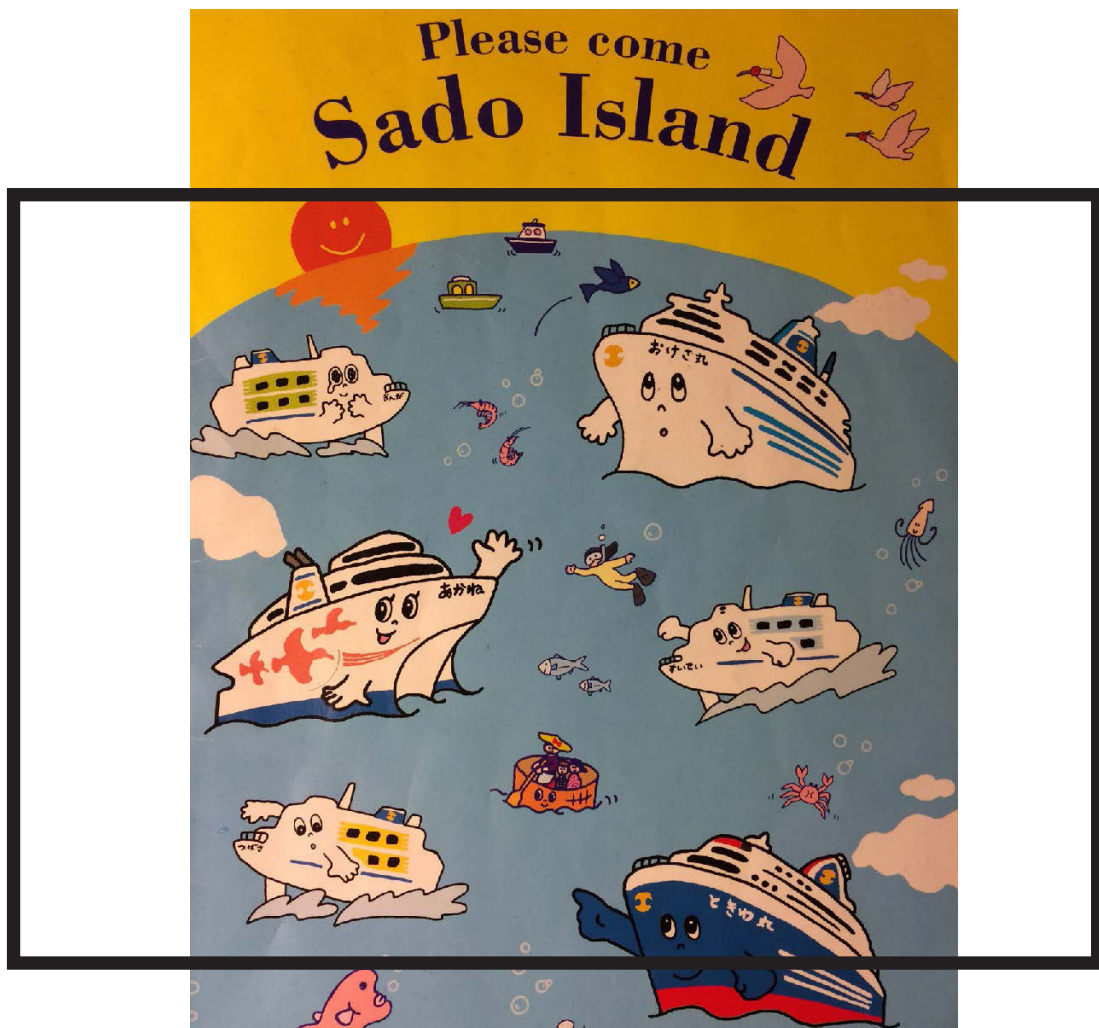


RHEA BRAUNWALDER

KEEP(ING) IT IN THE FAMILY?

INTERGENERATIONAL CARE RELATIONSHIPS IN A CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE VILLAGE

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Rhea Braunwalder

KEEP(ING) IT IN THE FAMILY?

INTERGENERATIONAL CARE RELATIONSHIPS IN A CONTEMPORARY
JAPANESE VILLAGE

ABSTRACT

Based on 9 weeks of research on the island of Sado I unite the concepts of care, generation and the life course to examine how people observe care responsibilities in the context of depopulation and migration associated with rural Japan. I concentrate on the care of children, care of parents and care of the deceased and assert that care, understood as a socially recognized right which people have in certain life phases, is exchanged in a long term intergenerational contract. Care duties can strengthen intergenerational relationships, and can lead to frustration and the feeling of having no choice, especially amongst eldest sons who are traditionally seen as care-takers of the family. For younger generations, I observe an increased flexibility in care duties, where the contract as such seems unlikely to dissolve. The thesis is on a different level a reminder of the relevance of villages as anthropological field sites.

Anhand von Daten einer 9-wöchigen Feldforschung auf der Insel Sado untersuche ich wie Familienmitglieder im Wissen um die Entvölkerung und Migration in ländlichen Regionen familiäre Pflegeverpflichtungen wahrnehmen. Plädierend für das Dorf als ethnographisch wertvollen Kontext verknüpfe ich Pflege, Generationen und den Lebenslauf und untersuche Kinderpflege, Altenpflege und die Pflege von verstorbenen Familienmitgliedern. Ich konstatiere, dass Pflege, verstanden als sozial anerkanntes Recht welches einem Menschen in bestimmten Lebensphasen zusteht, Teil eines impliziten, intergenerationellen Vertrages auf Lebensdauer ist. Pflegeverpflichtungen können intergenerationelle Beziehungen stärken und können auch zu Frustrationen führen. Dies gilt vor allem für die ältesten Söhne, denen traditionell die Verantwortung für die Familie zusteht. Für jüngere Generationen stelle ich fest, dass es zunehmend Spiel- und Gestaltungsraum in Pflegeverpflichtungen gibt, der Vertrag zwischen den Generationen jedoch bleibt wenig umstritten.

NOTE ON TRANSLATION

This thesis is aimed to be accessible for readers having no previous knowledge of Japanese anthropology. For the romanization of Japanese words I used the modified Hepburn system. Translations of interviews, titles and words are my own unless otherwise noted. For words having special connotations or nuances I add the Japanese words in brackets for those readers who speak Japanese to be able to make connections to literature or concepts common in Japanese studies.

Names of people are pseudonyms. I refer to the people in the text as I referred to them in the field, addressing grandparents with grandfather or grandmother, the adults either by their family name or by their first name depending on degrees of intimacy. That is why I sometimes use Mrs. and Mr., while in other cases I use first names.

The research was made possible by the AKB Foundation, the competition “Creativity in Studies” and the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology of the Georg-August University of Göttingen.

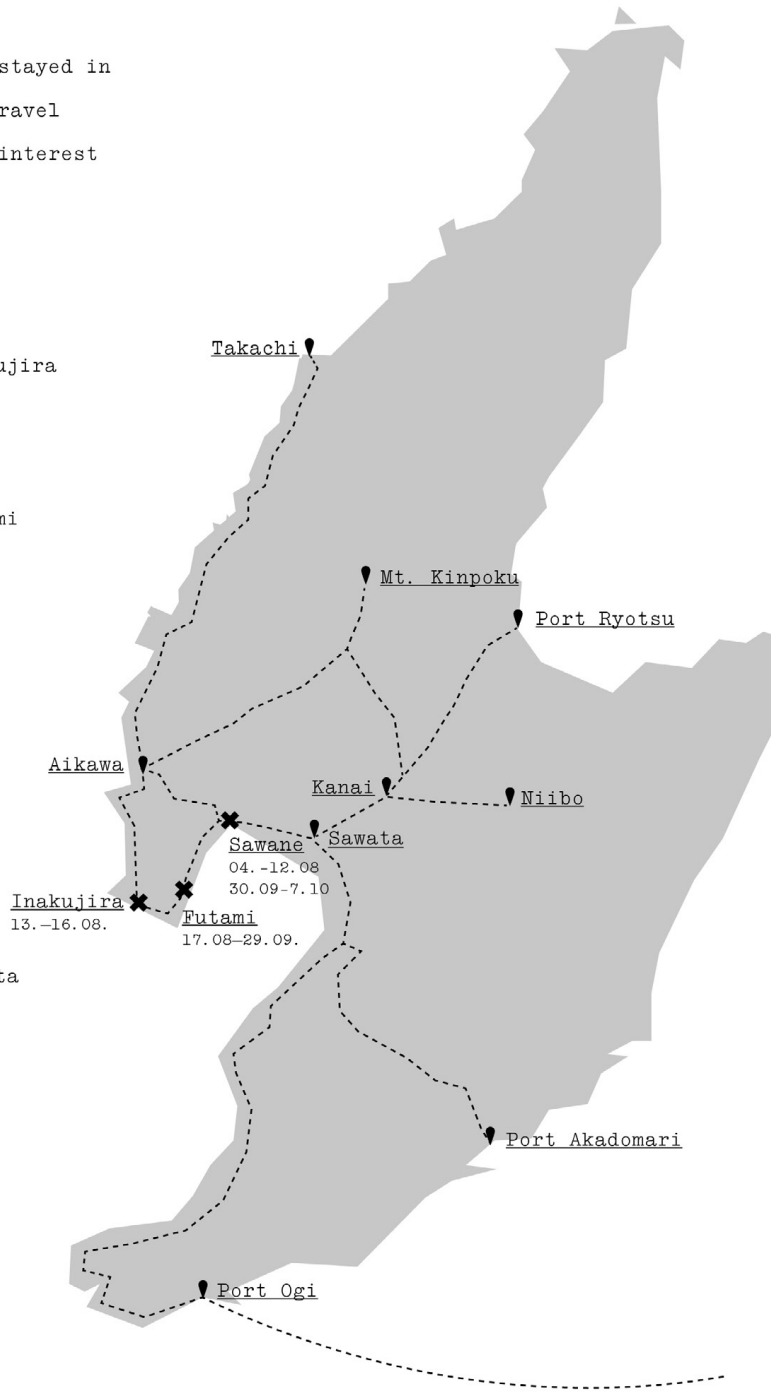
Map of Sado

- ✕ Locations stayed in
- Route of travel
- 📍 Points of interest

Informants
living in Inakujira
GM Yoshikoshi, 72

Informants
living in Futami
Eiko(f), 36
Mr. Fukaishi, 51
Mrs. Ikehata, 37
GM Kato, 82
GM Kiriyama, 66
GM Kobayashi, 62
GF Matsushita, 72
GM Nishizawa, 65
GM Takizawa, 67
Reiko(f), 54
Rie(f), 52

Informants
living in Sawata
Mariko(f), 37



GM: Grandmother
GF: Grandfather

Figure 1. Map of Sado. (By Mia Braunwalder 2016).

1. INTRODUCTION

This Master's thesis is based on nine weeks of fieldwork in the village of Futami on Sado Island in Japan (Fig. 1). Surrounded by fellow students doing fieldwork in Seoul, Dar-el-Salam, Mumbai and here in Göttingen on topics such as the oil-industry, migration or international exchange-students, my encompassing goal is to remind of the relevance of research done in village settings in anthropology today.

Since the 1990s anthropologists began to see the world as “increasingly connected and seamless” (Candea 2007:168). Instead of a mosaic of cultures (Cook, Laidlaw and Mair 2009:61) or “culture gardens” (Fabian 1983:47), where clear boundaries separated internally homogenous cultural units, the world was characterized by interrelated “global cultural flows” of people, media, technology, money and ideas (Appadurai 1990:296). Multi-sited Ethnography (MSE), as suggested by Marcus in 1995, quickly became a new buzzword (Hage 2005:464) and research in villages seemingly became more and more outmoded (Sorge 2015:236). Still, the specter of classical fieldwork done in isolated and remote field sites remains and Hannerz notes that even at the turn of the millennium doing research in villages is a legitimate way to become a “real anthropologist” (Hannerz 2003:202). But are villages, or were they ever, isolated and remote field sites?

My first visit to Sado Island was in 2013, when I worked in Niigata Prefecture as an Assistant Language Teacher on the JET Program.¹ A friend of mine had grown up on the island and together we took the approximately two-hour ferry ride to what was by many of my Japanese acquaintances described as the remote countryside (*inaka*). Back in Germany I came across an article describing research on Sado Island (Kadota, Konishi and Sugimoto 2014). I contacted the authors and was invited to their summer school in 2015, in the village of Futami. The summer school was a two-week program attended by social science students of three universities involved in projects ranging from the visual documentation

¹ The JET Program is an exchange programme supported by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, and the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations of Japan and aims to promote international exchange between Japan and other countries.

of a local festival to interviews regarding the reuse of former school buildings closed down due to lack of pupils.

Futami is an ideal example to show that no village is isolated or clearly bounded. It seemed lively and prosperous, not at all the dilapidating and abandoned village often described in the media or scientific literature on rural Japan. Nevertheless, Futami was affected by these images.² Not long into my stay a villager showed me a newspaper article of the prefectural newspaper entitled: “Measures against population decrease – Kendo³ also plays a role” (Niigata Nippō 2015). The article described how in the midst of the City of Sado making fruitless efforts to increase the population of the island the village of Futami had found a measure against population decline. From a graph depicting the population and the number of children under 14 in the village the reader could see that though the population was sinking, the number of children was rising. That this was associated with a successful measure against depopulation, and not with a statistical fluctuation⁴ shows the pervasiveness of the issue of depopulation supposedly threatening Japan. Not only media, but also scientists, for example Coulmas of the German Institute for Japanese Studies, state that “demographic change – aging and population decline – is the greatest challenge Japan faces today” (Coulmas 2011:vi).⁵

In my research, I focus on the intergenerational care relationships in Futami situating them in relation to the above mentioned context. I ask how intergenerational care relationships play out in the context of rural-urban outmigration of the young and an increased number of elderly people in a village in contemporary Japan. This entails looking at strategies individuals employ to ensure intergenerational care, observing living arrangements and comparing care expectations and care practices of individuals of different generations and genders, while keeping in mind the development of public and private care services in the 20th century. I link empirical observations of care practices with theoretical discussions about the anthropology of care, the concept of generations and different stages in the life course. In the midst of discussions on the crumbling “Intergenerational Contract in the Changing Asian Family” (Cross 2004), the focus of my thesis is how in the specific context of Futami, characterized by rural-urban outmigration, longevity, low birth-rates and increased female work participation, individuals negotiate intergenerational care and fill care gaps.

The main methods I employed were participant observation and biographical narrative interviews held in Japanese. I interviewed 18 people between 27 and 78 years old⁶ about their life stories and conducted home stays in five village households of different compositions, from three-generational households, to households with elderly women living alone. Thus, I had the opportunity to interview people of different generations of the same household or family and had access to varying perspectives on intergenerational relationships. As I will elaborate later, the village served as my starting point, but following people, objects and life-stories quickly led me to other relevant locations.

The first part of my title: “Keep(ing) it in the Family?” is a question from an etic perspective. On the one hand, care of household members in Japan is characterized by the imperative to “keep care in the family”, perpetuated by laws such as the former Civil Code, norms and cultural values such as filial piety. On the other hand, the gerund form “keeping it in the family” suggests that keeping care in the family may be a strategy my informants actively pursued and negotiated to ensure the care of family members in changing social

² A differentiated look at the state of Japan’s rural regions is provided by Matanle and Rausch (2011). Here, not only negative aspects but also opportunities afforded by Japan’s “rural shrinkage” are discussed from sociological, political, geographical and demographic points of view.

³ Kendo is a Japanese martial art.

⁴ The graph shows a number of 280 people with 30 children for the year 2014. That with numbers that small one family having slightly more children than usual can make a difference seemed to occur to no one.

⁵ Germany also grapples with demographic change, as described in the German magazine “*Der Spiegel*” which published a series about the “big issue of demography” (*Das Megathema Demografie*) (Bartsch et al. 2014).

⁶ Out of these 10 were male, and 8 female.

circumstances. I examine how and whether people incorporate state and media discourses concerning demographic changes occurring in Japan and how this affects care in the family.

I would like to make a note on the form of my thesis. Dumont, in the introduction to his ethnography about an island of the central Philippines, criticises “rational ethnographies” (1992:6) as too coherent and void of contradictions. They do not depict the “living texture of social life” (1992:5). I agree with Dumont, and believe that the classical structure of village ethnographies, with chapters dedicated to the village setting, detailed descriptions of chosen rituals, family trees and the occasional table on division of labour (cf. Sorge 2015:238), maintain a holistic image of a self-contained and bounded field. The fragmented fieldwork experience is neatly ordered into a coherent and rational text which depicts informants as generalized others (Dumont 1992:3). Early ethnographies of Japanese villages do not differ notably from this structure (for example Dore 1978 and Embree 1939). By giving a living insight into intergenerational care relationships in a contemporary village in Japan, I do not wish to return to anthropological “island metaphors” (Eriksen 1993:133), but instead hope to make readers reconsider their conceptions about “classical” anthropological field sites and the place of village anthropology in the discipline today. I argue that a well contextualized village ethnography, taking into account the interrelatedness of the village with broader entities and discourses, in this case discussions on the wide-reaching demographic changes in Japan, offers a relevant contribution to anthropological debates.

Inspired by Lauser’s ethnography on intercultural marriage of female Philippine migrants I show how care arrangements of individual actors are “formed” and “limited”, but not “determined” by the context they are encompassed in (2004:166). I use text-boxes that add optional back-ground information to the ethnography (cf. Lauser 2004). The font⁷ and layout are a link to “traditional” village ethnography of the early 20th century. They serve as a reminder of the continuity within the discipline and point to the question if what has changed is the world we are in, or simply our perception and the anthropological theorisation of it (cf. Bruner 1999:462). I try to make my presence in the field and in the text apparent, as my data emerged in a dialogue between me and the people in Sado and is rendered to the reader from my perspective.

In the first chapter, I will explain how I conceptualize my field site and stress the relevance of village ethnographies in contemporary anthropology. Then, I introduce concepts relevant to my study: care, generation and the life-course. I move on to the description of my setting in relation to its broader surroundings. What follows are three empirical chapters providing ethnographic descriptions of intergenerational care arrangements in different stages of the life-course: childhood, old age and death.

⁷ The font is a typewriter font, chosen as to resemble a typewritten paper.

2. REFLECTING ON THE FIELD AND THE VILLAGE

In this section I describe the process of constructing a field. First, I distance myself from the notion of the Village⁸ as a classical field site. Then, I introduce two alternative field concepts and give more details on my chosen field and research question. Lastly, I address why research in villages is not out of date in contemporary anthropology.

2.1 Step 1: Letting go of the Field

“From the outside, an island has an aspect that is quite illusory, though immensely seductive, particularly as its dimensions are relatively small. It can be embraced at once, in one single glance. Seen from afar, it stands in front of me, neither complex nor complicated as an almost graspable entity. It is bounded, limited in the immediacy of the view it presents. No need thus to search for the extension of its inhabitant’s territory, since the islanders are enveloped, maybe trapped, in the closure of their ‘natural’ habitat” (Dumont 1992:54).

...Or so I thought.

At the beginning of my fieldwork I did not think deeply about the boundaries or the nature of my field site. After all, what is a more legitimate setting for anthropological research than a village on a remote island? It was logical to assume that the village would be my field where I would live and collect relevant data.

As I started reading up on the construction of anthropological field sites, I realized that I had been influenced by anthropological “island metaphors” (Eriksen 1993:133) and the “archetype for normal anthropological practice” (Ferguson and Gupta 1997:11, cf. Stocking 1992) which I had come to know in the beginning of my studies. This archetype implies

⁸ In this chapter I consciously capitalise “field” and “village” when denoting specific perceptions of an ethnographic field or villages.

a long term stay of a male researcher in a remote and foreign place (Ferguson and Gupta 1997:11).⁹

The type of fieldwork originally conducted by anthropologists in the early 20th century can be described as “traditional practice” (Candea 2007:169), “traditional ethnography” (Cook, Laidlaw and Mair 2009:61), “conventional ethnography” (Marcus 1995:100) or “classical anthropology” (Hannerz 2003:208). All of these are based on the view of a field as bounded, small, isolated and of a manageable size.¹⁰

In the beginning, I too intended to conduct “classical anthropology” in a Village. However, in the course of my research It turned out I didn’t live in only one village, but three and I met and talked to people from different parts of the island and different parts of Japan. Were the observations and data from outside of Futami not relevant to my research? Could I write an ethnography based on data collected solely in the Village? I began to see that my observations, regardless of the location I made them in, were interrelated and that just because the starting point of my research was a village on an island, it did not mean that the research site had to be congruent with either. I had successfully let go of the Field.¹¹

2.2 Step 2: Constructing a “New” field¹²

In Falzon’s (2009) book about contemporary multi-sited ethnography I came across two concepts proposed by what the editor calls “second generation” multi-site ethnographers: “arbitrary locations” (Candea 2007) and “un-sited fields” (Cook, Laidlaw and Mair 2009). These helped me consciously construct a field site instead of taking one for granted.

2.2.1 Arbitrary locations

The title of Candea’s article “Arbitrary locations: in defense of the bounded field-site” sounds like a step back towards “traditional” field work. But what Candea means by an “arbitrary location” is a “window into complexity” (2007:179) explicitly chosen by the researcher for the purpose of analytical and methodological practicability. The emerging concept of the field is one where the field is not something given or complete, but a consciously chosen part of a bigger piece (2007:179).

Candea suggests that the process of constructing and bounding the site is neglected in multi-sited research (Candea 2007:169). The notion of “site” as such is not explicitly explained (2007:171) and thus MSE implies already existing sites which have only to be discovered and travelled to by anthropologists (2007:172). Candea agrees that sites are not to be seen as isolated and that “any local context is always intrinsically multi-sited” (2007:175). He shares the world view purported by MSE, but combines it with the bounded field-site of “traditional” ethnography. It is the complexity of the world which makes it necessary for researchers to use self-limitation as a method (2007:174). In this regard, an arbitrary location is a bounded field site in an interconnected world.¹³

⁹ Figures associated with this type of fieldwork are B. Malinowski or E. E. Evans-Pritchard.

¹⁰ Note that many researchers at the time of Malinowski had long been involved in field work which differed from the “classical” type (Hannerz 2003:202).

¹¹ This does not mean that the village as a field-site was out of the question, or that the village did not exist. However, there is a difference between assuming the Village as a field site and constructing or choosing it as a field in relation to research questions.

¹² Note the lower-case “f”.

¹³ Candea sees arbitrary locations as the inversion of Weber’s “ideal types” (2007:180). These are analytical constructs with which to examine the empirical state. The arbitrary location is the empirical state with which models can be challenged and reexamined.

2.2.2 Un-sited fields

Cook, Laidlaw and Mair agree with Candea's critique of MSE. Their suggestion is not to use arbitrary boundaries. Instead, they call for boundaries which are oriented towards theoretical research questions (2009:58) and encompass observations relevant to these research questions (2009:64). This approach applies for research done in a village as well as research conducted across village or country borders (Cook, Laidlaw and Mair 2009:64). Researchers should construct their field so as to encompass discontinuities, different groups, national, geographic or administrative boundaries relevant to their research questions, which lead to productive comparison and analysis. Their starting point is not a specific field-site, as it was in my case, but the wish to obtain data relevant to a chosen research question. This means that the field and research question are interrelated. They influence each other and can change during the process of ethnographic research. Constructing the field thus means formulating a research question and vice-versa.

Cook, Laidlaw and Mair's article is entitled: "What if there is no Elephant? Towards a Conception of an Un-sited Field" (2009). The elephant symbolizes the larger system which in their opinion is implied in multi-sited research. By referring to an overarching social structure, MSE creates the image of a three-dimensional space. Cook, Laidlaw and Mair aim for "flat descriptions", describing social phenomena without reference to "the elephant" (2009:56), as global structures do not explain local phenomena and might not exist at all (2009:57). The contribution of MSE is that it leads to the recognition that a field does not have to be connected to a geographic area (2009:58). Cook, Laidlaw and Mair take this notion further in arguing for decoupling the field site from geographic space (2009:58). Their definition of space is taken from human geography as "abstract and impersonal" location (2009:59). They define places as spaces or groups where members imagine "sharing certain characteristics that they do not share with members of other groups, that is, insofar as they are found inside a boundary, whether or not that boundary is a spatial one" (2009:60). They define the field as the object of the anthropologist's research (2009:60). Building on these definitions of space, place and field the field does not need to be congruent or related with space and place (Cook, Laidlaw and Mair 2009:64).

2.2.3 Arriving at a field and a research question

In Futami, I quickly found the village boundaries as a field to be insufficient. Almost every household had more than one car and some people commuted as far as the mainland to work. The inhabitants spent most of their time outside the village and people from elsewhere spent time in it. Furthermore, villagers maintained ties with relatives who had emigrated from the island and family members from the mainland visited the island on important holidays. The cruise ships with their international passengers and crew¹⁴ and the presence of an astounding number of social scientists and students doing research in the region also made me think about the boundaries of my field.

Back in Germany I searched for emerging and recurring themes in my data guided by the Grounded Theory Method as described by Charmaz (2008). I realized that I was going to have to make an (arbitrary?) decision: Out of the many potential ethnographies I could write, which one was I committed to? Observations on care-arrangements and practices, together with the statements of my informants on what they thought about these and what they expected from other people, were prominent in my data. I thus formulated the research question: "How do intergenerational care relations work in the context of social changes (demographic change and depopulation) in contemporary rural Japan?". The relationships between different generations were not limited to the geographic boundaries

¹⁴ Imagine my surprise when an anthropologist from the university I was studying at in Germany descended from one of the ships, where she was working at the time.

of the village: grandmothers commuted to take care of their grandchildren, adult children moved back to the village from the city to take care of their parents, parents moved to the city to be taken care of by their children.

My field is an “un-sited” and “arbitrary” field in the sense that it is unconstrained by geographic location and just one of many possible windows into a complex world. The relevant boundaries (cf. Cook, Laidlaw and Mair 2009:64) my field encompasses are boundaries between generations, between genders, between households, between life and death, between villages and between the island and the mainland.

Metaphorically, I see my field as a climbing structure (Fig. 2) where the bars and ropes are social relationships which connect different nodes. Not all of the social relations are relevant to my research question. The steel bars of the climbing structure build the frame of my field, whereas the ropes, even though existing, are secondary and omitted for the sake of analytical practicability.¹⁵

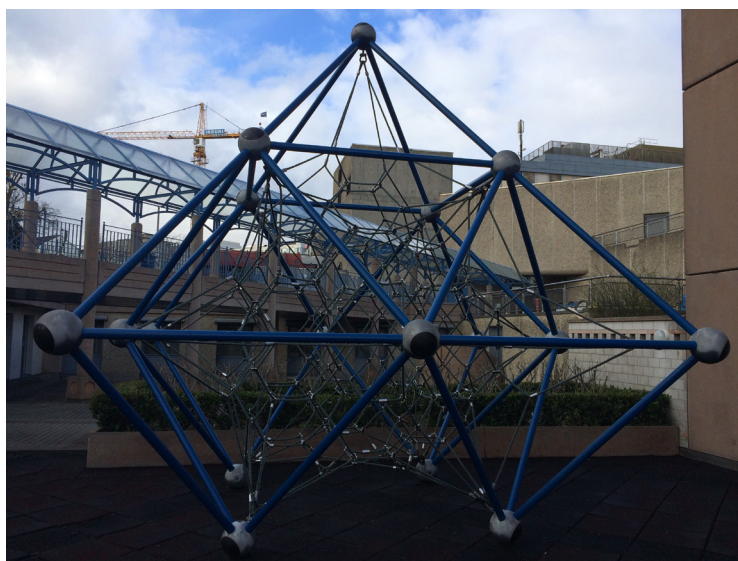


Figure 2. My field as a climbing structure (picture taken by author 2017)

2.3 Village Ethnography in the 21st Century?

If my conclusion is that fields are “un-sited” and based on social relations, then one might ask what relevance the village has at all in anthropological research today. Indeed, the position of the village in anthropology seems threatened by several discussions which arose in the late 20th century. Sorge observes that villages, in the early 20th century the mainstay of anthropological research, today have receded from view and have been displaced by new anthropological subjects, methods and topics (2015:237).

2.3.1 *Maybe not...*

Next to changes in the world view and the emergence of MSE, a further discussion that could be seen to question the relevance of the village in anthropology is the spatial turn

¹⁵ ...and my sanity.

(cf. Bachmann-Medick 2006).¹⁶ The main concern here is the localisation of culture or the relationship between culture and space.¹⁷ The spatial turn asserts that culture should not be seen as tied to a specific location (Dickhardt and Hauser-Schäublin 2003:17). As means of transportation and communication become quicker and more affordable, the actions of our informants are increasingly “despatialised” (*enträumlicht*) (2003:15). Identities are increasingly shaped multilocally (2003:16). For village ethnography, this means acknowledging that villages are parts of delocalised structures and influenced by local, national and global happenings (Rössler 2003:177).

Gille, as a solution to doing ethnography in an increasingly globalized world, suggests redefining the anthropological notion of place (Gille 2001:322). He borrows geographer Massey’s definition of place as something dynamic, heterogeneous without boundaries and unique in regard to its mixture of social relations (2001:327). Space should not be seen as a vessel for culture, instead it is seen as relational, forming and formed by social relations and actions (Bachmann-Medick 2006:307). This has the following implications for ethnography: it should include history, it should not be confined to a geographic locality but instead follow different social relations and it should study the changes in these relations over time (Gille 2001:327). What emerge as central to the revised concept of place, are the lived social relations that link people.

Although particularly in these discussions clear definitions of “space”, “place” or “locality” would be helpful, I found them lacking in most texts. This might be because what is being discussed are the meanings of “space” and “place” and the changing relationship between culture and “space” or “place”. The consensus is to detach culture from “space”, “place” and “location” and to see spatial concepts as relationally defined, fluid and processual, in contrast to stable and bounded concepts of the past. This being said, space has not lost its importance for human actions, as Dickhardt and Hauser-Schäublin assert that human actions are “fundamentally spacial” (2003:16) and that “space” and “place” are not irrelevant, but simply changing in meaning.

2.3.2 Absolutely

The special issue “Resiting the Village” (2015) of *Critique of Anthropology* addresses what there is to gain from anthropological engagement with villages today. Sorge sees villages as open and changeable, embedded in and affected by global political and economic transformations and modernization processes. He argues there is much potential in an anthropological reengagement with villages (2015:241). The analytical focus of village based ethnography lies on informants’ lifeworlds, portrays “particular modernities” and shows how people experience the world in rural areas (2015:242). The village as a geographic concept is less important than the imagination of the village and the ideas people connect with it. That is why Shneidermann sees the village as a “flexible set of social relations” (2015:319) connected to a historical and political context. She shows how the idea of the village can positively or negatively influence social relations, whether they are in the village or not (2015:319).

A dichotomy questioned in the special issue is the contradiction between “tradition” associated with the village and “modernity” associated with cities. Creighton asserts that the village she lived in while doing research in a neighbouring mega-mall was characterised by tradition and modernity at the same time (2015:295). She sees villages as affected by global flows and influenced by their surroundings. Ethnographic research in such settings can show how “localised culture” persists, changes and adapts to external influences (2015:297). Gallo goes on to question the dichotomy tradition and modernity

¹⁶ The spatial turn is apparent in anthropological metaphors such as “margins”, “borders”, “center” or “periphery” (Bachmann-Medick 2006:304).

¹⁷ This is discussed in a volume by Dickhardt and Hauser-Schäublin (2003).

in her discussions about methods in the field. Where village ethnography is related to immobility, “traditional” field work and classical anthropological topics, such as kinship or rural life, MSE is associated with mobility, new methods and contemporary topics such as migration or transnational relations (Gallo 2015:249). She argues that village ethnography can treat contemporary anthropological concerns and be part of multi-sited research at the same time (2015:250). MSE and village ethnography are not mutually exclusive. In her research, Gallo uses both methods to shed light on the understanding of kinship among a highly mobile South Indian middle class. She and the other contributors to the special issue show how engaging with villages can address themes relevant to current anthropological concerns and connect these with “traditional” anthropological concepts developed in the past.¹⁸ That “transnational research” is not contradictory to village anthropology and that all sites, whether villages or cities, can be approached from a transnational perspective, was already argued by Bruner several years prior (1999:462).¹⁹

What emerges is a picture of villages that can be simultaneously traditional and modern and in constant movement. They are fields of social relations interrelated with their surroundings and not necessarily geographically defined. In spite of this rather vague or flexible image, the village remains important and concrete as it serves as an organising concept and anchoring image for its inhabitants. It is this understanding of a village that can be fruitful for anthropological research today.

Finally, Gallo reminds us to be more conscious of the continuity in anthropological research, warning that one should not create a break between anthropological work of the past and the present (2015:259). The image of the displaced village is further relativized as Herzfeld suggests that villages never vanished from anthropologists’ view (Herzfeld 2015:338). He states that the image of the bounded, homogenous and isolated Village is a construct of anthropologists “too burdened to read back into the older literature” (2015:338). In short: the bounded, isolated Village never existed.

But now, enough rumination about the nature and boundaries of my field. Come and join me on a climb!

¹⁸ Other topics of the special issue on the village include cultural self-definition through social memory (Sorge:2015), or the production of social meaning by Himalayan migrants (Shneiderman:2015).

¹⁹ What is interesting in his article about revisiting a field site 40 years after the initial fieldwork, is if the changes he observed were due to empirical changes in the world or due to changes in anthropological theory (Bruner 1999:461). He notes how anthropological theories reflect and shape changes in the world (1999:462). He suggests examining the “taken-for-granted narratives about fieldwork” implicit in each study (1999:474).

3. FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS

In this chapter, I discuss concepts relevant to my study of intergenerational care relationships. Of these “care” is the central concept which serves to bring together the concepts of “generation” and the “life course”.

During my fieldwork, I encountered different practices which could be regarded as care as understood in everyday language. Following Tronto (1993:108) and Thelen (2014:41), I see care not as a principle or an emotion, but as a practice and an on-going process. I tried not to focus on specific relationships and to stay open to relationships of care not usually regarded as such and took concrete care actions as starting points for my research. Hence, I observed grandmother Kimiyama feed her two wild cats, Mr. Kanai repot and prune his Bonsai²⁰, grandmother Nishizawa sew bibs for the stone *jizō*²¹ statues located behind the village, or grandfather Matsushita repaint his boat.²² Although these practices can be seen as forms of care, I chose to concentrate on intergenerational care practices, which limits the scope to actions observed between people of different kinship and historical generations, whether living or deceased. At first, I clarify what I mean by “generation”. Next, I introduce my working concept of care and finally, I bring these two concepts together with the life course, introducing the ideal life course and the notion of the intergenerational contract.

3.1 Generations in Anthropology

In “Kinship Today” (*Verwandtschaft Heute*) Alber and Häberlein note a rise in anthropological research involving intergenerational relationships. Striving to include

²⁰ Bonsai are miniature trees often grown as a hobby in pots or in a garden.

²¹ *Jizō* statues are statues commonly taking the form of men, often adorned with knitted or sewn red bibs or caps. They are said to be Buddhist deities who protect children and travelers.

²² In Shintoism animate and inanimate things have spirits. Thus, care practices directed towards the environment, things or animals are not unusual. For example, in a ceremony for old sewing tools, needles and the like are pricked into tofu to thank them for their service. This is called *hari-kuyō*, *kuyō* being the term used in reference to ancestral veneration, *hari* meaning needle.

other perspectives than those of middle-aged male members of society, research on other generations and genders and the relationships between them has grown (2010:284). The changing population structure in industrialised countries characterised by an increasing number of elderly people has equally contributed to intergenerational research about the elderly and the relationships they are encompassed in (Alber and Häberlein 2010:284). Some ethnographic work in the context of Japan describes intergenerational relationships, mostly focussing on the relationships between elderly parents and their adult children, bringing up issues such as elder suicide (Traphagan 2004), elderly care or aging (Hashimoto 1996, Matsumoto 2011 or Knight and Traphagan 2003).

Alber and Häberlein describe three concepts of generation which have been used in anthropological work. The first, is generation as an ordering system (2010:288). The second concept, is generation understood in the sense of kinship (Alber and Häberlein 2010:289). The third concept, originating from sociology, defines generations as the group of people who were born and grew up in a specific time and whose views and norms are shaped by this time (2010:290). This may be called a “historical generation” (Alber, van der Geest and Whyte 2008:5). In my text, I work with all three generational concepts: generations at a societal level when comparing the perceptions of intergenerational care of different generations, at the family level in open or more indirect negotiations of care between family members and as an ordering system which assigns individuals specific duties and tasks in relation to each other. My emphasis lies on generations as a kinship term, as my empirical data illustrates kinship relations in specific family constellations and households.

Whereas in the first two concepts intergenerational relationships are seen as stabilising and structuring, in the third concept they are related to historical time and thus dynamic (Alber and Häberlein 2010:290). As different generations co-reside, the simultaneity of different life stages leads to “negotiations about established normative systems” (2010:286) resulting in either harmonious relations, conflicts or isolation. As emphasised by Alber and Häberlein (2010:296) I see intergenerational relationships as changing and influenced by the historic context and demographic changes occurring in Futami and Japan today. Now that I have specified my understanding of generations, I turn to the concept of care.

3.2 Working with Care

In their reviews on care in anthropology Buch (2015), Thelen (2014) and Alber and Drotbohm (2015) note that as studies of care have increased, the scope of the topic has broadened without a theoretical base which defines the concept of care. In some of the literature I refer to, care was not explicitly defined. In the context of caring for the dead Kawano (2005) uses the term care without further consideration. She describes how people care for household altars, graves, the family dead and ancestors. Hashimoto (1966) or Göransson (2013) do not use the term care at all, but instead speak of “support” and “help” between generations. In the following, my aim is not to create a boundary on what care is and what it isn't. However, I wish to avoid using an implicit notion of care based on the term's everyday use and enumerate possible definitions and different dimensions of care relevant to my thesis.

A description Kavedžija uses in her research on care practices performed by elderly in Japan is that care includes “forms of support and expressions of concerns for others” (Kavedžija 2015:63). Using this broad definition, she is able to encompass the various ways in which the elderly can be involved in caring, even though they are often primarily seen as recipients of care. Though some might argue this definition is too broad, I believe it shows how interpreting care narrowly can serve to exclude people from the role of caregivers and lead to disregard practices initially not perceived as care by either the researcher or his or her informants.

Tronto separates care into four phases, two of which I find useful in reference to my data. These are “care-giving” and “taking-care of” (Tronto 1993:106f.). By “care-giving”, Tronto means the actual physical care practices performed by a person, in the context of Futami for example washing laundry, preparing food or giving medicine. “Taking-care of” is associated with the feeling of responsibility, for example the feeling of responsibility an eldest son might have towards his parents. Although the phases are not clearly separable, I found that the person responsible for care was often not the person performing the actual care.

Drotbohm and Alber do not define care and instead describe three dimensions of care: care as work, care as kinship and care in the life course (2015:2). Care as work shows the commercialisation and professionalization of care and sheds light on different institutions: hospitals, schools or kindergartens where care can take place. Care as kinship describes care as a social practice which creates bonds and belonging but can also destroy them. Care in the life course shows that care is a temporally embedded leading to changing rights and obligations in the course of a person’s life (Drotbohm and Alber 2015:2). These three domains are interlinked and interdependent (Drotbohm and Alber 2015:14). Similarly, interlinked are the levels of family, community and state care (cf. Drotbohm 2015), as care practices are influenced by and influence state policies. Buch equally abstains from defining care (2015:279). She argues that care has “multiple qualities as a form of moral, intersubjective practice” and is a “circulating and potentially scarce social resource” (Buch 2015:279). This sheds light on further dimensions of care: It can be seen as a moral practice, defining people and their actions as “good” or “bad”, it is intersubjective (hence more than one actor is involved) it circulates (it is in some way possible to pass it on or hold on to it over time) and it is not always readily available, implying some might have easier access to it than others. Thus, care is to be situated in power relations or hierarchies.

This leads us to the flexibility of care. Demographic and economic changes have effects on care norms and actions (Thelen 2014:137). Thus, care practices are subject to changes and negotiation (Buch 2015:183). Thelen shows how in the context of the German reunification, economic measures, such as early retirement and demographic factors, such as later births made it possible for grandparents to take care of their grandchildren, whereas this was not usual in the past (2014:150).

Another dimension important to mention is the social construction of care. Thelen asserts that care connects a “giving and a taking side in such practices, which are aimed at the satisfaction of *socially acknowledged needs*”²³ (Thelen 2014:41, emphasis by author). Care is a process on a societal level and the need for care socially constructed.²⁴ In the case of Japan, the elderly, children and the deceased are socially acknowledged as needing and entitled to care, while other generations are assigned the duty to care for them.

Lastly, Tronto states that care practices are culturally shaped (1993:103). They are connected to the sense of well-being (equally a culturally shaped concept) as people try to “maintain, continue, and repair” the world they live in (Tronto 1993:103).

Keeping these dimensions of care in mind – circulation, morality, power, negotiability, culture and the connection to an individual’s life course – will prevent confusing the analytical concept of care with care as used in everyday life. In the next subsection, I will describe cultural features of care in Japan.

²³ “eine gebende und eine nehmende Seite in solchen Praktiken verbindet, die sich auf die Befriedigung von sozial anerkannter Bedürfnisse richten” (Thelen 2015:41).

²⁴ The construction and understanding of need is one of the cultural assumptions Hashimoto states necessary for understanding the generational contract in different cultures (Hashimoto 1996: 145).

3.2.1 Care in Japan

As in other languages in Japanese many words exist to describe care.²⁵ The terms most often used by my informants in the context of intergenerational familial care were *sewa wo suru*, *mendou wo miru*, or simply *miru*. These were used interchangeably in talking about caring for young children and elderly parents in a broad sense and implied caring for them when they were sick, providing them with food, visiting them or simply supervising them. *Mendou* actually means something which is bothersome and takes time. *Miru* comes from the Chinese character “to look”. *Mimamoru*, another term frequently used, also includes the character “to look” and adds “to protect” to it, while this implies a more passive sort of care, less associated with practical care and more with being close by and looking on. *Miokuru* combines “to look” with “to send”, meaning to see someone off in the sense of looking after someone until he or she dies. Two expressions strongly connoting physical proximity were *soba ni iru*, being by someone’s side, or *tsukisou* composed of two characters meaning “to be attached”. These are used in the sense of being by a weak or sick person’s side, for example if the person is hospitalised or bed-ridden.²⁶ These words suggest that caring in the family is associated with physical proximity²⁷ and being in someone’s sight.

3.2.2 Public care

In the Japanese Civil Code instated in the Meiji Period (at the end of the 19th century) the eldest son was legally the inheritor of his parents’ house and land and was responsible for the well-being of all household members including the young, the elderly and the ancestors (Long 2006:35). This system, called the *ie*-system, seeing the household as a self-sufficient unit responsible for its members was formally abolished after World War II. Since then due to demographic developments including a rise in the number of elderly people, a low birth-rate and increased female participation in the work-force, a public welfare system and private care facilities in Japan have developed and the state and local governments have taken on more responsibility for public welfare.

The first long-term public-health plan was the “Gold Plan” in 1989, which aimed to raise the number of home helpers, beds in institutions, day care service centers and beds in nursing homes. In 2000 the Japanese government introduced mandatory long-term care insurance, which makes people over 65 eligible for individually adapted public welfare services.²⁸ The long-term care insurance plan includes services by home helpers, day care centers and nursing homes. In the light of the economic condition of Japan and the rising number of beneficiaries compared to a small number of contributors the Japanese state is cutting back on welfare expenses, gradually raising the pension age from 60–65 and encouraging prevention and home-care to minimize their expenses (Web Japan n.d.). In spite of these developments the norms and values regarding care within the family and the

²⁵ See Thelen for the terms describing care in German and English (2014:23).

²⁶ *Hoiku*, using the characters “to guarantee” or “to bring up” was used, often in the context of nursing schools and nursing school teachers. *Kaigo* was rarely used in the familial context, but used by my informants who worked in nursing or elderly care when talking about their jobs. Shimada describes *kaigo* as a word which has gained in popularity due to the introduction of new welfare policies and mentions its “bureaucratic and technical” connotations (2015:36). It is used in referral to elderly medical care (2015:35, 36). Other words he notes are *kango* (care of the sick), *kaijo* (care of handicapped) or *ikuji* (childcare) (2015:35, 36). Further the word *kea*, from the English term “care” in scientific discourses denotes a general term for care. It includes medical aspects of care, but also the German connotation of “Fürsorge” (Shimada 2015:36).

²⁷ Long notes that female care duties often denote actions such as washing, cooking or toileting, which require continuous physical proximity (Long 2009:3).

²⁸ The users pay 10% of the costs, the rest is covered by the state, the local government and contributions by those over the age of 40.

household as a self-sufficient unit are said to persist until now (Shimano 2015:34, Long 2009:18).

In the domain of child care, nurseries are the main formal caring arrangements for children between 0 and 5.²⁹ Originally nurseries were social welfare facilities for children lacking care at home because their mothers were working or sick. In the 1960s the demand and number of nurseries rose strongly and now almost all children attend either a nursery or kindergarten before entering compulsory education at the age of 6 (Abumiya 2011). The rise in the use of nurseries is linked to the increased number of working mothers and nuclearization of families (Ben-Ari 2005:249). The use of babysitters is very rare (Ben-Ari 2005:249). In Futami all children under six were in the care of the nursery school accepting children from the age of seven months and open between 7:30 a.m. and 7 p.m. on weekdays, and half-days on Saturdays.

Even though formal care alternatives gradually developed in the 20th century, the norm stating that care should be kept within the family (instilled by the *ie* system in the Meiji Period) still persisted until at least the 1970s and was even strengthened in the post-war era (Shimada 2015:34). Izuhara notes that the care of the elderly remains tied to inheritance and coresidence (Izuhara 2002:74) and Hashimoto's research in the late 20th century revealed that care of elderly, young or deceased family members was still then kept inside the family (1996:43). According to Ben-Ari in the domain of child care the norm states that only if there are no other options the state should be involved (2015:250).

3.2.3 Care in the family

In Japan the family acts as an informal social security system (Hashimoto 1996:79). Where the *responsibility* (taking care of) for the care of household members lies with the eldest son, *practical care* (care-giving) is associated with female family members, most often mothers (Traphagan 2003:136). Daughters-in-law are the designated care givers for their mothers-in-law and children, and are expected to devote themselves entirely to this task (Traphagan 2003:136). As women grow older, their care duties decrease and their daughters-in-law take over (Traphagan 2003:136). This leaves elder women in charge of ancestral care, or left without care duties at all (2003:129).

Hashimoto states that need for care in old age is seen as inevitable in the Japanese life course. Being cared for is an entitlement, caring a duty and these ideas are cemented by norms of filial obligation (Hashimoto 1996:102). In spite of the entitlement to care in old age, Kavedžija notes that the norm of not being a burden to other people is very strong (2015:65). Regarding care on an individual level, Kavedžija suggests that caring is connected to notions of personhood and self (2015:62). She asserts that together with being engaged in social relations and not being a burden to others "the ability to care and to express concern, through gestures no matter how small, lies at the heart of social personhood in Japan" (2015:77).

Thus caring is not only a duty or obligation but also can be seen as positive, may be done out of affinity and incorporates people into social relationships. Studies on well-being in Japan show that well-being is associated with social interaction with other people (Traphagan 2003:129, Taniguchi 2012:98) and with having a specific role or work (Suzuki 2012:88). Care-giving as a social practice creating connections and social belonging (Alber and Drotbohm 2015:2) might thus be seen as a beneficial task. This being said the main image of caring is one associated with sacrifice and burden on the part of the care-giver (Campbell, Long and Nishimura 2009:12), reinforcing the right to receive care in the long run.

²⁹ In contrast to kindergartens, nurseries encompass not mainly academic goals, but include everyday care such as feeding, dressing or putting to sleep (Ben-Ari 2005:248). Kindergartens cater to children the age of 3-5 and have a stronger academic focus.

3.3 Bringing it all together – Generations, Care and the Life Course

Enumerating different areas of anthropological research on care, all three reviews mentioned above dedicate a section to care and the life course, or the temporality of care.³⁰ What these sections imply is that care is related to people's life courses and the life courses of the people that surround them. Thelen notes that care practices are influenced by past experiences and future expectations of care in individual biographies (2014:14). Alber and Drotbohm describe that there is a "life-course related care norm" (2015:11) which people must adhere to, to be seen as full and functioning members of their society. This norm is not static, but changes due to societal change and people can actively choose not to follow the care norm (2015:11). As people pass through life stages, timing becomes primordial as family members coordinate care amongst different generations. But not only the moment as such must be considered, past and future care duties and credits must be accounted for because of what Coe calls the "circular quality" of care between people in shifting positions (2015:188). Häberlein also uses the image of "circulating" care and compares it to a currency "circulating between persons of different ages over their individual life-courses" (Häberlein 2015:159).

As the duty to care and the right to receive care are related to different stages of the life course I think it important to give an overview of the ideal life course as described to me in biographical and narrative life-history interviews in Futami, setting an emphasis on narrations of care.

3.3.1 The ideal life course and its variations

The concepts of the life course, life stages and life cycles implying universal, ordered and coherent stages have been criticised as inflexible. Further they are seen as impositions on empirical data (Johnson-Hanks 2002). Johnson-Hanks makes an observation about life cycles: "Life stages' emerge only as the result of institutional projects; their coherence should be an object, rather than an assumption, of ethnographic inquiry" (Johnson-Hanks 2002:866).

For the case of Japan anthropologists note the applicability of the life course concept. Brinton describes the "orderliness" of the life course strongly structured by social institutions (1992:79). She characterises it as "irreversible", with "little variance" and "age-incongruous" (1992:83). Hashimoto mentions "clearly defined" life stages which come with particular needs, strengths and weaknesses (1996:68).

The image of an ordered life course is corroborated by official documents: A statistical report titled "Japan's population and generations as seen through life stages" (*raifusutēgi de miru – nihon no jinkō, sedai*) is structured along the chapters: "giving birth", "pursuing education", "moving out", "starting work", "marrying", "establishing a family", "building a house" and "aging" (Statistics Bureau 2012). These were incidentally the stages my informants used to give structure to their life stories. They talked about their lives as paths and used expressions such as "*michi wo erabu*" to choose a path, "*michi wo susumu*" to follow a path, or "*michi ni maishin suru*" staying on a path.

In comparing biographical narratives in generations (here as a societal notion), certain events and a strong sense of the sequence of these events emerged. A person's life course varied according to factors such as age, gender and birth order but most attached importance to following the same life course as their social generation and gender did. Life stages were associated with different behaviour, obligations, priorities and duties and completing the stages in order is important to be seen as a functioning member of society.

³⁰ Buch's section is entitled "Intergenerational circulations of care" (2015:283). Alber and Drotbohm address the issue as "Care in the life course" (2015:10) and Thelen as the "temporal incorporation" of care (*Care: Temporale Einbettung*) (2014:42).

For most of my informants the compulsory schooling system shapes the first life stages: entering primary school at the age of six and middle school at the age of 12 where mentioned without fail.³¹ While most older villagers started to work immediately for economic reasons the younger generation continued on to high school and university or a vocational school. After completing education, men are expected to find a stable job, preferably life-time employment with a steadily rising salary. This forms the basis of marriage, followed by building or buying a house, or in the case of the eldest son living in his parents' house with his wife. Women marry after working in part-time or temporary jobs and follow their husbands to their houses. The next step is having children³² after which the women stop work to take care of the children. Women who are married to eldest sons (*chōnan*) are expected to give priority to the care of their parents-in-law and stop working when they need care. The main duties for fathers were ensuring that children had a good education, earning money and working until retirement at the age of 65. When retired the ideal would be to have paid off all one's debts³³ and to have children who are well educated and securely employed.³⁴ The elderly are expected to live in three-generational households with their eldest son and his wife, who should take care of them until they pass away and afterwards, tending to their graves and performing rituals at the family altar. In their late life the elderly can engage in vegetable gardening, volunteer work or other hobbies, or stay at home and spoil their grand-children.

The stories of my informants mostly did not proceed along the ideal path. There were single fathers, single mothers, working mothers, parents living alone without their children and children who did not find spouses or stable jobs. However, the above described life course was the implicit model that my informants strived to achieve, as exemplified by the following case:

Grandmother Kobayashi started with the statement that she had had a usual (*futsū*) life. In one and a half minutes she summed everything up:

会話

Grandmother Kobayashi: (...) I was going to nursing school. For two years. I got the license and then immediately we got together [she and her husband], and then I got married at around 21. After that I stopped nursing, gave birth to my eldest daughter and then while watching out for my eldest daughter I moved to Kobayashi's [her husband's] parents' home. And then – the house we had before this one, a really small one, half of what it is now – we lived there. And then, I gave birth to Nori [son], then to Mariko [daughter] and then raised the children and when I was around 40, one of the children said he would go to university, so I started working as a nurse and continued until I was 60, and then the year before last I retired and after that stayed at home. (Interview with Grandmother Kobayashi, 62, 11.09.2015, translated by Rhea Braunwalder).

Much of Grandmother Kobayashi's narration is related to care work, paid and unpaid, as she describes working as a nurse, performing practical care for her children and then restarting work to ensure her children could attend university thus engaging in financial care. Although there had been many incidents in her life, for example that her daughter was disabled and died at the age of 12 and that she was now taking care of her grandchildren (*sotomago*) and not simply "staying at home", this condensed version shows how grandmother Kobayashi structures her life and presents it as a normal life as lead by other women in her social generation.

³¹ This exemplary life course will concentrate on the generation born around 1950.

³² Although the birthrate in Japan is at 1.4, families in Futami at the time of my research had an average of three children and being an only-child was a rarity.

³³ Most of my informants had taken on loans to build their houses.

³⁴ Many parents seemed to enjoy elaborating on their children's careers and salaries.

For the generation born around 1975 the life course was more flexible. Even though the life course events were equal to those of the elder generation, they spoke of more options and had a different notion of choice than their parents did. A characteristic specific to Futami is that due to the difficult economic circumstances many women, also amongst the elder generation, worked. Amongst the younger generation many were dual income families (*tomobataraki*), where both the father and mother worked, either out of financial necessity to pay off their loans or by choice. This has implications for child and elderly care and was one of the factors influencing the intergenerational contract which I describe in the next section.

3.3.2 *The intergenerational contract*

The idea of care circulating during the life course and norms of intergenerational reciprocity form the basis of the “generational contract” (Häberlein 2015:159).³⁵ In her review of the concept, Göransson sees it as composed of “explicit and implicit obligations and expectations between (aged) parents and (adult) children as well as (...) the actual manifestations of those obligations and expectations” (2013:64). Göransson notes that the intergenerational contract is influenced by cultural beliefs and by welfare policies of the state (2013:67). It can be “legal”, “moral” and/or “emotional” (2013:68f.). It is not possible to separate “public” and “private” contracts or contracts between family generations and societal generations³⁶ as these influence and shape each other (Göransson 2013:66). She uses the word contract, as it shows that generations negotiate terms whilst being incorporated in asymmetrical power relations (2013:64).

Hashimoto’s book, entitled “The Gift of Generations” (1996),³⁷ compares the social contract in the USA and Japan. Hashimoto uses the term “social contract” to describe a reciprocal relationship between givers and receivers of support which is stabilized and structured by the creation of an image of fairness and equity (1996:17). Hashimoto notes the asymmetrical relationship between the giver and receiver of care. However, she asserts that this asymmetry is balanced by distributing “symbolic resources” (rights, responsibilities, credits and debts) in relationships, creating “symbolic equity” and a sense of fairness. She states: “the key to getting along (...) lies in sustaining the sense of fairness in the everyday acts of giving” (1996:180). She further notes that “[a]nticipated life course trajectories and assumptions about the nature of security and self-sufficiency” as well as “socioeconomic factors – such as geographical mobility, occupational changes, and housing options” influence the contract (1996:50). For Hashimoto the social contract is made up of a formal “public” contract between the state and individuals and an informal “private” contract (1996:17). After describing support in both the public and private domain and giving ethnographic examples of elderly people and their conceptions of support and the actual support they receive, Hashimoto proposes a model of six cultural assumptions which shape the social contract in both USA and Japan.³⁸ This emphasises the cultural factors surrounding intergenerational care, but undermines the agency of individual actors. The negotiations, power relations and changes involved in the intergenerational contract as described by Göransson (2013) are less visible.

Häberlein suggests that even though generational contracts may normatively exist in every society, intergenerational reciprocity in practice is not self-evident (2015:161). Empirical data shows that the elderly can be left uncared for. Häberlein asserts that the

³⁵ The generational contract is a term which is often not explicitly defined and can also be found as an „intergenerational contract“ or a „social contract“ (Göransson 2013:62).

³⁶ Here she distinguishes between generation as kinship term and historical generations as suggested by Alber and Drotbohm (2015).

³⁷ The gift in question is intergenerational support and help during the life course.

³⁸ The assumptions are: „need, security, equity, primary bonds, self-sufficiency, and resource affluence“ (1996:144).

existence of uncared for family members is attributable to specific circumstances on the individual, family or historical level (2015:175). Here she refers to Hareven's notions of "individual time", the roles one goes through during one's life course, "family time", the interaction of the individual times of family members, and "historical time" the institutional and social framework (Hareven 1977:59). Specific constellations of these times can lead to different care arrangements or not-caring. Coe explains the lack of care for certain family members, saying that "gaps in care" (Coe 2015:182) are results of the failure to coordinate life courses of different family members (2015:189). This happens for example if family members migrate. The "care gap" must then be filled either by another family member, the community, the state or private services. This is transposable to the situation in rural Japan, where past care contributions may not be recognized by the next generation (Hashimoto 1996:88). Factors such as rural-urban migration, the nuclearization of households, later marriages, low fertility-rates and increased longevity lead to shifts in the periods of needing and supplying help and result in changing care arrangements. In the light of these changes Hashimoto suggests that ties of affinity are increasingly important in intergenerational care (Hashimoto 1996:102).

In the next chapter, I describe the setting of my research to show what context shapes the way people are involved in intergenerational care arrangements, and how in turn my informants shape this context.

4. DIFFERING VIEWS OF AN ISLAND

Working with the concept of a village as a social field interrelated with its surroundings means going beyond typical setting descriptions as found in 20th century village ethnographies. My description of the setting is “arbitrary” and shaped by my research interests, my perception of and my interactions in the field.

Appadurai notes that locality does not simply exist, but must be created by local subjects (1995:206) who are influenced by the context-providing powers of large scale organisations such as cities and states (1995:211). That is why the chapter is structured into three levels: Japan, Sado Island and Futami Village. The way the people in Futami created and perceived the village they lived in was shaped by the way the City and the state perceived of Sado Island and rural Japan.

I start with topographies of Sado Island and Futami Village, giving the historical and geographical framework of my setting.³⁹ These are followed by descriptions of rural Japan from different perspectives in descending order: anthropological literature, a vignette about rural Japan from my perspective in Tokyo, the perspective on Sado and finally on Futami from the point of view of their inhabitants.⁴⁰

4.1 Topographies

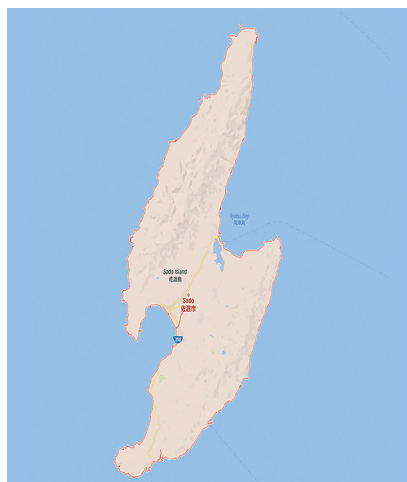
4.1.1 Sado Island

Sado Island is located in the Japanese Sea 50 km off the west coast of Japan (Fig. 3). The island of Sado has an area of 855 km².⁴¹ It has an “S” like shape with forested mountain ranges in the north and the south and a flat plain in the middle where towns and rice fields are concentrated (Fig. 4).

³⁹ In addition to my own data, I draw on the mid-term report of a research project about the reuse of closed schoolhouses and the revitalization of local areas in Sado financed by the Toyota Foundation from November 2009 to October 2011 (Kadota, Kodai and Sugimoto 2011) and data from the official website of the City of Sado. Additionally, I include data from the private archive concerning the village population and its composition by the head of the Futami Community Centre.

⁴⁰ The literature on Japan’s rural areas is abundant, contributions from Political Studies, Japanese Studies and Sociology forming the majority.

⁴¹ Slightly smaller than the German island Rügen.



(left) Figure 3. Map of Japanese prefectures, with Sado highlighted. From Wikipedia, n.d., retrieved 19.02.2016 from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sado,_Niigata>.

(right) Figure 4. Location of Futami. From Google Maps, n.d., retrieved 19.02.2016

Sado Island is a City⁴² (*shi*) and belongs to Niigata prefecture. Sado consists of ten cities, towns and villages which were merged to Sado City in 2004. This was part of a larger movement of the central government, which created financial incentives for small municipalities to merge into Cities in light of the national financial situation, the changing demographic situation and the increased scope of mobility of inhabitants of municipalities (Yokomichi 2008:5).⁴³

Due to its remote location Sado has a history of exile and banishment. The site of silver and gold mines financing the Tokugawa Shogunate⁴⁴, Sado was very prosperous in the 17th century. The first mine opened in 1601. Traders, engineers and labourers from the whole of Japan came to the island. Mining flourished and settlements of up to 100'000 inhabitants developed. In 1896 the largest mine belonging to the Imperial family was sold to the Mitsubishi Company which exploited it until 1989 (Mitsubishi n.d).

In contrast to the thriving mining island of the Tokugawa Period, Sado now has a population of 58'701 (Sado City 2015). This is half of the 125'597 inhabitants in 1950 (Niigata Prefecture 2014) (see Appendix A for additional data on the population of Sado). The area around the plains has a high density of shopping facilities, including clothes stores, electronic stores, drug stores, supermarkets, coffee shops and restaurants. Former shopping streets and other smaller towns have become shutter streets⁴⁵ (*shattā shōtengai*) with small businesses struggling to survive. Outside the plains Sado is speckled with fishing villages around the coast and agricultural villages located in the mountainous areas. According to Matanle (2008) the shrinking of the population is mainly due to rural-urban outmigration of young people in search of further education and employment. As there are no universities in Sado, high school graduates must leave the island or go to one of the two vocational schools: The Sado School of Nursing established in 1935 and the recently opened vocational school for Traditional Culture, Environment and Welfare offering courses such as traditional architecture, environment conservation, ceramic design, tourism or care work. The educational situation leads to a high percentage of people aged over 60 in relation to a low number of people in the age groups between 20 and 40.

⁴² A City is an administrative unit in Japan.

⁴³ Through these administrative mergers the state hopes to improve efficiency of local administration, promote decentralization and trim state expenditures, amongst others by diminishing municipal employees (2008:13).

⁴⁴ This was the Japanese government between 1608 and 1868.

⁴⁵ The name shutter street alludes to the closed shutters one can see when passing the now usually deserted roads.

4.1.2 Futami Village

To get to Futami (Fig. 4) I took the ferry from the mainland and drove 25 km or 40 km by car or bus.⁴⁶ In calm weather Sado is accessible by three ferries in one to two and a half hours, however two ferries do not operate in winter. There are no trains on the island so the main means of transport are cars and public busses. Futami stretches 1 km along the coastal road in a natural bay. The houses are located on a narrow strip between the ocean and the hills overgrown by bamboo and forest-like vegetation. Small, steep footpaths lead through the forest to the inhabitants' private vegetable and fruit gardens located on a narrow plane at the top of the hill.

Just a few kilometres away from what was to become the largest gold and silver mine in Japan, Futami was strongly influenced by the mining industry. Land reclamation in the 1870s and the construction of the new trade port led to an increase in the population to 409 people in 84 households in 1888.⁴⁷ Many of the villagers (men and women) were involved in loading work, employed by two family owned shipping companies still based in the village today.⁴⁸ Until the mines closed in 1989 Futami was used as a coal yard and a shipping port for ore which was brought to Futami by truck, loaded onto barges and further onto big vessels waiting in the deeper ocean. An entertainment district, which existed until the 1930s, developed and is visible due to the architecture of the houses. By 2010 Futami had a population of 261 people in 96 households (Statistic-lab 2010) (Appendix A).⁴⁹ Although the number of households had risen, the population almost halved. Today, driving through Futami you will see a mix of houses ranging from well-maintained or dilapidating traditional Japanese houses, new, western-inspired houses and several overgrown and empty houses dangerously close to collapsing. Other than these residential houses, Futami has a post office, village store, tennis court, community centre and since the 1990s a thermal power station, seafood manufacturing company and cement storage cite (Fig. 5).⁵⁰ The village shop is run by an 88-year-old woman. She lives with her family in a four-generational household next to the store, but no one wants to take over the business. Children go to the store to buy sweets and ice-cream and the bench in front of the shop is often occupied by chatting elderly people. The woman told me how the range of products had declined as customers had slowly diminished.

Looking at statistical data, Futami differs from its surrounding villages in two points: the composition of the workforce and the number of children. Compared to the neighbouring villages and Sado Island as a whole, Futami has a high percentage of villagers working in the second and third sectors. Most of my male informants worked in public works and construction and the women in nursing or care work. Other employment options were at nursery schools or in the City hall. Side- or part-time jobs included work in restaurants, convenience stores or hotels outside of the village, which meant that during the week the village was empty except for elderly people chatting by the road or sitting outside. Many elderly people mentioned that before they worked in mining related jobs and during winter months did manual labour away from home (*dekasegi*). *Dekasegi* was a common practice in post-war Japan where the migrant workers from the countryside supplied the manual work-force which enabled the post-war economic urban growth. The practice of *dekasegi* declined as possibilities to earn money in Futami increased.

⁴⁶ There are three ports for ferries on Sado.

⁴⁷ That averages 4.6 people per household.

⁴⁸ When the mines closed the companies had to adapt, one company selling their boats, and the other starting to ship products to other locations.

⁴⁹ That makes an average of 2.7 people per household.

⁵⁰ The seafood factory seasonally employs elderly woman of the village for their knowledge in processing sea cucumbers shipped to China, while the other establishments employ people from around the island.



Figure 5. Cement storage site (left) and thermal power station (right) next to Futami. (Picture taken by author 2015).

The number of children under 15 in Futami has stayed relatively stable and high compared to its surroundings. The primary school, now located in a neighbouring village, includes around 50 children from four villages. In 2016, more than half of the children in the school will be from Futami (Appendix B). The nearest nursery school is located five minutes away by car in the same village as the primary school. The primary school in Futami was closed in the year 2000, a fate met by many of Sado's schools, which are merged due to a lack of pupils. The school building still exists and the ground-floor is used as a practice location for the Futami Kendo Club.

My older informants described their childhood in Futami as a poor period. However, in the economic upswing starting in post-war Japan people began to earn more money and could afford more affluent lifestyles. Many of the elderly men were involved in fishing, which became very profitable after the Second World War due to big catches, high fish prices and cheap oil. The oil shock in 1974 gradually forced many to stop fishing and turn to second or third sector jobs. In 2010, there were 16 full time fishermen in the village aged between 56 and 90. Conversations with fishers about the past resulted in nostalgic oppositions of "before" (*mukashi*) and "now", the year 1989 (*heisei gannen*)⁵¹ marking the turning point: before everything was good, there were more fish, and the fish cost more; now there are no more fish, and on top of that they don't even fetch a decent price.

Today the life-standard in Futami is high, most of the families owning more than one car, their children equipped with state-of-the art bikes, swimming-rings, game consoles and their houses furnished with big flat screen televisions, eco-fridges and washing-machines.

After this general introduction, I go on to the way Sado and Futami were viewed by different actors in the field.

4.2 Perspectives on Rural Japan

4.2.1 Anthropological perspectives on Japan

My research period coincided with one of Japan's most important holidays: *obon*. During *obon* deceased family members are said to return to their homes. Futami and the whole of Sado island were crowded with people who had returned to their natal homes to care for the graves of their ancestors. The roads were full of parked cars and the supermarkets crowded with people buying special food for their guests and the deceased. When *obon* was over, things returned to normal, the streets and shops empty and the shutters of many

⁵¹ This year marks the shift in the Japanese calendar from the Shōwa era to the Heisei era, due to the death of the Emperor Hirohito.

houses closed. The following period was marked by a different set of visitors: the crew and passengers of international cruise ships.

The often confused, foreign, unfittingly dressed and rich passengers were welcomed enthusiastically by City employees, villagers and other on-lookers. The children from the local nursery school handed out cranes folded by an elderly volunteer from Futami and the “Sado Supporters Club”, founded by the City hall to welcome ships arriving in Sado, waved flags (Fig. 6). The cruise ship passengers were loaded onto waiting tour busses which drove them around the island, showcasing touristic highlights before it was time to return to the ship.



Figure 6. Local nursery school children in yellow hats hand out origami toki birds to cruise ship passengers while on the left-hand side Sado supporters club members wave flags. (Picture with courtesy of Tatsumi Sakamoto 29.09.2015).

This excerpt indicates different concepts prevalent in social science research on rural Japan. They are *furusato* (hometown), *inaka* (countryside) and *kokusaika* (internationalization). The stream of urban dwellers returning to their natal homes or travelling to the countryside at *obon* emphasise the countryside as *furusato*. They leave the hectic and industrialised city behind to travel to their remote home villages, associated with feelings of warmth, community and belonging (Creighton 1997:240). Once all the visitors have returned to the cities, what is left is the *inaka*. The deserted, shrinking, depopulating, economically unviable and aging countryside. Then come international and domestic tourists seeking the exotic and “vanishing” Japan (Ivy 1995). The villagers enter in contact with them striving for internationalisation, the feeling of being cosmopolite (Faier 2009:111) and participation in middle class Japanese life (Kelly 1986:604).

The three concepts are seemingly contradicting but interrelated. Robertson (1998) examines the tensions between desires to internationalize the nation and fears about the loss of cultural and national identity. Rural Japan is transformed into a landscape of nostalgia fulfilling both of these contradictory desires at the same time (1998:112). This nostalgia is founded on a perceived threat of westernization and urbanization and leads to a search for a “pure Japan” (Creighton 1997:244). Schnell observes how rural Japan is a source of symbolic images linked to cultural identity (2005:201). He notes the contradiction between *inaka*: the backward countryside which must be modernized and raised to urban standards and *furusato*: the countryside as a repository for cultural heritage (Schnell 2005:212, cf. Klien 2009). Denoted by the term *furusato*, rural villages become decontextualized and symbolize “whatever is felt to be lacking in contemporary industrialized society” (Schnell 2005:213). Ivy suggests that the image of a “vanishing” rural Japan is upheld on purpose, for feeling nostalgia for the past enables people to live their lives in contemporary urban Japan (Ivy 1995:242).

Creighton translates *furusato* as native place, hometown, or home village and examines how the travel industry and department stores successfully market the *furusato* as a place of belonging, nurturance and Japaneseness (1997:252). In the retro boom occurring since the 1970s, urban residents search for community and collective identity in the rural past (Creighton 1997:241). Klien shows how rural areas are decontextualized in local tourism material. Unspecific natural landscapes symbolising places for relaxation stand in contrast

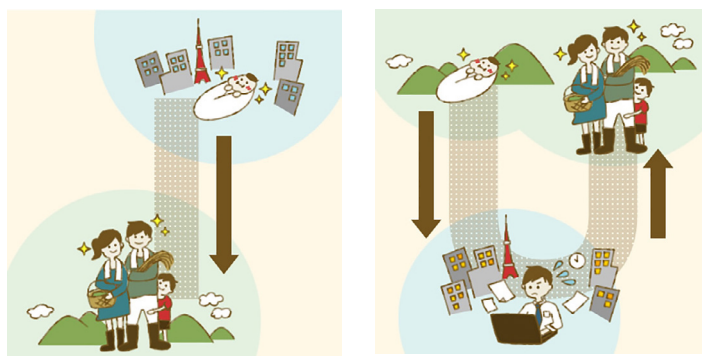
to the stressful life in the cities (Klien 2009:238). In sum, from the point of view of the “westernized”, “modern” urbanites, the countryside has become a home to return to, to experience feelings of belonging, community and national and cultural identity.

In the aim of escaping the dichotomies of “rural-urban” and “industrial-agricultural” Kelly suggests the analytical concept of “regional” Japan (1990:211). This captures the themes of internationalisation, revitalisation and nostalgia, which are interconnected and form the context in which people in rural Japan lead their lives (1990:211).

4.2.2 Urban perspectives on rural Japan

The few days I spent in Tokyo before my field work in Sado pointed to several salient issues concerning rural Japan from the point of view of the cities. I came across the “iju info magazine” which aims to strengthen the network between city and rural areas and promote rural revitalization by securing the next generation of farmers, fisher and forestry workers.⁵² The title refers to the terms: I-Turn, J-Turn and U-Turn. According to the Japan Organisation for Internal Migration (JOIN) doing an I-Turn (Fig. 7) means moving from the urban area you were born and grew up in, to a rural region for work. A J-Turn implies moving from the rural area you were born in, to an urban area to study and work, and then moving back to a smaller city near your hometown. A U-turn means moving from your rural hometown to an urban region for further education and work and then returning to your hometown (Fig. 8) (JOIN n.d).⁵³

In a book-store I found shelves of books dedicated to the topics of the decreasing birth-rate and aging population combined into one omnipresent keyword: “*shōshikōreika*”. The books referred to measures against population decline and low fertility in Sweden, Germany and France, examined the effects of *shōshikōreika* on the Japanese economy and social and financial policy or addressed changes in the family and care in a period of depopulation and aging.⁵⁴



(left) Figure 7. Graphical depiction of an I-Turn. (reprinted with permission from JOIN n.d).
(right) Figure 8. Graphical depiction of a U-Turn. (reprinted with permission from JOIN n.d).

⁵² The magazine is published twice yearly since 2005.

⁵³ JOIN goes on to suggest amongst others the O-Turn: moving back to the city after doing a U-Turn, the N-Turn: moving every once in a while in search of a better lifestyle, work and living environment, or the F-Turn: any turn involving a move to Fukushima prefecture, a prefecture strongly affected by the 2011 East Japan Earthquake (JOIN n.d.):

⁵⁴ The solution to *shōshikōreika* in rural Japan is revitalization (*kasseika*). Starting 2009 the ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication instated region revitalization workers in the whole of Japan (*chiikiokoshi kyōryokutaiin*). These are young adults employed by municipalities with the goal of revitalizing specific villages or regions. The island of Sado had around 15 revitalization workers.

4.2.3 Narratives on Sado Island

From the point of view of many of the inhabitants of Sado the island was in a bad shape. Several campaigns were underway to “make Sado well” (*sado wo genki*⁵⁵ *ni suru*). An interview with a local politician and former member of the Japanese national diet indicated important issues. Referring mainly to statistics the man named the sinking population, the sinking number of tourists, the falling number of children, the failing industry, leaving young people, the rising number of elderly living alone and the decaying infrastructure as factors contributing to a vicious circle in Sado. With his association “Make Sado into a World Heritage Site” (*sado wo sekai isan ni suru kai*) he hopes to raise the number of tourists, leading to more income for hotels, better infrastructure and more jobs in construction, turning the vicious circle around (Interview 7.08.2015).⁵⁶

Before the 1990s Sado was a popular domestic tourist destination. According to statistical data from the prefecture of Niigata the number of tourists visiting Sado in 2006 were just over 500'000 people, half of what it was in the 1990s (Niigata Prefecture 2010). Though the number of domestic tourists is sinking, the number of foreign tourists⁵⁷ is on the rise, and the City hopes to raise the number in the future (Sado City 2007). The current campaign of the tourist association of Sado invites tourists with the English slogan “Visit Sado Island Pure Japan” and the Japanese text: “Sado, the island of mystery and blessings” (*shinpi to megumi no shima sado*) (Sado Tourism Association n.d.). The English webpage further elaborates the image of “pure Japan” stating:

“Unlike the hustle and bustle of major cities, you’ll find the traditional and old Japan that developed over thousands of years on Sado, a remote island of Japan. A way of life that respects the environment to exist in harmony with Nature (sic.), a lifestyle that venerates the ancestors as guardian angels and that emphasizes the importance of cooperation and helping one another in the family and the community, and a philosophy of life that values labor are still very much alive on Sado. (...) In Sado, you’ll find the true Japanese spirit.” (Sado Tourism Association 2016).

It caters to the image of the countryside emphasizing strong cooperation within the family, respect towards the deceased, community and a traditional lifestyle, all characteristic of the “true Japanese spirit” contrasting the hectic and modern city life.

The administrative policy published in the monthly City newsletter distributed to households in April 2015 was subtitled “aiming to be the island most loved and chosen by visitors in Japan” (*nihon ichi okyakusama ni ai sare, erandemoraeru shima wo mezashite*) (Sado City Hall Public Information Section 2015). An examination of it indicates where the City sees its responsibilities in relation to the community and the family. The first page features the overarching topic: measures against population decline. Subsumed under this category are measures to create a family friendly environment on the island. The measures are structured according to life stages, starting with supporting and keeping young people on the island by strengthening their attachment to the island through education. Moving on, the City would like to support young singles in marriage, creating meeting opportunities for men and women. A young couple can benefit from free prenatal health checks and reduced nursery school fees for their second child. In the domain of employment, the City is promoting care-related work, supporting aspiring nurses and young people under 25 who can become “immediate assets” in nursing-related jobs in the community. Women are regarded as important contributors to the work-force, to the family and to the community. They should be encouraged by creating an environment where they can continue to work even after having born children. This should be achieved by improving access to public and

⁵⁵ I translate *genki* with “well”. The online dictionary “www.jisho.org” lists: “1. Lively; full of spirit; energetic; vigorous; vital; spirited. 2. Healthy; well; fit; in good health”.

⁵⁶ I learnt upon my return to Germany that the hopes to turn the mines into a UNESCO World Heritage site are hampered by the fact that Korean workers were forced to work in the mines in the 19th century (Financial Times 2015).

⁵⁷ In 2006 they numbered 4430 (Sado City 2007).

private child-care facilities like nurseries and after-school clubs. The elderly are described as experienced and knowledgeable members of the community who should be able to live with a “purpose in life” (*ikigai*). This should be supported by health promotion and community building. The City further wants to introduce a neighborly support system for the elderly and educate guardians for senile people, to prevent isolation and wandering. While the actual care is seen as a task of community members, the City stays in the background contributing to the education and support of caring community members.

4.2.4 Narratives on Futami Village

Futami and the views of the village cannot be separated to discourses about rural Japan, depopulation and aging circulating on the City and on the state level.

In first conversations, the villagers described Futami using recurring themes and phrases in specific sequences (for a list of themes and the appearance of these in conversations see Appendix C). I see these recurring themes as “conversational nodes” (Rapport 2000:77).⁵⁸ Rapport suggests that conversational nodes help speakers to create a sense of order and meaning their lives (2000:77). By using them people construct a social world in which they are grounded in. An exemplary conversation based on collective conversational nodes which the inhabitants of Futami shared went as follows:

The person would describe their family and then state that their children had left (theme one). He or she would go on with the fact that the children always came to visit on *obon*⁵⁹ or New Year (theme two), and that they had left because there are no jobs in Sado (theme three) (Textbox 2). Then they would go on with the fact that Futami was – even by Sado standards – a great place to live (theme four). The wind was weaker than in other villages, there was less corrosion and houses lasted longer. Plus, Sado was located in a natural bay, so the sea was quieter than in other villages. Mostly the enumeration would end with reference to the *toki*⁶⁰ (Textbox 1) nest which was located near the shrine. The speaker didn’t fail to mention that the *toki* only lives in pristine and clean environments (theme five). Optional continuations of the conversation led to a description of life in the city which was noisy, crowded and dirty. Thus living in Futami was truly the better way to live. Also popular was the story of the emperor Juntoku who was banned to Sado in the 13th century and when passing through Futami looked back at the island twice because it was so nice, giving the village its name.



Figure 9. Milk carton with toki design. (Picture by author 2015).

⁵⁸ Rapport further describes these as building blocks of narrations (Rapport 2000:77).

⁵⁹ For a detailed description of *obon* in a Japanese fishing village see Martinez (2004:185).

⁶⁰ A rare and protected species of bird.

Textbox 1: Theme 5

The toki bird is the mascot of Sado and figures prominently as a souvenir. It is depicted on milk cartons (Fig. 9), t-shirts and construction workers use barriers in its form. Further, public buildings like schools and care-facilities are named after it. To protect the toki the local government has initiated a breeding program in cooperation with China and governmental employees equipped with binoculars are sent off to monitor the toki population. The presence of the toki serves to legitimate Sado as a worthwhile place to visit for tourists and at the same time affirms and reminds Sado's inhabitants of the worth of their island and home villages.

In describing their village, my informants created the image of Futami as a good and worthwhile place to live, giving meaning to their decision to stay on the island despite the current discourses of depopulation and the emigration of their children and other relatives.⁶¹ Later conversations with villagers revealed less positive views of Futami and its development, characterised by mentions of depopulation, aging, lack of jobs, and children,

Textbox 2: Theme 3

Most of my informants insisted that there were "no jobs in Sado".

"She didn't consider staying in Sado after graduating because there were no jobs she wanted to do in Sado." (Field notes 15.08.2015).

What they actually meant, is that there are few jobs people felt they *wanted* to do in Sado. The jobs available were structured by gender and generation.

"She thinks that when her sons grow old there will be no jobs in Sado for them." (Field notes 20.08.2015).

The conviction that there were "no jobs in Sado" influenced my informants' decisions on where to live and what to expect in the future and shaped their views of the village and island.

fish, fishermen, snow, same aged people, relatives, traditional dancers, boats etc. getting less and less.

This discourse of rural depopulation has a strong hold on the national and local level and also among the inhabitants of rural areas. This is demonstrated by constant visual reminders of depopulation and the frequent mention of depopulation as the reason for various types of problems. Traphagan and Knight call this attitude of the popular level a "depopulation consciousness" (2003a:13). In Futami the "depopulation consciousness" was visible in the two meter big posters hanging in the village community center: a bar chart indicating the number of male and female inhabitants grouped according to age (from

⁶¹ Funnily, when talking to a man from a neighboring village he too mentioned the *toki*, saying that there was a nest in his village and that surely the *toki* would not live in Futami, because it only lived in places with enough food, fitting trees and clean rice fields.

0 to 100 in ten year intervals) (see Appendix D) framed by two posters listing the 20 oldest men and women of the village and a ranking of the 20 youngest children of the village complete with name and age. This public display and monitoring implicates villagers in the development of the village population, almost raising the impression of a competition to be listed on the posters. The population structure becomes tangible and each new child evidence of the vitality of the village.

4.3 Producing Futami

Treating the intergenerational care practices of the inhabitants of Futami as actions of “production of locality” (Appadurai 1995) in the face of the “depopulation consciousness” in rural Japan and Japan as a nation, ties what at first appear to be individual care practices observed in a village on a remote island to the flows of people, ideas and media in Japan. Village research, viewed like this, can in my opinion hardly be considered passé. I now go on to three empirical chapters in which I examine living arrangements, care practices and expectations and norms concerning intergenerational support, as Göransson suggests that it is in these domains that negotiations between different actors are especially visible (2013:70).

5. CARING FOR CHILDREN...

We begin our examination of intergenerational care relations in childhood at the start of the life-course. Childhood in Japan is marked by the need for care and the right to be cared for by one's parents. Hendry notes that the main areas of childcare are the home, the neighbourhood and nurseries or kindergartens (1986:47). Within the family the person responsible for child-care is the child's mother. Mothers are said to be devoted to their children, sacrificing themselves and suffering hardship for them, instilling a feeling of nonrepayable debt in the children (Kondo 1990:149).⁶² Fathers are less practically involved in child-care, but are expected to financially care for the children and family (Hendry 1986:53).⁶³ Grandparents may be involved in child-care, especially in three-generational households or if they live in the vicinity of their grandchildren (Ben-Ari 2005:249, Hendry 1986:31); however, they are often said to spoil their grandchildren and to be too indulgent with them (Hendry 1986:52). Other than at home, the children spend a large amount of time in nurseries or kindergartens and enter mandatory primary school at the age of six years.

The care practices which I found most conspicuous in Futami were those by grandmothers⁶⁴ around the age of 65. I collected data during homestays in households where grandmothers assumed a big part of child-care. I accompanied the women and did participant observation of their routine chores, helping them cook, clean, grocery shop and entertain children. Following care relationships between grandmothers and their grandchildren led me outside of the village, to households of daughters and sons who had moved to bigger cities and to friends of the grandmothers who were living similar care experiences. I thus crossed household borders and village borders linked together

⁶² One of my elderly informants stated that she was often reminded by others how much hardship her mother had to endure to raise her, an example of how the notion of hardship (*kurō*) is used to instill a feeling of debt in children.

⁶³ The young fathers I observed in Futami were supportive of their wives, washed dishes and clothes, bathed the children and spent time with them, when their work hours permitted.

⁶⁴ I concentrate on care practices by grandmothers. This does not mean grandfathers were not involved in child-care at all, but rather in other ways (see Thelen 2014 for a note on care contributions made by grandfathers).

by the intergenerational care ties pivotal to my research. The data collected by participant observation is complemented by biographical data obtained through narrative interviews with the care-taking grandmothers.

My informants used the terms *sotomago*, *uchimago* or *mago* to refer to their grandchildren. *Sotomago* literally means “outside grandchild”, while *uchimago* means “inside grandchild”. *Uchimago* or *mago* referred to grandchildren who lived with the grandparents and would possibly inherit the house, while *sotomago* did not live in the same household and were the children of daughters or younger sons. Grandmothers I met were involved in the care of both inside and outside grandchildren.

5.1 Caring Grandmothers

In kinship studies, research on relationships between grandparents and their grandchildren are common regarding societies with no or little formalised social security systems.⁶⁵ However, in research about the family in Europe and in English literature on Japan the relationships between grandparents and grandchildren have been neglected (Long 2012:36, Thelen 2014:136).

The social construction of grandparenthood and political and economic changes affect intergenerational care relations. One example of a study of care by grandparents in a country with a well-developed welfare system is Thelen’s book on care in post reunification Germany (2014). Drawing on biographies of grandparents, Thelen describes new and changing care arrangements. She shows how past experiences of working women and future expectations regarding their children’s employment in an unstable economy made grandparents contribute to their grandchildren’s care (2014:149). Predicting which options people will rely on – available public services or private intergenerational care options – is difficult: care arrangements are negotiated between actors with different experiences and expectations (2014:156).

5.2 Caring Grandmothers in Futami

In three-generational households in Futami, grandparents were involved in childcare if the child’s mother was working. If the mother stopped working, she was a “professional housewife” (cf. Roberts 2005:115) and care contributions by grandparents were less necessary or desired. The latter case is what my informants born in the 1950s stated as the norm.

In Futami the post-war years were economically tough. Many of my informants came from families where women worked and said that this was considered normal. Women’s jobs in the 1950s included preparing meals for ship crews, doing mine-related work, watching other people’s children or, if they could not find paid work, helping their husbands with fishing. Amongst the generation born around 1975 most worked part-time or full-time. Common jobs included tourism related work, teachers in nursery schools, nurses and caretakers in facilities for the elderly.⁶⁶

Where mothers worked part-time they were able to unite their work with their duties and care for their children. A “care-gap” emerged in households where mothers worked full-time. The most common solution was asking for the help of healthy and retired

⁶⁵ Ingstad wrote about the changing relationship between grandchildren and grandparents in the context of the AIDS epidemic in Botswana (2004) and Yarris about transnational families from Nicaragua, where grandmotherly care enables mothers to migrate (2014).

⁶⁶ This corresponds well to Thelen’s (2014) description of working women in the GDR: working women were nothing special and thus grandmothers felt it natural to contribute to child-care.

mothers, mothers-in-law or in rare cases other members of the family (for example a younger sister without children). Only when distant relatives – one case I heard of involved a single grandmother caring for her niece’s children⁶⁷ – had been considered, did people hire external help, often from women in the neighbourhood. Outside of the family circle, the nursery school was the main institution in charge of child-care. What follows are ethnographic descriptions of care arrangements structured by patterns of movement between households.

5.2.1 Case A: *Everyone stays put*

Grandmother Shimizu⁶⁸ lived with her husband, her eldest son, her daughter-in-law and their five grand-children aged two to nine in a house at the edge of the village. The grandmother’s daughter-in-law worked as a nurse in a nearby hospital sometimes taking on night shifts, while her son did construction work around the island. Grandmother Shimizu took over the care of her inside grandchildren and household chores: preparing meals, shopping and doing the laundry. Grandfather Shimizu was at home, but according to Grandmother, could not possibly be left alone with the children, as he could not even change a diaper. Indeed, I rarely saw him do more than being physically present.

In this straight-forward case the grandmother takes care of her inside grandchildren. This is a care arrangement chosen when the parents of the children are both working full-time, or where there are single parents in multi-generational households. The care of the children is taken over by the closest capable person in the household, in this case the retired and still healthy grandmother.

5.2.2 Case B: *The grandmother moves (or is moved)*

Grandmother Kobayashi was 62 at the time I was in Futami. She lived in the bottom unit of a newly built western style house with her husband who worked in public works. Together they had three children. Her eldest daughter had been handicapped and passed away at the age of 12. Her eldest son lived in the unit upstairs with his wife and soon to be three children. Her second daughter Mariko lived in the next town with her husband and two boys. Mariko worked in the office of a facility for elderly care and her husband worked on the mainland only returning home on week-ends.

A retired nurse, Grandmother Kobayashi was very energetic, bustling about the house, never sitting down except to relax while watching her beloved Korean soap operas in her electrical massage chair she and her husband had indulged on. At the time she was supporting three households – not financially but through cooking, cleaning, shopping and child-rearing. Mornings, evenings and nights she spent at her daughter’s house, returning to her own house during the day. On a typical week-day Grandmother Kobayashi slept at her daughter’s house, prepared breakfast for her grandchildren, made a packed lunch (*bentō*) for her daughter and then brought her grandsons to nursery school. After that she returned to her daughter’s house, cleaned, went shopping for both her household and her daughter’s household and then drove home 15 minutes in her white two-seater sports car to do chores in her own household. She prepared dinner for her husband, her son’s nuclear family upstairs and her daughter’s household. She then set the table for her husband, placed parcels of food on the stairs leading up to her son’s unit and packed the food for her daughter and her outside grandchildren in Tupperware boxes, planning and calculating

⁶⁷ Her younger sister’s daughter’s children.

⁶⁸ I use the terms of reference “grandmother” and “grandfather” to avoid confusion with their children who have the same family name.

all the while. At around 4 p.m. she got ready to drive back to her daughter's household, bringing over the prepared dinner and canisters of tap water as her daughter didn't like the tap water in town. Then Grandmother fetched the boys from the nursery. When her daughter came home at around 6 p.m. they ate together, after which Grandmother helped her daughter bathe and change the boys, watched TV with them or read them stories. At night they all slept together in a big room. On week-ends, Grandmother Kobayashi's son-in-law came home, which meant that grandmother could return to her own house. Occasionally, Mariko's mother-in-law come to look after the children. Seeing as she could not drive and lived over an hour away by car, she had to be fetched and brought back home by someone (sometimes Grandmother Kobayashi herself).

In this case the inside grandchildren are taken care of by their parents, which leaves the grandmother with free time to take care of her outside grandchildren. She thus commutes to the second household (if she cannot drive, she must be driven by others). She can either sleep at the second household or return to her household in the evening once the parents return from work. Care can be done by the grandmothers of both sides in alternation or just by one grandmother. This can continue until either the grandmother is physically unable to commute anymore or until the children reach schooling age, when they can be put into public after-school clubs.⁶⁹

At the same time as appropriating her own contributions to child-care positively, Grandmother Kobayashi spoke very well of her daughter, praising her hard work at the office and in the household. She stated that if Mariko's husband were there, she would not need to help the couple at all. When Grandmother Kobayashi's son-in-law returned home Grandmother was sure not to be around. Similarly, Mariko stated that if her husband were home she would not need help and that she did not like being a burden to her mother. Talking about what she would do if her mother could not help, she stated considering the following options with her husband:

会話

Rhea: What do you do when Grandmother is not there?

Mariko: Well, my husband's mother is also here and my mother from my natal home is here too. But if they weren't there...I didn't consider it. But well for the time being, we have a house here so, I don't really want to think about giving it up, but there would also be the option [*hōhō*] of moving together with my husband in Niigata [large City on the mainland]. If there is no one here who will look after the kids. I work and come home at six and dinner is not ready, so I would have to buy it somewhere. But, I'm busy at work. So to come home, feed them dinner, bathe them, sleep and then bring them to nursery school the next day and go to work myself, and that five days a week – I don't think I could live like that. If someone would say try for one month, for a month I would do it, but if it's to do it until my husband is in retiring age, I couldn't do it. My body wouldn't hold up. Now my mother is here when I come home, makes dinner and watches the kids, that's why it's possible but... My work now, I have Saturday and Sunday off, come home in the evening. It wasn't possible to change the job to part-time. I was told I couldn't work as a part-time worker. So I was told to ask my family to cooperate [*kazoku ni kyōryoku shite morainasai*].

Rhea: You were told that?

Mariko: Yes, that's why I asked both of the mothers to cooperate. If it would come to me raising these two [children] here without relying on the mothers, if I don't change my current work, I could not do it. If I change my work, my salary will change: the conditions will also

⁶⁹ These after-school clubs (*gakudōhoiku*) are public facilities provided by the municipality for primary school children up to the age of 10. They offer a place for the children to stay until their working parents come home.

change. And well, it's work where I would work on Saturday and Sunday, when the children have off. That's the only type of work that is left. (Interview with Mariko, 37, 01.09.2015, translated by Rhea Braunwalder).

This citation shows the financial, social and structural constraints Mariko was faced with in her efforts to fill the care-gap in her household. Because she had the loan to pay off for their newly built house⁷⁰ Mariko could not stop working. Her employer, contrary to the city policy which aims to create work-friendly environments for women, invoked the family as a support system for child-care. This indicates that city policies are not yet incorporated into company policies. Another dimension revealed in the citation is the gender aspect of care. As a mother Mariko sees it as her duty to provide dinner (preferably a home-cooked meal) and watch the children. As her husband's salary is higher and his job stable the separation of work and care duties is self-evident.

Faced with these terms, Mariko decided to ask her mother and mother-in-law to help. She had considered hiring external help, but this would have been costly and was rarely done in Japan. Even a baby-sitter would have her own household and would return home in the evenings, exactly at the time where Mariko would need her most. Thus, Mariko felt that the care arrangement involving the children's two grandmothers was the best option for the time being.

5.2.3 Case C: *The children move (or are moved)*

Grandmother Kiriyama lived alone with her two feral cats in an old, Japanese style two storey house. There she had raised her own children and until recently lived with six other people: her husband, her single daughter, her second son (her eldest son having left the island), his wife and their two children. By now the house was cluttered with unused objects from living and already deceased family members. Eight years ago Grandmother's daughter died due to illness, her husband passed away five years later and her son, Mr. Kiriyama, built a brand-new Western style house for his nuclear family on the other side of the village. Grandmother Kiriyama told me she was happy to be living alone, because it had been quite cramped for the seven of them in the old house. Additionally, living alone would give her a better eligibility to enter a facility for the elderly if need be. The elderly woman was still in good health, but could not walk long distances. She had a car which she frequently used and was not restricted in her mobility.

Mr. Kiriyama worked as a truck-driver delivering goods on the mainland and returning to Sado only one or two nights a week. His wife worked as a nurse coming home late and working five night shifts a month. Their children (aged six, nine and thirteen) were attending school. As the houses were close together, the children could commute without supervision. When Mrs. Kiriyama had night shifts the children slept over at their grandmother's house. On other days the two younger siblings did homework, played or ate there.⁷¹ The Grandmother's main tasks were to occasionally prepare dinner and to be with the children during the nights when their parents were working. The aid by Grandmother Kiriyama allowed Mrs. Kiriyama to keep her job and pursue hobbies like computer and tea ceremony lessons. It was clear that as the children were getting older, Grandmother Kiriyama had to provide less and less child-care. The care relationship was gradually turning around. Grandmother Kiriyama would occasionally go over to her son's newly built

⁷⁰Interestingly, the idea of buying land in the neighboring town and building a house was the idea of her who financially contributed to the cause. This could be viewed as the mother's strategy to keep her daughter close by. This strengthens ties between mother and daughter and heighten the probability of care in old age (see also chapter 6).

⁷¹ Grandmother Kiriyama did not seem very strict and during a school visit I noticed that one of her grand-children had completed none of home-work in contrast to her class-mates.

house for a bath in the evening to use the state of the art electric bathtub. Sometimes she would eat dinner with the family, but because the family ate late due to Mrs. Kiriya's work hours, she preferred to eat at home.

Looking at Grandmother Kiriya's biography gives insights into the reasons why she provides care now. Her father left the family (his mother, his wife and three children) when she was a child. Grandmother Kiriya grew up mostly with her grandmother, her mother at times working away from home to sustain the family. She had to spend her free time helping in the vegetable patch which provided food and supplementary income to the family. When Grandmother Kiriya married and had children, she continued working for economic reasons and entrusted her first son to a care-taker. This was the last resort as Grandmother Kiriya's mother had passed away, nurseries were full and her husband was a younger son without an available mother-in-law. With the birth of her second son the cost of the care-taker would have surpassed her income, so Grandmother Kiriya stayed at home watching the children and helping her husband. When her third child was born, the family income gained through fishing was not enough and Grandmother Kiriya had to begin working again. She found a job where it was possible for her to bring her youngest child to work. Given her past experiences regarding child-care, relying on hired help for her own children and being cared for by her grandmother, helping her working daughter-in-law with child-care was only natural to Grandmother Kiriya and positively viewed by other women of the village.

In this case it was not the grandmother, but the children who commuted between houses. Space and land was available due to migration or death of other villagers and so historical, individual and family time allowed for a change in living arrangements of the family. Grandmother Kiriya was taking care of her inside grand-children and the three-generational family was dispersed across two houses. Would there not have been any free land available, Mr. Kiriya said he would have stayed in the same house as his mother which would have resulted in the care arrangement described in case A.

This type of arrangement works if the children are old enough to commute between households, and if the houses are close enough to allow this.⁷² It requires flexibility and coordination between the grandmother and the daughter-in-law. The children's eating and sleeping schedule was discussed every few days, and Mrs. Kiriya's work timetable hung in grandmother Kiriya's living room.⁷³ Another factor contributing to the success of this arrangement is the availability of the grandmother. Grandmother Kiriya's eldest grandchild entered nursery school at the age of three. At the time, Grandmother Kiriya was free to take care of her with the child's father.⁷⁴ When Grandmother Kiriya's daughter fell ill, Grandmother Kiriya was occupied with the care of her daughter. Caring for the children was not possible in the family and external help was sought in the broader social network, in this case the next door neighbour and cousin of Mrs. Kiriya. The family adjusted, sending the second child to nursery school at the early age of 1.5 years. When Grandmother Kiriya's daughter passed away, Grandmother Kiriya was free to take care of her grandchildren again. To sum it up she stated that "thanks to everyone" the children were raised.

5.3 ...Strengthens Intergenerational Ties

The above examples show how individuals coordinate individual and family time to fill the care-gaps resulting due to the historical time and context. I described different strategies

⁷² I heard of cases where the children were driven to their grandparents' house to be fetched later or the following day.

⁷³ Thelen, in her study based in Germany, highlights the amount of coordination and planning necessary in the relationships between the grandparents and the parents (2014:140).

⁷⁴ This meant he had a smaller salary and that the family depended on the wife's income.

to ensure child-care, the Shimizu family following the norm of keeping care in the family, Mariko being forced to keep care in the family but adjusting the norm to her own needs by instilling the help of both her mother and mother-in-law and the Kiriya family coordinating the individual times of diverse family members mixing institutional, family and community care.

What remained important in all cases were economic factors: the supplementary income generated by working mothers and the supplementary costs resulting in hiring external child-care. Structural factors such as the limited employment opportunities in Sado and the salary women received limited the mother's options. Equally, the father's outmigration for work purposes added to the stress of caring for children within the family. In urban regions neighbours or lengthened nursery school opening times provide options for working mothers. In rural areas the proximity and availability of grandmothers made these the ideal choice.

Next to grandmothers, the nursery school was an option to ensure child-care. Here the age at which the child entered nursery school and the time a child spent in nursery school were indicators of the care resources of a family. While some children were picked up by grandparents or parents as early as 3pm others stayed until 6pm. In the nursery I visited in the neighbouring town the majority of the children were picked up late and the staff told me they were mostly picked up by parents on their way home from work. This shows that for neolocal families, the nursery school takes over more weight in child-care, whereas in villages, where grandparents lived in the vicinity, it was possible for them to take over care duties.

A major factor contributing to keeping care in the family was the monetary cost of care. Asking for external help, for example from neighbors or making use of facilities, meant having to pay for something that family members would do for free (or more precisely, without expecting *money* in return). Akiyama, Antonucci and Campbell state that systems of exchange in the family are characterized by long-term, indirect and diffuse exchanges (2009:7), implying that money is not the usual exchange resource in familial intergenerational relationships.⁷⁵

Although finding someone to fill the care-gap can be seen as an act on behalf of the mother, actually filling the care-gap can be seen as a strategic action on behalf of the grandmother if one keeps in mind the temporal dimension and the circulating characteristic of care.

First of all, caring for their grandchildren affects the relationship between grandparents and their own children, as the following example of a single father shows:

会話

Grandfather Matsushita: She [his mother] took care of the children, did everything. I went out to the ocean and earned money and for the rest, my mother pretty much saw to all of it so...so I am really thankful to my mother.

Rhea: So your mother watched the children...

Tsukasa: Well of course I had to have someone watch them, because I was at sea. Well for special school events I sometimes took off but the rest, my mother took care of the children. If I wouldn't have done it like that no one would have watched the children for me. I know that my mother did her best even if she complained, so I am really thankful to her. That's why, well saying filial piety would be a bit exaggerated but, (...) I wouldn't go so far as to say filial piety but I want to do what I can [regarding his mother's care]. (Interview with Grandfather Matsushita, 72, 29.09.2015, translated by Rhea Braunwalder).

Rather than stating that he wanted to care for his mother because she raised him, it is the support of his mother in raising his children that he states as motivation to take care of her.

⁷⁵ Reciprocating care with money in the family is considered a lack of intimacy (Akiyama, Antonucci and Campbell 2009:8).

I suggest that by caring for grandchildren, grandmothers indirectly strengthen the ties to their children increasing the probability of being cared for in old age. This in an era of an increased number of elderly people being left alone due to rural-urban migration and by the fear of the deterioration of the intergenerational contract.

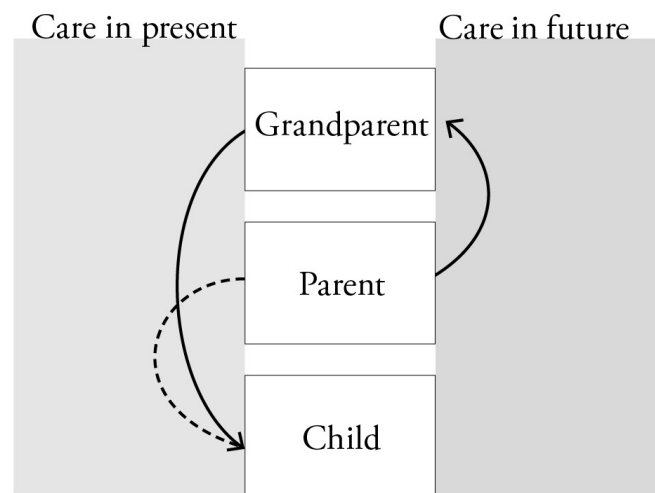


Figure 10. Care cycle involving three generations. (By author 2016).
The graph shows the care cycle tying three generations to each other in a long-term care arrangement. While grandparents care for their grandchildren in the present, the middle generation is likely to reciprocate this care in the future. When the grandparents die and the next generation is born the care cycle continues.

Secondly, caring for grandchildren gives grandparents a task in life. Traphagan notes that as women grow older their importance as care-givers in the family diminish and care duties are increasingly taken over by their daughters-in-law (2003:136). He argues that by caring for family ancestors, elderly women keep a role which contributes to their sense of well-being. I suggest that caring for grandchildren is a way for elderly women to keep their role as care-givers in the household and strengthen their intergenerational ties with other family members (Fig. 10). The households where grandmothers were involved in child-care seemed to be more harmonious. In contrast, in the only household where the mother stayed at home and took care of the children, conflicts arose between the nuclear family and the mother-in-law, leading to the isolation of the mother-in-law in a separate unit of the house.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ While the daughter-in-law continued to prepare meals for her mother-in-law, she put these on a tray and carried them to the separate unit, where she left them without saying a word.

6. CARING FOR PARENTS...

The previous chapter described how in multi-generational households the elder generation cared for the youngest generation, while the middle generation worked. As the children grow up it is the elderly in turn who are in need of and entitled to care while their capacity and duty to provide care diminishes. Following the care cycle in a lifetime of an individual thus inevitably leads to the issue of parental care.

In this chapter I focus on the intergenerational care practices between working adults and their retired parents. In this case not geographical space, but time plays an important role in the construction of my field. I follow parent-child relationships into the past and the future. I first give an overview of elderly care in Japan. The chapter is then divided into two subsections “Generation 0” and “Generation 1”, describing how people of different societal generations and gender perceived their duties to care for the elderly and how they expected to be cared for in the future. Generation 0 are people born around 1950 (part of the baby-boom generation of post-war Japan) and generation 1 around 1975. I describe parent-child relationships inside households as well as between households and consider the matter of choice and obligation in parent-child relations. I use observations from my stays in five households and biographical and narrative interviews with men and women from both historical generations.

In Futami I arrived at a time where the generation 0 had almost completed taking care of their parents, i.e. many of their parents had passed away, and generation 1 had not yet started practical care for their parents, as their parents were mostly in good health. The topic of elderly care was omnipresent, whether in the television, newspapers or City newsletters and often tied up with rural depopulation, the sinking number of children and a shift in values between generations. The present cases show different strategies used by people to care for the elderly, characterized by close ties of affinity or frustration and isolation on either side.

6.1 The Norm of Elderly Care in Japan

As mentioned in chapter 3, the Civil Code of the Meiji period implied two things: first, that elderly care was the responsibility of the eldest son and heir, who lived with his parents and inherited their house (Long, Campbell, Nishimura 2009:13) and second, that the household and not the state was in charge of elderly care. Care-giving in Japan is often associated with the female gender (Traphagan 2003:136). Consequently though the eldest son was responsible for care, the “care-giving” was done by daughters-in-law (Long, Campbell, Nishimura 2009:3). Especially in rural areas, daughters-in-law remain the main care givers of elderly parents-in-law (Nishimura 2009:4).

The practice of caring for the elderly in East-Asian families is often framed as filial piety, reciprocity or as part of an intergenerational contract. I use the concept of the intergenerational contract as filial piety is a “culturally embedded” term (Göransson 2013:64) and in Japan is strongly associated with pre-war loyalty to the emperor who was depicted as the father of the nation (Maeda 2004:74). Equally the term “filial piety” does not do justice to the fact that caring for one’s parents is not a one-sided obligation nor merely respect towards the elderly. The term intergenerational contract implies a “binding nature of mutual support between parents and children” (Göransson 2013:64 referring to Ikels 1993) and evokes notions of a fixed intergenerational exchange of care over the life course. The contract is stabilised by “symbolic equity” as described above (Hashimoto 1996:171). In Japan child-hood and old age are socially acknowledged to be life-stages where individuals are in inevitable need of care (Hashimoto 1996:148) and adulthood the stage where one typically gives care. As indicated in Figure 11, the elderly are entitled to the care of their children because of the care they gave them over their life course (Hashimoto 1996:79). When the younger generation in its turn becomes old, they should be cared for by the following generation. It is on this care-cycle that the informal social security system rests (Hashimoto 1996:79). Thus, children from early on are confronted with the fact that they will take care of their parents.

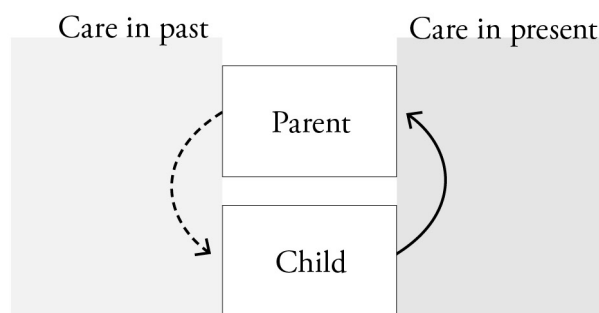


Figure 11. Care cycle between parent and child. (By author 2016). Note the difference to the above mentioned care arrangement, where three generations are interrelated, two generations involved in care-taking alternately. In this graph only one generation is actively caring, heightening the possibility of isolation or a sense of uselessness of the elder generation.

What is described above is the prevalent norm regarding elderly care. However, Häberlein shows that there is no such thing as “automatic reciprocity” (2015:161) and that the intergenerational contract is anything but fixed. This is manifested in the fact that there are elderly people living alone, not-cared for by their children. The following empirical examples will show how strong the norm of filial care was in Futami and what shifts are occurring between historical and familial generations.

6.2 Generation 0

6.2.1 “Care-giving” women

While talking about their lives, caring for parents and parents-in-law took an important place in many of my older informants’ narratives.

Mrs. Nishizawa had a revolutionary way of thinking for her generation and gender. She started by telling me the story of her mother and her mother’s five sisters, of whom most had led rather tragic lives due to their husbands either passing away or leaving. Recommended by her middle school teacher Mrs. Nishizawa read Russian classics⁷⁷ and Japanese literature with female protagonists suffering different fates. Growing up in the then poor Futami these books and her own family history strengthened Mrs. Nishizawa’s wish for a life where she could be financially independent and capable of supporting herself, her children and her parents.

会話

Mrs. Nishizawa: Living in Sado, that you have to take care [*sewa o suru*] of your stem family’s father and mother – your own parents when they get old is natural. People in my age were all raised like that [laughs]. That’s why the *chōnan* or the first – well if it is a household with only girls, then the eldest daughter, the eldest daughter – for example if it is [a household with] three girls, the eldest girl takes care of the mother and the father when they get old, when they can’t work anymore. In my case, I had an elder brother, but well because of some circumstances my brother didn’t do that kind of thing for my parents. I was raised knowing I would take care of my father and mother. (Interview with Mrs. Nishizawa, 65, 18.09.2015).

This awareness guided Mrs. Nishizawa in important choices during her life course regarding work, marriage and housing. Mrs. Nishizawa chose to become a primary school teacher, a stable job, which she could continue her whole life with a secure income. Mrs. Nishizawa left Sado to attend university and work in Tokyo, where she met her future husband. She made sure to avoid marrying an eldest son so that she would be free to take care of her own parents. Before marrying she made clear to her parents, her parents-in-law and her future husband that she wanted to take care of her parents. Only once everyone agreed to her conditions the couple married. She built her house in Tokyo with the idea of bringing her parents over from Sado and caring for them there. All this arranged, she also wanted to accord her parents the wish of spending the last period of their lives in Futami. Thus, she planned to move back to Sado with them after she had retired.⁷⁸ As her parents’ health began to deteriorate Mrs. Nishizawa told them to move to Tokyo. Her father died shortly before moving but her mother spent three years living with her and her son-in-law. In a reversal of usual gender roles, Mrs. Nishizawa worked and her retired husband took care of her mother. When her mother had a stroke and needed intensive care, Mrs. Nishizawa broke her mother’s house in Sado down, to build a senior-friendly house in preparation for their arrival. After serious consideration she decided to stop work earlier than planned and move to Sado with her mother. Three months after Mrs. Nishizawa stopped working as a teacher her mother died in Tokyo. The couple returned to Sado alone, where they now live in the house originally meant for her mother’s final years.

This case is exceptional because a daughter took on the role of the eldest son, working and taking on responsibility for her parents’ care. The actual care-giving was done by her retired husband and a hired home-helper, even though Mrs. Nishizawa strongly felt the

⁷⁷ The authors she mentioned were Tolstoi and Dostoyewski.

⁷⁸ Retirement age for primary school teachers was 60 at the time.

wish to care for her mother herself. This wish finally pushed her to stop her job. While describing her life course Mrs. Nishizawa did not portray caring for her parents as an obligation or something she was forced to do, but something she planned, wanted and chose to do all along.

Mrs. Nishizawa's comments on developments in the village situate elderly care in the broader context of social changes occurring in Japan:

会話

Mrs. Nishizawa: The eldest son or the eldest daughter, they worry about their parents. As they are getting older. They are on their minds, but they themselves still have to work. It was like that for all of my cousins. They themselves went to the city and their parents were left over here. And having done that, well they are on their minds, but they can't stop work and take care of their parents. Gradually that's the kind of situation it has been coming to. So there is that kind of issue. And in the end, well they put them into facilities for the elderly or hire a helper and look out for them in that way. (Interview with Mrs. Nishizawa, 65, 18.09.2015, translated by Rhea Braunwalder).

Saying this she reveals feelings or doubts she may have had when leaving her parents behind and points to conflicting feelings between staying in the village with limited employment opportunities but close to one's parents and pursuing one's career in the city, leaving one's parents behind. The comment also shows a strategy employed to ensure parental care in this context: hiring external help and thus shifting care outside the family.

Mrs. Nishizawa's children moved to Tokyo, but in the future she herself would like to stay in Sado as long as possible. She launched into a description of the various hobbies (patchwork, traditional dancing, tea ceremony, gardening) and volunteer activities she was involved in, stating how much fun they were and how they made her part of the village and island. Especially caring for the children and elderly in Futami and developing ties with them were a joy for her. In her current activity as a local volunteer social worker (*minseiiin*)⁷⁹ she hopes to give back (*kaesu*) to other generations the care that she received in the past.

When she is not capable of living alone anymore Mrs. Nishizawa wants to live with one of her children. As her daughter married an eldest son, burdening her with a supplementary parent to care for would not be appropriate. Instead, she told her daughter to dedicate herself to the care of her parents-in-law while banking on the care of her son.

A dinner party with the "morning glory club", a women's club with members aged from 55 to 65 years old, allowed me to hear about other women's relationships with their parents and parents-in-law. The group consisted of seven grandmothers, each more occupied than the next with duties towards children, grandchildren, husbands, parents and parents-in-law. Originally founded when their children were in primary school, the groups meetings had become more and more difficult to organise as the women took on different care duties. They looked forward to the rare occasions where they could meet, exchange, eat, laugh, brag about their successful children and talk about not becoming burdens to them in old age. That evening, while they initially started chatting about daughters-in-law and their relationships with them, the talk soon went on to how they themselves had treated the elder generation.

One grandmother had taken care of her mother-in-law who had been senile for ten years and bed-ridden the last three years of her life. She now was taking care of her five inside grandchildren while making occasional visits to her mother who had Alzheimer and was living with her elder brother. The "morning glory" women admiringly stated how much hardship (*kurō*) the woman had endured, following around her wandering mother-in-law

⁷⁹ Also translated as volunteer welfare commissioners (cf. Kavedžija 2015), *minseiiin* are elderly local volunteers who check up on and advise community members in need, for example elderly living alone, single-parent families, the poor or handicapped.

and looking for her in the streets when she got lost. The notions of hardship (*kurō*) and perseverance or endurance (*gaman*) are often cited as Japanese cultural virtues associated with maturity (Kondo 1990:110), being a good daughter-in-law and a proper woman in general (Jenike 2003:184). The more hardship one endures or the more perseverance one shows, the more deserving one is of happiness, care and rest in later life.

Maybe because of their own experiences as dedicated and enduring daughters-in-law, most of the women agreed that they would rather be cared for by their daughters than their daughters-in-law. One grandmother stated that everyone should look after their own parents and that she would also tell her daughter-in-law to look after her own parents.⁸⁰

I found that several women in this age group upheld relationships with their parents in their natal homes, even if they were officially “taken care of” by their brothers. This “care-giving” entailed visits, food parcels, shopping or even sleeping over at their parents’ house, if their brothers were working night shifts. In practice, care practices performed between daughters and their parents across different households remained important. This is in contrast to model depictions of Japanese society, which often state that relationships to people in the same household are more important than those with family members who have married out (cf. Nakane 1970:5).

6.2.2 “Care-taking” men

Grandfather Matsushita is a fisherman, living with his eldest son, daughter-in-law and two grandchildren. He was very clear in that he wanted to assume the responsibility of his parent’s care. Grandfather was not originally the eldest son in his family, but his brother died when they both were in primary school. At first Grandfather Matsushita didn’t think deeply about the fact that he was expected to take over the house. He described to me how he slowly started to be conscious of his position. He began to believe that he would take over the house with the responsibilities and rights attached to it, not only caring for his parents, but for his siblings too. For Grandfather Matsushita it was clear that it was *his* duty to take care of his parents and that he could not possibly ask his siblings to help with his mother’s care.⁸¹ He stated that it was an “unspoken agreement” (*anmoku no ryōkai*): He inherited the house, and in exchange should take care of his mother. If his wife would still have been alive, he could have cared for his mother at home, but alone he could not manage “giving-care” to his mother and at the same time continuing to fish in order to contribute financially to the household.

Grandfather Matsushita did not only want to care for his bedridden mother, he also felt the responsibility to take care of his siblings and was trying to arrange for them to move in with him. Wondering whether Grandfather Matsushita felt he had a choice of caring for his family I asked: “Well, it is an unspoken agreement, but you have your own feelings too, right?”. Grandfather Matsushita simply replied: “It is *because* I have my own feelings that I am discussing it [living together] with my brother and sister. I am doing it of my own will”. This shattered my imagination of the opposition of personal wishes and normative obligations. It rather seemed that Grandfather Matsushita’s will and the obligations and expectations others had for him seemed to be interrelated, shaping each other and growing together over time.

In the future Grandfather Matsushita will be taken care of by his co-residing son and daughter-in-law, but he upholds strong ties to his two daughters, who married out but remained close by. Incidentally, Grandfather Matsushita told his eldest daughter, when she stated her wish to become a beautician in Tokyo, that he did not want her to leave Sado. She had stayed in Sado, working as a tour guide and visited her father frequently, bringing by crops from her garden and gathering crops from his.

⁸⁰ Note the opposition to Mrs. Nishizawa.

⁸¹ She was at the time bedridden and in a care facility for the elderly around 10 minutes away by car.

Grandfather Matsushita is an example of strong adherence to the *ie*-system of the prewar years. He takes his role as head of the household very seriously, caring for all the members of his family and keeping his family together. Still, it is interesting to note that precisely in this case, where the ideology of keeping care in the family is very strong, Grandfather Matsushita nevertheless had to resort to institutional services due to the fact that his wife passed away young and his daughter-in-law is working, which made keeping care in the family impossible.

6.2.3 A matter of course – a matter of choice

Thus, for the generation born in the 1950s the notion that the eldest child, especially the eldest son, takes care of the parents and inherits the house is natural. Taking care of one's parents was described as an implicit agreement, conventional practice or custom which existed since before and which was accepted as it was. However, my informants hastened to tell me that it was not a law as it was in the past.

The naturalness of caring for parents simply because you are the eldest child seemed to be bound to a certain era, location and education, as many informants of Generation 0 grounded their motivation to care for their parents in their upbringing, the period of their upbringing and the rural location they lived in. However, many did not talk about obligations and accepted parental care as a matter of course while at the same time portraying it as a matter of choice, expressing agency in a situation of resignation. Caring for one's parents was seen as a self-evident element of Japanese culture and tradition, on the one hand distinguishing Japan from other countries such as Switzerland or Germany, confirming their identities as Japanese national citizens and on the other hand distinguishing the *inaka* from the city, setting Futami apart from urban Japan. Grandfather Takizawa now living with his wife, eldest son, daughter-in-law and two grandchildren told me:

会話

Grandfather Takizawa: In my age, *chōnans* always succeeded the house. There was that kind of custom. That's what there was.

Rhea: So your parents contacted you [and asked you to come home]?

Grandfather Takizawa: Mm. No [I thought so] by myself. In our times – by myself I said I would take over the house.

Thus, actively “caring for parents” and the obligation to “care for parents” were not contradictions. How it would be for the next generation was not sure, as Grandfather Takizawa continued to say:

Rhea: And now when your son was born, was it certain that your son would succeed the house?

Grandfather Takizawa: In this case it is a different era, so I don't know. It is a different era, so it's as the children like. Every household would like their son to succeed the house. That's what parents think. But now children are completely free. (Interview with Grandfather Takizawa, 67, 3.09.2015, translated by Rhea Braunwalder).

Grandfather Takizawa was not the only one to indicate that the future was uncertain. The elderly were not sure of how the “young people” felt about elderly care or the succession of the house. According to them, times were changing. In the next section I turn to the perspective of the younger generation.

6.3 Generation 1

6.3.1 A question of money

Like Generation 0, Generation 1 affirmed the norm that the younger generation, in particular elder sons and their wives, should take care of the older generation. Mariko, who had married an eldest son, explained:

- 会話 **Mariko:** We will have to take care of her [her mother in law] [*mendō wo miru*]. That's how it works. The children will. The siblings of my husband, he has two older sisters and my husband is the youngest so they are three. But his sisters married out. Well, the man – well it is the same in our house – the older brother takes care of [*miru*] his own parents. So for us as well, my husband will look after his mother [*miru*].
- Rhea:** Because he is a man?
- Mariko:** Yes.
- Rhea:** So women-
- Mariko:** They marry out. They marry out and take care of [*miru*] the mother and father of the place they married into. Nursing and stuff. Well, for me it's also like that but even if I marry out, my parents are my parents so it's not like I will not take care of [*miru*] them at all. Probably the older sisters of my husband will take care of [*miru*] their mother but the responsibility lies with the eldest son. Usually. Then the person who becomes the wife of an eldest son has to take care of [*mendō wo miru*] her parents-in-law. (Interview with Mariko, 37, 1.09.2015, translated by Rhea Braunwalder).

She has planned to care for her mother-in-law and is making financial arrangements for when the time comes. This shows that it is not the elderly person's responsibility to make provisions for his or her future. This is noted by Izuhara, who confirms that because of the strong belief in being cared for by their children, elderly usually do not make financial provisions for their future (Izuhara 2002:75). Children are confronted with the fact that they will take care of their parents early and start making arrangements for this. These can either be in terms of financial savings or material preparations such as senior-friendly housing. Mariko feels that compared to her older brother she has less to worry about:

- 会話 **Mariko:** Her [the wife of her brother] mother and father are in Tokyo, so my brother has to take care of my mother and my father and the father and mother in Tokyo. In the end the children have to take care of their parents, the four of them. That's tough. In my case the father of my husband is already dead and only the mother is left. (Interview with Mariko, 37, 1.09.2015).

Mariko potentially has only her mother-in-law to care for, but she worries if she and her husband will be able to ensure an education of good quality for their two sons, manage to pay off the loan for the house and land and at the same time provide for her mother-in-law. For her own future Mariko stated she did not want to give the responsibility for her care to her children.

Mariko's older brother was busy with plans to become a local politician and change the system (*shikumi*) of life in Sado. According to his mother and his wife he was neglecting his care duties towards his children and being selfish (*wagamama*), which means just doing

what he likes doing.⁸² Talking to him about the care of his parents he said he hoped it would somehow work out and that they would manage by themselves as long as they could.

Mariko's father mentioned to me that he would like to live independently of his children (*tayoranaï*). He would give his savings to either child who wanted to care for him and if none of his children wanted to be involved, would pay for his care in a facility for the elderly. This shows that inheritance in the family is tied to elderly care and that the decision of whom to leave one's money to is a strategic decision on behalf of the older generation (see also Izuhara 2002:74). Indeed, Croll sees investing money in one's adult children as a strategy to ensure future care or keep the children nearby (Croll 2006:479). Although not explicitly stated in that manner, I did hear from younger informants that the fact that their parents had bought them a car or land made it more difficult if not impossible for them to leave the village. It equally shows the increased financial independence of the elderly generation today, who in old age have their savings and pension to draw from, in comparison with the generation before them (Atoh 2011:392).

6.3.2 A question of timing

Like Mariko, Mr. Kuroda prepared for taking care of his parents at an early age. As his brother left the island, it was clear for Mr. Kuroda that the care of his parents was his duty. He accepted this as a matter of course and planned his life accordingly, choosing to return to Sado immediately after having completed his studies so that he could start to build a network of friends and be integrated in the community while he was young. He also chose to work in the local municipality, a life-long job with little chance of leaving the countryside. Mr. Kuroda stated it was not a question of *if* he would come back to Sado, but rather the important question was one of timing, thus *when* he would return to Sado. While Mr. Kuroda returned immediately after his studies, others chose to stay on the mainland until they retired and then returned to their natal homes either alone or with their spouses. Others worked and established a household on the mainland and when their parents were in need of care had them move in with them. Despite outmigration and increased mobility of the young, the tendency to in the end care for the elderly, be it in their natal home or in the children's new established homes, and the notion of intergenerational exchange persist (see also Croll 2006:487 and Traphagan 2008:215).

6.3.3 A question of will

Where Mariko and Mr. Kuroda seemed prepared and willing to care for the elderly of the family, others of their generation, especially eldest sons, seemed more frustrated by or resigned to their care responsibilities (cf. Traphagan 2000:38). Rather than seeing parental care as a return for previous care received or as return for inheriting the house as implied in the intergenerational contract, care was interpreted as an obligation.

Reiko, a woman in her 50s, had bought a small house in Tokyo and was working as an exercise instructor; when her sister-in-law died and she was forced to come back to Sado to live with her mother. She stated that if her mother would die, she would return to Tokyo. Sado in her opinion was full of old people and lacking in activities such as museums or cinemas. Three things are interesting to note in this case. First of all, although her older brother was still alive and well and living next door, he did not suffice to take care of his mother. Second, once her mother dies, Reiko does not think she has any reason to stay

⁸² His way of caring for his family was less visible in practical care actions, but by becoming involved in local politics he hoped to create connections which would help his nuclear family in the future for example in the education, employment and marriage of his children.

in Sado, indicating that the care of her mother's grave and the succession of the family line clearly are not her responsibility, and third, Reiko's perception of rural Japan as not providing an adequate environment in contrast to the lure of the city. This being said, Reiko and her mother seemed to live together harmoniously and when Reiko broke her leg while walking her German shepherd – which incidentally almost bit me when I passed through Reiko's back yard – the situation had turned around and Reiko was being cared for by her mother, rather than the opposite way around.

6.3.4 A question of affinity

For women frustration often came in connection with difficult relationships with their parents-in-law. In the Fukaishi family relationships were tense. The couple told me that they wished to live alone as a nuclear family with their two teenage children, but that probably this would not be possible as they were taking care of the mother of Mr. Fukaishi. Conflicts with the elderly woman had arisen once Grandfather Fukaishi had passed away. The situation became so bad that Mrs. Fukaishi started eating after the family to avoid her mother-in-law. At this point, Mr. Fukaishi decided to install a kitchenette in grandmother's room so she would be able to cook for herself.⁸³ Grandmother refuses to cook or wash which means her daughter-in-law preforms these duties grudgingly while other contact between the family and their grandmother is kept at a minimum.⁸⁴ Grandmother Fukaishi stated that she felt isolated. Her only contact with other people was once a week, when she was picked up by a bus to go to a day care center. Still, viewed from the outside the Fukaishi's lived in a three-generational household, and the actual state of the intergenerational relations were not made public to the rest of the village. While leaving their grandmother to live alone would not have been acceptable, the next best option was the one the family arrived at: maintaining the image of a traditional three-generational household on the outside, but living separately on the inside. This example shows that family members are capable of negotiating terms of the intergenerational contract and that values concerning filial obligations, even though persistent, are contested.⁸⁵

6.3.5 Future expectations

The opinion voiced by most of my informants in Generation 1 was that caring for one's parents was natural, but not necessarily something to be looked forward to. For their own futures they stated that their children could take care of them if they wanted to, but at the same time should be free to do as they please. They did not want to burden their children and stated they would manage alone with their spouse as long as possible and, if need be enter a care facility for the elderly.⁸⁶ Here one can see that in addition to the usual intergenerational support by family members, my younger informants considered intragenerational and extra-familial support. What is also apparent is the increasing tendency to not rely on children in old age, but to make provisions for one's own future, a tendency also prevalent amongst Generation 0. This is attributable amongst others to the increasing amount of personal savings, due to the economic boom period of post-war

⁸³ Grandmother's side of the story was that she was living alone because she eats messily and that it is not nice to look at. She insisted that her legs were weak and that she couldn't walk and cook for herself.

⁸⁴ Grandmother was socially isolated except for once a week, when she was fetched by a bus to go to a day-care center.

⁸⁵ These negotiations and contestations might be done in open conversations with the family, but frequently occur more indirectly or allusively through communal drinking or more subtle ways of communication.

⁸⁶ One of my informants even stated that he would be taken care of by robots, which by the time he would be old would surely exist.

Japan and the development of a universal pension system and long-term care insurance by the state (cf. Izuhara 2002:73).

More important than having their children stay in Sado, parents stated they wished to ensure a solid education for their children so they could find jobs and either return to Sado to contribute to the island with their skills or live on the mainland, where their parents could occasionally visit them. Similarly to the women of Generation 0, the preference to be taken care of by one's daughter, rather than daughter-in-law, was apparent.

6.4 ...is only natural

"Well, you told me that in Switzerland children and parents live separately, but especially here in the countryside (*inaka*) that type of thing doesn't exist. In the end family is family." (Interview with Grandfather Matsushita, 72, 30.09.2015, translated by Rhea Braunwalder).

All in all, the idea of care for the elder generation as a duty of the younger generation was prevalent in all of my informants' statements. I spoke to no one who said that it was the state's duty to take charge of the elderly and care for the elderly was often implicitly bound up with co-residence and inheritance of parents' financial assets and property (cf. Long 2009:16). Indeed, Linnhart notes that "Altruism (...) is practically not determinable in intergenerational coresidence in Japan" (Linnhart 2011:434)⁸⁷. He refers to the fact that care within the family is not devoid of expectations of return, but rather is a contribution in an implicit intergenerational contract structured by delayed exchanges of resources (for example property, money or care) in the course of people's lives.

That does not mean that state or other services for elderly care were not used in Futami. Day care centers, home-helpers and institutions for the aged were used and were also significant employers for the women of the village. The services were acknowledged and used as a nice-to-have option and supplementation of family care. In contrast to European societies, where family care is emotionalized and state care tends to be rated negatively as an economic transaction, in Japan care is seen as an exchange in relationships based on social obligation (Shimada and Tagsold 2015:148). This is grounded on the fact that historically the idea of the welfare state, allowing a separation of public and private spheres, emerged much earlier in Europe, whereas care of the family in Japan was until the Second World War a duty of the household (Shimada and Tagsold 2015:146). Moral comments regarding care did not allude to being a loving family member, but rather to fulfilling duties appropriate to one's life-stage, gender and birth order. However, even if elderly family members were in a facility this did not mean that the family stopped being involved in their care. In one case the great-grandmother was frequently visited by her son, grand-daughter-in-law and grandchildren to bring clean clothes and visit and on holidays, when her son did not have to work, the great-grandmother was brought home for a few days. Furthermore, seeing the current rise in the number of elderly and the Japanese state's economic condition, my informants voiced doubts that the state would be able to continue providing sufficient care for the elderly at all.

Between the generations there seemed to be a shift in regard to the options and choices surrounding intergenerational care. Whereas generation 0 emphasized the matter of factness of caring for the elder generation, generation 1 more openly contested care norms. Hashimoto also observed a change in the perception of the intergenerational contract between the generation born in the 1950s and their children (1996:84). Rather than referring to obligations or values influenced by the old household-system, Hashimoto suggests that affinity and good personal relationships are becoming more important when it comes to care and co-residence of different generations (1996:101). This is also

⁸⁷ „Altruismus (...) lässt sich beim intergenerationalen Zusammenleben in Japan praktisch nicht feststellen" (Linnhart 2011:434).

confirmed by Croll (2006) who states that the intergenerational contract in Asian families is not breaking down as expected in the light of current demographic and economic changes, instead it is being reinterpreted and changed, to a more “balanced and symmetric” relationship based on mutual support and care (2006:484).

Another trend noted by Croll in Asian families is the rise in the number of nuclear families, often taken as an indication of the isolation and neglect of the elderly by the young generation (2006:474). Brown (2003:63) and Traphagan (2004:315) show that the living arrangement is not a viable indicator for the degree of intergenerational interaction within the family. As my examples suggest, generations can live together in isolation and live apart while maintaining close care ties. Looking at Asian families in general Croll proposes a new family form: the “embedded” or “enwebbed” nuclear family (2006:485). With this she means to accentuate the flows of care and the intergenerational exchanges between households. Akiyama, Antonucci and Campbell similarly note that living arrangements in old age are increasingly diverse (2009:13). Delayed co-residence and proximate living are alternatives to the traditional stem family living arrangement (Izuhara 2002:67), but still allow for intergenerational care in old age. Contrary to the image of the household as the main unit, depreciating married out daughters and sons who have established separate households (Nakane 1970:5), my data shows that family ties and not the household unit form the basis for intergenerational relationships and are important resources for care and support.

Another trend noted in parental care, which corroborate my research findings, is the increased involvement of daughters in parental care and a preference for being cared for by one’s daughter instead of daughter-in-law. It is more and more common for mothers to uphold a close relationship to their married daughters, and affective ties are gaining in importance in intergenerational relationships (Akiyama, Antonucci and Campbell 2009:9). This equally shows the importance of intergenerational relations between different households within the biological family.

I would like to close with a note on the matter of choice regarding elderly care. Several authors suggest an absence of choice related to parental care:⁸⁸ Long states that daughters-in-law are obliged to care for their parents-in-law (2009:8), Hashimoto asserts that elder sons carry the responsibility and are obliged to care for their parents (1996:156), and in his research in rural Japan, Traphagan states that the discourse of “filial piety” constrains people in life decisions and remains influential in intergenerational relationships (2008:212).

Where I agree that notions of the *ie*-system and the intergenerational contract remain crucial and apparent in rural Japan, I do not agree with how moral obligations are depicted as opposed to personal desires. This contradiction implies a concept of self which values individual choice and independence and does not address how norms, obligations and individual aspirations⁸⁹ can influence and shape each other. As the statements of my informants show, responsibilities and duties which they grow up knowing become part of their individual aspirations. Hence, even completing duties and following obligations leaves leeway for negotiation and contestation.

By giving examples from two historical generations I hope to have shown how historical time and social changes shape the way that different societal generations care for their parents and envisage to be cared for themselves.

⁸⁸ In Hareven’s (1977) terms, this corresponds to a conflict between “individual time” and “family time”.

⁸⁹ I see aspirations as defined by Appadurai (2004) as individual preferences and choices based on and formed by cultural beliefs and general norms.

7. CARE FOR THE DECEASED...

In the transition from old age to death the type of care one needs and the people who are able to provide it shift. In this chapter, I concentrate on care practices performed by the living for deceased family members, regarding them as indicators of intergenerational care relationships.⁹⁰ Following this intergenerational relationship lead me to relatives, temples and grave sites not located in Futami, once more indicating the geographical “un-sitedness” of my field.

In Japan, the idea that the deceased depend on the living is prevalent and the deceased’s need for care is socially acknowledged (Smith 1974:123). As a general rule, care practices for the deceased are performed by succeeding family generations⁹¹ of the household (Kawano 2005:22) maintaining and strengthening intergenerational ties. Smith notes “[a] person can expect that in the normal course of things his spirit will continue to share in the life of his immediate kinsmen” (Smith 1974:114). Thus, death is not seen as a separation and allows for contact between the living and the dead to continue (Tsuji 2004:432). Traphagan describes the relationship between the living and the dead as reciprocal (2003:127). In return for the care they receive, the deceased protect and watch over the family. Hence, caring for the dead is not only aimed at the well-being of the deceased person, but also at the well-being of the family (Kawano 2000:23). While care-giving is done by multiple members of the household, the responsibility for ancestral care and the succession of the family line lie with the eldest son or designated successor.⁹² Given this premise, ensuring a successor who will take care of one’s grave after one dies is very important (Tsuji 2004:433).

⁹⁰ Even though I draw on literature referring to “ancestor worship” and “mortuary rites”, I do not use these terms as they have religious connotations. Kawano notes that religion is not the primary motivation for people performing rituals for their ancestors (Kawano 2005:21). More central is the search for individual and family well-being.

⁹¹ In the case of deceased children it was not the succeeding generation but parents who performed care.

⁹² That is why finding a suitable successor and a caretaker in death are difficult to separate and in this chapter I treat both topics together.

I first give a historic introduction to care of the deceased. Then, I describe the practices I observed in Futami concentrating on two areas: caring for dead family members, and finding a suitable caretaker and successor.

7.1 Historical Background and Changes

According to Kawano, practices involving the dead are “forms of calculated engagement in the context of social change” (Kawano 2015:53).⁹³ Looking at the history of mortuary practices in Japan, one can see that they have changed over time and are linked to and used by various actors.⁹⁴

Although forms of ancestor worship existed before Buddhism entered into Japan, a notable stage in the fixation of ancestor worship was in the 17th century where all Japanese had to register at a Buddhist temple to prove they were not Christians. This strengthened the hold of Buddhism on mortuary rites. In contrast, in the Meiji period⁹⁵ worshipping one’s ancestors was a state affair. Practices involving the dead were a demonstration of filial piety and loyalty towards the emperor who was portrayed as the father of the nation. After the Second World War the ties between ancestor worship and state worship were dissolved. The practices introduced during the Meiji period are still regarded as the norm today (cf. Kawano 2015:56).

The recent years have led to shifts in the location of responsibility for care after death and resulted in new ways of burying and commemorating the dead. For the post-war period, Smith states that caring for the dead was increasingly a family custom performed by all household members, separate from Buddhist temples or religious expertise (Smith 1974:90).⁹⁶ In the late 20th century Tsuji notes that caring for the dead has shifted from a family responsibility to the responsibility of the individual (2004:427).

To examine the responses to social and demographic changes in Japan, Kawano suggests looking at the access to culturally defined “ritual-care resources” necessary to ensure the care of the deceased (2015:53). These resources are material, in form of a family grave, and immaterial, in form of a successor who performs care after death. The access to care resources differs depending on the historical generation one belongs to (Kawano 2015:58). In the following examples, we will see how people deal with the availability or lack of care resources.

7.2 Caring for the Dead in Futami

People in Futami invested various amounts of time and money in the care for the dead. All household members, from children to grandparents, were involved. Dead family members were talked about and to – often through their pictures on the walls – as if they were still alive and in need of care.⁹⁷ Care of the deceased occurred mainly in two places: Buddhist family altars (*butsudan*) over which pictures of the deceased hung and grave sites, family graves located next to a Buddhist temple or on grave plots around the village.

⁹³ She compares them with the conception of the anthropological field, which both have often been seen as isolated and unchanging units (Kawano 2015:53).

⁹⁴ For a detailed history of ancestor worship in Japan see Smith (1974:20ff.).

⁹⁵ The Meiji period was from 1868-1912.

⁹⁶ For funerals Suzuki shows the opposite tendency: a shift from community funeral rituals involving several households of the neighborhood, to commercialized funeral services organized by specialized funeral companies (Suzuki 2000:44).

⁹⁷ Traphagan states “In much the same way as one’s children and other family members need love and attention, ancestors, too, need emotional support” (Traphagan 2003:127).

The care practices at the *but sudan* did not necessitate leaving the house. In many households freshly cooked rice and water were placed in front of the *but sudan* every morning. Any gifts received were also placed in front of the altar only later to be enjoyed by the family. At special occasions the altar was decorated with fruits, sweets and flowers. Care practices at grave sites meant having to leave the house and cost more time and effort. People expressed care and concern for the dead by placing items the deceased liked to eat or drink on their graves, cleaning the graves with water or shading them from the sun and heat with big leaves. Most people observed the rites of cleaning the family grave and decorating it with flowers at *obon*. For a few days Futami and Sado were filled with family members returning to their natal villages to tend to their ancestor's graves and spend time with family remaining on the island. Other than *obon*, New Year and the Spring and Autumn Equinox were occasions to take special care of family graves. In addition, memorial services on monthly and yearly death anniversaries were performed.⁹⁸

To give an impression of how important care after death is, I close this section with an ethnographic vignette describing an elderly woman and her worries concerning grave care.

Grandmother Kato had three daughters but lived alone. Her husband died three months previously and she was still shaken when I stayed at her house. All of her daughters were married and living in separate houses, one on the mainland, one in another city in Sado and the eldest, Rie, directly across from her in Futami. Rie worked as a care-taker in a facility for the elderly and since her father died slept over at her mother's house. Even though Rie was physically close, Grandmother Kato did not feel at all reassured. All of her daughters had taken on the family names of their husbands. They were not officially part of her household anymore and would not succeed the house.

Rie's husband was not an eldest son and for a while the couple, their children and their parents had lived in a three-generational household. In 1994, they decided that there was not enough space and built a separate house next door on the land of Grandfather Kato with the financial support of the grandparents. Looking back, Grandmother Kato regrets that decision. She told me they should have persevered (*gaman suru*), even if they lacked in space. At the time she considered a separate house a good idea because her daughter would stay nearby. Grandmother Kato stated that she would give the house away to anyone who would want it, under the condition that the person take care of the graves and the ancestors. Even though her daughter lived meters away, the fact that she could not find anyone to take care of her in death prevented Grandmother Kato to be able to feel a sense of security or peace of mind (*anshin*).

7.2.1 Caring for Others

While Grandmother Kato was worried about her own death, Grandmother Kiriya was at the time preoccupied with the care of others. She was taking care of her recently deceased older brother, her deceased husband and her deceased daughter. The care duties she performed were distributed across household altars and family graves in two villages and included daily offerings of rice and water, visits to the graves to perform specific Buddhist ceremonies on monthly and yearly death anniversaries, cleaning the graves, decorating graves with bought flowers, lighting incense and laying preferred drinks or food of the deceased in front of the grave. Most actions she performed alone, but for special occasions she was joined by corresponding sets of relatives, depending on the deceased person involved.

Grandmother Kiriya's brother's grave and altar were located in her natal village five minutes away by car from Futami. The family grave of her husband and daughter were

⁹⁸ The anniversaries vary according to Buddhist school. One of my informants stated the important yearly anniversaries occurred on the 1st, 7th, 13th, 17th and 23rd years after death.

near their neolocal residence in Futami. The family had bought a new grave and an altar when their daughter died, as Grandfather Kiriyaama had been a younger son and thus not an heir. Grandmother Kiriyaama had discussed the location of the family grave with her son who would succeed the house. He insisted to keep the grave in Futami. This meant that his mother – carrying water and eventual offerings – had to climb a flight of concrete steps, cross between the border of two rice fields and then continue up a steep, stony pathway to access it. Needless to say, Grandmother Kiriyaama would have preferred to locate the grave at the nearby temple easily accessible by car. How things would continue in the future when she would not be able to walk anymore was a worrying thought for her. Although she stated that her son and his wife would take over the care for her husband and daughter if she asked and she could at least continue to care for them at the altar, the care of her brother was a more difficult matter.

Although Grandmother Kiriyaama's brother had inherited a family grave and altar, he had died childless and unmarried and hence lacked a potential caregiver. His sister was the nearest living relative and thus took over the care of him and his ancestors. The family altar was standing in the brother's now empty house which was still fully equipped with electricity and water. As many of the other houses of this village, it seemed this house too would slowly fall into disuse and decay.

Because Grandmother Kiriyaama was in charge of the care of her own family altar, in the long run she could not see herself keeping up all these care duties. She had discussed the option of an eternally worshipped grave at the temple her brother was a member of. The lack of a potential caretaker had affected the funeral of her brother, where the family had refused condolence money (*kōden*) usually received from relatives, friends and work colleagues.⁹⁹ This way they would not have to reciprocate in case of the death of someone they had received money from.

In television programs and magazines Grandmother Kiriyaama had heard about alternative mortuary practices. Whereas simply scattering one's ashes into the ocean seemed to surprise her, community graves which are cared for by the community as a whole, she considered an acceptable option in the light of the many young people leaving their natal villages. This shows how Grandmother Kiriyaama was guided by cultural norms, the knowledge of her own future capacities and by the changes occurring in the population structure while caring for her deceased family members.

7.2.2 Caring for Oneself

Whereas Grandmother Kiriyaama's brother apparently had not made provisions regarding care after his death, others made preparations to increase access to care-resources and prevent care gaps in the future.

Strategy 1: Enticing a grave watcher

Grandmother Yoshikoshi lived in her extravagant and redesigned house at the site of the former house of her parents with her husband from Tokyo. She had two children, a son and a daughter. Regarding her future, she stated:

⁹⁹ The giving of *kōden* obliges the receiver to reciprocate the same amount of money in case of the death of the giver and also entitles the giver to a return gift half the value of the money he or she gave at the funeral. Tsuji (2006) in her article about mortuary rituals in Japan shows further examples of how people deviate from the norm of accepting *kōden* at funerals, thus changing the degree of connectedness with the funeral guests.

会話

Grandmother Yoshikoshi: Yes, this place I renovated and made bigger right? So sometime, when he [her oldest son] retires, well it [retiring age] is not like at age 60 like for us right? So at 65, or when that is over, I was thinking it would be good if he would come here and live here. In Sado we say ‘grave watcher’ [*hakamori*]. Em, so when the past generations who have followed and died and stuff they have a grave right? To do that grave watching it would be good to have him come I suppose. *In exchange* that’s why I have prepared everything, so he just needs to come and live here, that’s the sort of preparations I made. #00:15:44-9 #

Rhea: Oh so when he is older ...#00:15:47-2#

Grandmother Yoshikoshi: Yes, I am thinking that when he stops work at 65 I would like him to succeed the house [laughs]. That’s the details of the story. (Interview with Grandmother Yoshikoshi, 72, 03.09.2015, emphasis by author, translated by Rhea Braunwalder).

Instead of wanting her son to move in while she was alive, she explicitly stated she would like him to come back to take care of her grave when she was dead. Whereas caring for oneself in old age might be possible, the couple relying on each other, at the very least for the care of the graves a successor from the younger generation is necessary. By arranging her house so that her son could and would want to live in it Grandmother Yoshikoshi hopes to ensure her care after death. Interesting to note is that she uses the notion of an exchange: in exchange for an elegantly redesigned house she expects her son to perform ancestral care. Grandmother Yoshikoshi herself had moved back to Sado only *after* her parents had died. Her parents had moved to her house in the city for their final years, but one of their wishes was that their daughter would succeed the house in Sado. Grandmother Yoshikoshi was a grave watcher.

Strategy 2: Adopting a caretaker

The next case describes a childless and elderly couple who is looking for a caretaker. I depict the situation from the point of view of the prospective caregiver and her family, Mrs. Ikehata.

Mrs. Ikehata was originally from a different village but lived in Futami with her Indonesian husband and their three children. She did not have any responsibilities to care for her parents during their life or death and often talked about being free or being able to do as she wanted (*jiyū ni suru*) as she was the only daughter in a family with an older brother. She noted that her parents were originally against her marriage, but she moved out and married her husband against their will.¹⁰⁰

Regarding their living situation, the couple was not bound to either of their parents. After living in a rented apartment in a nearby town, the couple moved to Futami renting the house of an acquaintance of Mrs. Ikehata’s mother. The Ikehata family was well integrated into the village community. The two boys were attending primary school and the youngest daughter nursery school with the rest of the children of Futami. The family was often mistaken for relatives of the owners of the rented house. Talking about if she would stay in Futami permanently, Mrs. Ikehata mentioned that an acquaintance of her mother in her natal village had recently started to ask her to come “into her house” (*ouchi ni haitte kureru*). Not understanding the situation well, I asked for an explanation from her and her same aged female friend Eiko.

¹⁰⁰ To marry her husband, she converted to Islam. Interestingly this did not seem to interfere with notions of succession of the house and mortuary care, which indicates that ancestral care is not tied to religious affiliation. Smith (1974:139) notes that conversion does not affect the relationship between the living and the dead.

会話

Mrs. Ikehata: Eiko or other people, they live with the parents of the husband of the house they married into right?

Rhea: Together, yes.

Mrs. Ikehata: But we, we are only us [the nuclear family], so I am being asked if I wouldn't become an adopted daughter.

Eiko: An adopted daughter, an adopted child.

Mrs. Ikehata: For a house that doesn't have children. I am being asked if I wouldn't come into the house. It's a house near my natal house [laughs].

(...)

Rhea: Ok, so entering not only into the house, but also into the family?

Mrs. Ikehata: Yes.

Eiko: Not only for fun, but as a family member.

Mrs. Ikehata: Yep. Won't you come in? Into the house?

Eiko: That means stopping your own house, and going [to the house] with the two elderly people. Even though you are not even the grandfather's or the grandmother's relative. (Interview with Mrs. Ikehata, 37, and Eiko, 36, 25.09.2015, translated by Rhea Braunwalder).

Mrs. Ikehata was quite uncomfortable with the situation and did not want to move into the unrelated elderly couple's house. For one, she did not want to have her children change school. Further, she had heard of cases where the adoptee had left the family after less than a year because of the toll of having to pay attention to the other people's needs (*kidukai*). Mrs. Ikehata and Eiko voiced the opinion that it was difficult to move in with strangers, and that it was *kidukaisō*, meaning taxing because of the consideration and worry you had to bring to the other party. Mrs. Ikehata had tentatively told the grandmother that they would not come, but the grandmother was spreading the word that the children would soon move in, making it more and more difficult for Mrs. Ikehata to refuse. Another factor making it difficult for Mrs. Ikehata to refuse, was that the grandmother frequently brought over home-grown vegetables and that they had already accepted vegetables from her in the past. Mrs. Ikehata had encouraged her husband not to accept anything from the couple anymore, but sensed it was already too late.¹⁰¹ In contrast to Eiko, who accepted the duties designated to her due to her marriage with an inheriting son, Mrs. Ikehata, technically not required to take on elderly-care as a younger daughter and used to the "freedom" of a nuclear family, was reluctant to accept the elderly couple's request.

Interesting here are the suggested notions of relatedness. Moving into a house and living with unrelated people is difficult, while some degree of relatedness (however distant) facilitates coresidence. The fact that everyone in Futami assumed that Mrs. Ikehata was related to the person she was renting the house from is another indicator that living together implies a degree of relatedness and that relatedness leads to bonds of care.¹⁰² In adoption, the opposite seems to be the case, bonds of care eventually leading to the creation of kinship-like ties.

Ensuring the continuity of the household and care after death is a goal which can be reached in different ways. Although choosing a successor amongst family members and keeping care in the family is the norm, in the case that no one is available unrelated people can be adopted into the household to ensure the succession of the house and caretaking of the grave. Smith lists the people who can ensure the succession of the family line and at the same time take on responsibility for ancestral care (1964:165): the eldest son, an adopted son-in law married to one's daughter (the husband changing his family name), in

¹⁰¹ Gift giving in rural Japan is strongly tied to the notion of reciprocity and receiving a gift instills in the receiver the moral obligation to reciprocate (Befu 1968:450). Further the exchange of gifts, especially of food in the Japanese context is a means of creating and renewing social ties (Daniels 2009:391).

¹⁰² The friendship between Eiko and Mrs. Ikehata was not based on the fact that they lived across the street from each other, as I initially assumed, but started because the owner of Mrs. Ikehata's house was related to Eiko's family.

rare cases the husband of an adopted daughter, or an adopted son unrelated to the family. The practice of adult adoption is not exceptional and mentioned by Nakane (1970:5), Dore (1978) or Embree (1939:79ff.) for early 20th century Japan. The most common form in Futami was the adoption of the husband of one's daughter. Although not usually done, the case of Mrs. Ikehata was not unheard of.

7.3 ...must be done by a Successor

The above examples show how my informants, each in a different stage of individual and family time, deal with the lack of a care-taker in death. Grandmother Kiriyaama holds on to the traditional practice of intergenerational care within the family for her household, but for her brother adopts new mortuary rituals shifting care outside the family into the hands of a temple. Grandmother Yoshikoshi tries to keep care in the family by maintaining a material exchange between her and the succeeding generation. The elderly couple try to ensure care by adopting a son and a daughter and create new family members who are socially acknowledged carers for their graves.

For the everyday care practices concerning dead family members ("care-giving"), which were performed by all household members, I found the main motivation for care to be affinity and affection. By performing everyday care practices at the altar the memory of and relationship between the deceased and the living was kept alive. For specific care practices performed at the funeral, anniversaries and for the *responsibility* of care ("taking care of") it was a different matter. In comparison to care during other stages of the life-course, as childhood or old age, which was done by different family members or taken over by the state or private institutions, the options of who could provide care in death were limited. Although in urban contexts authors have described the emergence of new burial practices such as ash scattering (*shizensō*) or eternally worshipped graves (*eitai kuyōbo*), which do not depend on a successor to take care of the grave (cf. Kawano 2015, Tsuji 2004), these options were not established or considered in Futami. The only possible provider for care in death was a successor who was formally the heir of the grave and an official member of the household. Thus, in this life-stage the importance of keeping care in the family remained, as did the cultural norm of successor based care after death. Whereas in urban regions the lack of material care-resources and space is a problem, in Futami the lack of immaterial care-resources is apparent.

8. CONCLUSION

My research based in a contemporary Japanese village showed the care arrangements individuals and families opted for in different situations (Table 1). Whereas the person normatively responsible for care was clearly defined, those actually “giving care” varied. For child-care the mother was the one responsible for care, but care by grandparents in combination with nursery schools was the norm. In cases where the grandmother was not available, other relatives or neighbors were asked. Employers were not involved in child-care and they, as the only actors in my study, indicated that care should be kept in the family. Elderly care was influenced by notions of exchange and the obligation to care for one’s parents as an eldest son. Care was seen as a return for care received in the past or done in exchange for money or the inheritance of property. Formal services, for example day-care centers, home-helpers or facilities for the elderly were used and accepted as supplementation but not replacement of family care. Care of the deceased was the domain which was the most inflexible regarding potential care-givers. Only the inheritor of the grave and successor to the family line were seen as fit to care for deceased family members. Everyday care duties incorporated members of the whole household. Adoption, and more rarely eternally worshipped graves, were considered in cases where no related care-giver could be found.

Life-stage of care-recipient	Person normatively responsible for care	Actual care-giver	Options in the family	Options outside the family
Childhood	Mother	Maternal grandmother/ paternal grandmother	Unmarried aunts, other female relatives	Nursery school, after-school clubs, baby-sitters (rare)
Old age	Eldest son	Daughter-in-law	Daughters, granddaughters	Day care centers, facilities for the elderly, home helpers
Death	Eldest son	Eldest son and household	Siblings, close relatives	Eternally worshipped graves, adoption

Table 1. Care in the life-course: Providers and receivers of care. (By author 2016)

Stopping here would transmit the image of a static and stable care-system. As discussed by Alber and Häberlein (2010), intergenerational relations are to be seen in reference to social change. Depending on a person's societal generation and gender, perceptions of responsibilities, duties and rights implied in the intergenerational contract shift. Other than by historical time, the care arrangements I describe are influenced by individual and family circumstances, for example illnesses or the availability of economic resources. The outmigration of the young in search of education, work and entertainment, constant reminders of the problems of a supposedly aging and shrinking society and financial cut-backs of the state in the domain of welfare contribute to a sense of ambiguity regarding intergenerational care.

In the three domains I described the following negotiations are apparent: Regarding child care, women in Futami have to work to contribute to the financial income of the family. This results in the incorporation of grandmothers in child-care. The negative perception of the employment situation in Sado leads to the expectation that the young generation – the potential care-takers – will leave the island and creates the need for women to work. Grandmotherly care in Futami is natural and common in different variations across household and village borders. Additionally, caring for grandchildren is a way for elderly parents to keep their children close by and likely to reciprocate care in the future. Regarding elderly care, the elderly generation today is less dependent on their children than previous generations, due to changes in the pension system, private savings, increased availability of institutional care and the introduction of long-term health insurance in 2000 (Izuhara 2002:73). They make provisions for their own care or negotiate exchanges of money and property with their children and widen options regarding care and living arrangements in later life. The young generation today can choose to work and live in the city or to stay in the village in proximity to their parents and home towns. In either case it is necessary for them to negotiate care arrangements with their parents which leads to the variations I described in chapter five. Regarding care for deceased family members, finding a successor is the crystallization point of worries regarding intergenerational care. For here financial resources are not very helpful and there is little one can do to influence the living world from the grave. The increased number of elderly people living alone, together with the statistically substantiated trend towards nuclear households, stoke fears of having no care-taker in death. Either people must depend and invest in their family or other members of the younger generation in the hope of a return in care, find alternative care-givers or resort to mortuary rites requiring no care-givers (cf. Tsuji 2004). In Futami the first option was common, enforced by the image of “traditional” ways of life and family community in *urusato* Japan.

Referring to my title and question “Keep(ing) it in the family?” I conclude two things: first, that keeping care in the family out of obligation and out of own accord are not oppositions. At least, my informants do not depict it this way. Instead, both are done at the same time and develop during the life course of an individual. Second, whether care is kept in the family or not is not the relevant question to be asked in this context. It is a question influenced by a “western” concept of care and the family (Shimada and Tagsold 2015:146). To answer Campbell, Long and Nishimura's (2009) question: “Does it matter who cares?” I believe in these circumstances it does not. What was relevant in the case of Futami was ensuring care in changing social conditions, while keeping the idea of an equal exchange between generations intact. I argue that a changing and flexible intergenerational contract, as it was apparent in Futami, remains the base of care in the family despite changes in the demographic structure of the village.

To add a personal note, as an anthropologist I was not excluded from intergenerational care exchanges. A young, foreign, female student travelling alone, I was socially acknowledged to be in need of care and received care from older people. They all explicitly refused financial repayment. Instead, I was often told that when I was older my turn would come to care for others and allusions were made to possible visits of them and their children and grandchildren to Switzerland or Germany. By accepting the care of the people in Futami

I involved myself in a long-term care relationship where I might someday be expected to fulfill my end of the deal.

Types of care that were present in Futami but lay outside the scope of my thesis were Topics intragenerational care relationships¹⁰³ and intergenerational care relationships on the societal level.¹⁰⁴ These topics are addressed by Kavedžija in two recent articles, one emphasising the care contributions of elderly for elderly within the community (Kavedžija 2015:76) and the other showing examples of neighbourly and friendship based support in the context of urban Japan (2015a:144).

Care on the societal level includes the notion of a generalised exchange between unspecific members of the older generation and the younger generation. A dimension of intergenerational care on the societal level is apparent in the newspaper article mentioned in the introduction: The first members of the Kendo club founded in the 1960s grew up and took over the roles as instructors, returning the care they received from their teachers on to the next generation of students. This bound them to the village where they bore children who in their turn have joined the club. For further research it would be interesting to examine how inter- and intragenerational care relationships intertwine, overlap and influence each other.

Having spent nine weeks in Futami wanting to write a village ethnography is overambitious, but this study indicates that, both for becoming or established anthropologists, doing research in villages is not to be neglected. Whether studying in a village or in a city, at home or in a remote location, relating findings to the field specific context is important. As Herzfeld stated in a public keynote lecture regarding “urban” anthropology: “contextualization is the key” (Herzfeld 2016).¹⁰⁵ In Futami the context was shaped by a “depopulation consciousness” (Knight and Traphagan 2003a:13) and images of nostalgia and tradition currently associated with rural Japan. In this thesis, I questioned the importance of the locality of the field, emphasizing its “un-sitedness”, partiality and construction around social relationships of our informants. Field sites, as Cook, Laidlaw and Mair (2009) suggest, are constructed primarily around research questions. I believe that my research in Futami should not be seen as a separate category from my fellow students’ projects in bigger cities or urban settings and that the village as a site for research, is as relevant as any other site in anthropology today.

¹⁰³ Examples for intragenerational care relationships include care between spouses, siblings or friends.

¹⁰⁴ Some authors further suggest that the contribution of men to care is an often neglected topic of research. Examples on research about male carers in Japan include Nakatani (2006) and Miller (2009). As mentioned in chapter 5, I found that especially men of the Generation 1 in double income families readily participated in house-work and child-care.

¹⁰⁵ The public keynote lecture was held in the 2016 summer school: “Beyond the City Limits: Rethinking new Religiosities in Asia” jointly organized by the Centre for Modern East Asian Studies, the Centre for Modern Indian Studies and the Göttingen Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology.

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In 2013 Rhea Braunwalder earned her Bachelor's degree at the University of Zurich with a major in Social Anthropology and minors in Japanese and Political Studies. Throughout her studies, she concentrated on acquiring the Japanese language and subsequently worked as an assistant language teacher in a public middle school on the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET). During her year in the prefecture of Niigata Rhea Braunwalder made connections which enabled her to complete field research the same prefecture in 2015. The results are presented in her Master thesis which she handed in at the faculty of Social Sciences of the Georg-August University of Göttingen.

Rhea Braunwalder erlangte 2013 an der Universität Zürich den Bachelor-Abschluss in Ethnologie, mit Nebenfächern Politikwissenschaften und Japanisch. Während des Studiums widmete sie sich vertieft dem Erwerb der japanischen Sprache. Anschliessend arbeitete sie im Rahmen des Japan Exchange and Teaching Programms (JET) als Assistenzlehrerin für Englisch an einer öffentlichen Mittelschule in der Präfektur Niigata, Japan. Im Verlauf des Jahres knüpfte sie Verbindungen, die es ihr ermöglichten, 2015 in der gleichen Präfektur die Feldforschung für die vorliegende Publikation durchzuführen, welche 2016 Abschlussarbeit zur Erlangung des Master of Arts an der Sozialwissenschaftlichen Fakultät der Georg-August-Universität Göttingen war.

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10. APPENDIX

Appendix A – Population Data

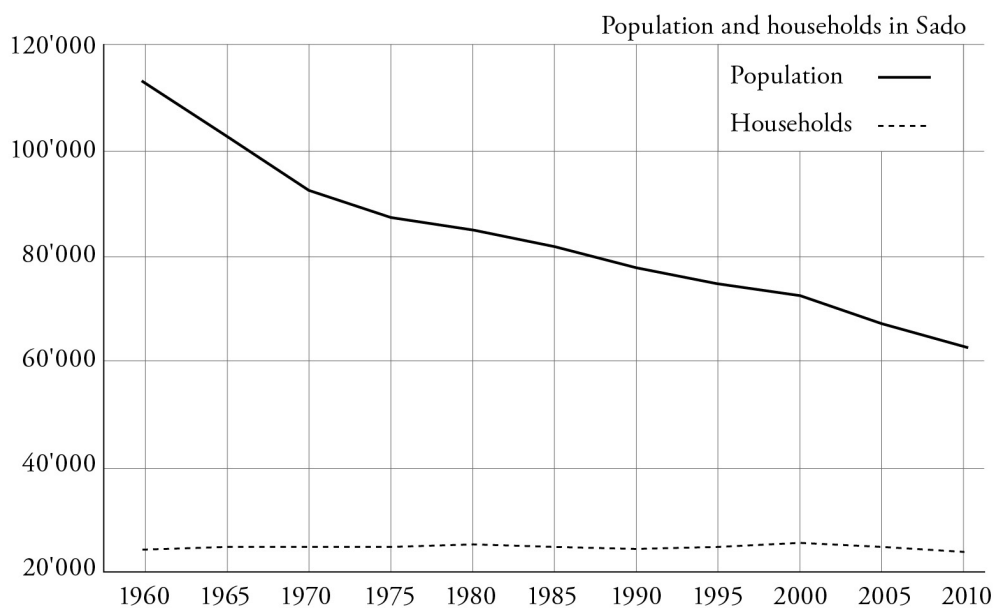


Table 2. Population and households of Sado. (By author with data retrieved 19.02.2016 from <https://www.city.sado.niigata.jp/admin/stat/m1_kokusei/s_01.shtml#con02_4>).

Appendix B

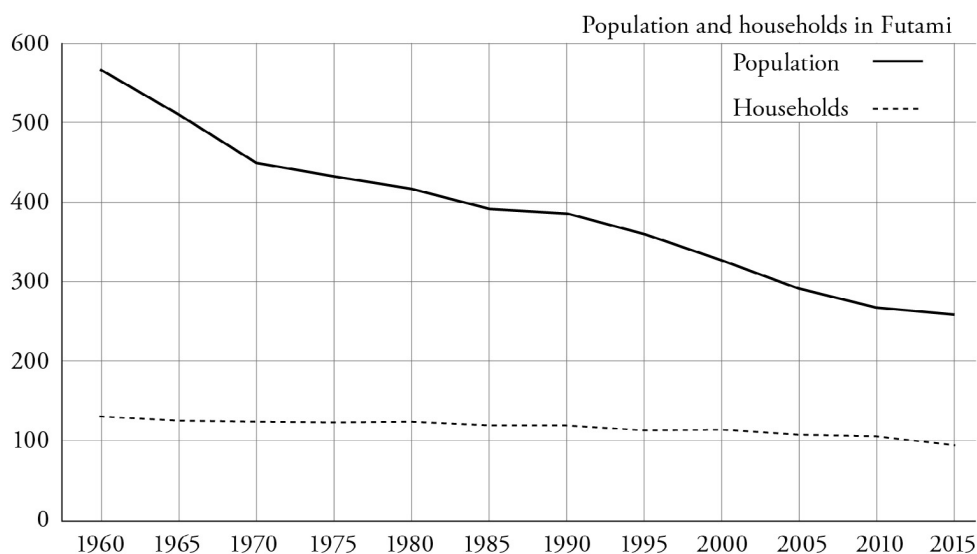


Table 3. Population and households in Futami. (By author with data from Kadota, Konishi and Sugimoto 2011).

Appendix C

List of conversational nodes

1. Children left home
2. Children come to visit on special occasions (*obon*, *matsuri* (village festival), New Year, family events)
3. No jobs in Sado
4. Futami is a great place to live (weather, sea, environment, human relations, natural disasters)
5. *Toki* bird
6. Life in Tokyo (negative aspects: dirty, crowded, noisy)
7. Origin myth: Explaining the origin of the name of the village

Sequence of conversational nodes

1. Children leave – but come to visit – no jobs here for them – but Futami is nice
2. Children leave – decline and decay – but Futami is nice – global warming
3. Moving back to Futami – city bad – Futami is nice – *toki*
4. Moving back to Futami – city bad
5. Building a house in Futami – Futami is nice (compared to other villages in Sado) – being raised and born in Futami – Futami fits to me
6. Not leaving Futami – city bad (crowds, people bumping into you) – Futami is nice (neighbourly, people talk to each other, safe from natural disasters)
7. Never left Futami – Futami is best – being raised and born in Futami
8. Never went abroad – no interest in going abroad – *toki*
9. Leaving Futami – having an empty house in Futami – visiting Futami – Futami is nice – *toki*

Appendix D

七浦小学校児童数の推移

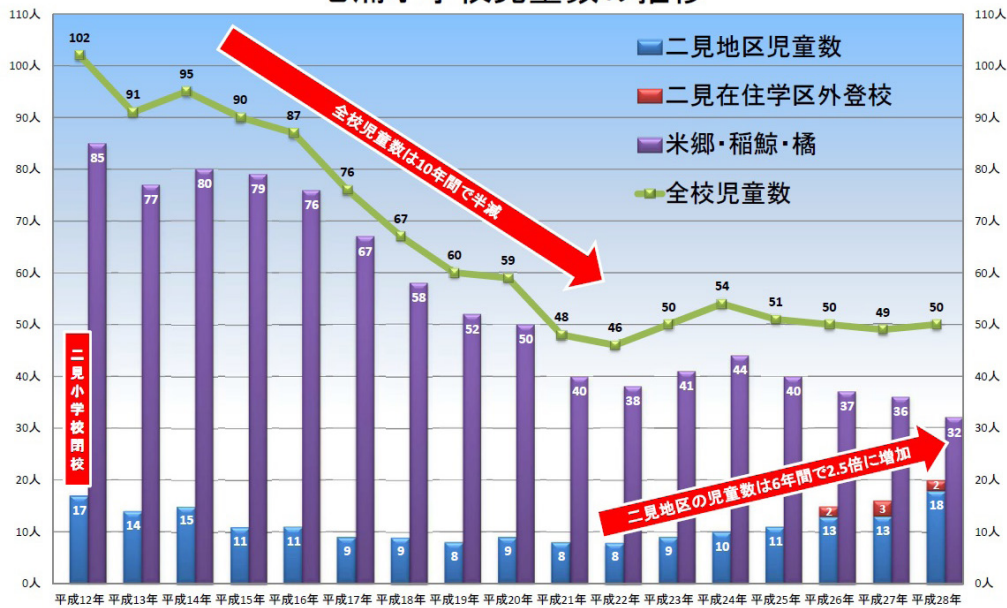


Table 4. Number of children (from the year 2000 to 2016 in one year intervals) in Nanaura Primary School. (Reprinted with permission from Tatsumi Sakamoto 2015, translated by author).

二見地区年代別人数グラフ

平成27年8月14日現在 合計 259名

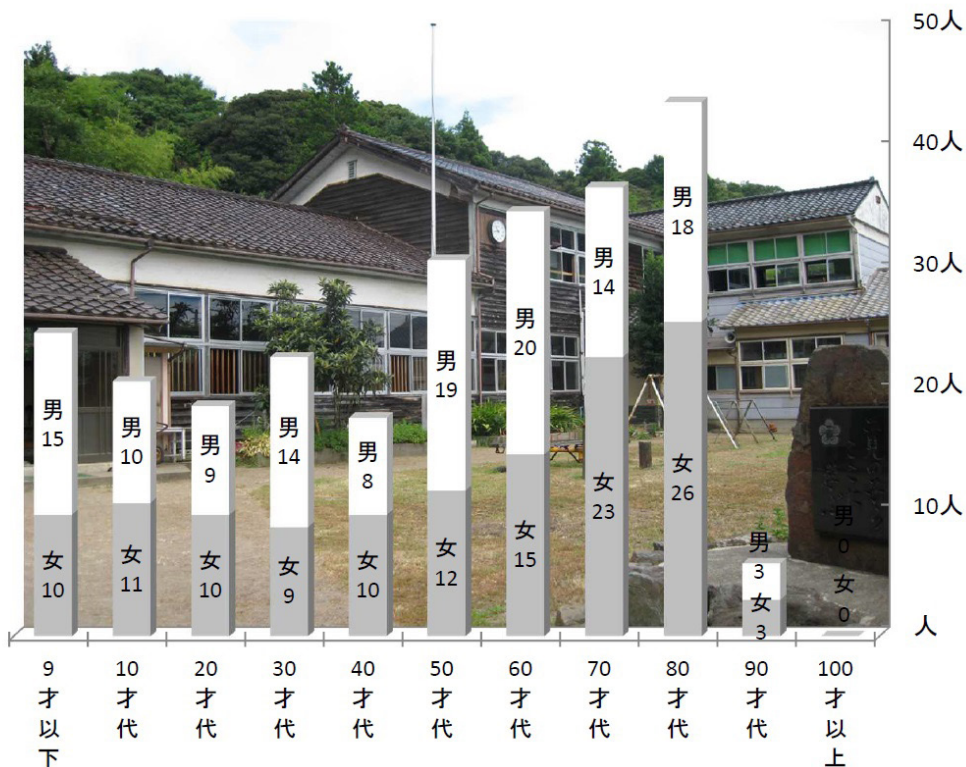


Table 5. Poster hanging in the village community centre. Number of male and female inhabitants according to age. Males are on top, females on the bottom. X-axis = age, y-axis=number of people. (Reprinted with permission from Tatsumi Sakamoto 2015).

11. GLOSSARY¹⁰⁶

<i>butsudan</i>	Buddhist household altar
<i>chōnan</i>	Eldest son
<i>dekasegi</i>	Working away from home
<i>furusato</i>	Home town, home village, invoking images of community and warmth
<i>ie</i>	Household as understood in the Meiji Civil Code: implies a stem family where the eldest son inherits his parents' property and money and as the head of the household is responsible for all family members including living and dead. Younger siblings either marry out or establish separate households. The <i>ie</i> system was legally abolished after the Second World War
<i>inaka</i>	Countryside, with a negative connotation of remoteness and backwardness
<i>jizō</i>	Guardian deity who looks after children and travellers, often in the form of a bald man decorated with red caps and bibs
<i>kasseika</i>	Revitalisation, used in reference to rural areas
<i>kidukai</i>	Consideration, regard towards others
<i>kōden</i>	Condolence money given at funerals by funeral guests (relatives, work colleagues and friends). The amount and donator is noted in a register
<i>kokusaika</i>	Internationalization
<i>mago</i>	Grandchild
<i>obon</i>	Buddhist feast of the dead, occurs in August, main holiday season where people return to their natal families
<i>shōshikōreika</i>	Decreasing birthrate and aging population
<i>shattā shōtengai</i>	Literally "shutter shopping street", refers to shopping streets lined with closed shops
<i>toki</i>	Red crested Ibis, almost extinct bird in Japan only living on Sado Island
<i>tomobataraki</i>	Dual income household, husband and wife both working

¹⁰⁶ Only words which occur more than once, or words which require further explanation are noted.