

A. No. 2 (b)

Population Trends  
of Japan in Tokugawa Era

(b)

Some Data of Vital Statistics

by

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It is needless to say that any survey of the static population in Tokugawa Era is greatly restricted by the lack of materials, but the difficulty of surveying the dynamic population in such era is still greater. No nation-wide census was, of course, undertaken, and even a survey concerning one Clan or one district was rare. Therefore, I propose to give here an outline of the population in some districts, in regard to which I have made a study, with a view to enabling an idea to be formed of the general trends in those days.

(1) Instance of the Tsushima Clan.

It is possible to calculate birth-rates and death-rates by the materials to be found in the "Memorandum" written by the aged Don Sueyama covering the period between the 4th Year of Teikyo (1687) and the 2nd Year of Seitoku (1712). According to this, the highest of birth-rates was 25.16 ~~out~~ per 1,000 population in the 3rd Year of Genroku, while the lowest was 16.76 in the 1st Year of Genroku; the general rate being slightly above or below 20, with the average standing at 20.81. The highest of death-rates was 33.31 in the 6th Year of Kanei, and the lowest was 15.21 in the 2nd Year of Genroku; the average being 22.74. The great difference between the two rates is explained by the aged Don to be due to (a) the prevalence of epidemics, and (b) the difference in the time of Shumon Aratame (ceremony of determining the religious sect one belongs to) in each year.

A general survey of these two rates reveals that there were many years in which the death-rate surpassed the birth-rate, and in consequence the total population decreased year after year; 31,000 of earlier days decreasing to 29,000 in the last stage. However, the population did not decrease so much as might be supposed from the difference between these two rates, for the people entering the territory exceeded generally the people going out of it.

In the description covering the period later than the 14th Year of Genroku, birth- and death-rates are given, classified in regard to three districts: Fuchu, Goson and Ginzan. Thus a rough calculation of the *specific* birth-rates characteristic of urban and rural areas can be obtained. This is a most valuable piece of data.

Year	Birth-rate (per one thousand)			Death-rate (per one thousand)		
	Fuchu	Goson	Ginzan	Fuchu	Goson	Ginzan
1701	18.07	21.09	8.02	23.65	21.03	30.49
1702	16.57	25.33	16.77	37.41	17.51	50.33
1703	9.78	25.5	27.49	22.68	24.13	44.67
1704	16.95	24.37	8.74	24.25	24.56	20.97
1625	17.62	28.59	29.87	26.67	15.49	33.39
1626	15.36	29.20	17.57	17.28	16.51	12.30
1627	24.75	24.91	28.57	23.18	15.89	37.50
1628	15.68	26.04	30.25	26.99	20.90	33.28
1629	13.98	26.36	10.75	45.30	23.78	52.22
1630	15.87	27.14	17.13	37.46	19.88	28.03
1711	12.31	22.45	9.67	20.94	32.83	40.32
1712	18.41	29.54	23.06	26.43	28.78	31.30

As will have been seen from the above table, the birth-rate of Goson exceeded that of two other districts in every year - a fact which shows that, in urban districts, late marriages were inevitable owing to the difficulty of getting married, as compared with rural districts. Then, the death-rate was more or less higher in Fuchu than in Goson, and in Ginzan the rate was remarkably high, even exceeding 50 per 1,000 in some years.

In short, Fuchu had an excess of deaths and Goson had an excess of births every year. This excess of births in rural areas enabled the population in the whole of the Tsushima Clan to make a narrow escape from suffering a sharp decline. It seems to me that these opposite trends

of birth- and death-rates in urban and rural districts may be taken as indicative of the general tendency all over the country in Tokugawa Era.

(2) Instance of the Nambu Clan.

By the investigations made by Bansen Takahashi, the population of this territory during approximately 100 years out of 130 years between the 9th Year of Kanei (1669) and the 3rd Year of Kyowa (1803), is available. Further, in regard to about 90 years of that period, the numbers of births and deaths are also known. It is very rare, indeed, that such particulars are ascertainable over so long a period. In the following table, figures are given, generally with intervals of ten years:

Year	Total Population	Birth	Death	Birth- rate	Death- rate
1681	307,641	4,469	3,493	14.52	11.35
1691	307,260	5,645	4,620	18.37	15.04
1701	345,938	5,253	3,032	15.18	8.76
1711	348,750	8,771	6,852	29.51	19.88
1720	366,577	8,741	6,770	23.84	18.47
1730	343,031	6,348	6,173	18.51	18.00
1740	367,403	7,857	5,176	31.39	14.09
1750	358,488	4,740	8,930	13.22	24.91
1760	355,935	6,113	4,058	17.17	11.40
1770	358,855	6,846	6,810	19.08	18.98
1780	357,705	8,215	8,225	22.97	22.99
1790	356,987	8,703	8,783	24.88	24.60
1800	357,810	11,293	11,913	31.56	33.29
Total average	-	-	-	20.07	19.80

It is difficult to see, even taking into consideration the circumstances in those days, that the normal figures of both birth- and death-rates were around 20. Is it not reasonable to assume that both normal rates in Kanei Era were 27 or 28, or possibly around 30? If so, these rates should be taken as comparatively high even in those days. Perhaps this may be regarded as proving that, as far back as Tokugawa Era, there were many births and many deaths in the Tohoku region.

#### A. General Survey of the Trends.

Besides the above-mentioned examples, several instances are available, such as those of Imafuku-mura, Kuma-gun, Kai Province, and other districts. An overall study of all these instances shows that, in general, the rates of both births and deaths were noticeably low; especially is it observable that the birth rate was exceedingly low. This was not by any means due to the insufficient reproductivity of women.

The first cause was that illegal abortion, i.e., intentional birth control, was practiced all over the country, a certain percentage of embryos being prevented from seeing the light.

The second cause was that people reported, for registration, births, not immediately after the event, but after a certain period of time, usually at the time of Shumon Aratame. As a result, those who has died prior to that registration were not counted. This custom, on the other hand, serves to explain the fact that the death-rate in those days was comparatively low.

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When these circumstances are taken into account, it will be seen that both birth- and death-rates in Tokugawa Era were actually higher by some percentage than the available figures disclose, this being especially the case with the birth-rate.

(End)