

Progress and Achievements: Five Years Activity of EAP Project

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1. The Start of the EAP Project

I would like to start first with an explanation of the formation and significance of this EAP (Eurasian Project on the History of Population and Family) Project, in particular, the significance of historical demography and international comparative research.

Looking at the events that led to the inception of this project, I recall the "Urbanization and Population Dynamics in History" symposium held in 1986 by the International Committee of Historical Demography of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP) at Keio University, my previous university. (The results of this symposium were published in book form under the same name as the symposium in 1995 by Oxford University Press.) Professor Tommy Bengtsson participated in the symposium, reporting from Sweden, and he is here again with us today. During the breaks at the 1986 symposium, Professor Bengtsson would visit my office, which gave me a chance to tell him about the research I was conducting. Seeing the *shumonkai-cho* religious faith register, one of the major sources of historical research material in Japan, as well as the methods we used to work with these materials, he stated that, being population register materials, the religious faith registers were very similar to historical materials from Sweden, and we realized that we would be able to do comparative research in the field of historical demography, something we both wanted to pursue in the future.

After that, I concentrated solely on historical demographic research in Japan until 1993. Then, I learned that Professor James Lee, who is also here today, had discovered population survey materials from the Qing Dynasty. I also learned that there were similar materials in Belgium and Italy, where research was moving forward. I therefore began making plans to establish an international organization to conduct comparative research and to organize and initiate projects involving Japan, China, Italy, Belgium, and Sweden, as well as domestic research in Japan.

These countries have different cultural and religious backgrounds—Japan and China have Buddhist societies, Italy and Belgium have Roman Catholic societies, and Sweden has a Protestant society. The primary historical materials from each country have a rather interesting connection. In Japan, we have the religious faith register, which was produced by the Central Japanese government for its strict anti-Christian policies. Italy has the *status animarum*, which was used to rally Catholic strength against the Protestants. And Sweden has the examination register, which was used by priests to check the ability of their parishioners to read

and understand the Bible. Each of these records was drafted as a result of the country's means of dealing with Christianity.

For this type of large-scale project, the Japanese Ministry of Education has a scientific research fund for creative fundamental research which provides a comparatively large amount of funding for a period of three to five years. I heard about this from Professor Tatemoto, and applied for a subsidy in 1993. Fortunately, we passed the document review and the interview with the Committee of Scientific Council, which judges the applications. We began working with a six-month preliminary subsidy in the fall of 1994, and in 1995, our organization got underway with what may be the most generous five-year research subsidy in Japan today. I would once again like to express my deep appreciation to all those who approved the research subsidy for this project.

2. The Historical Materials Used in the EAP Project

There are many interesting aspects to this project, one being that the historical materials used are population registers in the form of the family registry. Furthermore, we use only population registers that are available continuously for a long period of time (our goal is at least 50 years) for the same town, village or parish. Of course, between countries, and even within one country, there are differences in the details recorded and in the ways the records were recorded. The ways of counting a person's age and the calendar systems also vary. Further differences result from the cultural and geographic backgrounds of each area. However, it is a fact that the limiting of the historical materials used to this type of document offers us several very important advantages.

We see one such advantage when we compare the records we use with the parish registers, the primary historical demographic material source in Europe. These registers contain chronological records of events conducted by parish priests, such as the baptisms (taken as a birth), weddings, and funerals (taken as a death) of the parishioners. Our records include not only these types of events, but also tell us about the current conditions of the population. We are able to learn many things that parish records can not tell us, such as the size, makeup, and structure of the population of a town, village or parish, and the makeup and structure of families. In the latter half of the 1950s, the family reconstitution method developed by Louis Henry became an important cornerstone in establishing historical demography as a valid research field. Without the aid of computer systems like we have today, Henry transferred the information from the parish registries to individual slips of paper, traced marriages, births, and deaths using a married couple as one unit, entered information on family reconstitution forms, and successfully extracted indexes, primarily for marriages and births. Truly an achievement of great significance. Similar projects have been undertaken since Henry's work. In France, a large number of parish registries were being collected and used in studies. In England, the Cambridge Group is collecting and using parish registries from around the country. The achievements made with these materials have been nothing short of monumental, including "Population of England, Vol. 1" by E. A. Wrigley and Roger Schofield, a research project using registries from more than 400 parishes, and Volume 2 from the same authors, which involves a much more detailed investigation of 26 of the parishes used in Volume 1. I do not expect to see

any other research project surpass these achievements for some time.

However, research that relies solely on parish registries is unable to study the population at risk. The population at risk can not be determined for a population scale of any level, so projections must be made. Much more, there is absolutely no information about the age structure of the population, so it is impossible to directly create life tables or to measure the total fertility rates, which in turn yield age-specific mortalities and age-specific fertilities, fundamentals of demographic research. Furthermore, parish registries do not include information about movement, so absolutely no research can be done on population movement. The biggest problem, however, is that such registries actually contain no information about families. Therefore, such family reconstitution is not a reconstitution of a family as a symbiotic unit, but merely a reconstitution of married couples who had children. In actuality, a family reconstitution does not provide us with information about the membership structure of one family or household.

On the other hand, the historical materials we are using are population registers similar to today's family register. Such registers were created for many villages, towns, and parishes, and more than make up for the lacking of parish registries as historical materials. We assume that these records were produced annually, and that we are able to make use of such records (such conditions are often required of materials used in research). In these historical materials, records are made for each household and include the names of the household members, ages (although ages are not available on rare occasions), gender, and the relationship to the head of the household. The records also contain the reasons for changes, such as birth, death, marriage and relocation as well as the date the change took place (although not always included), the location of a relocation, etc. It is also not unusual to find records that contain information about the household as a whole in addition to individual member information, such as the relocation of a household and household assets, for example, cultivated land and livestock. Thus, the same documents contain both static and dynamic information about populations and households. We can see just how much more information is recorded in these historical documents than in the parish registries. This allows us to understand the population at risk and also easily determine fertility rates and death rates by age. One could even say that we are hit by a flood of information. As such, one vital factor determining the success of this project is just how well we are able to organize and arrange this information into something that can be used for comparison.

This brings us to the second advantage to using these types of historical materials—They allow, for each individual as well as each married couple, the tracing of a person's life from birth to death, or from the entry into to the departure from the historical documents, as well as the events that took place during a person's life and the internal and external conditions at the time of each event. As such, event history analysis became the *lingua franca* for EAP international comparative research. Multi-variable analysis, an equally important method, was used as the basis for analysis, and we are able to achieve a standardization for international comparison. This was extremely beneficial to us, and made it possible to perform numerically definitive comparative research rather than simply making vague

comparisons. However, the introduction of this type of statistical method also requires that the basic demographic statistics be extremely reliable and that data file construction be done accurately. Therefore, the researchers themselves must be very knowledgeable about statistics and computers, or work in collaboration with people who are.

It is also vital that we be able to obtain information about external variables. Food prices are the most important economic variable, but the decisive factor is the availability of a series of food prices for regions included in the same geographical economic area. As a result, historical demography is not really a field of demographic history, but rather, a field of demography.

The third advantage is that using this type of historical material virtually eliminates the border between historical demography and family history research. Of course, each of these disciplines has its own unique characteristics. However, by using common analytical methods and common historical materials, even though there are differences that result from using the individual as a unit and the family as a unit, the insurmountable barrier between the two disciplines is broken down. Of course, historical demographic research that does not use these types of methods and materials, research that uses macro-data, for example, as well as family history research based on qualitative materials, also have their own *raison d'être*. It is not our intention to say that the research being done by the EAP international comparative research group is the only acceptable method for historical demography and family history research.

3. Presentation of the Results of EAP Project Research

Concrete aspects of this project will be presented in the reports of today and tomorrow. International comparison work is done at research conferences held two or three times annually, with comparison studies done for each theme in the following order: mortality, fertility, nuptiality and migration. I would like to express the esteem I hold for Professor Tommy Bengtsson, who has participated in all of these meetings, reports, and discussions. We have also used some of these international conferences to hold sessions and present the results of our research. One highlight was the A session of the International Conference of Economic History in Madrid in August 1998. The conference chair as well as nearly all of the presenters were EAP members, and the report session on "Population and the economy: from hunger to modern economic growth" was truly exceptional. These proceedings will be published in the near future. Sessions were also held at other major conferences including SSHA, ESSHA, and PAA, and the "Family Structures, Demography and Population: A Comparison of Societies in Asia and Europe" at the International Congress of Historical Sciences to be held in Oslo in August 2000 will, in fact, be a platform for the announcement of the results of the EAP Project. With the ESF (European Science Foundation), we cosponsored A preparatory conference for this Oslo conference in Liege, Belgium in January 2000. The ESF Senior Secretary praised our collaborative research efforts as being a "best model" for this type of research.

The results of our research are being printed as working paper series, conference paper series, off-print series, etc., and distributed to project members and related

parties. More than 120 papers, including Japanese versions, have already been published. We are also currently making preparations to publish, through some university press, a full-scale report of the results of our international comparisons. We are even considering publishing a Japanese version on CD-ROM. Unfortunately, however, preparations are taking longer than we had anticipated, and the final version of Volume 1 is still not ready. As one might expect, the completion of the final manuscript involves very careful, time-consuming editing work to scrupulously select and unify concepts, styles and methods.

4. EAP Project Achievements

The individual, concrete achievements of the EAP Project will be presented in the various reports given at this conference. For now, I would like to give just an overview of the project achievements.

First, there is the achievement of a breakthrough in our challenge to conventional historical demographic research using parish registries. Conventional historical demography has certainly yielded valuable results related to nuptiality and fertility. However, this research was started by Henry and completed by Wrigley and Schofield as one cycle of research. In the future, this type of research will be extended to other areas, but it may be difficult to pioneer new methodologies and gain new results. The EAP Project, however, makes full statistical use of the abundant information contained in the historical documents being studied, opening new horizons in this field. We have achieved results that were unattainable with any other method—the understanding of the facts clarified through the event history analysis and multivariable analysis added to the databases created through the careful selection and strict formatting of historical documents. There are still some things to wrap up in completing the first volume, but I believe that when the first volume of the EAP Project results is published, the reader will get a sense that a new era in historical demography has begun.

The second achievement is the raising of the level of international comparative research so that it is now being done with strict statistical standards. This does present the problem of sacrificing factors of cultural and religious background, however, by using the same set of conditions to deal with each man and woman listed in the historical records, we are able to compare various demographic factors. In fact, the comparison of these factors actually indicates the cultural characteristics of each society. For example, if the cost of food rises, we are able to see which sector of the population reacts most sensitively to the change in terms of mortality, a factor that is determined by the culture of the society. These results even serve to stimulate other scholastic fields.

In these ways, we can say that our challenge of reinventing the existing field of historical demography, which places its foundation in the parish registries, is having great success.

5. Remaining Problems

There are, however, more than a few remaining problems.

First, the regions that can be studied are limited. The countries of Japan, China,

Italy, Belgium and Sweden are being studied, but historical records do not exist for every corner of each of these countries. In Japan, such records exist only for a portion of north-east and central Japan, and a very small portion of south-west Japan. We are only able to use historical records for a limited number of villages (less than one-one thousandth of the estimated 60,000 villages that existed throughout the country). Differences among regional areas within Japan are thought to have been large, so analysis performed for one area can not be taken as a research study of Japan as a whole. The same could be said for countries other than Japan as well. For China, we have been studying the Liaoning Province of the north-east, but there is a strong possibility that the population and family patterns were very different for central, southern, and inland areas of the country.

For Italy, our current research is limited to Venezia and the rural village of Madregolo in the northern part of the country and to the rural village of Casalguidi in the central part, therefore northwestern and southern regions are still unexplored territory for us. For Belgium, we are using population registers created in the latter half of the 19th century based on census statistics, and we expect to see some development with research using these records. At present, our work is concentrated primarily on Liege and Vervier in the Walloon region. We are interested in what the conditions were in the Flanders region as well, but that information is still unclear to us. In Sweden, work is concentrated around Scania at the southern end of the country, and the central and northern areas are not included in the current research.

As such, although we are studying five societies, these societies can not be taken as representatives of the conditions throughout their respective countries. Considering the strong regional characteristics that existed prior to modern times, we must remember that these regions represent merely one portion of each country, not the entire country. In order to ascertain conditions for an entire country, we must expand the regional areas covered by our research.

But above all, the question that we can not avoid is whether or not these five societies tell the story of "Eurasia". This project does, in fact, encompass the east and west end of the Eurasian continent, but does not include major regions between these two ends, such as South East Asia, the Indian Subcontinent, Islamic society, and Slavic society. We originally considered including Ottoman, Turkey in the study, but the conditions of the historical records for that area would not have allowed us to conduct a comparative study of the area and the other five societies in the study, so we abandoned the idea of including this area. Still, I would like to expect that, in the future, the study of these societies will be included in some form, and that we will be able to compile a study of Eurasian society that truly encompasses the geographic whole of the Eurasian continent.

The second problem is related to family history. As the historical documents we are using are population registers, it is, of course, also possible to use the documents in other types of studies. Also, population and family are two fundamental factors of which society is composed, and they have a deep interrelationship. As such, it seems like it would be easy to perform joint research on historical demography and family history. However, in reality, there are several

problems that prohibit such research from going as one might expect. The discipline of demography was established using the rigid methodologies of formal demography, and the application of statistical methods is an extremely easy matter. Historical demography is fundamentally a field of research strongly based in statistics, utilizing quantitative data, including macro-data or micro-data. Conversely, there are no concrete statistical methodologies for family history. One could go so far as to say that, with family history, results can be obtained with just qualitative data. Therefore, even though historical demography and family history utilize the same population registry materials, we can not necessarily conduct joint research covering both fields. If we tried limiting the objectives of family history research to the extraction of family patterns, it would still be extremely difficult to achieve any results without using the Hammel-Laslett model, even if corrections are made to the data. Please understand that I am not trying to make light of the significance of that model, in fact, if we can expand the EAP Project, we may be able to realize family patterns that truly encompass the entire scale of the Eurasian continent.

In these ways, the EAP Project is achieving results, making breakthroughs, and becoming recognized on an international level. However, speaking from the standpoint of the creator of this project, I feel that we may have been able to achieve even more results, even more quickly. We must expand the subject and geographic scope of our studies. As such, we are now just at the "end of the beginning" of this project.