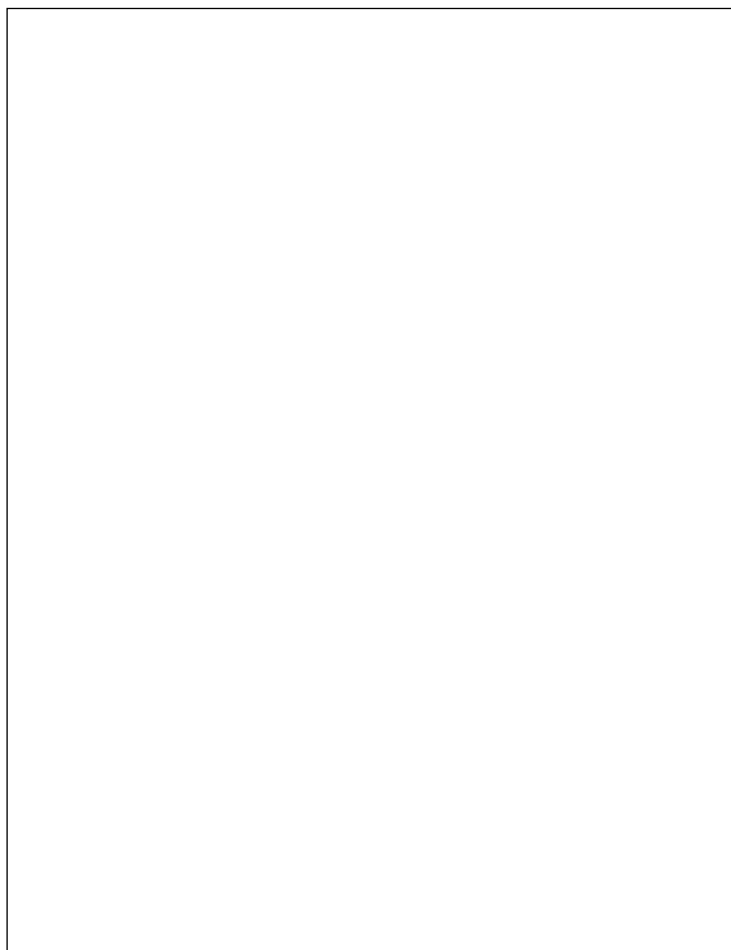


**Provided for non-commercial research and education use.  
Not for reproduction, distribution or commercial use.**



**This article appeared in a journal published by Elsevier. The attached copy is furnished to the author for internal non-commercial research and education use, including for instruction at the author's institution and sharing with colleagues.**

**Other uses, including reproduction and distribution, or selling or licensing copies, or posting to personal, institutional or third party websites are prohibited.**

**In most cases authors are permitted to post their version of the article (e.g. in Word or Tex form) to their personal website or institutional repository. Authors requiring further information regarding Elsevier's archiving and manuscript policies are encouraged to visit:**

**<http://www.elsevier.com/authorsrights>**



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## Asian Journal of Social Science

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/ajss](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/ajss)

**Fumie Kumagai, (2020) Municipal Power and Population Decline in Japan: Goki-Shichido and Regional Variations. Springer Singapore. 288 pages. ISBN: 978-981-15-4233-6. ISBN: 978-981-15-4234-3 (eBook)**

Japan is a society experiencing rapid fertility declining and population aging. The Japanese demographic challenges have attracted substantial attention among researchers all over the world (Coulmas, 2007; Matanle and Rausch, 2011). Departing from the earlier academic works on Japan's depopulating society, Fumie Kumagai's recent publication, *Municipal Power and Population Decline in Japan: Goki-Shichido and Regional Variations*, presents a pioneering approach to demographic studies by paying special attention to the regional variations at the municipal level and highlighting the importance of municipal power for revitalizing and reconstructing the population-declining Japanese society. The book thus makes a unique contribution to regional population analyses in the fields of regional demography, historical demography, and regional population policy research.

The theoretical framework employed in Fumie Kumagai's book for the analysis of regional variations by municipality and the significance of municipal power for regional revitalization in Japan is set forth by the *Goki-Shichido* (Five Home Provinces and Seven Circuits of ancient Japan) under the Ritsuryo code, and provinces under the Han dynasties. "Goki" (also called Kinai) refers to the Five Home Provinces surrounding the ancient capitals of Nara and Kyoto and "Shichido" refers to the provinces located along the seven main roads connecting various regions of Japan. The central concept of this book, i.e., municipal power (*Chiiki-ryoku*), is defined in Chapter 1 by historical, geographic, socio-economic, and demographic characteristics that make up municipal and regional variations in Japanese historical context and determines municipal population decline. The theoretical framework of *Goki-Shichido* and the central concept of *Chiiki-ryoku* help the book to offer a valuable historical perspective on Japan's population and community development.

The book successfully combines two dimensions of analyses from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives at the municipal level using historical, archival and current statistical data. On the one hand, the book presents clearly regional variations in population increase and decrease rates across different prefectures and municipalities thanks to a creative statistical analysis using demographic data on the national, regional, prefectural, and municipal levels, while combining other socioeconomic data. In particular, a quantitative characterization of population decline in Japan with a focus on regional variation and an identification of major explanatory factors are shown by presenting small area open data graphically with the help of different GPI statistical software programs including G-Census and EvaCva. It identifies "marriage power" as a significant factor for population sustainability. It reveals the population concentration tendency in large cities or in eight prefectures, rather than the well-known hypothesis of monopolar centralization in Tokyo. Population concentration in Tokyo is due to a high rate of social population increase rather than natural population increase. With its low birth rate and high death rate today, the population of Tokyo will decline in future. Therefore, analyses of population decline at the prefectural level in Japan is not appropriate, rather it is essential to look at

municipal power in order to find countermeasures used against Japan's population decline.

On the other hand, it offers a qualitative assessment of what constitutes 'municipal power' and presents its relations with regional/local revitalization as a means of addressing municipal population decline. Three elements constitute a strong municipal power: the accumulation of municipal capital including environmental conditions, municipal organizations, and people's activities within the municipality; people's autonomous relationships and their cooperation and organization within the municipality as well as their interests in their municipality. The qualitative dimension of analysis is based on extensive data gathered from historical archives, governmental papers, municipal policy documents, and NPO websites. In combining these two perspectives, this book reveals the impact of municipal power and socio-cultural identity of social capital in the region and provides informative and vivid images of Japan's demographic situation on the regional and municipal levels.

Four chapters (from Chapter 4 to chapter 7) of this book compare the municipal power of nine prefectures selected from the eastern (Tokyo and Aichi), western (Okinawa, Fukuoka, and Osaka, three prefectures with high population increase rates, and Shimane and Kochi, two prefectures with devastated population-sustaining power), and northeastern (Akita, Aomori, Iwate, and Yamagata) parts of Japan, discusses the historical development of each prefecture and municipality and examines the municipal and regional variations within these nine prefectures in their historical contexts. These four chapters together highlight significant regional variations within each prefecture and the importance of municipal power for revitalizing and reconstructing the population-declining municipalities. Even though the author is cautious about whether the above nine prefectures selected for this study are enough to validate the theoretical framework of *Goki-Shichido* for regional variations, this book makes a good start on the analysis of regional variations in the municipal power within the same prefecture and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the declining Japanese population.

The book not only presents a unique analysis of regional variations at the micro level, i.e., municipal level, but also goes further to highlight municipal power as a driving force for community revitalization and explore various new policies at the municipal level in confronting a shrinking society. The concluding chapter of this book argues that the revitalization of the community is necessary for Japan to increase its population and suggests that "smart municipalities" may become important forces for community building and the revitalization of Japanese society based on a number of successful cases of community revitalization through the active use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in small regional areas. Receiving immigrants and foreign workers may also be an useful strategy in the face of regional population decline, particularly for rural communities. The case of Japan studied in this book provides a good lesson for many other Asian societies facing similar problems of population aging and regional shrinkage, including South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Mainland China, and will encourage them to look into regional characteristics and variations on small

municipal levels and explore effective regional policies for community revitalization and population decline.

#### References

- Matanle, P., & Rausch, A. (2011). *Japan's Shrinking Regions in the 21st century: Contemporary responses to depopulation and socio-economic decline*. Amherst, NY: Cambria Press.
- Coulmas, F. (2007). *Population Decline and Ageing in Japan: The Social Consequences*. Abingdon, Oxford: Routledge.

Yanxia Zhang\*  
China Agricultural University, Beijing, China  
\* Corresponding author.  
E-mail address: [yanxiazhang@cau.edu.cn](mailto:yanxiazhang@cau.edu.cn)