

## Family Firms in Nineteenth Century Kyoto

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Abstract-- During the Tokugawa period, family firms in Japan were both families and firms with families acting like corporate entities and this phenomenon has been well addressed in the research literature. The population registers of Kyoto neighborhoods in the 1840s seem to reveal the beginning of the separation of the household from the business with some households comprised only of employees and the kin members of some households being only children. In this paper I address these households that may represent the transition from "family that is a business" to "family that owns a business".

### ***Introduction***

In the nineteenth century, family businesses commonly identified the family with the business, although the form and degree of this association could vary by culture and society.<sup>1</sup> The family was the business and the business was the family. In Japan this identification was common even for businesses that employed non-kin salaried workers including professional managers.

In business history there is quite a lot of research on how family businesses worked as businesses. There is also research addressing the ways laws regarding family practice such as inheritance constrained the choices of family businesses.<sup>2</sup> However, the ways family businesses acted as families and made use of customary family practices for business purposes have received less attention.

In family history, recent discussions have suggested that the Northwestern European family was unique, even implying that this unique system somehow was the reason the Industrial Revolution took place in Northwestern Europe first.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, family historians participating in this discussion also have not paid much attention to the families that were family businesses and whether the family system that formed the framework of the family business gave some advantage to the success of family businesses even though such businesses also played an integral role in industrializing economies.

In this study I address family businesses in Kyoto, Japan during the first half of the nineteenth century. This is Japan during the last part of the Tokugawa period before industrialization. I begin with a general picture of family structure in Kyoto and how Japanese family businesses acted as families. The main focus of this study addresses the practice of establishing young boys at ages 7-10 years old in households, separate from their parents or any other kin, that were branches of the family business. I investigate and discuss various possible explanations for this practice from both the family and business perspectives. I argue that this practice represented efforts to provide education, experience and inheritance to younger sons who would not succeed to headship and overall management of the larger family business, but would eventually grow to control their branches. At the same time, I argue that this practice began the separation of the family from the businesses and the transition to family owned, but not managed, businesses.

Research in Japanese family history has neither addressed nor even noted this practice, much less how it might have been related to family businesses. Scholars of Japanese business history have tended to focus on the labor hierarchy and the employment and integration of distant kin and nonkin into the management of Tokugawa family businesses. This integration is, of course, related to

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<sup>1</sup> Andrea Colli, *The History of Family Business*, (Cambridge University Press, The Economic History Society 2003) 41-45.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid* 36.

<sup>3</sup> See for example the discussion by Mary S. Hartman in *The Household and the Making of History: A Subversive View of the Western Past*, (Cambridge University Press 2004).

Japanese inheritance practices that allowed for flexibility and could stress capability over bloodline.<sup>4</sup> However, this research also has made no mention of the above practice. Yasuoka Shigeaki did note that the Mitsui family established an account upon the birth of a younger son or a daughter to save money for dowries, in the case of marriage or adoption into another family, or subsidizing a career outside of the business. However, Yasuoka makes no mention of the above practice suggesting that Mitsui may not have used it.

In this study I review how Japanese family businesses of the Tokugawa period acted as families and how these family practices were used to benefit the business. Then I investigate the details of the above practice as it appears in the data. Finally, I discuss the significance of this practice for family and business.

### **Data and methodology**

The main data for this investigation are the religious and population registers of Takoyakushi neighborhood and the official journal of the neighborhood. The registers of two other Kyoto neighborhoods, Sujichigaibashi and Seido, also provide data to support the discussion.

The official journal of Takoyakushi neighborhood is simply titled *Nikki*, or “Journal” with the dates Tenpo 12 (1841) year of the serpent *shōgatsu* (New Year) until year of the tiger (1842) third month second day. The cover page claims to be two volumes; the entire journal comes to 128 pages of standard size 20x20 *genkō yōshi*, or Japanese manuscript paper.<sup>5</sup> The author of the 1841 journal was Yashiro Jinbei, who also used the shop name (*yagō*) Kondaya, one of seven households in Takoyakushi that used this particular shop name. Jinbei worked at the neighborhood meeting-house (*machi kaisho*) where the neighborhood handyman (*machi yōnin*) lived. The journal tells of notices posted at the meeting-house and of residents coming to the meeting house to make inquiries regarding recent edicts.

Takoyakushi neighborhood is located on Muromachi Street the block south of Nijō Street. The main or stem branch of the Mitsui lineage businesses was located at the corner of Muromachi and Nijō streets on the northwest corner, right next door, and several of the Takoyakushi businesses were related to the Mitsui businesses.<sup>6</sup> Administratively, Takoyakushi was one of twelve neighborhoods in its neighborhood group called *machi gumi*. The entries in the journal can be roughly divided into two

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<sup>4</sup> See for example the work of Nakano Takashi, *Shōka dōzoku dan no kenkyū*, 2 vols, [Research on merchant houses and federations], (Tokyo: Miraisha 1978-81) or the long list of work by Yasuoka Shigeaki including “Kinsei Kyōto shōnin no kagyō to sōzoku,” [Family businesses and inheritance of early modern Kyoto merchants], *Kyōto shakai shi kenkyū*, [Research on the social history of Kyoto], (Kyoto: Hōritsu Bunkasha 1971).

<sup>5</sup> Takoyakushi chō, Yashiro Jinbei yaku chū, “Nikki”, Takoyakushi neighborhood journal, 1/1/1841-3/2/1842, Takoyakushi cho collection D2, Kyoto City Library of Historical Documents.

<sup>6</sup> I refer to the large organization of stem and branch households that are also a business as a lineage business. Nakano Takashi calls this same organization a “federation” in the English language abstract to his study *Shōka dōzoku dan no kenkyū*, (1978-81).

groups: 1) issues and events specifically concerning residents of Takoyakushi, and 2) issues and events concerning the larger neighborhood group. On the individual level, the journal recorded deaths and funerals as well as adoptions, although the entries could be vague. Moreover, the journal was used to keep track of where household heads were as well as moves, property sales and rentals. In this last respect, the journal also acted as a record for accounts and legal housing documents such as moves, sales and rental agreements.

The population registers for Takoyakushi neighborhood, called *Shūmon ninbetsu aratame chō*, provide evidence for the membership of households in the neighborhood and the timing of related events. The population registers of Kyoto were compiled in the ninth month of each lunar year and record residents in households in their relations to the household head including kin, fictive kin and non-kin relations. The Kyoto registers, however, do not record age until 1843 when they also begin recording birth province and temple of registration. Registers from the twenty year period 1843-1862 also include a second month update registration of residents who entered the neighborhood since the previous ninth month registration and notations either written or pasted into the registers of other entries to and exits from the data such as births, deaths, moves, marriages, divorces of spouses or other family members, and other reasons for entering or exiting the data. In addition to the above demographic information, the registers record the house name, or business name, of each household and residential information. The residential information includes the name and address of the landlord, if the housing is rented, or if this household shares a residence with another household. All other households are identified as owned.

The extant population registers for Takoyakushi neighborhood are for the years 1841-1853 with 1842 missing. There is another register listing only the householder and children of the households in the neighborhood each month in 1842. This second register was the result of a reaction to foundlings occasionally appearing in the neighborhood. The registers do not record age until 1843, so the register of 1841 is not generally useful for demographic analysis while the 1842 register only records children.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, having these registers allows backward calculation of age and a view at the content of the households in the neighborhood. For example, the population register for 1841 identifies Hishiya Etsusuke as absentee head of one of the households in the neighborhood that otherwise consists only of servants. Etsusuke also appears in the registry of children where he is listed as household head age seven and he is present as head in the 1843 register with his age recorded as eight, making Etsusuke's

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<sup>7</sup> Takoyakushi chō, "Ninbetsu aratame chō", Population register, 1842, Takoyakushi collection J2-3, Kyoto City Library of Historical Documents. The title page includes the explanation "Sutego tabi tabi kore ari sourou ni tsuki on hitori (?) nagare kore ari," [Foundlings appear frequently, so we have this investigation]. This particular register requires the householder to witness the presence or absence of own children in his household each month during the year as well as the age of the children. No other household members are listed.

age as six in 1841.<sup>8</sup> Later registers have other cases of young boys listed as both head and the only kin members of households in the neighborhood, so any information that the journal can provide regarding these children or their households will be important to understanding their situation.

Takoyakushi neighborhood is located in the commercial center of the city at that time. The neighborhood is located on Muromachi Street one block south of Nijō Street. The main branch of the Mitsui business was located on the northwest corner of the intersection of Muromachi and Nijō streets in the next neighborhood north, suggesting that this is the most affluent neighborhood in the data. The registers claim 46 physical households and the neighborhood averages 45.1 households per year. The average household size was 6.0 with households ranging 1-34 persons in size and including several large businesses with many employees living on site. The average population was 310 people per year and the probability that a resident was living in housing owned by the family was 0.52. The collection contains registers for 11 years of the data period 1843-1853 with no gaps and provides 3795 observations for analysis of which 1852 person years are for servants or 49 percent, another factor revealing the affluence of the households in this neighborhood.

Seidō neighborhood is located near the center of the city and contains a number of large family businesses employing many servants, but does not appear quite as affluent as Takoyakushi. The neighborhood is the city block on Ogawa Street between Sanjō Street to the south and Anenokoji Street to the north. The registers claim that the neighborhood contains 23 physical households, but the neighborhood averages 20 households per year during the data period with a maximum of 26 households and a minimum of 8 households each year. The collection includes registers for every year 1818-1866 and the register for 1868 providing an almost unbroken record of the households in the neighborhood. The registers for the 1843-1862 data period provide 2292 observations for analysis of which 661 observations are for servants or 29 percent. The average household size was 3.7, with households ranging 1-11 persons and an average population of 119 people per year. The probability that a resident was living in housing owned by his household was 0.51.

Sujichigaibashi neighborhood is located in the Nishijin silk textile district in the northwest part of the city. The neighborhood consists of the households on Omiya street one block north and south of the intersection with Teranouchi street. The registers claim that the neighborhood contains 58 physical households, but the neighborhood averages 85.3 households per year during the data period. The collection contains the registers for eleven years of the data period—1843-45, 1848-51, 1856-57, 1860, and 1862—providing 3195 observations for analysis with only 8 observations provided by servants. The average household size was 3.1 with households ranging 1-7 people per year. The average population was 264 people per year and the probability that a resident was living in housing owned by

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<sup>8</sup> Age during the Tokugawa period did not represent time elapsed from birth as in the Western system, but rather the calendar year of life. Thus a newborn child is in his first calendar year and reckoned age one. When the lunar New Year came, he would enter his second calendar year and be age two although he might be only a few weeks old according to elapsed time Western reckoning.

his household was 0.35.

The population registers of Seido and Sujichigaibashi neighborhoods record some households that have small children listed as head of household, even when there were other adult males in the household. These listings may be related to the practice found in Takoyakushi neighborhood mentioned above, so I include them in the investigation and discussion. However, I have addressed headship and succession in these two neighborhoods elsewhere, so the main focus of this study is Takoyakushi.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Tokugawa family businesses as families***

Inheritance laws and practice are undeniably a major factor in how family businesses survive over time. In a system of partible and egalitarian inheritance, like that found in northwestern Europe for example, each new generation must find a way to avoid breaking up the business by continuing as a partnership, compensating heirs not interested in participating in the business or some other strategy.<sup>10</sup>

As a stem family system, Japanese families generally followed a form of single inheritance with one child bringing a spouse home to co-reside with the parents and ultimately succeeding to headship. Japanese families also showed a definite preference for choosing to pass headship to the eldest son. However, even outside the business context, the system was quite flexible and various criteria, including ability and will to succeed to headship, influenced heir choice. When the eldest son was incapable or unwilling, he could be skipped over in favor of a younger son or an adopted son including the spouse of a daughter.<sup>11</sup> Nephews were also an important alternative when there was no son available or the son was incapable or unwilling. The Kyoto population registers and documents from Kyoto businesses also reveal headship succession passing through a daughter to a son-in-law or to an adopted son. Every effort, however, was made to ensure that an adopted heir recruited from outside the patriline would marry a woman descended from the patriline.<sup>12</sup> In this sense, inheritance in Japan was bi-lineal in that headship could pass through either a male or a female heir. For example, when Sakuzaemon, the head of the Fukui family business, adopted an heir, the heir married Sakuzaemon's niece, the daughter of Sakuzaemon's sister. Thus headship passed through two women to the adopted son and guaranteed through the female line that the next generation would be directly descended from

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<sup>9</sup> Mary Louise Nagata, "Headship and Succession in Early Modern Kyoto: the role of women," *Continuity and Change*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (2004), 1-32.

<sup>10</sup> Doreen Arnoldus, *Family, Family Firm and Strategy: Six Dutch Family Firms in the Food Industry, 1880-1970*, (Amsterdam: NEHA 2002).

<sup>11</sup> For comparison of the heirs in two rural villages in different regions of Japan see Mary Louise Nagata, "Balancing Family Strategies with Individual Choice: Name Changing in Early Modern Japan," *Japan Review*, No. 11, 1999, pp. 145-166.

<sup>12</sup> Mary Louise Nagata, "Headship and Succession in Early Modern Kyoto: the role of women," *Continuity and Change* 19 (1), 2004, pp. 1-32.

the Fukui bloodline.<sup>13</sup> In another example, an adopted son and heir had his daughter marry the much younger natural son of his adoptive father thereby ensuring both that the family business would remain within the bloodline and that his own descendents would also be part of the family.<sup>14</sup>

Evidence also suggests that the heirs who joined the family through adoption or marriage did not gain ownership, even though as successors to headship they gained management and control. For one, they could not unilaterally decide to then pass on family assets or headship to someone outside of the family without the agreement of the wider kin group.<sup>15</sup> In many cases these outside heirs were recruited as the most capable managers of the family business. In some cases, however, an adopted head retired as soon as his son was born. These cases look as though the family recruited an adopted head only to produce the next generation.<sup>16</sup>

Succession could take place either after the death of the former head or with the retirement of the former head. Heads of family businesses in Kyoto tended to retire instead of retaining headship until death when possible. By choosing to retire, they could oversee the succession process, advise the new head in his duties or take action if the new head turned out not to be as capable or willing as originally planned. Even when the early death of the former head prevented him from overseeing the succession process, his widow often took up the task.<sup>17</sup> If the new head did not work out, then another mechanism of the family system could be used to address the problem. Divorce was relatively common and was not limited to severing the ties of marriage, but also included severing other family ties. When a family member was divorced from the family, he or she received a cash settlement representing his or her share of the joint ownership.<sup>18</sup> When an outside member of the family, someone who joined the family through marriage or adoption, was divorced, then the dowry he or she brought to the family was returned with interest.<sup>19</sup>

The Japanese stem family also could expand by establishing branch households if the family had enough land or assets to split and support new households. In this sense, inheritance could be partible.

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<sup>13</sup> Mary Louise Nagata, "Headship and Succession," 2004. Mary Louise Nagata, "Mistress or Wife? Fukui Sakuzaemon vs. Iwa, 1819-1833," *Continuity and Change* (18) 2, 2003, pp. 1-23.

<sup>14</sup> Mary Louise Nagata, "L'adoption à Kyôto aux XVIIe et XIXe siècles," Jérôme Bourgon and Guillaume Ladmiral transl., *Ebisu* 31, Automne-Hiver 2003, Maison Franco-Japonaise, Tôkyô, p. 59-83.

<sup>15</sup> Katakura Hisako, "Edo machikata ni okeru sozoku," [Inheritance among Edo townsmen], in Hayashi Reiko et al. Kinsei Josei Shi Kenkyukai (eds), *Ronshu kinsei josei shi*, [Collection of essays on the history of early modern women], (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan 1986), pp. 177-218. Also see Makita Rieko, "Kinsei Kyôto ni okeru josei no kasan shoyû," [Female property ownership in early modern Kyoto], in the same volume pp. 219-255.

<sup>16</sup> Mary Louise Nagata, "Headship and Succession in Early Modern Kyoto."

<sup>17</sup> Mary Louise Nagata, "Headship and Succession in Early Modern Kyoto."

<sup>18</sup> Kagawa Takayuki, "Kinsei shônin no dôzoku soshiki," [The organization of early modern merchant lineages], Asao Naohiro et al. (eds), *Nihon no shakai shi: shakaiteki sho shûdan*, [Social history of Japan: various social organizations], 8 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten 1988), VI, 173-180. Mary Louise Nagata, "Mistress or Wife?" 2003.

<sup>19</sup> Mary Louise Nagata, "L'adoption à Kyôto aux XVIIe et XIXe siècles." Harald Fuess, *Divorce in Japan*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 2004).

Affluent farm families would subsidize a younger son, a daughter with her spouse, or even a servant to establish such a branch, often together with land development and the expansion of their holdings. The combination of stem and branch households, often organized in a hierarchy with branches and sub-branches, was called a *dōzoku*. Family businesses used this stem and branch framework to establish branch breweries, branch shops, or other branches of the larger business that could either fulfill some specific function such as transport or invest in a new direction.<sup>20</sup> When a head retired to oversee the succession he had two options. He could continue to reside in the household with the new head or he could take over or establish a branch of the business. Examples of both types of retirement appear in the population registers of Seido neighborhood.<sup>21</sup>

The inheritance practices of the early modern Japanese family were well suited to ensuring that the most capable person was in charge of the business. The question remains, however, why the family would be willing to pass over a natural son in favor of an adopted son. The answer is that the only thing being inherited was headship, not ownership. The definition of inheritance changed from headship, meaning management and partial control, to inheritance of assets in 1878 as part of the process of compiling the new Meiji Civil Code.<sup>22</sup> Until then the evidence suggests that ownership was regarded as joint. How much say the larger kin group had in business decisions has not received much attention in the research literature, but there is no doubt that they had some power.

In some larger businesses organized on the lineage or *dōzoku* framework like the Konishi or Hakutsuru sake breweries, the head of the lineage and business was one member of a council comprised of his wife, the heads of the various branches and the retired head. The branch heads also could and did include nonkin managers.<sup>23</sup> However, even when the business was not so large that it was organized with a management council, there are signs that the larger kin group exercised a certain amount of control. For example, in the eighteenth century when the Mitsui family believed the head of the lineage business was misusing funds for pleasure to the extent that he could damage the business, they acted to disown him.<sup>24</sup> In the nineteenth century, when Souemon, the retired head of the Fukui family business in Kyoto tried to disinherit the new head who had been his adopted heir, the larger kin group represented by Souemon's sister, stepped in to support the young head and block the

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<sup>20</sup> Mary Louise Nagata, *Labor Contracts and Labor Relations in Early Modern Central Japan*, (London and New York: Routledge Press 2005), pp. 25-27.

<sup>21</sup> Mary Louise Nagata, "Headship and Succession in Early Modern Kyoto."

<sup>22</sup> Tetsuka Yutaka, 'Meiji juichi nen minpo soan hensan' [Compilation of the 1878 draft of the Meiji civil code] in *Tatekawa hakase kanreki kinen ronbun shu: Nihon shi hen*. [Collection of essays commemorating the sixtieth birthday of Doctor Hasekawa: Japanese History], (Tokyo: Nakagawa Insatsu, 1957), 835-858. Mary Louise Nagata, "Mistress or Wife?" 2003.

<sup>23</sup> Mary Louise Nagata, *Labor Contracts and Labor Relations in Early Modern Central Japan*, (London and New York: Routledge Press 2005) pp. 23-30.

<sup>24</sup> Kagawa Takayuki, "Kinsei shōnin no dōzoku shoshiki," [The organization of early modern merchant lineages], Asao Naohiro *et al.* (eds), *Nihon no shakai shi: shakaiteki sho shūdan*, [Social history of Japan: various social organizations], 8 vols, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten 1988) VI, 173-80.

disinheritance/divorce.<sup>25</sup>

Japanese family businesses of the early modern period also assimilated employees at the managerial level. Employees did not need to marry or adopt into the family to rise in management. The Japanese family had already developed mechanisms for establishing nonkin branches in an exchange of labor for support agreement in the late sixteenth century and the larger businesses extended that precedent. This practice adapted to business needs allowed for the training and promotion of professional managers that could then be assimilated into the larger framework.<sup>26</sup>

In summary, the Japanese family system included practices of inheritance, retirement, marriage, adoption and divorce as well as the stem and branch organization that were adapted to benefit the needs of business. In many ways the Japanese family functioned as a corporate unit that provided a flexible framework for business. Since ownership rested with the larger kin group whether they were involved in management or not, outsiders could be recruited and trained for management and assimilated into the family for the purpose of benefiting the organization as a whole without compromising the identity of the family with the business. Nevertheless, this flexibility also allowed for the possibility of transforming the family as business to a family that owns a business. At first glance, the population registers of Takoyakushi neighborhood in Kyoto seem to reveal the beginning of this process with a household that listed only servants. The next section focuses on this household as it appeared 1841-1853.

### ***A servant only household?***

The Kyoto population registers list every resident first by religious (defined as Buddhist) sect, and then by household under the household head. In the 1841 register for Takoyakushi neighborhood there are six servants that are not listed in a household, but simply identified as members of the household of Hishiya Etsusuke. The detailed listing identifies two *tedai* who are management employees or clerks, Teikichi and Yasōkichi; two apprentices Komakichi and Kajirō; and two maids Yae and Iwa. Hishiya Etsusuke, the head of household, is not listed in the register. Since businesses were normally identified by the combination of house name plus headship name, Hishiya Etsusuke was the name of the business and the name of the absentee head. Etsusuke's absence implies that this was primarily the business name and the head was living elsewhere, perhaps at the stem household of the business with

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<sup>25</sup> Hishiya Tomi, Hayashi Yōzō, Hishiya Uhei *et al.*, [to Nakai Okajirō sama], "Osore nagara negai tatematsuru kōjō sho," *Notes verbales* regarding the headship succession of Fukui Sakuzaemon, 10/1832, Kyō Masu Za Fukui Sakuzaemon Collection No. 833, Kyoto City Library for Historical Documents. This document is the first of twelve documents in the Fukui collection in which Tomi represents the wider kin group with respect to this case.

<sup>26</sup> Ōtō Osamu, *Kinsei nōmin to ie, mura, kokka*, [Early modern villagers and the ie, village and national polity], (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan 1996), p. 56. Mary Louise Nagata, *Labor Contracts and Labor Relations in Early Modern Central Japan*, 2005.

this household representing a branch.

In 1842 and 1843 Takoyakushi neighborhood kept a listing of children belonging to households in the neighborhood that was checked each month with the household head affixing his signature chop each month. Hishiya Etsusuke appears at age seven in the 1842 register from the fifth lunar month where he is also identified as head of household (*tōshu*). Moreover, Etsusuke continued to be listed as head of household until the end of the extant run 1843-1853. He was also the only family member of the household until Sadajirō, identified as Etsusuke's father, appeared in 1847 when Etsusuke was age twelve. Etsusuke remained household head even after his father moved in and, at the age of eighteen, he served in an administrative position for the neighborhood in 1853. Hishiya Etsusuke and the Hishiya business is therefore a puzzle with many questions. What was its status in 1841? Why would a young child be listed as head of this business? Who actually had the responsibility? Why would a young child be living in a household alone except for servants when family was available to live with him? Where was his father Sadajirō before 1847 and why did he not take up headship when he appeared?

The 1841 journal contains four entries for Hishiya. On the twenty-sixth day of the lunar New Year (*shōgatsu*), the first neighborhood meeting of the year was finally held after much delay. Mukadeya Jinzaemon and Hishiya Sanzaemon attended the meeting with Sanzaemon arranging the function.<sup>27</sup> There is no further mention of Hishiya Sanzaemon in the Takoyakushi data and he never appears in the population register. The next entry for Hishiya in the journal, however, suggests that Sanzaemon may have died.

On the eighth day of the seventh month the journal records that there had been a death among Hishiya Etsusuke's relatives (*Hishiya Etsusuke sama go shinrui fukō ni tsuki*), so they would hesitate to require that household to participate in some unspecified activity. The entry previous to this one was dated the fifth day of the month and referred to a vermilion seal that would be in the neighborhood office for several more days. The entry following the death in Etsusuke's family refers to interest that must be paid on money set aside for aid.<sup>28</sup>

The third entry for Hishiya in the journal is on the eleventh day of the tenth month as the third of three items. This item is Hishiya Etsusuke's registration of the intent for construction, "*Hishiya Etsusuke sama go fushin nasare sourou yoshi on todoke kore ari sourou koto.*" No further information is provided.<sup>29</sup>

The fourth and final entry for Hishiya in the 1841 journal is as short as the previous ones. On the second day of the twelfth month, Hishiya Etsusuke registered that he (his business?) had begun weaving long dust cloths that day, "*Hishiya Etsusuke sama konnichi yori naga zoukin on ori no yoshi todoke kore ari.*" Again, no further information is provided.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Yashiro Jinbei, "Nikki," 1/26/1841, p. 10.

<sup>28</sup> Yashiro Jinbei, "Nikki", 7/5-7/12/1841, p. 50.

<sup>29</sup> Yashiro Jinbei, "Nikki", 10/11/1841, p. 67.

<sup>30</sup> Yashiro Jinbei, "Nikki", 12/2/1841, p. 102.

The above four entries do not seem to provide much information regarding Etsusuke's situation or the questions we have asked about him in any obvious way. However, there are other clues. Etsusuke is only referred to as head of the business after there is a death in the family, possibly of Sanzaemon who was apparently the former head of the household and business. None of the entries required Etsusuke himself to witness the entry, yet refer to him as registering some activity at the neighborhood office. Etsusuke is always the person mentioned, not some representative, as is the case in other entries when the head of household could not perform or attend to his duties personally. On this point, Jinbei's son Hisatarō was also expected to witness a transaction even though Hisatarō was only age ten at the time. A representative witnessed in Hisatarō's place because he was ill, not because he was young.

Although the lack of family members of the household in 1841 was unusual, Etsusuke's situation as a child who became acting head of household was not unique. There are other households where the only family members are children or where small children are listed as head of household. Examining these households may provide clues to Etsusuke's situation at Hishiya.

### ***Children as head of household?***

The registers for Seido neighborhood, a few blocks away from Takoyakushi, contain four households headed by boys under the age of fifteen. In three of the four households, the head is indeed the eldest male in the household. Heijirō age four, for example, became head of the family business Hishiya when his father died in 1854.<sup>31</sup> The other members of the household were his mother Kiku age thirty-three and his elder sister Kame age five. On the other hand, Tsunejirō enters the data at age eight as head of Surugaya even though both of his parents lived with him. The registers for Sujichigaibashi neighborhood in the weaver's district confirm this pattern as well as revealing some differences. The Sujichigaibashi registers contain twenty-four households with heads ages fifteen or younger. Nine of these very young heads, or more than one third of the households, had both parents living in the household and sometimes even grandparents, aunts and uncles. Moreover, the registers for some households record fathers retiring in favor of their infant or very young sons. In these cases, the father was likely an in-married son-in-law and headship passed to the next generation as soon as possible to keep headship within the bloodline.

Takoyakushi neighborhood also has four households where the head of household is age ten or younger. We have already examined Hishiya Etsusuke above. Since his father moved in when Etsusuke was twelve, he clearly was not alone by default. The other three households in the data reveal that Etsusuke's situation was not unique. I address the remaining households in order of appearance in the data.

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<sup>31</sup> "Hishiya" meaning "Water chestnut house" was a common house and business name at the time. This Hishiya and Etsusuke's Hishiya may not have any relation.

The household of Jinkōya Tokujirō appears in the Takoyakushi registers 1843-1846. Tokujirō, who was age six in 1843, lived with his grandmother, his mother, and two sisters as well as 2-4 servants and a maternal uncle who appeared in 1844. The servants always included one clerk or management employee, 1-2 apprentices and sometimes a maid. The clerk is identified as a *tedai*, a term used for a skilled employee who has completed some kind of apprenticeship, signaling that Jinkōya was some kind of business, but no further information is available. Tokujirō seems to have been listed as head of household because there were no other males in the patriline available to take up the task.

Izumiya Usaburō appeared in 1845, and he seemed to be in a situation similar to Etsusuke. Usaburō's household solely consisted of Usaburō age ten and five servants in 1845. In 1846 he changed his name to Junsaburō and employed only three servants. In 1847 Junsaburō age eleven was alone with no servants and no kin, but his grandmother appeared in 1848 and the registers continue to record them living together until the end of the data period in 1853. However, Junsaburō was not truly living alone. According to the registers, his household shared the residence of Harimaya Genbei, who in 1845 was living with his mother, wife, daughter and four servants. In fact, three of the five servants employed by Izumiya Usaburō in 1845 had previously been employed by Genbei.

Since Usaburō was never listed as a member of Genbei's household, we cannot know their relation, if any. Genbei had a son Genkichi living in his household from 1848 until 1850 when Genkichi, then age fifteen, left to study at a school by a temple just outside of Kyoto. Except for the two years that some of Genbei's employees were listed as Usaburo's employees, Genbei employs eight or more servants of which 3-4 are skilled *tedai*, 2-3 are apprentices, and 3-4 are maids.

The fourth child listed as head of household in Takoyakushi is Kondaya Takejirō. In this case, the registers provide a little more information. Takejirō was born in 1841 as a younger son of Kondaya Jinbei. At that time the household consisted of Jinbei (31), his mother Kane (52), wife Chiu (29), son Hisatarō (11), daughter Sumi (6), Takejirō (1), Jinbei's sister Hisa (age unknown), and Chiu's sister Rui (22), as well as twenty-seven employees. The Kondaya business was related to the Mitsui group as textile brokers and was one of the largest businesses in Takoyakushi neighborhood. In 1850, when Takejirō was ten, he and his cousin Sōtarō age eight were established in a separate household together with two maids. Neither of the maids appeared in Jinbei's household before this year, so they must have been employed specifically to live with these two boys. Certainly Jinbei went to the trouble of finding a woman of experience to care for his son. One of the maids, Mitsu, was fifty-nine and the other, Mume, was twenty-four. This household of four people remained unchanged until the end of the data period.

In summary, Tokujirō's household was apparently a business, but he also had his mother, grandmother and maternal uncle living with him. So Tokujirō was not alone with his employees and his mother or grandmother likely ran the business while training him. Usaburō, however, began alone with his employees, but was living as a boarder in a larger household/business. Eventually, his landlord seems to have taken over the management of Usaburō's business, if he had one, and Usaburō (as

Junsaburō) lived with his grandmother. Takejirō and his cousin, however, were living without any adult kin in their household. Their family lived nearby, practically across the street, but not in the same household. What was the purpose of establishing them in a separate residence?

Returning to Etsusuke, he took over headship from his grandfather and the journal reveals that he was no figurehead, but actually performed the duties of head. However, his youth suggests that someone must have been assisting or advising him. Since he had no kin living with him, the best candidates are the servants or employees. In 1841, Etsusuke lived with two *tedai*, two apprentices and two maids. The 1843 listing reveals that one *tedai* and one maid were rather older than the norm for live-in positions. Live-in employment tended to be a life-cycle activity with most *komono* apprentices ages 11-18, most *tedai* ages 16-26 and most maids 15-23. Seishichi, the *tedai* living with Etsusuke, was thirty-eight years old, suggesting that this *tedai* was teaching or guiding Etsusuke in his duties as head.<sup>32</sup> Seishichi remained in the household until 1851 when, at age forty-six, he moved out to establish a branch of the business. By that time Etsusuke's father was living in the household and Etsusuke was already sixteen.

Clearly, these children did not become head of household by default because they were orphaned and there was no one else available for the position. Instead, their headship of independent households was planned. The next section reconsiders their situation in relation to the framework of the Japanese stem family and family business.

### ***Discussion and conclusion***

Kyoto family businesses showed a preference for headship to pass to the eldest son. At the same time, whoever became head needed to be well qualified for the position. This meant that the eldest son needed to be trained for the position. The example of Etsusuke above suggests that this training could start quite early, if not immediately. However, there was always the possibility that the eldest son would not be able to fulfill the position and the family would need to find someone else. In this case, the obvious candidate for reasons of bloodline would be a younger son. For this reason, younger sons also needed to undergo the necessary training to be viable alternatives. Yet this could also cause conflict within the family if they remained in the same household.

There were also other concerns. Even if they did not succeed to headship, the non-inheriting sons needed to be taken care of. They could marry into another house or apprentice in another business. In either case, however, they would take assets of the business with them as dowry. Another possibility was to establish these younger sons in a branch of the business. That way, they could be trained to

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<sup>32</sup> In 1841, the senior *tedai* living in the household is Teikichi. While Teikichi and Seishichi may have been different people, changing one's personal names was not uncommon in Japan at this time and Seishichi's age together with his later establishment of a branch both suggest that he had been employed by Hishiya for a while before becoming Etsusuke's mentor.

eventually take over the branch and then would be available as alternative heirs in case the eldest son was disqualified. This seems to be the most likely explanation for Takejirō and his cousin. Since the Kondaya business was textiles, the two maids that lived with them may also have trained them in weaving or other aspects of textile manufacture. Junsaburō was also likely studying with Harimaya Genbei. Junsaburō's household was kept separate because he was studying with rather than apprenticing to and therefore joining the business of Genbei. Moreover, the examples of Takejirō and Junsaburō also suggest that these younger sons usually began their training outside the household around age ten. The younger ages of Etsusuke and Tokujirō seem to be more the result of mortality than the plan of the family.

Etsusuke's situation is a bit more puzzling because he succeeded his grandfather Sanzaemon even though his father Sadajirō was available. Moreover, his father did not take on headship even after moving in with Etsusuke. The most likely explanation here is that Sadajirō was an in-marrying son-in-law. However, this cannot be the entire story. There is no sign of Etsusuke's mother in the data and there is the question of where Sadajirō was before he appeared in 1847. Of the various possible explanations, the most likely and least dramatic is that the Hishiya business had another branch and Sadajirō had been there. Putting all of the pieces together suggests the following picture.

Kyoto businesses tried to pass headship by retiring so that the former head could oversee the succession process and advise the new head. While some retired heads continued to live in the household with the new head, some established a new household or took over a branch shop.<sup>33</sup> Etsusuke was likely a younger son designated to take over the retirement shop of his grandfather Sanzaemon. Meanwhile, Sadajirō remained at the stem business with Etsusuke's elder brother until the brother was established as head. Then Sadajirō moved in with Etsusuke.

There is also another aspect to this pattern. The employees charged with mentoring these younger members of the family also gained independent management experience and were effectively in charge. In Seishichi's case, he was rewarded with establishment in his own branch. At the same time, while they were mentoring the young family members, they too were effectively assimilated into the family business while remaining employees. In this respect, these households established with children as head and mentored by employees may indeed represent the beginning of the process of separating the family from the management of the business.

In conclusion, Japanese family businesses of the early nineteenth century took a stem family framework with, nevertheless, joint ownership. Headship was passed to the eldest son if possible, but there were various mechanisms for bypassing the eldest son and choosing alternatives to recruit the most capable person as head and to establish capable leadership in the various branches and therefore the managing council. For this purpose, these families developed mechanisms for training not only the

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<sup>33</sup> The population registers of Seido neighborhood have both examples. Mary Louise Nagata, "Headship and Succession in Early Modern Kyoto."

heir apparent, but also the “non-inheriting” younger sons. One of these mechanisms was to establish younger sons in a branch at around the age of ten. By doing this, the family had a pool of alternatives within the kin group that they could choose from if for some reason the heir did not work out. At the same time, the employees charged with training these younger sons gained control of branch shops and eventually established either their own branches or their own businesses.

This flexibility is likely one reason that these family businesses have been able to survive and prosper over time. Kondaya, for example, still has offices on Muromachi Street a few blocks south of Takoyakushi neighborhood. The process of their survival to the present, however, is another story.

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